

The Grammatical-Historical Hermeneutic: Its Defense and the Demand for Premillennialism

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Hermeneutics occupies a pivotal place in the discussion on eschatology. As premillennialists, we commonly argue that a consistent hermeneutical approach—one that interprets all passages literally, grammatically, and historically—inevitably yields a premillennial viewpoint.¹ This is a major, driving argument for us and rightly so. Behind our concern for hermeneutics is a consummate passion for understanding Scripture correctly, for articulating the very depths of God's Word and knowing the God of the Word accurately. Our concern is *not merely to prove* we are right but to be *in* the right, to bring immense honor to God by handling every intricacy of His inerrant Word rightly. Godly ambition drives a preoccupation for sound hermeneutics. We want to have the right interpretation of Scripture and thereby the right eschatology, the one that God Himself has established as revealed in His Word.

Because of this, the hermeneutical argument is compelling and vital. Hermeneutics concerns the principles that anchor interpretation. It thereby has an epistemological purpose, defining how we know what the Author said. Thus, if a consistent hermeneutical produces a premillennial conclusion, then that is what God said. Disagreements about eschatology are not merely academic or even disagreements amongst peers; rather, they are a disagreement with God Himself. The hermeneutical argument is powerful because it leaves us with Luther's own resolve:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen²

In that way, hermeneutics is not only foundational for our eschatology but for all theology for it confirms that our beliefs and ideas are not our own but what God has declared. For this reason, biblical scholars list hermeneutics as a foundational element of scriptural study.³ It illustrates how hermeneutics is not only vital to the issue of eschatology but to the entire theological enterprise.

¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 35–42, 75–102.

² Martin. Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 1st English language ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), 1:460.

³ Robert L. Thomas, "The Hermeneutical Landscape," in *Evangelical Hermeneutics*, ed. Robert L. Thomas (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 13–15; Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard Duane Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 60–62.

What has typically occurred in our hermeneutical argumentation is that our hermeneutic is assumed and not necessarily proven. This is not unreasonable. After all, literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutics makes sense and is reasonable. It is the way we read our newspapers, books, pay check, contracts, and laws.⁴ This is how language and communication seems to work and is just “common sense.”⁵ This has been the norm throughout church history (and in fact, world history). Those who contended for a spiritual or allegorical hermeneutic did so acknowledging theirs was a supplement or exception to the grammatical-historical hermeneutical rule. Even those who argued for multiple meanings in a text still agreed that the grammatical-historical understanding of the text was fundamental.⁶ Church history consistently held the presence of a literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic and that it was the default. The argument historically was *how consistent* one should be to that standard and *not whether one should hold that standard at all*. Because of this, assuming the traditional hermeneutic is reasonable.

Nevertheless, in recent days, that assumption is under siege. Philosophers, under the influence of post-structuralism and post-modernism, have increasingly questioned the entire framework of traditional hermeneutics.⁷ To these philosophers and linguists, the whole communicative process breaks down. Authors cannot control their texts since texts themselves are just a bunch of arbitrary symbols.⁸ Accordingly, the whole notion of proper interpretation is a myth. Authors do not know how they communicate, texts do not have true specification to communicate, and the reader will just read in his own preunderstanding into the textual morass of confusion.⁹ Authorial “intent” may occur but it can never be accessed by the reader with any degree of certainty. Based upon this, these theorists argue interpretation must then be “free.”¹⁰

My summary above has not done the arguments justice. I would be the first to acknowledge the objections raised are dense, complex, and to some quite compelling.¹¹ They are particularly influential to young people. That begins to remind us of what is at stake. The discussion of hermeneutics is not merely academic. What is at stake is to lose a generation to the lie that they can never understand the Bible and never connect with the God of the Bible. What is at stake is to mistakenly believe people can create whatever gospel or theology they feel is “true.” What is at stake is to think that interpretation is so completely subjective that we can

⁴ Robert H. Stein, “The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 (2001): 451–52.

⁵ E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 188, 198.

⁶ See discussion in Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victory Publishing, 2003), 33–43; Robert M. Grant and David Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 2nd ed., and enl. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 52–103.

⁷ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang Publishing, 1975); Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1975); R. Albert Mohler, “Right Dividing the Word of Truth: Inerrancy and Hermeneutics,” in *The Inerrant Word: Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives*, ed. John MacArthur (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 200–203.

⁸ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*; Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 27; P. B. Payne, “The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author’s Intention,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 20 (1977): 249; Timothy Ward, “The Diversity and Sufficiency of Scripture,” in *Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture*, ed. Paul Helm and Carl R. Trueman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 197–99.

⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 388; Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 204–5.

¹⁰ Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 74–81.

¹¹ See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? Grand Rapids: Zondervan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 1–147.

never know what is right or wrong in our reading of Scripture. It all is just a matter of interpretation. As we observed, hermeneutics is not only vital for eschatology but the entire theological endeavor. With that, what is at stake is not just a discussion of a part of theology but the whole, our entire faith.

That being said, this great danger provides an equally great opportunity. For centuries we have assumed our hermeneutic, now is the time for us to prove it. In doing so, we not only can help people avoid the danger of post-modern thinking or even derive comfort that our assumptions are valid. Rather, we also move our assumptions to deep convictions and certainties, which in turn answer the very question of eschatology that we are to discuss at this conference. By intentionally delving through the issue of hermeneutics in order to defend it, we learn that Scripture comes with hermeneutic included. God shows us in His authoritative Word that He wrote it a certain way, the biblical writers read it that way, and they thereby expect that what they wrote should also be read that same way. Literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutics is not something we made up but the way the Scripture operates as evidenced by the way the prophets and apostles read and wrote Scripture.

Such hermeneutical clarity gives us equal clarity on any area of theology and eschatology is no exception. We can observe that the way Scripture demands it must be read produces a premillennial understanding of prophetic texts. We can also observe that no warrant exists for any hermeneutical shift which might produce a different eschatology. Thus, by defending our hermeneutic from Scripture, we thereby show the demand for premillennialism. That is the agenda of this paper.

Literal Hermeneutics and the Consistency of Meaning

Literal meaning fundamentally refers to that which the author intended.¹² Traditional hermeneutics maintains that the text denotes what the author communicated as per the rules of grammar and the facts of history (see next two major points of discussion).¹³ In light of the discussion above, the question is whether the Scripture views authorial intent as the *content* of meaning as well as how *consistently* does it do so. Is God's intent deeper than man's intent? Can additional meanings be added and found which would give rise to more spiritual and symbolic interpretations?¹⁴

From Old to New: A Consistent Literal Hermeneutic

The way the biblical writers read and wrote Scripture provides an answer to these issues. They were fixated upon the author's intent and did not deviate from that. We can observe this in the OT. The way the prophets describe Scripture shows they believed it comprised the author's intent. After all, they believed it was God's word (Deut 18:18), laws (Neh 9:26; Ps 119:18), statutes (Ps 119:5), precepts (Ps 119:4–5), and covenant (1 Kgs 19:10). The text of Scripture originated from Him and communicated what He said (Deut 18:18–21) with His full authority. Human involvement in the writing process did not interfere with this at all. Moses, for example,

¹² Stein, "Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach."

¹³ Mohler, "Inerrancy and Hermeneutics," 203.

¹⁴ See argumentation in Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 113–

stresses his own mediation did not interfere with communicating God's intent (Deut 5:5). For this reason, the prophets sometimes discuss what Moses or other prophets wrote (cf. Josh 8:30–33; 2 Kgs 18:6b) but also what God said (Josh 11:12–15; 2 Kgs 18:6a). They are interchangeable for they both say and mean the same thing. All of that shows the prophets thoroughly viewed the text of Scripture as the (dual) author's intent. To them, it was that alone for no one could add or subtract from the Word (Deut 4:1–2) but rather must tremble before it (Isa 66:1–3). The reader did not have the right to alter or invent new ideas in Scripture but only to understand what God said and obey (Deut 4:2b–3).¹⁵ In fact, for the prophetic office specifically, those who supposedly gave revelation contrary to what was originally written, even if it was miraculous, were to be executed (Deut 13:1–5). Thus, the prophets by belief and job description were those believed in authorial intent and were careful exegetes to that end.¹⁶

These convictions and descriptions were not theoretical but fleshed themselves out in the prophets' writings. Essentially every book of the OT alludes to prior revelation.¹⁷ Within this, one can note immense consistency with what was originally said. For example, the Abrahamic covenant promised land, seed, and blessing for the nation (Gen 12:1–3). Israel was to dwell in a certain place, become a great nation with a great king (Gen 12:1–3; cf. 17:6), and be a blessing for the nations. These promises are reiterated nearly word for word in other parts of the Pentateuch (cf. Gen 15:15; 22:17; 32:12; Deut 1:10). Joshua discusses the promise of land (Josh 1:11) and Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel deal with the promise of Israel's great king (Ruth 4:12–22; 2 Sam 7:1–13) even discussing the idea with the term "seed" (2 Sam 7:12) as well as in conjunction with the land promised in Genesis (2 Sam 7:10).¹⁸ First Kings draws these three components together discussing Israel's land in terms of what God promised Abraham (1 Kgs 4:24 [Heb., 5:4]), how Israel was a great nation like the sand (1 Kgs 4:20), and how it brought blessing to the world (1 Kgs 4:31 [Heb., 5:11]). Although the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant did not happen in Kings, later prophets describe again when Israel will dwell in the land (Isa 2:2), with a great king (Isa 2:3–4; 11:1–6), as a great nation (Isa 2:2), and be a blessing to the whole world (Isa 11:9; 66:10–14; Amos 9:13–15) as was already expressed in the Abrahamic covenant.¹⁹ From the beginning of the OT to the end, the OT writers, the prophets, are consistent in their handling of the texts of the Abrahamic covenant.

¹⁵ Daniel Isaac Block, *Deuteronomy: From Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary; NIV Application Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 117; Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 43; Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1976), 129.

¹⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 126. "In no case, however, do later Old Testament writers reverse Moses' teaching (cf. Deut 13, 18)..."

¹⁷ See further discussions in Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Craig C. Broyles, "Traditions, Intertextuality, and Canon," in *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis*, ed. Craig C. Broyles (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 157–76; Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 9–13; Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 122–26.

¹⁸ See discussion on T. D. Alexander, "Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings: Their Importance for Biblical Theology," *Tyndale Bulletin* 49 (1998): 191–212; T. D. Alexander, "Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis," *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993): 255–70.

¹⁹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40–66*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 546–47; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 1–39*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1986), 117–18; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1987), 399.

The same consistency is for the law. The writers of the historical books evaluate Israel's history based upon their obedience to the law as they explicitly state (cf. 2 Kgs 17:1–41). That reaffirms their intentionality of depicting various difficult situations as a result of covenant disobedience. Hence, mothers eating their children (2 Kgs 6:28), famine (1 Kgs 17:1–3), siege (1 Kgs 20:1–10), and ultimately exile are all a result of Israel's disobedience to the law (2 Kgs 25:1–26; cf. Deut 27–28). The prophets as well condemn Israel for covenant violations of various laws from theft (Mic 2:2) to idolatry (Hos 2:13–15) to neglecting the Sabbath (Jer 17:21–27). This not only shows the detailed understanding of the law the prophets had but also their consistency with it.

Along with this, Israel has a similar way to articulate its own history. For example, later writers pick up on the events discussed in the Pentateuch the same way they were originally discussed with the same emphases. For example, in Numbers, Israel failed to believe (אֱמַן) God and go up to the Promised Land (Num 14:11). Deuteronomy discusses the same incident mentioning Israel's failure to believe (אֱמַן, Deut 1:32). Psalm 95 uses other terminology found throughout the Pentateuch concerning how Israel tested God (Ps 95:9; cf. Exod 17:2; Num 14:22; Deut 6:16). In fact, even the author of Hebrews mentions this (Heb 3:11–19). These texts, from OT to NT, maintain the author's original intent. We can also observe this consistency on a broader scale. The prophets all discuss the sweep of Israel's history with the same viewpoint. They all view Israel's demise as due to disobedience (Dan 9:8–12; Neh 9:17–28). They all also view Israel's hope consistently. Moses recounts that even in exile, God will circumcise Israel's heart (Deut 30:1–6). Solomon reiterates that and asks that God would be faithful to that promise (1 Kgs 8:48–52). Daniel, in the exile, uses Solomon wording to plea that God would forgive just as Moses originally stated (Dan 9:1–20). The prophets adopt the very interpretation and ideas of their predecessors. They were fixated upon and consistent with authorial intent.

