



PART 1: “Literal ... or not?”

THE BOOK OF
REVELATION
A STORY OF THE LAST DAYS

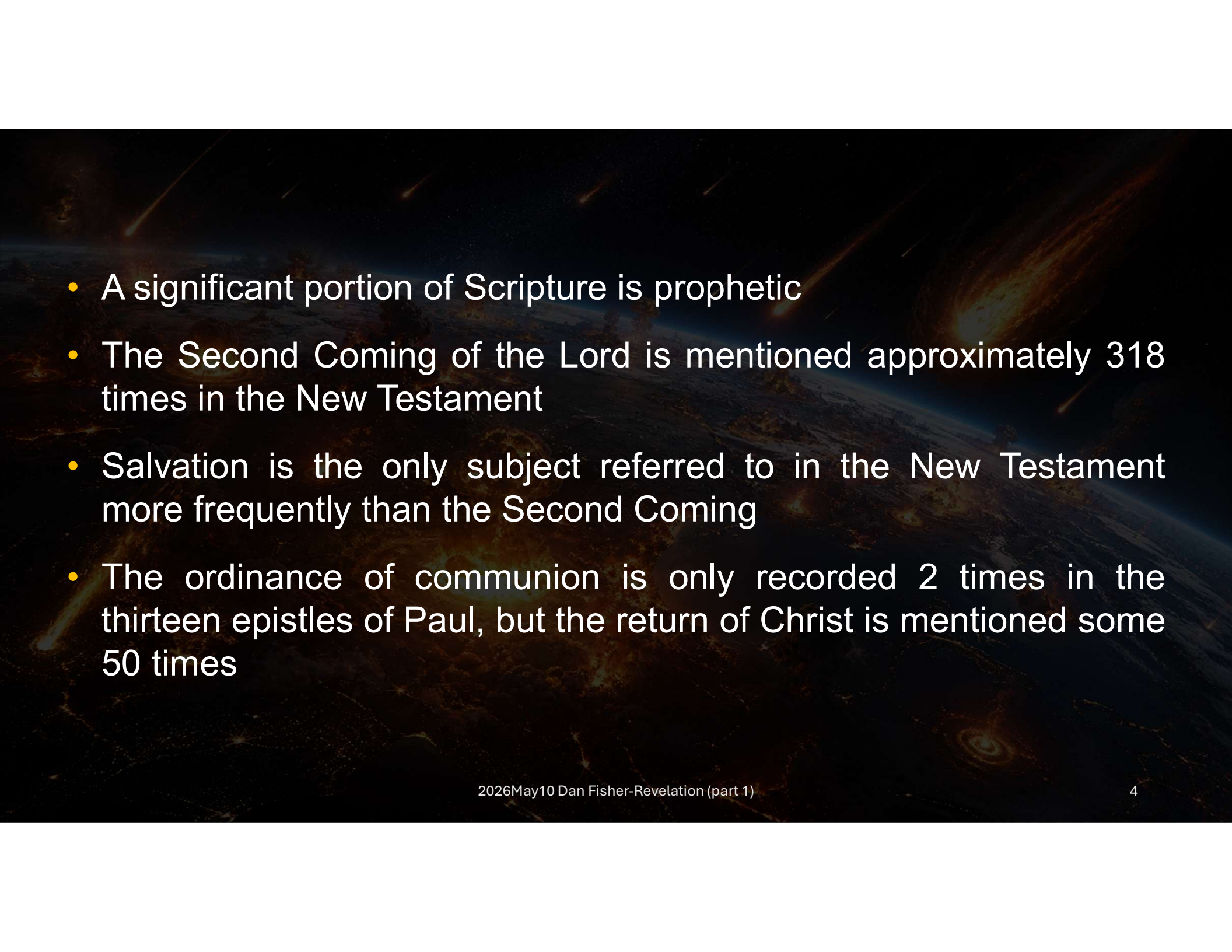
2026May10 Dan Fisher-Revelation (part 1)



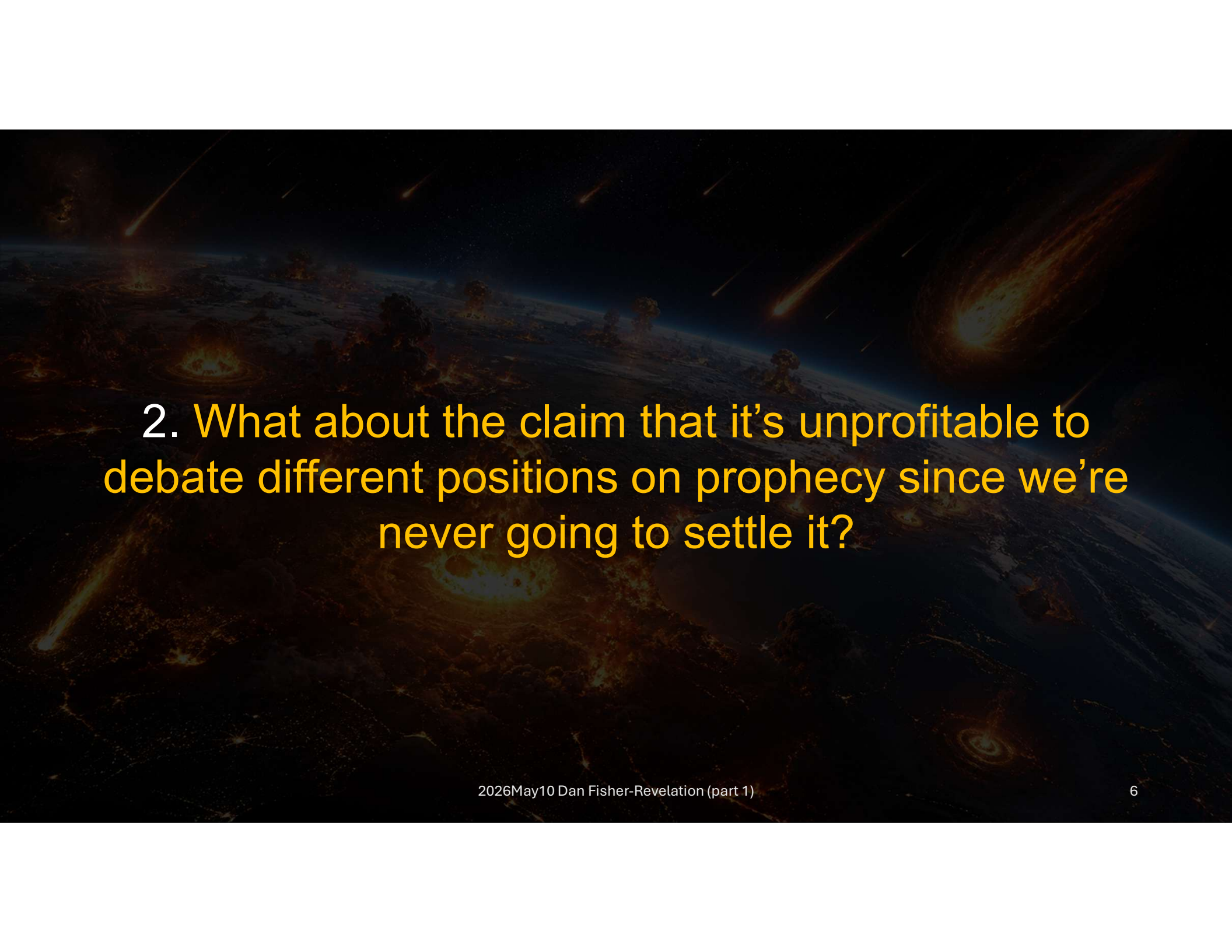
Prophecy is a major theme in the Book of Revelation



