

C. Prophecy

ie. The ~~main~~ major idea in revelation is to remember that Christ is coming

Mickelsen says that the heart of the prophetic message is summed up in the words of Amos: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4:5). Prophecy focuses on the relationship of people to God, whether the prophet speaks of the past, the present, or the future.

We should immediately warn ourselves therefore against what I call "the crystal ball approach" to biblical prophecy. It is wrong to look at Biblical prophecy as a Christian "horoscope"

1. Characteristics of biblical prophecy--here we are concerned especially with the aspects which present a particular challenge to the interpreter.

- prophecy vs. history--prophecy is not history recorded before hand, although by this we certainly do not deny that God reveals details about his future plans.
This is why so many people who try to interpret current events with prophecy have been wrong
- figurative and symbolic language--distinguishing figurative (symbolic) language from literal language is one of the chief problems of interpretation in prophetic literature. Differing judgments here are the main cause for the different major schools of prophetic interpretation (A-, Post-, or Pre-millennial). Decisions here are complicated because no school of interpretation adopts a purely figurative or purely literal approach. The question, therefore, is how to distinguish these usages.

Mickelsen speaks of approaching such literature *in terms of equivalents, analogy, or correspondence*. Thus, the transportation (chariots for example) of the prophet's day will have a corresponding equivalent in the time of its fulfillment. This sounds very good and I am in agreement with it--I just don't think it helps us past many of the real hurdles.

2. Procedures for the exegete

- Make a careful grammatical-historical-contextual analysis of the passage. What is the overall thrust of the passage in its context.
- Identify those elements which you suspect are figurative or symbolic. Why do you think they are so?
- Identify other passages which may offer significant parallels. This may be specially helpful for deciding the issue of symbolic language.
- Avoid the fallacy of false disjunction. Either/or may be both/and.
- Avoid the fallacy of overly neat distinctions.
Two different terms may not be two distinctively different things (Ex: Day of Christ and Day of the Lord)