The list above is by no means comprehensive. We could comment upon how creation ideas (Gen 1–2) are repeated with great care in Exodus (20:11), Psalms (104), Daniel (7:1–13), Ezekiel (1:1–26), and Isaiah (65:17).²⁰ We could observe how Joel upholds God's promise of sending locust against disobedient Israel (Joel 1:1–10; cf. Deut 28:38) or how Ecclesiastes upholds Moses' own words to fear God and keep His commands (Ecc 12:13; cf. Deut 10:12). We could see how Jeremiah (31:31–33) and Ezekiel (36:26) faithfully expound upon God's promise to circumcise the heart (Deut 30:6) in their discussions of the new covenant. We can see how Achan is punished per the regulations Moses set forth in the law (Deut 7:26; 13:17; Josh 7:1).

One can find a plethora of additional examples that also reiterate this.²¹ Even more, the coherence of the OT storyline demands this. If laws changed their meaning or there were different viewpoints of the OT storyline, then we would not observe the cohesive nature of the OT. The very sensibility of the OT and its unified storyline are massive attestation to its hermeneutical consistency. All of this points out that the prophets had a high view of Scripture, had a job description to uphold Scripture (Deut 13:1–6; 18:18–22), and repeatedly did this throughout the entire history of Israel. To do otherwise, would be met by death (Deut 13:1–6).

²⁰ André Lacocque, "Allusions to Creation in Daniel 7," in *Book of Daniel Volume One*, ed. John Joseph Collins, Peter W. Flint, and Cameron VanEpps (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 114–31; Abner Chou, *I Saw the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Vision* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2013), 87–91.

²¹ Note earlier quote from Waltke concerning the nature of Deut 13, 18. See Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 126.

Thus, deductive and inductive evidence points to the prophets' consistent passion to understand the authorial intent of Scripture.

The NT does this as well. Fundamentally, the apostles claim this in their introductory formulae. Phrases like "just as it is written" (Rom 8:36; 9:13), "for it is written" (Luke 2:23; Rom 3:4), "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:1–4), "in order that it may be fulfilled" (Matt 1:22; John 12:38) assert that the apostles upheld the meaning of the OT. In addition, these formulae state that what God said is (Matt 1:22) what the prophets said (Matt 3:3) is what the Scripture say (Gal 3:8). The apostles use these phrases interchangeably because they believed that when men spoke, they spoke a message from God (2 Pet 1:21). Human and divine intent is the same and there is no hidden meaning and there are no other meanings. The formulae thereby show that the OT meaning is what the human authors state and the NT does not desire to differ from that meaning.

One can find further support of this from seeing how the apostles view themselves as continuing the role of the OT prophet. They describe themselves with prophetic gifting (Eph 2:20; 1 Cor 14:37; Rev 1:3) and put themselves in parallel with the prophets (cf. 2 Pet 3:2).²² This too supports that they maintain the intent of the OT as opposed to change it. They do not see themselves as divergent or in conflict with the prophets but rather as those who continue and uphold their ministry. Furthermore, our Lord affirms the intent of the OT. He chastises His audience for not hearing what Moses said (John 5:45–46) or for being slow to understand what the prophets spoke (Luke 24:25). These statements uphold the authorial intent of the OT.

All of these overarching statements supports that the apostles viewed Scripture as the author's intent and claimed to abide in that. They did not believe they were finding a new or different meaning in the text. They did not just claim this but exhibited this in their writings. Prophecies of the virgin birth (Isa 7:14), Christ's birth place (Mic 5:2 [Heb., 5:1]), and Christ's death (cf. Ps 22; Isa 53) are all fulfilled the way they were originally articulated. Paul juxtaposes Psalm 14 with Isa 59 in Rom 3:9–18 which actually corresponds to how Isaiah alluded to Psalm 14 in his writing. Paul follows what Isaiah does. The theology of penal substitutionary atonement within Isa 53 becomes the viewpoint of atonement in the NT as Isa 53 is nearly cited in every NT book (cf. Mark 10:43; Acts 3:13; Rom 5:15; Heb 9:28).²³ In fact, the NT writers use the OT so consistently with each other it shows a unified hermeneutic, one that is driven by authorial intent. James, John, and Paul all discuss "love your neighbor" (Jas 2:8; Gal 5:14; 1 John 2:6–8) the exact same way which is the exact same way Jesus and OT described it (Lev 19:18; Matt 19:19). The apostles all use Sodom and Gomorrah as a warning of God's judgment (Matt 10:15; 2 Pet 2:6; Jude 7) just like the prophets (Isa 1:10; Jer 49:18). The apostles all interpret Christ as the cornerstone in Psa 118:22 (cf. Matt 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7) and the Son in Ps 2 just as the

²² Kenneth D. Litwak, "Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31," *Biblica* 85, no. 2 (2004): 200–204. "In contrast to how scriptural parallels in Paul's speech are generally treated by scholars, I will show that Luke uses intertextual echoes of the Scriptures of Israel in Acts 17,22-31 to present Paul's message as "prophetic speech". Paul's speech stands in continuity with those of Israel's prophets in the past. This continuity (recognized by scholars in other regards) serves an important purpose in Luke's narrative. Luke establishes continuity in order to validate that Paul's message is of God, and by extension, Luke's audience, and their faith that is based upon the preaching of the gospel, such as that done by Paul" (200).

²³ Otfried Hofius, "The Fourth Servant Song in the New Testament Letters," in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, ed. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 163–88.

prophet intended (Rom 1:4; Heb 1:5). The list could go on.²⁴ What the above examples illustrate is that the apostles viewed the OT as interconnected and used the OT consistently just as they claimed. In fact, their focus upon authorial intent is what explains their consistency with each other. This is particularly striking since their contemporaries in Qumran were nowhere near that unified.²⁵ All of this affirms that the NT writers had a unified interpretative approach, one that upheld the author's intent without change.

Thus, from OT to NT a hermeneutical perspective dominates. Both prophets and apostles understand the Scripture as the author's intent, they read the Scriptures per that intent, and they do so consistently with each other. Literal hermeneutics is justified because that is the way the authors of Scripture read and wrote.

Dealing with Supposed Inconsistencies

So far, we have observed that the prophets and apostles have affirmed and concentrated on authorial intent in Scripture. The breadth of the OT and the NT demonstrates this primary mode of interpretation. In fact, scholars even dealing with the NT's use of the OT note that a contextual of the OT is the norm. All of this supports a literal hermeneutic.

This would be sufficient enough evidence and unquestioned were it not for those instances when it appears that non-contextually occurs. Examples are not only raised in the NT (which are more well known) but also in the OT. Dealing with these then is necessary.

Before dealing with some of the major theological arguments and exegetical examples, we can make several key observations. First, we should give the biblical writers a fair hearing. Issues can be more complex and while matters may appear on the surface one way, they may resolve with further study quite well in the end. As discussed above, the biblical authors not only have an excellent track record of interpreting per the original context but also claim to do so. We should take them at their word.

Second, in light of this, one helpful concept in dealing with this matter is distinguishing between meaning and significance. Meaning refers to the core ideas communicated in a text. Significance deals with the implications of those ideas. Just as ideas have consequences, so significance is the range of those ramifications within the parameters the author establishes in his meaning/intent. Hermeneutical discussions have authenticated these categories.²⁶ More importantly, Scripture itself authenticates these categories. The Bible speaks of hearing the Word (meaning) versus doing it (significance/application) (cf. Jms 1:23). The idea of wisdom and understanding deals with discerning the implications and insights of Scripture for life. Even terms like "commandments" (צְוִיֹּת) versus "statutes" (חֻקִּים) indicate this. Commandments refer to the particular regulations of a law (meaning) whereas statutes indicates the general principles and

²⁴ See Abner Chou, "Is Inerrancy Inert? Closing the Hermeneutical 'Loophole': Inerrancy and Intertextuality," in *The Inerrant Word: Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives*, ed. John MacArthur (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 231–43.

²⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 7 (1961): 330–33.

²⁶ G. K. Beale, "Questions of Authorial Intent, Epistemology, and Presuppositions and Their Bearing on the Study of The Old Testament in the New: A Rejoinder to Steve Moyise," *Irish Biblical Studies* 21 (1999): 152–80; Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 61–68; Stein, "Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach," 451–66.

ideas behind it.²⁷ The latter deals with significance denoting the overarching parameters the law establishes and reflects. Scripture understands the difference between meaning and significance. In fact, the very introductory formulae of the prophets and apostles often make claims of implications. When dealing with “as,” “just as,” “for,” or “according to,” one does not claim to give the meaning of a text but rather an implication of how it compares, justifies, or grounds an argument. We need to avoid charging an author with misinterpretation when he provided legitimate implication of the text.

Third, concerning significance, we can observe that the prophets highlighted certain implications of texts and prepared them for the apostles. The OT prophets do not merely repeat prior revelation but rather also develop it. This again deals with the significance of texts. We have already observed this in earlier examples. For instance, this occurs above in the example of the Abrahamic covenant. While maintaining the meaning of the Abrahamic covenant, the prophets still add detail about the nature of how Israel will bless the world (Isa 60:1–10), the nature of their great nation (Isa 2:2–4), their enjoyment of the land (Amos 9:11–15), and the majesty of their King (Isa 11:1–9). These details do not undermine what was originally stated but elaborate on it. This assumes the validity of the meaning of the Abrahamic covenant and shows then because it is true, then certain results will ensue. That is the very logic of implication.

The vine metaphor in the OT is another example. Asaph writes about Israel’s history from past to future using the image of the vine (Ps 80). He establishes this as a barometer for Israel’s spiritual and physical health (Ps 80:7–19). Later prophets will also appeal to that to discuss the same issue (Isa 5; Hos 10:1; Jer 2:21; Ezek 15:1–8). In doing so, on one hand, they maintain the original wording and ideas Asaph established. That shows consistency with the very way he used the metaphor. On the other hand, they develop the metaphor to discuss Israel’s fruitlessness and ultimately how they are a degenerate vine (cf. Isa 5:2–4; Jer 2:21a; Hos 10:1a; Ezek 15:1–5). While Asaph did not mention these elements, his intent was that the vine acted as a symbol of Israel’s vitality. Later authors flesh out and apply that intent in other situations appropriately.

The Davidic covenant could be another example of this development of significance. God’s original promise to David interconnects with the Abrahamic covenant promises of land (2 Sam 7:10; cf. Gen 12:1–3), the Mosaic covenant promise of stability (2 Sam 7:10b–11), as well as even the Noahic covenant promise of rest (2 Sam 7:11b).²⁸ The author of Kings reiterates these realities in Solomon’s reign. Israel occupies land, territory that extends to what was promised to Abraham (1 Kgs 4:24). They have peace on every side unlike the time of the Judges (1 Kgs 4:24b). They even have rest where creation is restored (1 Kgs 4:26–30).²⁹ This affirms that the author of Kings maintained the meaning of the Davidic covenant. This also shows how the author of Kings develops the significance of the Davidic covenant, showing how some of its

²⁷ G. Liedke, “קקח,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. E. Jenni and C. Westermann, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 470.