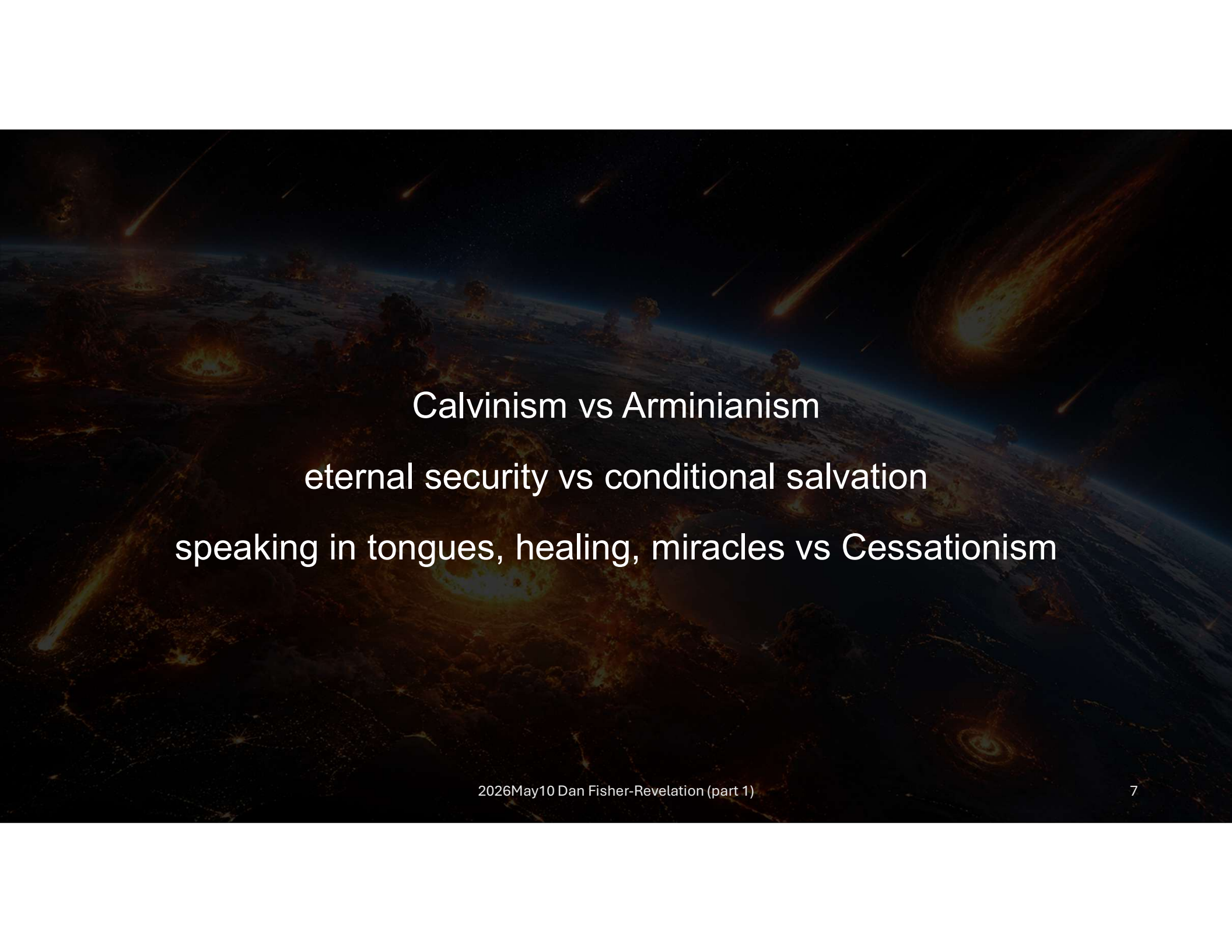
1. Why is it so Important to study Bible prophecy?

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- A significant portion of Scripture is prophetic
 - The Second Coming of the Lord is mentioned approximately 318 times in the New Testament
 - Salvation is the only subject referred to in the New Testament more frequently than the Second Coming
 - The ordinance of communion is only recorded 2 times in the thirteen epistles of Paul, but the return of Christ is mentioned some 50 times

- The Bible contains approx. 1,817 individual predictions concerning some 737 separate subjects found in 8,352 verses – these numerous predictions comprise 27% of the 31,124 verses in the whole Bible
- The Old Testament contains some 333 prophecies regarding the Messiah, most of which were fulfilled by the first coming of Jesus Christ
- Even the most liberal critics acknowledge that these prophecies were written at least 400 years before Christ
- The Bible contains over 2000 fulfilled prophecies, most with very specific details

A dramatic space scene with a large meteor streaking across the sky above a dark, rocky planet surface. The meteor is bright and fiery, leaving a long, glowing trail. The planet's surface is dark and textured, with some lighter patches. The sky is dark with several other smaller meteor streaks visible in the distance.


2. What about the claim that it's unprofitable to debate different positions on prophecy since we're never going to settle it?



