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Some Cardinal Principles of Prophetic Interpretation

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1. Prophecy is never given to satisfy curiosity, but to inculcate some needful moral and spiritual lesson (Daniel 9:2-3; Daniel 10:18; Luke 21:28; 2 Peter 1:19; 2 Peter 3:14).

2. Prophecies of events still future will be fulfilled on the same principle as those which have already come to pass. (The following prophecies concerning our Lord Jesus have been literally fulfilled: Micah 5:2; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:7-9; Psalm 16:8-11. The following prophecies will also be fulfilled literally: Zechariah 12:10; Zechariah 14:3-4; Matthew 24:29-31. Prophecies concerning Israel's scattering have been fulfilled literally, so also will be the promises of regathering: Jeremiah 30:3; Jeremiah 31:7-10; Isaiah 14:1-3; Amos 9:14-15).

3. It is well to bear in mind that there is no 'poetic exaggeration' in Scripture. The use of figurative and symbolical language does not imply that the subjects thereof are unreal and fictional. Israel means Israel, Jerusalem signifies Jerusalem, and not the Church. Babylon means Babylon, not Rome. So also days mean days, and years mean years, when a numeral is prefixed.

4. All prophecy is a preparation for Christ in connection either with His first or His second coming (Acts 10:43). In its dispensational aspect prophecy embraces, first, the Jews; secondly, the Gentile nations when brought into connection with Israel and Jerusalem; and, thirdly, Christendom or the Professing Church.

5. Every prophecy has its particular interpretation, even when capable of more than one application. But application is not interpretation, and adumbration is not fulfilment

6. As soon as any prophetic narrative reaches the point at which Jerusalem ceases to hold a national existence in the earth such historic detail as the mention of localities, dates, personages, is suspended, and is not resumed until Israel again becomes possessed of a recognised national position. For example: there is a gap of more than 1800 years in the middle of verse 26 of Daniel 9, i.e. between the crucifixion of our Lord and the rise of antichrist. During this long interval Israel is out of the land and set aside and so the period is not reckoned in the chronology of the 70 weeks. The same interval separates the two events mentioned in Isaiah 61:2 (compare Luke 4:18 and note where our Lord finished His reading).

7. For the reason afore-mentioned, prophecies relating to Israel, Jerusalem and Christendom during this period of Jewish dispersion are general in character. (for example Hosea 3:4; Luke 21:24; Matthew 13; Matthew 24:4-14).

8. Prophecy is rarely written in chronological order. The order is moral rather than historical and, therefore, involves repetition and retracing. Thus Genesis 2 goes over the ground of chapter 1 in order to add further details about the creation of man. Daniel 2 takes us right to the end of this age; the later visions simply retrace and give fuller particulars. In Revelation the final glory and blessedness is frequently mentioned before the events leading up to it.

9. Dispensational distinctions of light and knowledge between Jew and Gentile belong merely to their earthly circumstances and are not carried over into the eternal state, nor do they in any way affect the essential oneness in Christ of believers, whether Jew or Gentile, of all dispensations.

The Church of God is one; it comprehends all the redeemed from Abel to John the Baptist, from Pentecost till the close of the Millennium. All are saved under the same new covenant of grace, all have preached to them the same everlasting Gospel, all are justified through the Blood and Righteousness of the same Substitute, all are regenerated by the same Spirit, are united to the same Risen Lord, and shall alike be changed into the



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same heavenly likeness and dwell in the New Heavens and the New Earth. Scripture knows of no redemption that does not involve also union with the Person of the Redeemer. Any other teaching means two Gospels, two ways and two ends of salvation, which is impossible.

Beginners in the study of prophetic truth will do well to procure 'Elementary Studies in the Facts of Prophetic Scripture, parts 1 and 2' (obtainable from SGAT. Contact the Secretary at: satoms@hotmail.co.uk).