²⁸ The reference to “rest from enemies” in the Davidic covenant may be a part of a larger creational rest. That is consistent with the conception of rest throughout the OT up to that point. See John N. Oswalt, “Rest,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. W. VanGemeren, vol. 4, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1132–36. See also Michael A. Grisanti, “The Davidic Covenant,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 10 (1999): 240. Grisanti notes that the rest spoken of in this text must be eschatological since God in context already granted David rest (cf. 2 Sam 7:1).

²⁹ Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 147–48.

details flesh out into Solomon's reign. Later prophets will follow in suit for a future kingdom using the same language found in 2 Samuel and 1 Kings but yet adding certain details on. The prophets do not change the Davidic covenant but only show how it will consistently flesh out in God's plan.

The shepherd is another concept the prophets develop in the OT. God originally was Israel's shepherd (Gen 48:15). At the same time, God calls on human rulers to shepherd His people (Num 27:17; 2 Sam 5:2). However, one of them, David, still recognizes that ultimately the Lord is his Shepherd (Ps 23:1). As the prophets will develop, human shepherds will fail and in the end, God must come down as the good Shepherd to save and rule over His people (Ezek 34:1–24). At the end of the OT, Zechariah reminds the nation of this reality and elaborates that indeed God will come down as Israel's Shepherd but they will reject Him for forty pieces of silver (Zech 11:1–15) but in the end He will save and lead them home (Zech 14:5–6; cf. 12:7–8) just as other prophets prophesied (cf. Mic 7:14). In doing this, the prophets have not changed any information that God is the ultimate shepherd or that God had assigned human kings as shepherds. What they have shown is how these ideas play out in redemptive history. They show the ramifications of these realities in God's plan.

Again, these examples are not comprehensive. Volumes have been written to illustrate how this occurs. These observations form the foundation for biblical theology and particularly OT theology.³⁰ The very existence of these books and the discipline is evidence of not only the underlying hermeneutical consistency of the OT but how they develop the significance of prior revelation. Even more, the above examples not only maintain the meaning of the OT while developing its implications, they also move toward the NT. The way the vine metaphor is used sets up for the way Christ will use it (John 15:1). The articulation of the theology of shepherd sets up for Christ as the good Shepherd (John 10:11). Israel's failure of faith in the wilderness is picked up by the OT and then set up for how the NT will use those very texts (1 Cor 10:1–5; 1 Heb 3–4). *The OT has focused upon authorial intent and as a result its intent sets up for the NT. We may term this how the prophetic hermeneutic moves to the apostolic hermeneutic.* This factor particularly is useful in dealing with supposed "problem" texts. The extensive work of the prophets in the background of the NT's use of the OT shows there is more than meets the eye in dealing with these issues.

These three factors of giving the biblical writers a fair hearing, the distinction between meaning and significance, and how the prophetic hermeneutic sets up for the apostolic hermeneutic can provide us a solid foundation to work through the issues to which we now turn.

Objection 1: Speaking "Better than they Know"

Certain scholars may argue that the prophets spoke better than they knew. One passage cited is John 11:49 where John records how the high priest Caiaphas spoke better than he knew in speaking of Christ's need to die for the nation. Another example is 1 Pet 1:10–11 where the apostle records how the prophets did not know the times or kinds of time when things would take place. This appears that the prophets did not know what they were saying completely. This complements the claim that our Lord revealed the true meaning of the OT in show how everything in Moses and the prophets spoke of Him (Luke 24:44–46). Hence, the argument contends the OT prophets' intent was far too limited in their understanding the NT must fill in

³⁰ Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 126; House, *Old Testament Theology*, 9–13.

true meaning of the OT. This would not be a “literal” or strictly “authorial intended” approach to Scripture as described above.

In response, none of these passages accomplish the argument of establishing that the prophets “speak better than they know.” In the case of John 11:49, the high priest did speak better than he know. However, John asserts this with irony in that the priest’s words of opposition actually turn into the highest support for Christ.³¹ Even more, this verse seems to be how God turns the words of one individual around and in context does not speak to the issue of how God inspired His Word. After all, Caiaphas did not write Scripture. Thus, it would be incorrect to make John 11 normative for how God writes Scripture when the verse does not speak to that issue. First Pet 1:10–11 though does speak to this issue of what the prophets wrote. However, it does not assert that the prophets did not know *what* they said. Rather, the language of “time” and “kinds of time” (τίνα ἢ ποῖον) deal with the *timing* of their prophecies and the specific circumstances that would entail. This is more a question of *when* rather than *what*.³² In fact, Peter later states that the prophets read their works carefully and discerned that this pertained to Christ’s suffering and glory (1 Pet 1:11b). Hence, Peter asserts the prophets knew the *what*; they did not speak better than they know. Likewise, our Lord’s own statement does not imply He transformed the entire OT to have a Christological meaning. It simply discusses how Jesus spoke throughout the entire OT and spoke of the pertinent passages pertaining to Himself. That is what the grammar communicates.³³ At the same time, our Lord states that His disciples are “slow to believe *what the prophets spoke*” (πᾶσιν οἷς ἐλάλησαν οἱ προφῆται; Luke 24:25; emphasis mine). With the language of “what the prophets spoke,” our Lord affirms that the prophets had a message and that He affirms their message as it is without modification. As opposed to diminishing authorial intent, Jesus affirms it.

With that, this objection of a category of “speaking better than they know” lacks scriptural grounding. This is not to say that the prophets knew everything about the future. Progressive revelation does occur and even Peter states they did not know “what kind of time” would accompany their prophecies. They did not know everything but they knew what they meant and said. Even more, Jesus even in this discussion affirms that this is what the OT meant. Authorial intent stands.

Objection 2: OT Exegetical Problems

The NT’s use of the OT is not the only place where supposed misinterpretation or non-literal interpretation occurs. It is alleged in the OT as well. One such passage is how Ezek 18:2 and Jer 31:29 use Exod 20:5.³⁴ In Ezekiel and Jeremiah, the Israelites state a proverb expressing how their parents sinned but they suffer the consequences.³⁵ This seems to be based upon the

³¹ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 422.

³² Walter C. Jr. Kaiser, “Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament,” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, Counterpoints Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 45–60.

³³ See John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1998), 1245.

³⁴ Lamar E. Cooper, *Ezekiel*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 188; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel 1–24*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 563.

³⁵ Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 188; Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 563.

idea in Exod 20:5 that God visits the sins of the parents upon the children. However, God states that this proverb is incorrect and each person will die for their own sin (Ezek 18:4). Does God contradict His own word?

In response, although Israel's proverb alleges that God holds the wrong party responsible, that is not what is stated in Exod 20:5. Consequences of sin can carry over to other generations for sure. Nevertheless, God states that this particularly happens to the third and fourth generations of those who hate God (Exod 20:5–6). In light of this, Exod 20:5 does not endorse blame shifting as Israel's proverb does. In this case, God condemns an interpretation of His Word that twists the author's intent. Furthermore, the statement "every man will die for his own sin" is a quotation from Deut 24:16. God crushes false interpretation with a true interpretation of His Word. This illustrates shows the upholding of authorial intent rather than a transformation of meaning.

Another major kind of objection is the way the law is seemingly transformed in some texts. For example, Isa 56:3 states that the eunuch can be accepted into God's community. However, the Mosaic law clearly states the opposite (Lev 21:20). Does God violate the authorial intent of the law? Considering that the use of the law was a major example cited above, this is a substantial argument.

Initially, in context, Isaiah notes that the eunuch should not think of himself as a dry tree (Isa 56:3). Such language implies that the eunuch understands he is not accepted into the community.³⁶ This actually upholds the meaning of the Mosaic law. Even more, Isaiah not only upholds what the Mosaic law says but also its full intent: how it states it functions in God's plan. Deuteronomy highlights how the law ultimately revolves around the heart and one's covenant relationship with God (cf. Deut 6:4–6).³⁷ It notes how that core of the law will one day be fulfilled when God circumcises Israel's heart (Deut 30:6). With that, a new law will be in place, one that do not contradict the Mosaic law but fulfill its intent (cf. Deut 30:11–16).³⁸ In the context of Isaiah, the prophet has discussed the Servant's work to atone for sin (Isa 52:13–53:12). As a result, the issue of the law has been dealt with and so a eunuch can be cleansed from his true sin and accepted into God's people.³⁹ Isaiah thus upholds the content of the law but its function as well. Interestingly enough, based upon this, Oswalt observes: "The practice of Jesus is instructive here, and we may wonder if his interpretive method was not shaped by his study of this OT book along with others."⁴⁰ As opposed to violating authorial intent, Isaiah shows very thorough awareness of authorial intent and sets up for the NT.

These OT examples are some of the most major arguments against authorial intent. In each of them, they show the opposite. This shows the hermeneutical status quo above is still unchallenged. The prophets had an unwavering literal hermeneutic, one that regarded authorial intent.

Objection 3: NT Exegetical Problems

³⁶ Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 568.

³⁷ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 162.

³⁸ J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 429. McConville rightly notes that the ending of Deut looks forward to a new time when a new operation of the law will be in force.

³⁹ See Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 124–26.

⁴⁰ Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 458.

Perhaps the primary text cited for how the NT uses the OT non-contextually is Matthew's use of Hos 11:1 (Matt 2:15).⁴¹ How can Matthew use a passage that talks about Israel's past Exodus to speak as a prophecy about Jesus' escape from Herod? In answering this question, we must first answer a more underlying question: why does Matthew quote from Hosea to begin with? If Matthew wanted to merely speak of the past Exodus, he could have quoted from the book of Exodus (cf. Exod 4:11). However, he quotes a more obscure reference. This raises the question of what is happening in the context of Hosea.

In context, Hosea does speak of the Exodus; however, he does so for a specific purpose. He speaks of God's past love in the Exodus to show how His love will drive another deliverance, a second Exodus. That is precisely why Hosea characterizes Israel's upcoming exile in terms of Israel's sojourn to Egypt (cf. Hos 11:5). He desires to parallel the first Exodus with a new deliverance. Hence, although Hosea does refer to the past, he does so to make a point about the future. Furthermore, this deliverance mentioned in Hosea 11:1 has been discussed in parallel passages earlier in the book.⁴² It includes Israel's return to the land led by a single leader one like a new Moses (Hos 1:11 [Heb., 2:2]). Hosea later explicitly names the individual as a new David, the Messiah (Hos 3:5). Hence, Hosea 11:1 contextually discusses how God's love in the past Exodus drives a repeat performance led by a new Moses.

Matthew connects with this quite well. He too depicts Jesus as the Messiah and even a new Moses. Like Moses, Jesus gives a law on a mountain (Matt 5–7) and endures a parallel time in the wilderness (Matt 4:1–11).⁴³ Even more, like Moses was hunted down by Pharaoh as a babe (Exod 2:1–10), Jesus was hunted down by a king (Herod) at a young age (Matt 2:1–14). God delivered Jesus as He did Moses to show that Jesus is the new Moses, the one who represents His people as God's Son, the Messiah. These are the very ideas of Hosea being worked out.⁴⁴ As opposed to being non-contextual, this use of Hosea 11:1 is thoroughly contextual. Matthew wants to talk about the Exodus the very way Hosea discussed it.

Another instance of supposed misuse comes from Matthew's use of Jer 31:15. Rachel crying for her children seem so to be a past instance. How can Matthew apply it to the slaughter of infants in Bethlehem? The language of Jeremiah does not seem to only refer to the past. It

⁴¹ See G. K. Beale, "The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: One More Time," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55 (2012): 697; Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*, 132–34; Robert L. Thomas, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," in *Evangelical Hermeneutics*, ed. Robert L. Thomas (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 251.

⁴² Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 104; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 67; T. E. McComiskey, "Hosea," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. T. E. McComiskey, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 4–6; Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1948), 34–37. The new David passage is part of the oracles of hope/salvation genre. These hope filled exhortations help to structure the book (1:10–11; 2:14–23; 3:1–5; 6:1–3; 11:1–14:9).

⁴³ See full discussion in Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 166–69.