Calvinism vs Arminianism
eternal security vs conditional salvation
speaking in tongues, healing, miracles vs Cessationism



3. The benefits to studying Bible prophecy

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- Studying prophecy validates Scripture
 - Studying prophecy promotes evangelism
 - Studying prophecy tends to purify the life of the believer
 - Studying prophecy reveals God's sovereignty

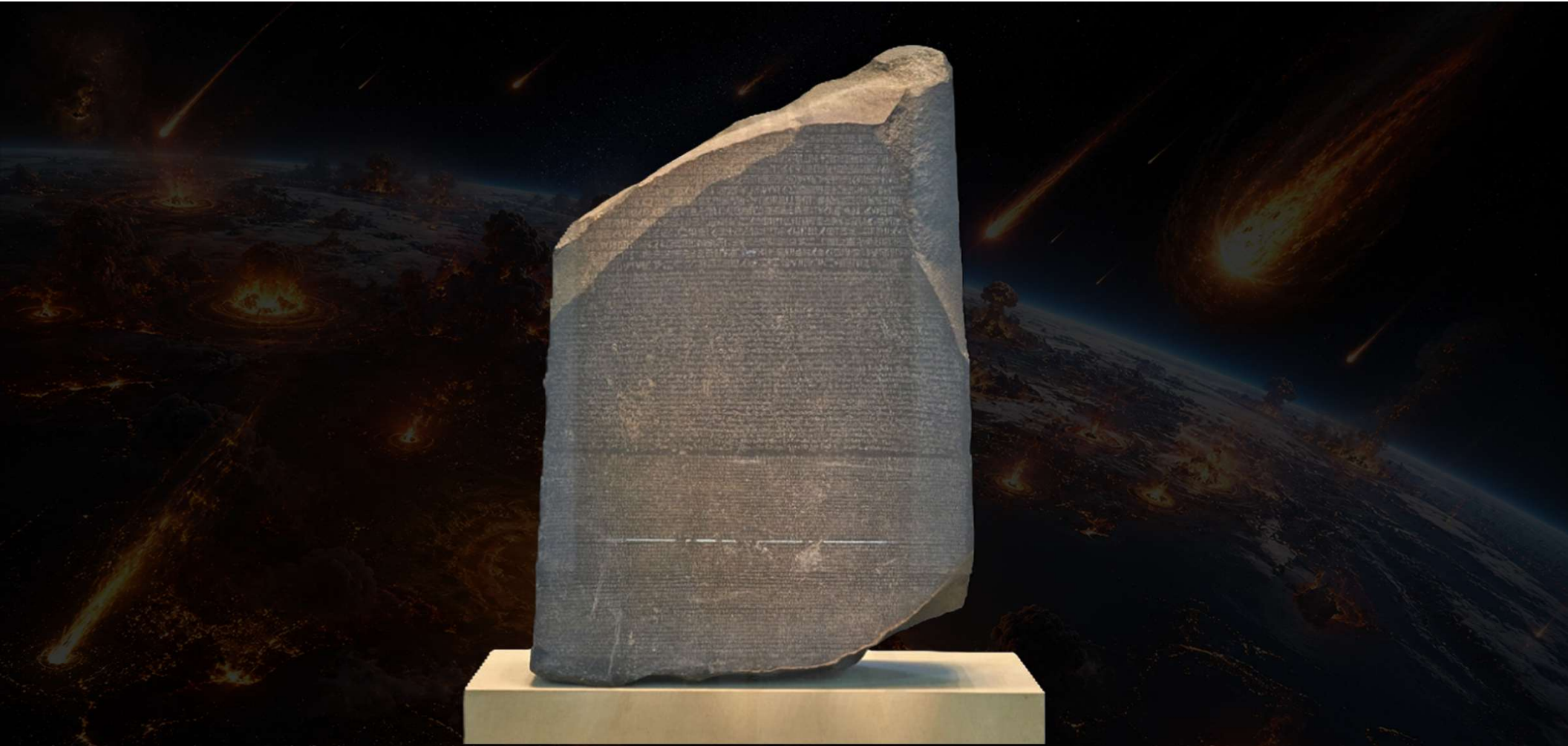
A dramatic, apocalyptic scene of Earth from space. The planet's surface is dark and textured, with several large, glowing, circular impact craters or fire patterns. The sky is filled with numerous streaks of light, representing a meteor shower, and a large, bright fireball is streaking across the upper right portion of the frame. The overall atmosphere is dark and ominous.

4. Is Revelation literal or symbolic?

A cosmic background image featuring a dark space filled with various galaxies, including spiral and elliptical ones, and several bright meteor streaks falling across the scene. The overall color palette is dark with highlights of blue, orange, and white from the celestial objects.

Revelation means exactly what it says, but as we study it, we must stay aware of ...


- Symbols – defined elsewhere in Scripture
- Metaphors – understood in a way that is consistent with the rest of Scripture



The Book of Daniel is the “Rosetta Stone” that helps to unlock Revelation

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5. The only way to make sense of Revelation (or the rest of the Bible) is to interpret it literally

What if I were to make the following predictions:

1. In 2029, Vladimir Putin will lead his Russian troops to destroy all but the island portion of New York City.
2. Then, other nations will join the Russians and fight against NYC.
3. NYC will be flattened like a bare rock and look like the top of a flat rock.
4. The debris from the buildings in New York City will be thrown into the water.
5. Fishermen will spread their nets over the heap that was once NYC.
6. NYC will be so destroyed it will never be rebuilt.

