

The Kingdom of God

Lesson 11:

I. Review

- a. Thus far our study of the Mediatorial kingdom has taken us through **eight stages** of Biblical history.
 1. The **creation** stage which included the lives of Adam and Noah and the building of the tower of Babel.
 2. The **Patriarchal** stage in which the family of Abraham is shown to be the mediatorial line of succession.
 3. The **Exodus** stage in which Moses is the central mediator.
 4. The **conquest** stage in which Joshua exercises the mediatorial reign.
 5. The **Judges** stage in which 12 separate judges rule the nation of Israel on behalf of God.
 6. The **United Kingdom** stage under the first three kings of Israel.
 7. The **Chaotic kingdom** stage in which the kingdom is torn apart after the death of Solomon.
 8. The **Captivity** stage in which the Shekinah-Glory departs from Israel and the historical earthly kingdom ends.
- b. In the next phase we will track the development of the mediatorial kingdom through the biblical record of the Prophets over a **450** year period from approximately 850 to 400 BC.

II. Difficulties in Understanding Kingdom Prophecy

- a. **All** Messianic prophecy in the OT is kingdom prophecy. Even predictions of Messiah's suffering and humiliation cannot be separated from the context of His Kingly glory for, this is who Christ is, both suffering servant and King.
- b. This kingdom has various **aspects**, it is both universal and mediatorial, it is literal and earthly and it is spiritual, but it is always unmistakably only one kingdom.
- c. In some respects the books of the **Prophets** are one of the most important areas of investigation relative to the future of the Mediatorial Kingdom of God.
- d. Therefore, we must take pains to correctly interpret OT prophecy which means we must avoid the many **pitfalls** awaiting the student who is studying these texts. Some of these pitfalls are listed below.
 1. As a picture lacks a dimension of depth, prophecy often lacks a dimension of time: events appear together on the screen of prophecy which in their fulfillment may be widely **separated** in time.
 2. This is sometimes referred to as a "**telescopic**" effect. That is, the prophet sees close behind the nearest coming event to the end without necessarily stating how separate in time the events may be.
 3. IE: Isaiah's prophecy of the defeat of the Babylonians by the **Medes** (13:17-22) and moves immediately (14:1-4) to a Babylon of the end time. The first part of the prediction soon became a fact in ancient history. The latter is even today a future event.
 4. The same phenomenon may be observed in some prophecies of the coming Messianic King which we see in the NT as **two advents** greatly separated in time. Isa 61:1-2 *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; KJV*
 5. Some use this phenomenon to suggest that prophecy, therefore, should **not** be taken literally.
 6. Others further complicate the issue by imposing an assumption of an **unbroken** time-sequence which can not allow any room for literal fulfillment.
 7. Some expositors argue for a **multiple** fulfillment position of some prophecies which says that a prophecy may be fulfilled multiple times before it is finally consummated in the end of the age, while other argue against it. Dan 9:27 *and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate KJV*
 - a. Some suggest that this was fulfilled by the **Greek** Antiochus Epiphanes BC, by Rome in 70 AD, and shall again occur at the time of the Anti-Christ.
 8. The issue of literal vs figurative interpretation is a major issue because on it hangs the question as to whether the Bible teaches a future millennial kingdom following the Second Advent, or whether it **does not**.
 9. Because the church is **divided** on this issue, careful attention should be paid in interpreting prophecy to allow Scriptures themselves to speak for themselves concerning literal vs nonliteral interpretation.
 10. **Apocalyptic** literature is in a place all by itself because most agree that this is not, strictly speaking, literal in its revelation. Outstanding examples, of course, are the Books of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation.

III. The Interpretation of Kingdom Prophecy

- a. Interpretation of Biblical prophecies must reflect the primary purpose of all Biblical prophets, that of delivering **contemporary** messages.
- b. The prophet's message always had direct and immediate relevance to the present condition or situation of the prophet's **audience**. There are no exceptions to this rule.
- c. Some argue that prophecies may be conditional or unconditional. This becomes an important part in the conclusion that may be reached from the revelation of the prophecy. If a prophecy is conditional, it is possible it will never be **fulfilled**.
- d. While there are many individual variations in interpretive methods there are **three** basic methods of prophecy interpretation: 1.) The Literal method; 2.) The Nonliteral/Spiritual method; and, 3.) The Historical-Critical method.

The Kingdom of God

Lesson 11:

- e. The Literal method involves taking the **plain sense** reading of a passage, considering its historical context, its grammatical construction and interpreting the meaning accordingly.
 - 1. The literal method takes into account **nuances** of language, including the use of figure, metaphor, simile, symbol and even allegory.
 - 2. The literal method takes history and prophecy literally and also allows for legitimate **types** found in both. However, Joseph is always Joseph he is not Christ; Israel is always Israel it is never the Church.
 - 3. Approximately **half** of the prophecies of the Bible have already been fulfilled in a literal way, thus providing an intellectual basis for assuming that prophecy yet to be fulfilled will likewise have a literal fulfillment.
 - 4. In general the Literal method **rejects** the notion of conditional prophecy unless the text says it is conditional.
 - 5. Using a literal method of exegesis generally leads one to a **premillennial** end-times position.
 - 6. The most important objection to **strong** literalism is that the Bible neither states nor demonstrates that this is a good way to read Scripture.
 - 7. On the contrary, Scripture actually teaches and demonstrates that the author's **intentions** and situations are important and need to be considered because seemingly straightforward texts are not always so straightforward.
- f. The spiritualizing aspect of the Nonliteral / **spiritual** method was essentially created by Origen (185-254). He was a Platonist in philosophy which explains much of his theology and which also created many theological problems for him.
 - 1. Texts should be interpreted according to the author's intentions; sometimes the author's intention was that his text be understood **figuratively**. This is shown by the use of figurative language in the passage.
 - 2. Some texts were intended to be understood **both** figuratively and literally as Paul points out in Galatians 4. Gal 4:24 *Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. KJV*
 - 3. Some texts were intended to be understood figuratively but not literally even though the texts might make sense **literally**. Dan 7:3-4 *And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. 4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. KJV*
 - 4. Whether or not a figurative and/or literal meaning is intended must be determined on a **case-by-case** basis.
 - 5. Using the non-literal or spiritual method of prophecy interpretation may lead one to an **amillennial** understanding of eschatology.
 - 6. The **difference** between a literal and a non-literal interpreter comes out when each tries to indicate which prophecies must be interpreted literally and which prophecies are to be interpreted in a non-literal sense.
- g. The Historical-**Critical** method originated with anti-Christian writers who valued reason and logic over faith and revelation.
- h. Their goal was to discredit and ridicule the Bible and Christianity they do not accept the **inerrancy** of the Bible.
 - 1. Their analysis techniques were picked up by some liberal theologians and initially used to explain away and discount Biblical accounts of prophecy saying events were written about **after** the fact.
 - 2. **Higher** criticism focuses on such things as the name of the author, the date of writing, or the relationships between books.
 - 3. Religious **conservatives** strongly embrace lower criticism, the detailed analysis of the authors' words and thoughts but reject higher criticism.

IV. Application

- a. In our study of kingdom prophecy the chief danger for us is that our presuppositions and our previous training may shape the way we understand the prophetic text.
- b. What factors will keep you from objectively understanding God's intended meaning of any particular prophetic passage?
- c. What can you do to guard against these pitfalls?

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 3. The _____ stage in which Moses is the central mediator.
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 6. The _____ stage under the first three kings of Israel.
 7. The _____ stage in which the kingdom is torn apart after the death of Solomon.
 8. The _____ stage in which the Shekinah-Glory departs from Israel and the historical earthly kingdom ends.
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- b. This kingdom has various _____, it is both universal and mediatorial, it is literal and earthly and it is spiritual, but it is always unmistakably only one kingdom.
- c. In some respects the books of the _____ are one of the most important areas of investigation relative to the future of the Mediatorial Kingdom of God.
- d. Therefore, we must take pains to correctly interpret OT prophecy which means we must avoid the many _____ awaiting the student who is studying these texts. Some of these pitfalls are listed below.
 1. As a picture lacks a dimension of depth, prophecy often lacks a dimension of time: events appear together on the screen of prophecy which in their fulfillment may be widely _____ in time.
 2. This is sometimes referred to as a "_____ " effect. That is, the prophet sees close behind the nearest coming event to the end without necessarily stating how separate in time the events may be.
 3. IE: Isaiah's prophecy of the defeat of the Babylonians by the _____ (13:17-22) and moves immediately (14:1-4) to a Babylon of the end time. The first part of the prediction soon became a fact in ancient history. The latter is even today a future event.
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 5. Some use this phenomenon to suggest that prophecy, therefore, should _____ be taken literally.
 6. Others further complicate the issue by imposing an assumption of an _____ time-sequence which can not allow any room for literal fulfillment.
 7. Some expositors argue for a _____ fulfillment position of some prophecies which says that a prophecy may be fulfilled multiple times before it is finally consummated in the end of the age, while other argue against it. Dan 9:27 *and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate KJV*
 - a. Some suggest that this was fulfilled by the _____ Antiochus Epiphanes BC, by Rome in 70 AD, and shall again occur at the time of the Anti-Christ.
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- b. The prophet's message always had direct and immediate relevance to the present condition or situation of the prophet's _____. There are no exceptions to this rule.

The Kingdom of God

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- c. Some argue that prophecies may be conditional or unconditional. This becomes an important part in the conclusion that may be reached from the revelation of the prophecy. If a prophecy is conditional, it is possible it will never be _____
- d. While there are many individual variations in interpretive methods there are _____ basic methods of prophecy interpretation: 1.) The Literal method; 2.) The Nonliteral/Spiritual method; and, 3.) The Historical-Critical method.
- e. The Literal method involves taking the _____ reading of a passage, considering its historical context, its grammatical construction and interpreting the meaning accordingly.
1. The literal method takes into account _____ of language, including the use of figure, metaphor, simile, symbol and even allegory.
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 5. Using a literal method of exegesis generally leads one to a _____ end-times position.
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 4. Whether or not a figurative and/or literal meaning is intended must be determined on a _____ basis.
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