⁴⁴ See Thomas, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," 262–64; Douglas Moo, *The Letter of James*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 138; Douglas J. Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 191. The idea of "fulfilled" does not necessarily entail prophecy-fulfillment but the actualization, accomplishment, or working out of an idea. For example, "fulfilling the law" or "fulfilling the ministry" do not refer to the actualization of prophecy but rather the accomplishing (or satisfaction) of certain requirements or ideals.

may include it but the participle form of the term “crying” implies ongoing action as does the fact that the text says Rachel will not cease her crying till the coming of the New Covenant (cf. Jer 31:31). Thus, Matthew’s use of this text is fundamentally appropriate. He identifies another situation where Rachel’s tears are applicable. Moreover, the circumstances of this tragedy though surround the reality that the Messiah has come to establish the New Covenant (cf. 26:24). In this way, Carson rightly says that are climaxed and ended by the tears of the mothers of Bethlehem. The heir to David’s throne has come, the Exile is over, the true Son of God has arrived, and he will introduce the new covenant (26:24) promised by Jeremiah.”⁴⁵ Matthew’s use of Jeremiah is not only contextual but important to communicate Matthew’s theological message. Rather than changing Jeremiah’s meaning, Matthew depends upon Jeremiah’s meaning for his own proclamation.

Yet another passage raised to show how the NT does not abide in the authorial intent of the OT is how John uses certain psalms in describing our Lord’s death (John 19:24, 28, 36; cf. Pss 22:18; 34:20; 69:21). The argument is that these OT texts are not prophetic but describe David’s own sufferings. How can they apply to the Messiah? In response, we must fundamentally remember that all Scripture is profitable (2 Tim 3:16). David wrote these psalms not only as a personal memoir but rather as instruction for all God’s people (cf. Ps 22:31 [Heb., v. 32]). Hence, certain ideas of David’s suffering have relevance to all the people of God, Jesus included. For this reason, Davidic psalms are used by even other prophets to describe their suffering and hope in the Lord (cf. Jon 2:4–7; cf. Ps 69:1–2; Hab 3:1–13; cf. Ps 68:19–21). Within this, David’s suffering and hope are put in terms of the Davidic covenant (e.g., Ps 18:43–50; cf. 2 Sam 7:9–14) which then has even tighter applicability to every Davidic king of which Jesus is most certainly included.⁴⁶ For this reason, Davidic psalms are utilized by the OT prophets concerning the Messiah (Isa 53:3; cf. Ps 22:6) who is depicted as a second David (Hos 3:5). John uses the text in a way quite consistent with David’s original intent and context. John actually follows the way actually his predecessors have done so quite legitimately. His point is that Jesus fulfills all the turmoil of the Davidic covenant and is the true ultimate heir of those promises.⁴⁷

A final example, concerns Paul’s use of the OT in Rom 3. Some have argued that the language of “no one who does good” originally applied to certain enemies of Israel.⁴⁸ Thus, Paul’s more universal application is faulty. However, Psalm 14 arguably suggests a more universal outlook though. The parallels suggest that the language of “no one...” or “there is none...” are exhaustive and not limited.⁴⁹ Israel’s enemies are condemned because all are condemned. For this reason, a later text, Isa 59:1–4, uses this same language to describe Israel who were wicked even though they believed they were righteous.⁵⁰ Fascinatingly, Paul uses both

⁴⁵ Carson, “Matthew,” 95.

⁴⁶ House, *Old Testament Theology*, 406; Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 888–89; Walter C Kaiser Jr, “Psalm 72: An Historical and Messianic Current Example of Antiochene Hermeneutical Theoria,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52, no. 2 (2009): 72.

⁴⁷ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 627; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 553.

⁴⁸ Thomas, “The New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” 251–52.

⁴⁹ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 221–24.

⁵⁰ Gary Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2009), 590.

Psa 14 and Isa 59 in his discussion in Rom 3. Scholars observe how he weaves these texts together because of their shared language.⁵¹ As opposed to taking the OT out of context, he is aware of how Psalm 14 is picked up and used throughout the OT. He thereby weaves a theme that proclaims to his own audience that even though they thought they were righteous, their Scripture condemns them. Paul not only abides by the meaning of the text but also its highlighted significance. He is faithful to authorial intent.

The above discussion has covered some of the most controversial passages of the NT's use of the OT. Other works have more thoroughly covered an even broader sampling.⁵² This argues that such dilemmas are not as insurmountable as originally thought. In essence, having the full context of how the OT authors wrote helps to show how the NT used the OT contextually. Along that line, these examples demonstrate how thoroughly the apostles used the OT. They not only abided by authorial intent relative to meaning and significance but even knew how certain legitimate implications of a text were emphasized by later biblical writers. Rather than using the OT in a loose fashion, their use of meaning is both accurate and precise, honing on very particular ramifications they knew were highlighted by their predecessors. Thus, the Scripture has a hermeneutic that is literal. The biblical writers establish that authorial intent is the content of meaning and is not only consistent to that but thoroughly contextual. Later revelation does not change the meaning but rather abides within the significance of those text, a significance refined throughout progressive revelation.

Demand for Premillennialism

We have observed that Scripture operates with a consistently literal hermeneutic, one where new revelation abides by the original intent of previous revelation. While the development of certain implications can take place, newer revelation is grounded in what older revelation states. This hermeneutical reality supports premillennialism in a variety of ways. I will survey through four of them.

First, such a literal hermeneutic shows that the reinterpretation of OT passages and prophecies lacks grounding. A major argument for certain eschatological systems revolve around the reinterpretation of OT texts whether that be their referent (Israel) or their physical, time-space nature.⁵³ However, such a hermeneutical shift does not occur within Scripture. This demonstrates that ideas such as Israel's future and land (Gen 12), a king reigning from Jerusalem (Isa 2), or how God will transform creation are not overturned. This provides substantial support for premillennialism.

Second, consistent literal hermeneutical operation solidifies a premillennial eschatology in the OT. The prophets do not reinterpret previous ideas but rather deepen them. This only serves to further entrench those concepts in OT theology. Eschatology is no exception to that pattern. For example, one can see this in the way the OT reinforces the notion of Christ's reign

⁵¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 165.

⁵² See Gleason Archer and Gregory Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983); G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007). See also Abner Chou, *The Prophetic, Apostolic, and Christian Hermeneutic: Learning Biblical Interpretation from the Writers of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, forthcoming).

⁵³ Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 12, 54–58.

from Jerusalem. In Isaiah 2, God speaks of a time when the mountain of Jerusalem will be exalted and all the nations will gather to it in order to hear the law. Justice will be established over all the earth from this capital (Isa 2:2–4). Later on in Isaiah 11, the same picture is reinforced as the nations will be governed from God’s holy mountain, Jerusalem (Isa 11:1–9). Even more, Isaiah reveals that this is because of the King who reigns from that city (Isa 11:1–4) and a time when God’s glory and His knowledge fill the earth (cf. 11:9; cf. Isa 6:3). Ezekiel 40 also mentions how Ezekiel is brought to a high mountain (Ezek 40:2) and beholds how God’s glory fills the earth (Ezek 43:2). Just like Isaiah, Ezekiel discusses the “millennial temple” in that city, one that Isaiah himself presented (cf. Isa 2:3). In fact, Ezekiel discusses how Israel will offer sacrifices of worship (not for soteriological atonement) just as Isaiah argued they would all be priests to the Lord (Isa 61:6).⁵⁴ Thus, Ezekiel does not change what Isaiah says but only elaborates on the framework of details.

Daniel reiterates this same picture as well. He too records how a statue representing major nations will be crushed by a stone without hands which will turn in a mountain and fill the earth (Dan 2:35). The language of stone is drawn from Isaiah alluding to the Messiah (Isa 6:3; 28:16). The language of mountain also comes from Isaiah alluding to Jerusalem (Isa 2:1–4; 11:1–10). The language of filling the earth as well comes from Isaiah and Ezekiel and discusses the same eschatological moment they envisioned (cf. Isa 6:3; Ezek 43:2).⁵⁵ These interconnected OT passage do not overturn Isaiah’s original prophecy of a physical kingdom with its capital in Jerusalem ruled and brought by Messiah. Rather, they uphold it and deepen those notions, ones that are distinctively premillennial. This very paradigm is reiterated later on in Dan when again the anti-Christ comes to God’s holy mountain (11:45) to challenge God’s plan only to find that the true king will come, one like the son of man (Dan 7:9–13), and He will have dominion forever with His saints (Dan 7:27). The notion of Christ’s reign from Jerusalem is not done away with in the OT but rather made to be a major motif in OT eschatology. Accordingly, because the OT is consistent, it reinforces premillennial ideas as dominant in OT eschatology.

The consistency of hermeneutics in the OT not only reinforces ideas but also provides grounding for how we interpret eschatological passages. The motif of creational rest exemplifies this. The notion of rest begins in Eden and continues with Noah (whose name means rest Gen 5:29; 9:1–20), and even in the Mosaic covenant (Exod 33:14). Much of this language of rest revolves around a vine/vineyard. For example, in Genesis, Noah plants a vineyard (Gen 9:18–20) and later a king (Shiloh) tying his colt to a vine (Gen 49:10–11). This notion of rest continues into Solomon’s era where Israel lived in safety under their own vine and fig tree (1 Kgs 4:25). This actually sets up for books like Zechariah and Micah which also discuss an eschatological time of immense peace (Mic 4:1–9; Zech 3:8–10; 8:1–23) characterized by people sitting under their vine and fig tree (Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10). This is what was promised in Genesis and illustrated in Solomon’s time. Dempster affirms these connections when he says:

The narrative [in Kings] describes the uniqueness of this new Israelite king and his superlative wisdom (1 Kgs 3) to solve social problems, to promote justice and

⁵⁴ See further explanation in Chou, *I Saw the Lord*, 109–11. In sum, the sacrifices in their organization in Ezek do not communicate atonement for sin but rather are akin to the ordination sacrifices in Lev 8–10. As such, they demonstrate Israel’s act of worship as they themselves as a nation are to be ordained as priests. They finally fulfill their role as being a “kingdom of priests” (cf. Exod 19:5–6).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 115–19.

righteousness (1 Kgs 3:16–28) and to explore and name his Creator’s world, in much the same way that Adam did in the garden of Eden (Gen 2:19–20; 1 Kgs 4:32–33 [MT 5:12–13])...His dominion of , which encompasses the boundaries of the land promised to Abraham, is described vividly. All Israel and Judah lived securely under their own vines and fig trees (1 Kgs. 4:24–25 [MT 5:4–5]). This epitomizes national security and prosperity similar to that predicted for the messianic ruler’s reign in the latter days (Gen 49:11–12; cf. Mic 4:4).⁵⁶

The OT emphasis of rest in creation and in a physical kingdom serves as an anchor point for what Zechariah’s and Micah’s prophecies are about. Rather than overturning past ideas of Edenic rest, Zechariah and Micah depend upon these ideas for clarity of what they speak of. This grounds a premillennial viewpoint of their prophecies.

One can find other examples of how the OT builds a cohesive picture of eschatology. Hosea, Micah, and Amos all share the same wording in their presentation of Israel’s restoration (Mic 5:2 [Heb., 5:1]; 7:14, 15, 20; cf. Hos 2:15; Amos 9:11). Zechariah’s visions affirm the prophets before him (cf. Zech 8:1–20; Isa 60–64; Amos 9:11–13; Joel 3:18–21 [Heb., 4:18–21]). The prophets handle eschatology in a manner that does not overturn prior meaning but upholds and reinforces it.