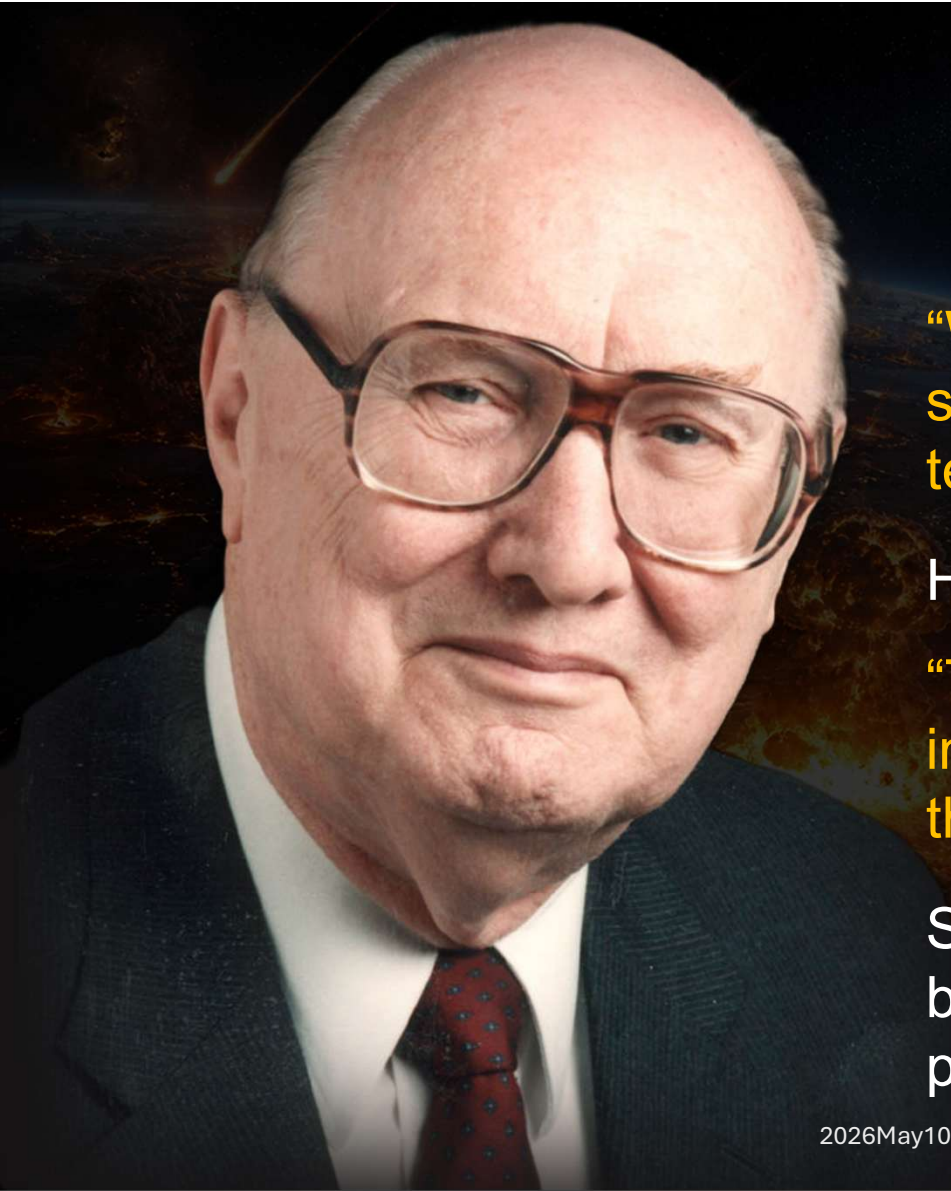
“For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, and with horsemen and a host of many soldiers. ...⁹ He will direct the shock of his battering rams against your walls, and with his axes he will break down your towers. ...³ I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. ...⁴ I will scrape her soil from her and make her a bare rock. ⁵ She shall be in the midst of the sea a place for the spreading of nets ...¹² They will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise. They will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses. Your stones and timber and soil they will cast into the midst of the waters. ...¹⁴ I will make you a bare rock. You shall be a place for the spreading of nets. You shall never be rebuilt, for I am the Lord; I have spoken, declares the Lord God.” **Ezk 26:3-5,7,9,12,14**

- Ezekiel gave the prophecy recorded in Ezk 26 when Tyre was a powerful city holding a stature much like that of New York City today.
- Three years after the Ezk prophecy, Nebuchadnezzar indeed laid siege to the city. The inhabitants all but abandoned Tyre and moved off-shore to a nearby island, where they fortified themselves and remained a powerful city for several hundred more years.
- Then came Alexander the Great, who eventually built a causeway to the island using debris from the old mainland city of Tyre!
- In the 12th century A.D., the final prophetic chapter was closed on the once great city of Tyre.



Historian Philip Myers, *General History for Colleges and High Schools*:

“[Tyre] never regained the place she had previously held in the world. The larger part of the site of the once great city is now bare as the top of a rock - a place where the fishermen that still frequent the spot spread their nets to dry.”



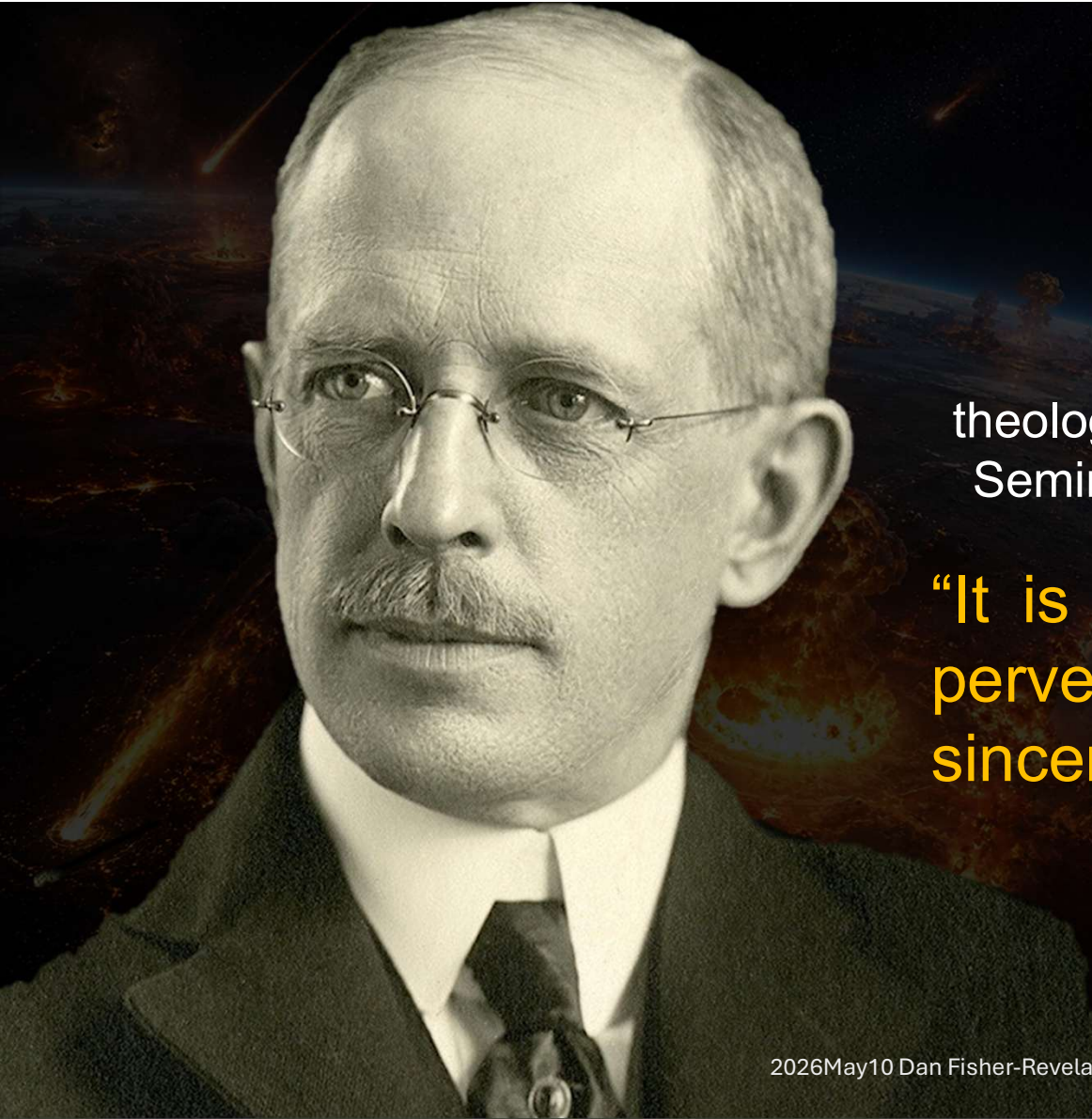
Dr. John Walvoord, theologian, pastor, & Pres. Dallas Theological Sem. was asked:

“What do you predict will be the most significant theological issues over the next ten years?”

His answer:

“The hermeneutical problem of not interpreting the Bible literally, especially the prophetic areas.”


Sadly, much of today’s church is deceived by the belief that one cannot interpret prophecy literally.



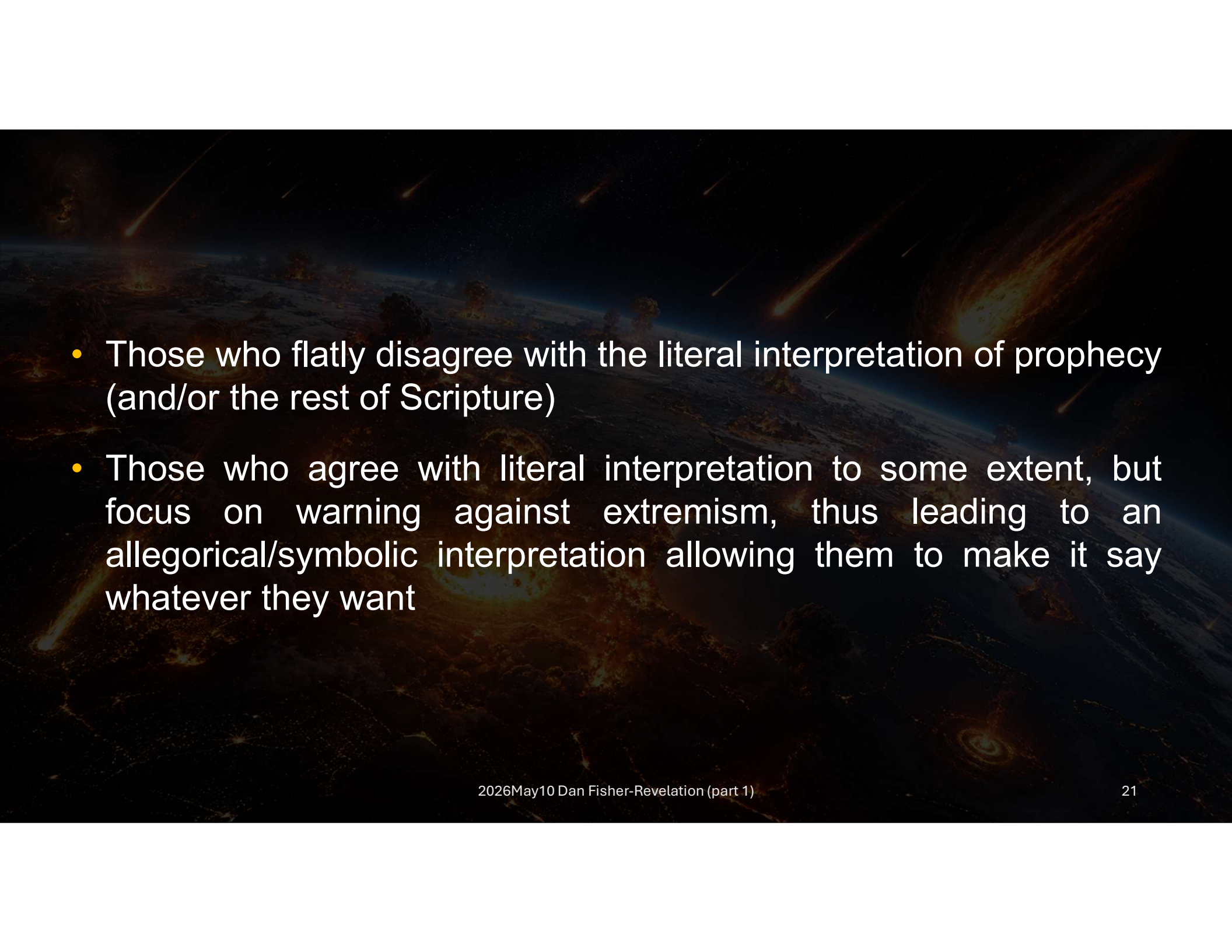
Lewis Chafer

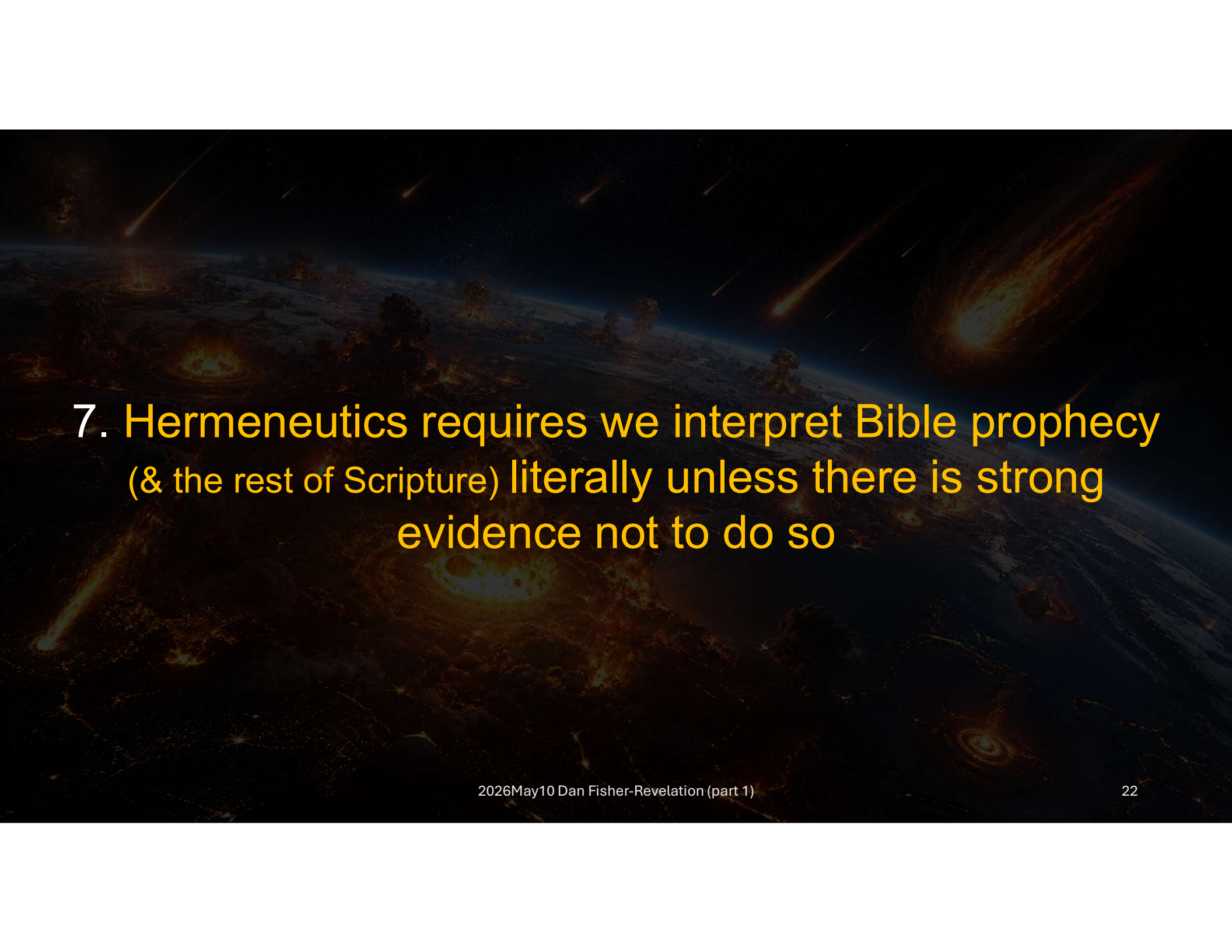
theologian, co-founder Dallas Theological Seminary, *Systematic Theology*, p. 267:

“It is but a short step from the perversion of truth, however sincere, to the denial of it.”



6. Those who criticize the literal approach to Bible prophecy can be divided into two groups

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- Those who flatly disagree with the literal interpretation of prophecy (and/or the rest of Scripture)