Ultimately, the prophets’ consistent literal hermeneutic significantly supports premillennialism. It shows why we interpret passages in a premillennial fashion. We observed how the prophets tie their predictions back to earlier revelation, that which is already established and clear. For instance, the rest found in Solomon’s kingdom grounds what later prophets predict. The way the prophets build upon previous revelation helps us to see why we believe what we believe about eschatology. They make their intent clear by upholding the intent of previous revelation. The prophets’ consistent hermeneutic also builds a consistent eschatology in the OT. Thus, Israel’s restoration, the kingdom, and the fulfillment of promises are not obscure ideas in the prophets but rather dominant, having been developed and reinforced repeatedly throughout the OT canon. These are notions that cannot be ignored. Along that line, the examples above show that premillennial ideas are not just in a smattering of passages but entrenched into prophecy after prophecy as later revelation incorporates and upholds prior revelation. This means that overturning certain ideas of premillennialism cannot be done so simply. This would not be a matter of overturning just one text or even a couple of texts but because the OT is so interwoven, whole and massive swathes of the OT would have to be denied. Even in the examples above, one would have reinterpret God’s agenda with the Sabbath or the historicity of Solomon’s kingdom if one was going to reinterpret an eschatological passage. The millennial temple does not merely reinterpret Ezekiel but Isaiah (and even Zechariah and Jeremiah, cf. Isa 2:2; Zech 3:7; Jer 33:18). In sum, the hermeneutical consistency of the prophets bring out substantial evidence for premillennialism. It shows the OT provides a deep and consistent picture of eschatology.

Third, because the biblical writers had a literal hermeneutic, the OT picture of eschatology does not change when one arrives at the NT. If later revelation operates a “literal” hermeneutic that does not overturn authorial intent, then the NT does not overwrite the OT but rather the OT shapes the NT including its conception of eschatology. Consequently, if the OT is premillennial, that makes the NT premillennial as well. We can observe this through some

⁵⁶ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 147–48.

inductive examples. For instance, both our Lord's Olivette discourse (Matt 24:15) and Revelation (Rev 13:1) heavily draw upon Daniel (7:1–10; 12:11). As noted, Daniel itself draws upon other books in previous revelation affirming a kingdom in Jerusalem headed and established by the Messiah (cf. Isa 2:2–4; 6:1–3; 11:1–10; Ezek 40:2; 43:1–4; Dan 2:35; 7:9–13). These NT books follow suit discussing after a period of (seven year) tribulation (Rev 11:3; cf. Dan 7:25) that the Messiah will return (Matt 24:30; Rev 19:11–21; cf. Dan 7:1–10; 11:40–12:3) and reign in His earthly kingdom (Isa 2:2–4; Dan 7:9–13; Rev 20:1–4). The OT helps to reinforce NT premillennialism and the NT reflects the eschatological picture provided by the OT.

Other examples of this occur. Paul's notion of the anti-Christ sitting in the temple (2 Thess 2:4) is drawn from both Daniel and Ezekiel and again these OT books help to anchor our understanding of Paul's epistle and eschatology.⁵⁷ Peter's understanding of a new heavens and earth is drawn from Isaiah (2 Pet 3:13; Isa 65:17). The author of Hebrews' eschatology comes from passages like Haggai (Heb 12:26; cf. Hag 2:6) and Isaiah (Heb 12:27; Isa 34:4; 54:10). Again the OT is the foundation of NT eschatology and if the NT cares about authorial intent (as they did and claimed), then the premillennial nature of the OT shapes these NT texts.

One final example is worth mentioning. The complex of events surrounding the thousand year reign of Christ in Revelation has allusions back to Genesis. In Genesis, a man ruled in the garden (Gen 1:26–28; 2:8–10) but a woman was deceived by the serpent (3:1–8), so Christ reigns in Jerusalem (Rev 20:1–6) but Satan deceives the nations (Rev 20:8). Like the examples above, if Adam was a real person and Eden a physical place in this world, so Jerusalem will also be a real place and Christ will have an equally physical rule. The physical and historical foundation of the OT is upheld by and shapes the NT. This grounds the kingdom as physical as premillennial maintains. However, this grounding also helps to provide the theological significance of this era. Unlike Adam who disobeyed and plunged creation into chaos, Christ demonstrates His completely sovereignty over Satan showing once and for all, a new and true Adam has won and can keep creation for the glory of God. Again, a consistent literal hermeneutic shows that OT ideas are not negated but rather reinforced and fulfilled.

Finally, this discussion on “literal” hermeneutics and authorial intent can deal with the common objection of symbolic language in prophecy. Some may still object to a “literal” hermeneutic because of the symbolism replete in prophecy. However, the notion of literal here regards authorial intent and does not preclude that an author can use figures of speech or symbolism. If that is his intent, we must accept it. At the same time, the question is how we know something is symbolic and what the author intends it to mean. Intertextuality can help in two ways. First, the notion of reading the OT as spiritual symbolism derives from the idea that the NT provides deeper meaning to the OT. This is particularly the way other theological systems handle OT prophecy.⁵⁸ However, we have observed that such a phenomenon does not happen. Accordingly, a deeper spiritual symbolic meaning does not have theological basis. Second, instead, eschatological symbolism is often rooted in the OT itself. For instance, the symbolism in Revelation has its root in Daniel (2, 7), Zechariah (3–4), and Genesis (1–3). This again brings out the paradigm we have observed thus far: previous revelation anchors later

⁵⁷ Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 246. Wanamaker rightly observes that the article with the term “temple” consistently refers to the structural temple in Paul. Although Wanamaker wants to historicize the reference, he makes an important point that Paul's description in 2 Thess 2 is what Daniel described and a physical event in a physical building as opposed to the anti-Christ dwelling in the spiritual temple of the church.

⁵⁸ Riddlebarger, *Case for Amillennialism*, 84–85.

revelation. In this case, the previously explained symbols help to anchor and clarify the discussion of how they are used later on. What we have observed about literal interpretation is not changed but actually reinforced. Accordingly, symbolism does happen in literal interpretation. However, symbolism is not difficult in eschatology because it is vague but because it is so precise. It requires one to know all the backstory of prior revelation well. Literal interpretation is hard work and requires us then to be humble.

Thus, from OT to NT we observe the Scripture maintains a literal hermeneutic, one that is consistently focused on the content of authorial intent in context. Such operation shows how premillennialism is engrained in the OT and affirmed in the NT. It demonstrates that no deviation from that occurs. It also shows that the allegation of symbolism does not undo a literal interpretation but rather points to the reality of how the NT references the (symbolism of the) OT. In that case, the principle of how later revelation upholds earlier revelation comes into play. Thus, the literal aspect of hermeneutics raises compounding evidence from OT to NT of not only affirming premillennialism but also showing why it is theologically beautiful and vital.

Grammatical Hermeneutics and the Detail of Meaning

We have defended the literal principle which contends that the author's intent is central to our hermeneutical endeavors. The next question concerns how that intent is communicated and how precisely. Grammatical hermeneutics argues that language not only adequately conveys the author's intent but does so with precision. Words, details, and constructions all matter for they comprise the author's meaning.

A Defense of Grammatical Hermeneutics from Old to New

The OT affirms this mentality. It affirms that every word of God is pure and from Him (Ps 12:6). Furthermore, God demands that Israel neither add nor subtract from any of His commands (Deut 4:1–2). Such language locks down the wording of past revelation. This ensures no tampering occurs to the wording and thereby the precise meaning of the covenant.⁵⁹ This tightly links the precise wording of a text with its meaning. God desired to express His truth in a particular way, He did that in the Pentateuch, and so it cannot be changed. This is officially from Him.⁶⁰ Thus, on an overarching level, the authors of the OT asserted that Scripture by nature is precise down to the last word.

They not only said this but also showed this. Joshua discusses how not one word from all the words God spoke have failed (לֹא-נִפְּלָא דְבַר אֶחָד מִכָּל הַדְּבָרִים ; Josh 23:14). The language does not merely specify various “words” but even within this, “one word” or detail. Howard remarks on this text:

These chapters show us that Yahweh was a promise-keeping God. In general, the detailed listings fulfill his land promises to give the land that he had repeated so many times previously. More specifically, chap. 13 reviews the lands that the Transjordan tribes inherited. They had already been given to these tribes (Numbers 32), but chap. 13 shows that what God had promised, he would deliver. Also, the setting aside of the cities of

⁵⁹ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 115; Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 129.

⁶⁰ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 115; Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 129.

refuge and the Levitical cities fulfilled God's instructions in the Pentateuch concerning these (Exod 21:12–14; Numbers 35). Furthermore, the individual inheritances of Caleb (14:6–15; 15:13–19) and the daughters of Zelophehad (17:3–6) fulfilled specific promises to each of them (Num 14:24 and Deut 1:36 for Caleb; Num 27:1–11 for the daughters of Zelophehad). In addition, the statements about the people and the land having rest (14:15; 21:44) fulfilled promises about this also (see Deut 12:10; 25:19). Likewise, none of Israel's enemies was able to withstand them (Josh 21:44), just as God had promised (1:5). In sum, "Not one of all the Lord's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled" (21:45).⁶¹

Joshua's own writings reflect how God's promise and fulfillment was not generic but precise and exact. He upholds His promises down to the last detail. This also can be seen in other laws whether that be the law how a king should multiply horses (Josh 11:6; Ps 20:7; Deut 17:16), how fathers should not be put to death for their sons (2 Kgs 14:6; cf. Deut 24:16), or various curses found in the covenant (2 Kgs 6:28–29; cf. Deut 28:56). The OT writers are particular about the details of covenantal regulation and punishments.

In addition to this, the OT describes and interprets events the same way even down to an individual word. For example, when discussing the issue of Israel's disobedience in the wilderness, Moses consistently says Israel did not believe (Num 14:11; Deut 1:32). This is picked up by Ps 106 (v. 24). The prophets pick up on individual words with consistency. Likewise, they also all discuss how Israel craved meat in the wilderness with the same language (Num 11:4; Deut 9:22; Ps 106:14). The language of crushing the head of one's enemies, related to Gen 3:15 also shares the same verbiage (Num 24:17; Psa 68:22; 110:6; Hab 3:13). On top of this, the term "rest" becomes consistently associated with eschatological and creational nuances. This is not only early in the Pentateuch in Ten Commandments (Exod 20:10–12; 33:14) but also in the Psalms (Ps 95:11) and in the prophets (Isa 63:14). Their consistency in how they use a word sets an entire theology of rest.⁶² The prophets' attention to detail shows that every word matters in the text.

The NT follows suit. For one, the apostles' assertions about Scripture demonstrate their conviction. They believe that all that is written (πᾶσα γραφή) is God's very communication (2 Tim 3:16). They warn against going beyond what is written (1 Cor 4:6) and going outside Christ's teaching (2 John 9). The Scriptures were to be rightly divided and handled with care and not capriciously (2 Tim 2:15; 2 Cor 2:17). All of this implies an attitude of precision and carefulness rather than something far more generic and broad.

The apostles, like their OT counterparts, demonstrate this mentality in the way they handle Scripture. Christ Himself exemplifies this. He speaks of the term "gods" in John 10:35 to argue for His divinity. He also appeals to the term "lord" for the same purpose (cf. Matt 22:44–45; Ps 110:1). He discusses the term "is"⁶³ in His discussion of the resurrection (Matt 22:32). Jesus, Paul, and Peter talk about the term "cornerstone" and its implications in Isa 26:18 and Ps 118:22. The author of Hebrews picks up on the idea and the word "rest" from the OT and incorporates that into his own discussion (Heb 3–4). Similarly, he also mentions the issue of

⁶¹ David M. Howard, *Joshua*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 399..

⁶² See full discussion in Oswalt, "Rest."

⁶³ The construction in Hebrew demands for this tense and verb to be supplied.

“faith” found in the wilderness wanderings of the OT just as the prophets had highlighted (Heb 3:19). These latter two examples demonstrate how both OT and NT writers knew Scripture down to the word and were even consistent with each other. Accordingly, the Scripture has a thoroughly grammatical hermeneutic, it is one of the hallmarks of its unity.

Nevertheless, some object to this notion. I will present one example from the OT and one from the NT. These examples though in the end show how thoroughly grammatical both the prophets and apostles are. Concerning the OT, some raise the issue of how Daniel interprets Jeremiah in Daniel 9. Daniel mentions the seventy years of exile prophesied by Jeremiah and prays that the Lord would end the exile (Dan 9:1–19). However, the Lord reveals that the exile would continue for seventy times seven years (seventy “weeks”). Some argue this is an allegorical reading of Jeremiah, imprecisely handling the numbers in Jeremiah.⁶⁴

However, initially, we could find the opposite to be true. The very fact that Daniel prays around the seventieth year of exile demonstrates he read Jeremiah precisely. In fact, one commentator cites this as proof of a literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic. Furthermore, the seventy weeks is not a direct interpretation of Jeremiah’s prophecy. To be technical, Daniel’s prayer concerns the ultimate end of exile. Jeremiah’s prophecy does predict that Israel will return to the land in seventy years; however, other passages also deal with the exile’s final conclusion when Israel returns home in mass and all promises are fulfilled (Dan 9:15–19).⁶⁵ This is covered in passages like Deut 30:1–6 And 1 Kgs 8:46–53 which are not only alluded to in Jeremiah’s prophecy but in Daniel’s prayer. Daniel then is wondering if the seventy years in Jeremiah is coterminous with the ultimate end of exile. God’s response is in the form of a word play. The answer in sum is no, rather instead of seventy years it will be seventy times seven years (a much longer period of time). Thus, as opposed to showing imprecision, Daniel actually affirms reading numbers precisely which serves as the basis for further developments.

Concerning the NT, Paul’s use of the term “seed” in Gal 3:16 is often raised as a demonstration of grammatical imprecision or just error.⁶⁶ How can Paul discuss the singular or plurality of the term “seed” when the Hebrew term always appears singular even when discussing the plural? To be sure, the Hebrew term seed (זרע) does not have a plural form. Nevertheless, it can refer to that which is plural or singular. Grammatical studies have shown that it refers to plural when plural verbs and pronouns refer to it and when singular verbs and pronouns are linked with the noun, it is singular. When these studies are applied to certain instances, it appears a messianic individual is involved. This begins in Gen 3:15 where a singular seed will crush the head of the serpent. This continues when a singular seed will possess the gates of *his* (note the pronoun) enemies in Gen 22:17–18 (וְיִרְשׁ זֶרְעֶךָ אֶת שַׁעַר אֲיִבָיו). In that latter passage, all nations will be blessed in that (singular) seed. Psalm 72:17 confirms this reading when it discusses how all the nations will be blessed in that seed, in Him (וְיִתְבָּרְכוּ בּוֹ).⁶⁷

For the prophets and apostles, details, words, and grammar matter. They believe this is precisely what God said and should not be changed but rather studied and lived out (Ezra 7:10; 1

⁶⁴ Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*, 118.

⁶⁵ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 248.

⁶⁶ Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*, 136–38.

⁶⁷ Jack Collins, “A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman’s Seed Singular or Plural?,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 139–48; T. D. Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 363–67.

Tim 4:14–15; 2 Tim 2:15). That is how they read, how they wrote, and how they want to be read. It behooves us to study out their intent as precisely then as they expressed it.

Demand for Premillennialism

Exegetical precision is part of what drives a premillennial interpretation. Some have criticized premillennialism of being too complicated and even over complicating ideas.⁶⁸ However, the grammatical approach of Scripture reminds us that such attention to detail and precision is exactly what is required in every passage and theological topic, particularly eschatology. It is not overreading. Although I cannot be comprehensive in this discussion, I do want to point out some points that show how this principle is useful and insightful.

First, we can deal with the issue of Israel. Though growing numbers of evangelicals even in other eschatological camps are beginning to acknowledge salvation for a large group of Jews in the end times, debate still exists whether or not the church is the true continuation of Israel and whether Israel not only has a soteriological future but also one with the blessings originally promised to Abraham.⁶⁹ The main argument of premillennialism and particularly dispensational premillennialism is ironically simple. The term Israel throughout the OT to the NT has denoted the nation. Thus, in the OT, when the prophets discuss how Israel and Jerusalem will be exalted in the kingdom (Isa 2; 4; 11; 64–66) or when Israel will have its central domain in the Promised Land (Ezek 40–48) or when Israel will be exalted amongst the nations and be fruitful (Amos 9:11–13; Joel 3:1–21 [Heb., 4:1–21]; Isa 60–62), we understand this to denote the nation of Israel. The same term is used of the nation and its judgment which historically took place (2 Kgs 17:1–21; 25:1–26). Hence, grammatically and linguistically, when restoration is discussed with the same term, we should assume the same referent is discussed. Likewise, in the NT when Jesus promises the regeneration of the world and how the disciples will judge the nation of Israel (Matt 19:28) or when dealing with the question of the kingdom restoration to Israel (Acts 1:6) or when Paul discusses how all Israel will be saved with a deliverance that was described in Isa 59:20 (Rom 11:25–26), we should believe this speaks of the same nation of the OT and not a spiritualized people of God or the church. Terms are precise.

This can even make sense of the use of the term “Israel of God” in Gal 6:16. This is not only in discussion of the term “Israel” but even in the use of the conjunction καί. Fung helpfully points out that an exegetical use of the conjunction (thereby equating “those who walk according to the rule” with the Israel of God) does not happen in any of Pauline literature.⁷⁰ Thus, the copulative means “and.” Thus, the “Israel of God” is an additional group to “those who walk according to this rule.” Consequently, since “those who walk according to this rule” seems to refer to Paul’s current audience the church, “Israel of God” is not that same group but an additional group. It means what it has always meant in all of Scripture: Israel. In fact, Bruce himself comes to the following conclusion:

⁶⁸ See argumentation in Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1116. See also Louis Berkhof, *By Louis Berkhof - Systematic Theology*, New edition edition (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 715.

⁶⁹ See Barry E. Horner and E. Ray. Clendenen, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), i–xxi.

⁷⁰ R. Y. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 310.

But the reference to the Israel of God need not be an afterthought. If Paul knew the additional (19th) benediction to the Eighteen Benedictions, he would have been familiar with a prayer which asks God for ‘peace ... and mercy on us and on all Israel thy people’ (*šālôm ... w^erah^amîm ‘ālênû w^e ‘al kol Yiśrā’ēl ‘ammekā*). If so, the words ‘and on the Israel of God’ would have come readily from his tongue.

F. Mussner (*Galaterbrief*, 417 n. 59) probably indicates the true sense when he identifies the Israel of God here with *παῖς Ἰσραήλ* of Rom. 11:26. For all his demoting of the law and the customs, Paul held good hope of the ultimate blessing of Israel. They were not all keeping in line with ‘this rule’ yet, but the fact that some Israelites were doing so was in his eyes a pledge that this remnant would increase until, with the ingathering of the full tale (*πλήρωμα*) of Gentiles, ‘all Israel will be saved’. The invocation of blessing on the Israel of God has probably an eschatological perspective⁷¹

With that, the consistency of the terminology of Israel does not show the subsistence of Israel in the church but rather the opposite: Paul believed and prayed for the future of that nation. This reinforces key ideas within premillennialism. Grammatical analysis is helpful in discerning through these issues and is not over-reading for as we have seen, the biblical authors read and wrote with such precision. We must read them accordingly.

Second, such detail and precision does not only pertain to Israel but to all the other details of prophecy. This not only includes the unity of animals (Isa 11:6–9; Hos 2:18) and the fruitfulness of creation (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18 [Heb., 4:18]) but also the plights of various other nations including Babylon, Edom, Moab, Egypt, Assyria, and Ammon (cf. Isa 13–27; Zech 9:1–8). In an amillennial approach, the details of those texts (including the particular nations) are supplanted for a more spiritual idea of salvation, restoration, or judgment.⁷² This again shows why grammatical hermeneutics drives a premillennial viewpoint. A grammatical approach argues that these details cannot be dismissed. These nations are differentiated from each other in prophetic discussions, have different geographical locales, and different destinies (cp. Isa 13:19–22; 19:24–25). They are not the same, these details matter, and must factor in our eschatology. This is the way the biblical authors read and wrote and how we then must read them. Thus we not only believe in a future for Israel, we believe in a future for these nations (even if they may use different anglicized names). This drives an eschatology that is located in space-time and deals with the nations of this world.

Third, linguistic details also drive the position on a pre-tribulation rapture. In discussions on passages like 1 Thess 4, some have argued that Jesus’ description of His coming in Matt 24 and Paul’s description in 1 Thess 4 are essentially the same.⁷³ However, in looking closely at the text several differences arise. For example, in Matt 24 (and in passages previous in the OT, cf. Ezek 39:17), the gathering of peoples can be unto judgment whereas no such idea is in 1 Thess 4. Even more, the gathering of Israel at Christ’s coming in Matt 24 and in other OT passages looks to a very horizontal gathering. Israel is gathered together on the earth from the

⁷¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), 274–275.

⁷² Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 432. Young sees this as how the church will have dominion in the earth or how the church’s enemies will be destroyed.

⁷³ P. H. R. van Houwelingen, “The Great Reunion: The Meaning and Significance of ‘Word of the Lord’ in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 42 (2007): 308–24.

various parts of the world (cf. Isa 60:1–6; Ezek 37:12–13; Zech 8:8). However, in 1 Thess 4, a vertical gathering is in view where people meet Christ in the air (1 Thess 4:17). Even more, Christ never comes down to reign in 1 Thess 4 whereas in Matt 24 and other OT passages (cf. Zech 14:3), that is the entire point of the episode. To some these are just trivial details of no consequence; however, in a grammatical hermeneutic, these are important details that must be accounted for. This is precisely why terms like “in the air” (εις ἀέρα), “caught up,” (ἀρπαγησόμεθα) and “in the clouds” (ἐν νεφέλαις) are so important. They show stark contrasts with other passages that speak of what will happen on the earth, when Israel is gathered back to their land. With a grammatical hermeneutic, details matter and this raises the clarity of a pre-tribulation rapture.

Along that line, another passage in the debate on the rapture is 2 Thess 2. Some use the phrase “unless the apostasy comes first...” (ἐὰν μὴ ἔλθῃ ἡ ἀποστασία πρῶτον καὶ ἀποκαλυφθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας,) to argue that the apostasy (and perhaps the later ideas of the man of lawlessness) must come before the rapture.⁷⁴ This could be the sense in English but how does the Greek grammar work? The use of the term πρῶτον followed by the word “and” though denotes chronological sequence with what follows not what comes before. For instance, the gospel went to the Jew *first* and the Greek (Rom 1:16). A similar construction is in 1 Thess 4:16 which talks of the dead in Christ rising *first* (οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον) and *then* (ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις) we who are alive and remain. The language there does not refer to how the dead in Christ rise before the “rapture.” Thus, the phrase “the apostasy comes first” speaks of what comes first in a sequence of events. First comes the apostasy followed by the revealing of the anti-Christ.

At this point, one other piece of grammatical analysis comes into the picture. What does the phrase “unless the apostasy comes first...” modify? Paul omits the “then” statement of this conditional clause. Per the rules of grammar, the nearest clause as it stands would be the assumed statement.⁷⁵ In this case, the nearest clause is “the Day of the Lord has come” (ὅτι ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου). The perfect tense of the verb ἐνίστημι is an intensive perfect denoting an ongoing state.⁷⁶ Earlier the false teachers evidently had argued the Day of the Lord was already in force. However, Paul counters that if that was true, the Thessalonians would observe that an apostasy would come followed by the man of lawlessness. The grammar points out that Paul is not talking about the timing of the rapture necessarily but the timing of the Day of the Lord by virtue of what happens *in* that era. Grammatically evidence demonstrates that this by no means undermines a pre-tribulation argument. In fact, the opposite could easily be argued. Since Paul seems to parallel the discussion of the “rapture” (τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; cf. 2 Thess 2:1) with the coming (not ending) of the Day of the Lord, it seems in everyone’s mind that the rapture was linked with the initiation of the Day of the Lord.