 - Those who agree with literal interpretation to some extent, but focus on warning against extremism, thus leading to an allegorical/symbolic interpretation allowing them to make it say whatever they want



7. Hermeneutics requires we interpret Bible prophecy (& the rest of Scripture) literally unless there is strong evidence not to do so

A dramatic space scene featuring a planet's horizon with a blue atmosphere. A large, bright comet streaks across the sky, leaving a long, glowing trail. The background is filled with a dark, swirling nebula and numerous stars.

The “literal principle” of hermeneutics:

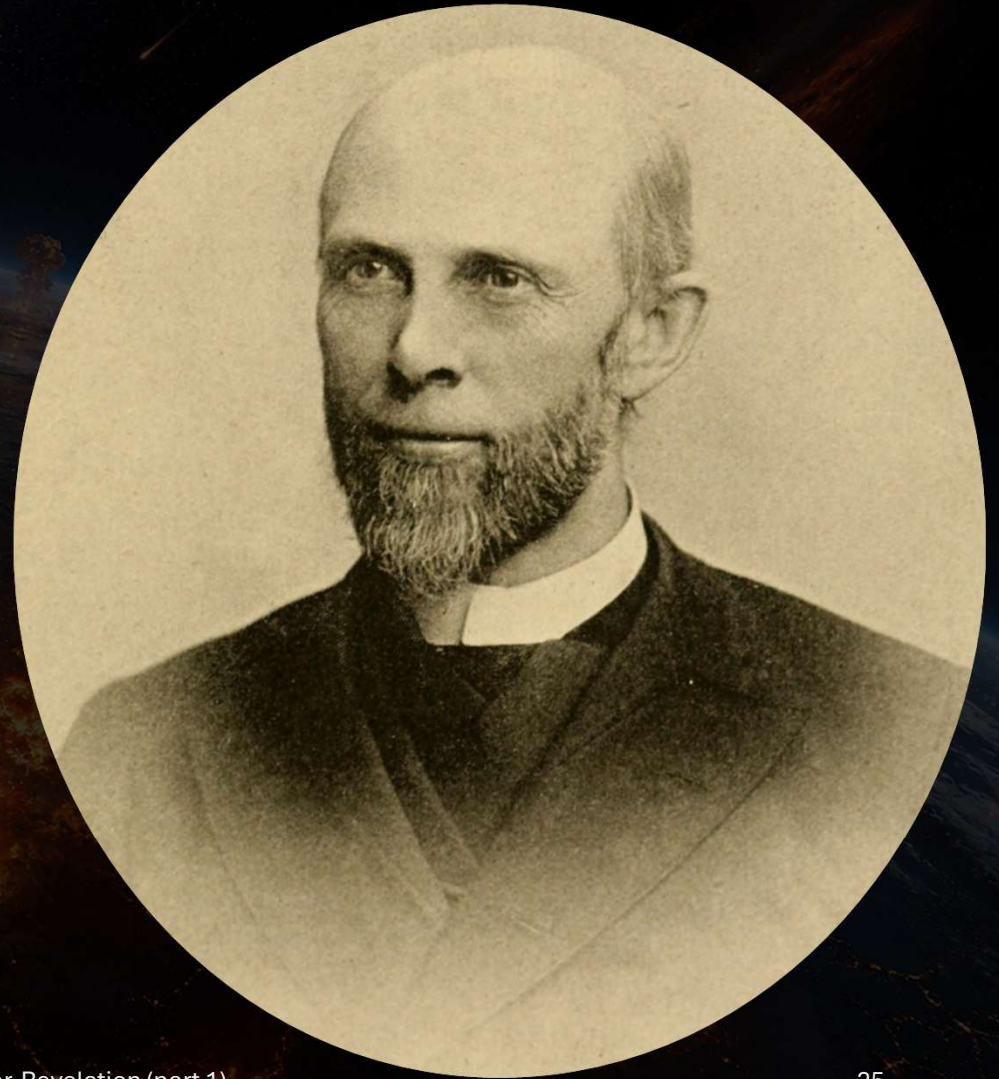
The Bible should always be interpreted literally unless the context would indicate a symbolic/allegorical approach