These examples remind us of the importance of seeing details. Premillennialism is not only evidenced via broader statements but also by a commitment of observing details and

⁷⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 280.

⁷⁵ Wanamaker, *Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 244.

⁷⁶ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1996), 574.

heeding those nuances. This hermeneutical commitment why the word Israel matters for a future for Israel or why we believe in a future for other nations or why we insist that the kingdom could not have been fulfilled yet or why we believe in a pre-tribulational rapture. We could make further comment on the tense of verbs (e.g., future tense in Rev 1:19) or certain adverbs that show ordering of events (e.g., the structural marker *καὶ εἶδον* in Rev 19:11; 20:1 showing how Christ's coming comes after the tribulation but before the millennium).⁷⁷

This is not over analysis but rather reading the writers of Scripture carefully, the way they read, wrote, and wanted to be read. This again is even pastorally significant to help our people understand why we need to study texts and pay attention to their intricacies. At the same time, grammatical hermeneutics is not merely about polemics. All of the details of God's wonderful work in the future, the rapture, His work with His people Israel, and even His work with the nations all show us the beauty, hope, and comfort eschatology brings. To those who wonder if God can make this world right, we can show all the details of how the wolf will lay down with the sheep (Isa 11:6) and how the barren world will be made fruitful and even a place of judgment (Gen 19) into a place of life (Ezek 47:1–12). To those who wonder if God can work out peace on earth, we can remind them of the prince of peace (Isa 9:6 {Heb., v. 5}) who indeed renders judgment amongst real nations (Isa 9:6–7 [Heb., vv. 5–6]) and who will turn their weapons into instruments of productivity (Isa 2:4). To those in the church who agonize over lost loved ones or even looming uncertainties of the future, we can point them to the rapture which is designed to give us comfort (1 Thess 4:8). A grammatical hermeneutic brings out and reminds us of the thousands of reasons and details for why we have real, deep, and abiding hope.

Historical Hermeneutics and the Tie of Theology and History

The historical principle reminds us to interpret what is said in light of the background of what happened in and around the time of writing.⁷⁸ We are to consider the author, date, cultural practices, figures of speech, as well as circumstances of the author and his recipients. That helps to shape the overarching purpose of what was said as well as have clarity about certain details of the text. All of this is rooted in the conviction that the Scripture is tied with reality and history. It deals with acts that happen in space and time as well as describes actions that happen in space and time.

History as Grounds for Theology from Old to New

This last point is of particular interest in this discussion. The OT and NT writers both identify the immersion of scriptural truth in history. To them, history grounds theology and their hermeneutic in part revolves around that idea. Perhaps the most famous example is how Paul states that without the historical fact of the resurrection, our faith is meaningless (1 Cor 15:11–19). The theological truths and ideals associated with the resurrection have no reality unless it

⁷⁷ Marko Jauhiainen, "Recapitulation and Chronological Progression in John's Apocalypse: Towards a New Perspective," *New Testament Studies* 49, no. 4 (October 2003): 543–59. Jauhiainen rightly argues that at best if these are recapitulations, they progress literarily in sequence. However, problems occur with a model of recapitulation. See Chou, *I Saw the Lord*, 224, fn. 148.

⁷⁸ Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 57–58.

actually happened in time and space. Historical reality is what grounds the reality of our theology.

However, the resurrection is not the only place where such sentiment is found. In the OT, God describes His character of compassion based upon His forgiveness of Israel at Sinai (Num 14:18–19). He reminds Israel of His uniqueness based upon His work in the Exodus (Deut 4:32–37). He commands the Sabbath in light of His work at creation (Exod 20:9–10). God’s declaration of His glory and judgment relates to what took place at Sinai (Deut 5:22–33). The OT writers do focus upon theology worked out in history whether that be the law in Israel’s judgment (2 Kgs 17:1–41), the covenant promises that bless the nation (1 Kgs 4–5), or even the royal honor given to a king who obeys God (1 Kgs 10:1–29). The whole notion of “fulfillment” deals with how history actualizes theology. The OT makes a connection with history and theology. One cannot be separated from the other.

The NT does the same. Paul does this not only with the resurrection in 1 Cor 15 but also in Rom 5. Paul claims Christ’s death demonstrates God’s love (Rom 5:8) and also grants forgiveness (Rom 5:10–21). If Christ never died, do Christians have forgiveness and was God’s love demonstrated? The same apostle shows God’s judgment against those in the wilderness as a lesson for the Corinthians (1 Cor 10:1–5). If that never happened, how can one be assured that God’s judgment is real? For Paul, history fleshes out and actualizes theology. Peter has the same mentality as well. His proof that God will judge the world eschatologically is based upon a previous act: the Flood (2 Pet 3:5). However, if the Flood never took place, then his entire argument falls apart for if one never happened, then why would the other occur? James points to Job and what he learned at the end of his trial as an example to believers to hope (James 5:11). However, if Job never existed, how can one be confident that such an example exists or is even possible? Jesus, Peter, and Jude also speak of events such as Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt 10:15; 2 Pet 2:6; Jude 7) as well as individuals like Balaam (2 Pet 2:15; Jude 11) as warnings against false teachers. Again, if those people or moments never existed, such warnings are empty. In addition, our Lord even speaks of Adam and his wife (Matt 19:1–6) in order to discuss marriage. The reality of Genesis grounds the reality and authority of the institution of marriage.⁷⁹ In all of these examples, if one takes away the history, one takes away the theology for the rhetoric predicates the substance, validity, and veracity of the theology upon what God did and established in time and space.

From OT to NT, Paul’s logic of the resurrection is the biblical writers’ logic about history. Even this brief list shows that God’s love, wrath, salvation, grace, forgiveness, and uniqueness are not just ethereal ideas. The Bible does not merely comment on abstract theological principles but rather their exhibition in time-space reality. They share a symbiotic relationship. History grounds the reality and demonstration of theology but theology gives the purpose behind the historical event. Accordingly, to the biblical writers, theology is not just what is but what happens. History grounds theology and theology is exhibited for God’s glory in history.

The tight connection between history and theology stems from and is accompanied by the biblical writers’ commitment to an overarching reality: God’s plan is one tied with history. One can observe this in how biblical writers continue the storyline established by their predecessors.

⁷⁹ Jo Suzuki, “‘He Made Them Male and Female’: The Image of God, Essentialism, and the Evangelical Gender Debate,” in *What Happened in the Garden: The Reality and Ramifications of the Creation and Fall of Man*, ed. Abner Chou (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016), 247–72.

Moses recounts the history of Israel in his covenant discourse (Deut 1–4) and Joshua reiterates it (Josh 24:1–11) and continues that history to continue to the covenant. Psalms (78, 104–6) and historical books (1 Kgs 8; 2 Kgs 17, 25; Neh 9) also speak of Israel’s history and narrate it all the way through David’s reign, to the exile, and even the return back from Babylon (Ezra; Neh). Even the prophets recount Israel’s history in order to show what God is doing and what He is about to do (Ezek 16:1–63). God’s plan is never divorced from time-space history but rather shapes and determines it to actualize the promises and judgments of God’s plan and covenant (Gen 49; Deut 27–28; 32). Even at the end of Israel’s history in the OT, Nehemiah explains to Israel where they stand in God’s agenda. He does so by narrating God’s plan from creation all the way to the present moment (Neh 9). That final recounting highlights a mentality the prophets all had: God’s agenda is interwoven with the history of this world (cf. Neh 9:6–7). That is precisely why He establishes real events in this world to flesh out theology. It proves His sovereignty over this creation.⁸⁰

The tie with God’s plan and history continues to the NT. This is apparent in the gospels which continue the OT storyline (Matt 1; cf. Gen 5:1). They retrace that the realities about who Jesus is and what He accomplishes are not based upon myth or story but rather based upon true history. His life actualizes promises and theology. Acts does so as well as it provides the church the grounds for its purpose and mission precisely because this is who we are; it is our history. Again, the reality of history becomes the grounds for our entire theology and purpose. The epistles, although not of narrative genre, still connect with a storyline as Paul narrates what happens before the foundation of the world to this moment in Ephesians (Eph 1:3–14) or shows how God’s activity intervenes at the present time in the midst of a world enslaved to sin (Eph 2:1–10). James highlights the situation of the Diaspora for his Jewish audience and understands the theological implications and realities of suffering that come from that (Jas 1:1–2). Peter likewise understands how exile is an ongoing reality for all of God’s people (1 Pet 1:1–3). Like James, he grasps that historical truth has inextricable theological realities about trials (Jas 1:3–10; 1 Pet 1:3–8). This becomes clear with the author of Hebrews. The famous “hall of fame of faith” is a demonstration of not only the author’s awareness of history but also how he links faith repeatedly with the reality of these individuals (Heb 11:1–40). Again, the biblical writers write historically not only with a historical background but immerse their writings with history. That is because they believe world history is inextricably tied with God’s plan and theology. Theology and spiritual truth is not relegated to a spiritual realm but rather tied with and demonstrated through time and space.

We can prove this another way. So far the discussion has been positive proofs of how the biblical writers were immersed history and theology. We can comment on this negatively. Because the biblical writers had such convictions, they stood against myths and fables (1 Tim 1:4; 2 Tim 4:4; Tit 1:14; 2 Pet 1:16). A part of this is because such stories were not historically true and thus presented theology that was equally untrue.⁸¹ This again reinforces the linkage between history and theology in the biblical authors’ perspective.

⁸⁰ Paul R. House, “Examining the Narratives of Old Testament Narrative: An Exploration in Biblical Theology,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 67 (2005): 229–45.

⁸¹ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 72; Thomas Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn: Holman Reference, 1992), 67.

Hence, the biblical writers have demonstrated a great concern for history. They demonstrate a commitment to basing their arguments upon history, a commitment to recounting history, and a commitment to the veracity of history. This is because as they so often express, history is tied with theology. The reality of history grounds the reality of theology.

Nevertheless, some scholars argue that theology and history are not so closely tied. There are times when the biblical writers stressed the theological reality of a statement and chose not to uphold the history behind it. One of the most major arguments is from Gal 4. There, Paul speaks of the allegory of Abraham, Hagar, Sarah, and Isaac. Perhaps that can demonstrate that Paul somewhat deconstructs the historicity of events for the sake of showing theology.⁸² He is more concerned about the spiritual realm rather than the earthly realm of history.

However, commentators note that this is not the case. Paul never downplays the existence of these individuals or their events.⁸³ Quite the opposite, throughout the discussion in Gal 4, he pays attention to the details of their interactions and sticks closely with the way the Greek translation of the historical record.⁸⁴ This accords with how in the immediate context Paul even pays attention to the chronological progression of Abraham to Moses specifying how the law came four hundred thirty years afterwards (Gal 4:17). Throughout the discussion in Galatians, Paul cares about history and his discussion in Gal 4 does not seem to bear out any different tone.

This would all be reasonable if it were not for the term allegory. However, commentators note that allegory in Paul's day should not be read as the term allegory later came to mean. Although later on it denoted using stories purely for their philosophical or spiritual ideals and to be rid of it historically, at the time of Paul this was not the case.⁸⁵ As opposed to typology which compares two similar items (e.g., Israel's temptation with church's temptation in 1 Cor 10:1–8), allegory compares two items of different categories like history and theology.⁸⁶ As Longenecker and Hanson rightly observe, Paul believes history is meaningful and full of (theological) meaning.⁸⁷ With that, Paul does not believe history and theology split but rather they are interwoven together. This does not undermine the notion of theology grounded in history but supports it.