8. Without approaching Scripture as “literal” truth, we cannot make sense of much of it

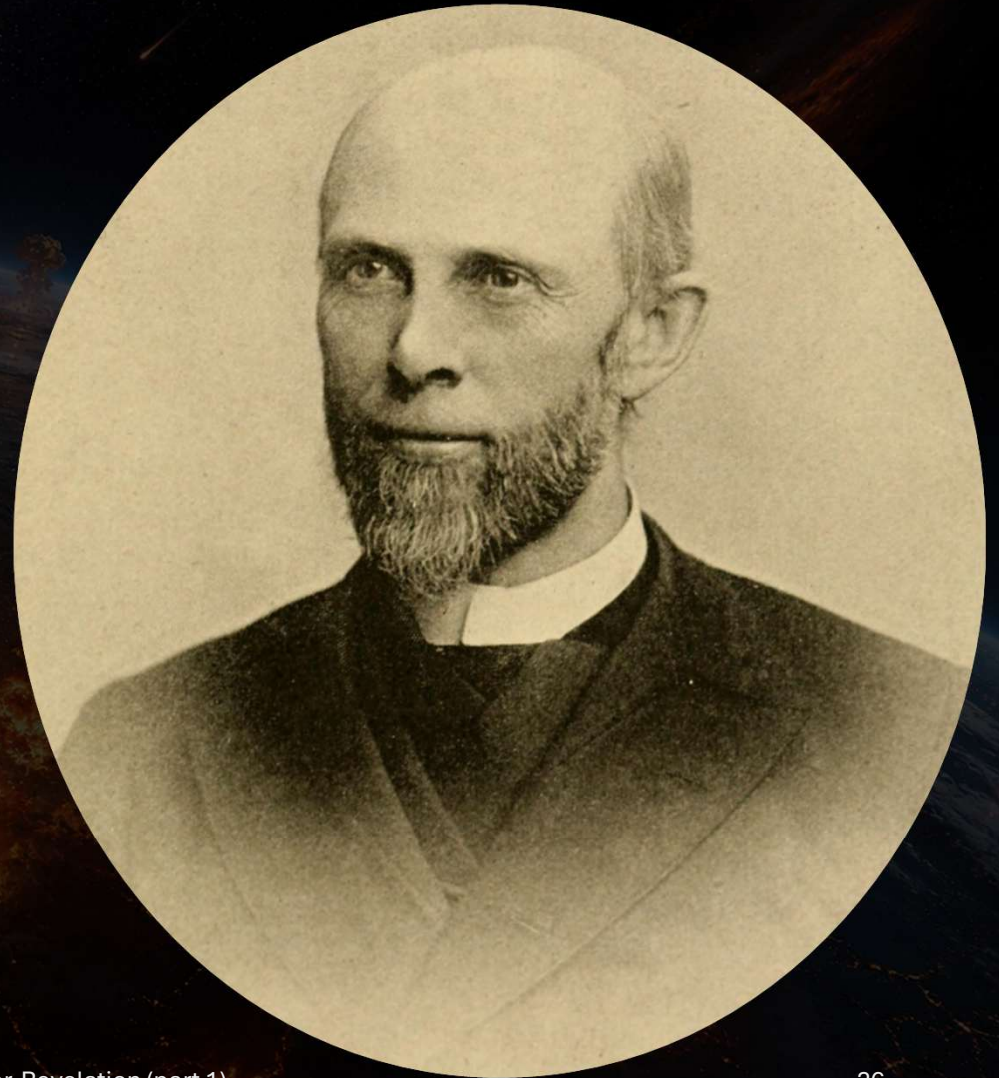
Milton S. Terry, 19th century theologian:

“We cannot believe that the sacred writers desired to be misunderstood. They did not write with a purpose to confuse and mislead their readers. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that the Scripture, given by divine inspiration, is of the nature of a puzzle designed to exercise the ingenuity of critics. It was given to make men wise unto salvation, and in great part it is so direct and simple in its teachings that a little child can understand its meaning.



It will be noticed at once that [the allegorical interpretation] is to disregard the common signification of words and give wing to all manner of fanciful speculation. It does not draw out the legitimate meaning of an author's language but foists into it whatever the whim or fancy of an interpreter may desire. As a system therefore, it puts itself beyond all well-defined principles and laws.”

Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic Books, 1883), 161.



“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” **Gen 3:15**

The crucifixion of Jesus – **Is 53:2-10**

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” **Zech 9:9**

“On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.” **Zech 14:4**

Prophecies about Egypt

“Thus says the Lord God: ‘I will destroy the idols and put an end to the images in Memphis; there shall no longer be a prince from the land of Egypt; so I will put fear in the land of Egypt.’” **Ezek 30:13**

- **Twenty-five hundred years have passed since this prophecy, and during this period, not one of its numerous ruling princes has been Egyptian!**
- **This would be similar to predicting that there would never again be an American elected President of the United States!**

Prophecies about Israel's scattering & regathering

“And the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. ⁶⁵ And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the Lord will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. ⁶⁶ Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. ⁶⁷ In the morning you shall say, ‘If only it were evening!’ and at evening you shall say, ‘If only it were morning!’ because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see.” **Deut 28:64-67**

“Then fear not, O Jacob my servant, declares the Lord, nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from far away, and your offspring from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease, and none shall make him afraid. ¹¹ For I am with you to save you, declares the Lord; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will discipline you in just measure,” **Jer 30:10-11**

Prophecies about Jesus

“All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; ⁸ ‘He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!’” **Ps 22:7-8**