Furthermore, Paul's analysis of Genesis abides by both the original intent of Moses as well as subsequent prophets. In the context of the Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah episode, Moses discusses Abraham's faith (Gen 15:6) and the lack thereof in his actions concerning Hagar. God's promise does not go through Ishmael but through Isaac (Gen 21:12–14). Abraham must abide in God's promise (Gen 21:12). Similarly, Isaiah exhorts Israel to remember the example of Abraham and Sarah and how God intervened for them (Isa 51:2). He would do so similarly through His Servant in the new covenant. Like Sarah, eschatological Jerusalem would give birth to many children through the Servant's work (Isa 54:1).⁸⁸ Hence, Isaiah links Abraham's faith in the promise with Israel's faith in the Servant through the new covenant. Paul follows on this very chain of thought. He shows that the believers in the NT must abide by God's promise for God

⁸² R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), 127.

⁸³ R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1990), 209.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*; Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 324–27.

⁸⁶ Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 326–27.

⁸⁷ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 209.

⁸⁸ Moises Silva, "Galatians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 807–9.

always worked through promise from Abraham onward to Servant and the new covenant. God's work in Genesis sets an important historical and theological precedent about promise versus attempting to achieve blessing one's own way (the way of the flesh).

With that, Gal 4 turns into an argument that maximizes history to prove theology. That underscores the hermeneutical paradigm of the biblical writers. They cared about history and its truthfulness for that had direct bearing upon the veracity of their own theological message. This is because history and theology are tied together.

Demand for Premillennialism

The biblical writers had a certain hermeneutical logic when reading and writing Scripture. The immersion of God's plan in history and the inextricable link between history and theology are significant for premillennialism in several ways. First, God's plan is linked with time space history and because eschatology is part of that plan, it too describes events in our "future history." In certain eschatological schema, the kingdom and eschatology are relegated more to a spiritual state, something hidden and apart from the earthly realities. Those who hold such eschatologies would teach that certain details of prophetic texts are really speaking of spiritual and supernatural realities, not found in this creation and that we are being too "literal" with the text to say otherwise.⁸⁹ We have already discussed a hermeneutic that does not alter authorial intent (literal) and that pays attention to the details (grammatical). Those address this line of thinking.

However, a historical hermeneutic equally speaks to these issues. Fundamentally, it reminds us that God's agenda from the beginning was concerned with this world and its history. For this reason, OT prophesies are tied with historical events of God's plan. For instance, Daniel traces the major progression of God's plan in history. This is not an abstract portray but one tied to real nations (e.g., Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome) in real time and in real order. Eschatological events such as the tribulation (Dan 7:21; 11:40–12:3; cf. Jer 30:7) and the Messiah's coming (Dan 9:26; 12:1–3; cf. Zech 14:1–3) are situated in that historical progression. Even more, Daniel parallels that eschatological era with a prior historical one (Greece) further anchoring that indeed these moments are in time and space. In addition, within this historical progression, the Messiah's coming precedes the moment where His kingdom fills the earth (Dan 2:35). The way Daniel immerses eschatology in history exhibits that it is not merely spiritual (contra amillennialism) but rather it is in history and with a historical progression (that is premillennial and not post).

Daniel is not the only one who has this historical logic to eschatology. Joel also ties eschatological prophesies with history. Joel speaks of a locust plague that happened in Israel's history as a warning and basis for Day of the Lord (Joel 1:1–2:11) as well as for how God would restore what Israel lost in that plague (Joel 2:25–3:21 [Heb., 2:25–4:21]). Isaiah also speaks of God's plan from past to future in historical terms. Israel's present king is evil but one will be born who is the Prince of Peace (Isa 7:1–9:6 [Heb., v. 5]). He will one day have total dominion over the world in justice and righteousness (Isa 11:1–10). Just as Israel's situation and the birth of the Prince of Peace were historical, so the kingdom is also equally in time and space. No indication of a shift has occurred but rather all of these events are linked precisely as events that God will do in this world. Similarly, Zechariah deals with prophesies concerning the

⁸⁹ Riddlebarger, *Case for Amillennialism*, 12, 54–58.

intertestamental period (Zech 9:1–5) and then Christ’s first advent (Zech 9:6). Zechariah speaks of how the death of the good Shepherd leads to a false Shepherd, presumably the anti-Christ (Zech 11:16–17) and subsequently the true Shepherd’s advent, the forgiveness of sins for Israel (12:10–13:3), and a kingdom where He rules (14:1–21). Again, Zechariah immerse eschatology in world history which shows it is not merely spiritual in nature and its chronology matters. One could point to further examples (Ezek 36–48; Amos 9:1–13; Mic 3–4; Matt 24–25). All of this indicates how the logic of historical hermeneutic connects with eschatology. The biblical writers immerse eschatology in history and that leads to premillennial interpretation.

Second, the logic of “history grounds theology” reminds us we cannot make the bifurcation between what is spiritual and history. Certain eschatological systems, like amillennialism, tend to emphasize the theological significance of certain prophesies to the negation of their time space reality.⁹⁰ To them, eschatological passages symbolize spiritual realities brought about by Christ’s death and resurrection.⁹¹ However, that is not how the biblical writers thought. To be sure, they believed *theology* is actualized through history; nevertheless, it is actualized *through history*. As we have seen, that is how the biblical writers depicted events. They did not minimize their veracity but upheld it because the reality of history exhibited the reality of theology. Both history and theology must be true. Consequently, the theology of eschatology is grounded upon eschatological events that happen as the Bible portrays them. Without the latter, the former loses its validity and substance. God’s justice against the wicked and for His people is real because He will do so (cf. Rev 19:1–6).

Third, the first two points not only show why a consistent hermeneutical logic leads to premillennial interpretation but also why that matters. To be sure, eschatology is tied with the historical storyline and establishes important theology relative to it. As such, premillennialism provides a real and satisfying resolution to the issues of redemptive history. From the very beginning, God’s agenda is for this creation and history (Gen 1:1). For this reason, much of prophesy, using language of creation (Dan 7; Rev 8–9) as well as God’s righteousness and honor (Ps 96; 98; Rev 7:1–17; 19:1–6), deals with God’s vindication in this world. It proves that God is the true and only king. Reverting to a purely “spiritual” interpretation of these events cannot satisfy the agenda and issues of the storyline of Scripture for it fails to deal with how God has victory in this world (as opposed to only in the spiritual realm).

However, premillennialism actually satisfies this storyline. As stated, the question is whether God does make all things right in this world. Can He overcome what occurred in Gen 3? The millennial kingdom becomes vital in light of this. As described by the prophets, this era is one where there is creational peace and rest and righteousness reigns (Isa 2; 11:1–10). However, John’s description in Revelation is particularly apt for the question. The millennial kingdom comes as part of God’s undoing of creation. The trumpet and bowl judgments particularly deal with very specific aspects of creation, ones that correspond to the days of creation in Gen 1. In fact, the undoing of Babylon (Rev 17–18) may even correspond with the Babel in Gen 11. This is also why God describes Satan relative to his role in the garden (Rev 12:9; cf. 20:7). God in His judgment and power moves history forward by reverting creation back to the situation of Gen 2–3. The millennial kingdom proves that God can restore the world to rights. However, will it be just like Eden in the sense that it can fall again? For this reason, Satan is released at the millennial kingdom and “deceives” the nations (Rev 20:7; see Gen 3:13). But Satan does not

⁹⁰ Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 1114–15.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1115; Riddlebarger, *Case for Amillennialism*, 39–55.

have success this time for the true Adam, Christ is the king and vanquishes this adversary. God's real kingdom in the world and the details of that resolves the storyline.

Fourth, historical hermeneutics not only concerns the connection of history and theology but also the need thereby for historical background. In arguments concerning the rapture, some appeal to Matthew 24 to argue that Christians will go through the tribulation for Jesus speaks of how people should flee to the mountains at that time (Matt 24:16) as well as how God will darken the sun for the sake of the elect (Matt 24:22). However, historically, Jesus was not speaking to the church but rather to His disciples about Israel (Matt 24:1; cf. v. 16). This is precisely why He speaks of Jerusalem (Matt 24:15), the Sabbath (Matt 24:20), and various OT passages concerning Israel (Matt 24:15; cf. Dan 9:27). The background of this passage is distinctively about Israel. That does not mean the church cannot learn truths from this passage or that it has certain types of applications to us. Nevertheless, we learn from what Christ talks about but not by what Christ says directly to us. The historical background reminds us that this passage does not necessarily imply the church will go through the tribulation period.

Finally, awareness of history also demands the need for awareness of chronology and sensitivity to the progress of revelation. This also helps to show the newness of the rapture and thereby its pre-tribulational nature. Both 1 Cor 15:51 And 1 Thess 4:15 deal with the rapture as a mystery and something brought about by new revelation.⁹² This is significant. Throughout the OT (Dan 7:25; 11:35–12:3) and even in the Olivette Discourse (Matt 24), the pattern is that Israel will go through the tribulation and be rescued in the end when the Messiah comes. Resurrection will occur at that time as well (cf. Dan 12:1–3). However, the doctrine of the rapture is something new and different from this. If the rapture was post-tribulational, this would be nothing distinct from what has been said. Rather, the rapture's mystery indicates that the rapture and resurrection of the church is not the same as the paradigm up to this point. A new event in the eschatological timeline is introduced. In fact, this actually satisfies the storyline as well. If the church was present in the tribulational period as the main instrument of God for the world, then where would Israel fit in? How would the prophecies about Israel be fulfilled? Instead, the church is removed so that God will fulfill what He promised to that nation. A sensitivity to the historical reality of progressive revelation help to diffuse faulty reasoning against a pre-tribulational rapture and point out evidence for it.

Historical hermeneutics reminds us of some key rationales the Bible has in interpretation. This reminds us of how eschatology is immersed in history, how spiritual ideals are grounded in history, and how careful understanding of history and chronology supports a pre-tribulational rapture. Historical hermeneutics then reminds us of the importance of premillennialism to show that God's glory is not baseless or abstract but grounded in what He will do in this earth to indisputably demonstrate His majesty. Premillennialism provides substantive hope in a world gone wrong for it reminds all that this is our Father's world and He will make all things truly right.

⁹² F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 99; Wanamaker, *Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 170. Wanamaker although pivoting towards the view that this is some sort of midrash, acknowledges the difficult of viewing "word of the Lord" as recounting Christ's own words. No exact parallel exists even if certain details are somewhat reminiscent of the Olivette discourse. Furthermore, the argument that this is Jesus' words is hampered by the OT allusion here to prophetic discourse. "Word of the Lord" used for the gospel usually occurs as the subject or object of the sentence as opposed to a locative statement found here.

Conclusion

Eschatology is a complex subject. Ultimately, it demands hermeneutical care so that we say exactly what God desires us to say about this issue. With that, in an age that speaks of a hermeneutic of love, humility, suspicion, or liberation, a literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic is one of surrender. Our goal is to believe what we believe not because that is what we want the text to say but rather because by the rules God has established, the text says no other and we cannot either. God has established these rules. We did not make them up. He has shown a consistent hermeneutic in the way the biblical authors read and thereby wrote Scripture. This is thereby how Scripture operates and how we must read it if we are to surrender to Him. We must read Scripture committed to upholding an authorial intent that does not change, factoring in grammatical details of the text, and tying theology with history and being grounded in historical background. Because of the consistency of the biblical writers, these rules apply to all scriptural texts, including eschatological ones. We must read them with hermeneutical care.

However, hermeneutical care reminds us of the beauty of eschatology. The biblical writers do not merely intend to reveal the future for the sake of novelty. Rather, eschatology gives us comfort (1 Thess 4:18; 1 Cor 15:58) and vindicates the glory of God (Ps 96:13). A literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic reminds us that every detail matters in showing the wonder of what will take place and that God's glory is real and provides substantive hope to a world gone wrong. Ultimately, it reminds us that eschatology interweaves all of God's revelation and thus is immensely complex and takes hard work. Hermeneutical care then reminds us that hermeneutics not only defends premillennialism but demands us to discover its depths. May we do the hard work of biblical interpretation in order all the more to declare a real, compounding, intricate, and powerful hope to people who desperately need it.