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.” **Is 53:5**

“Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.”
Ps 41:9

“they have pierced my hands and feet - ¹⁷ I can count all my bones” **Ps 22:16**

“Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors;”
Is 53:12

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.” **Zech 12:10**

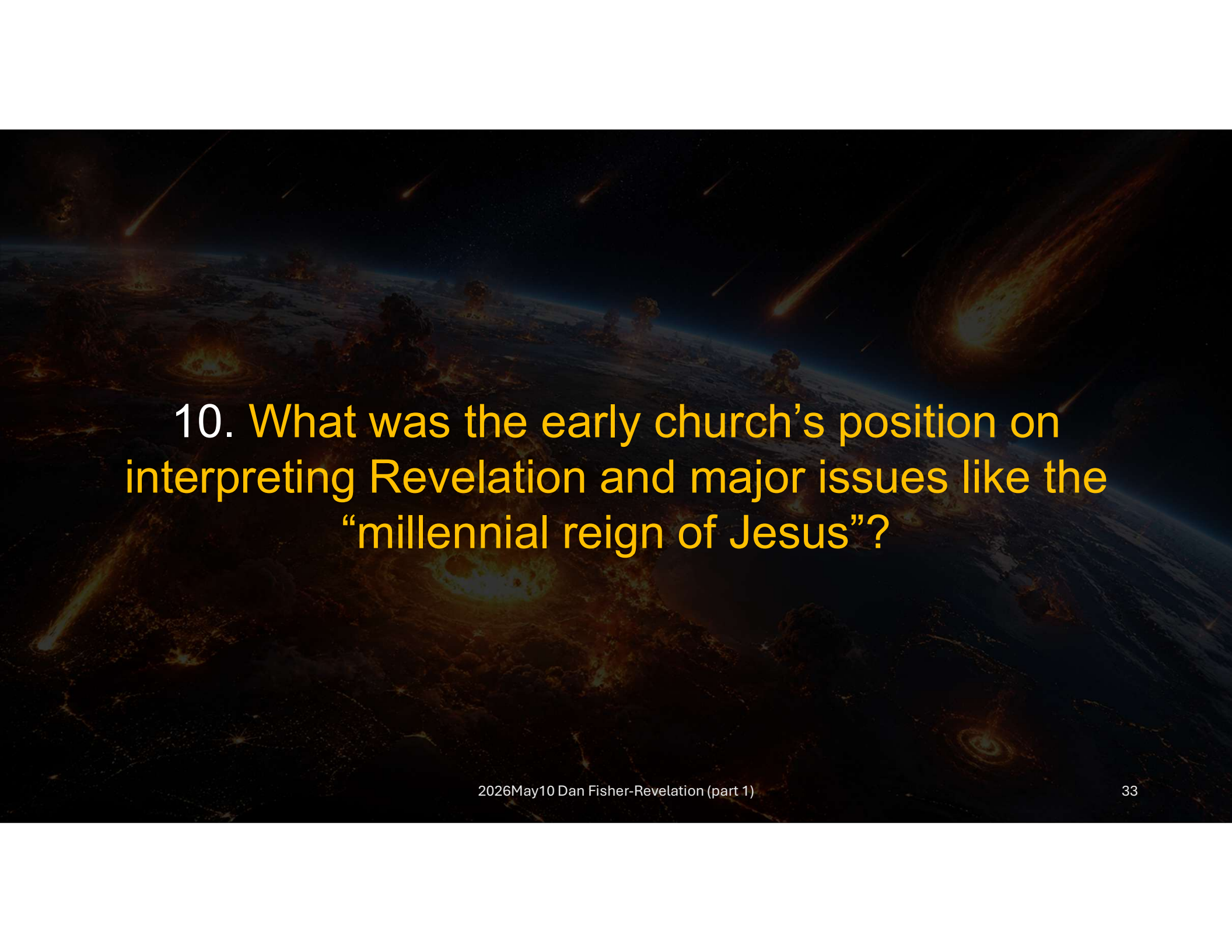


9. We must have the illumination of the Holy Spirit to understand all of Scripture – including prophecy


“we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” **1 Cor 2:12-14**

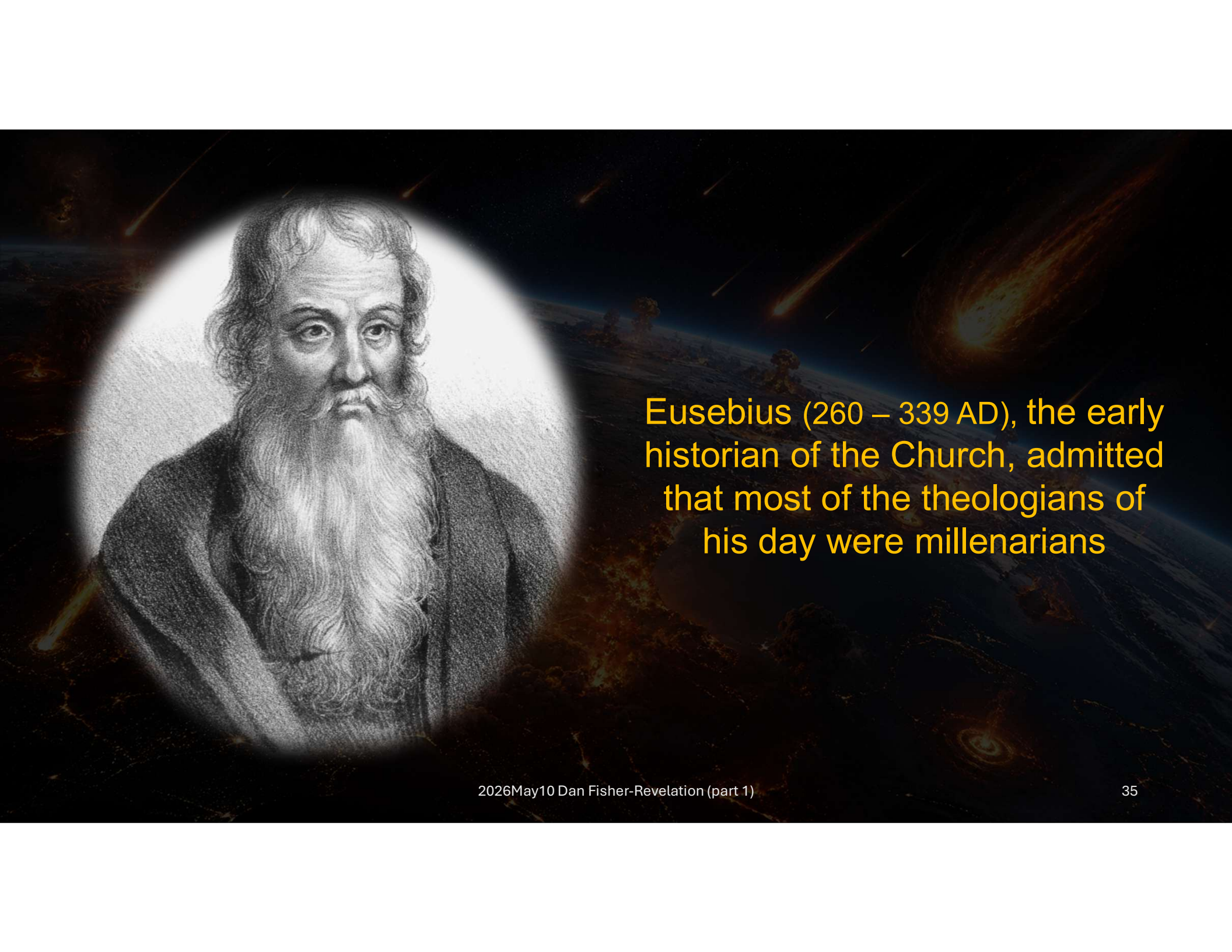
“And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,” **2 Pet 1:19**

“He said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.’” **Dan 12:9**



10. What was the early church's position on interpreting Revelation and major issues like the "millennial reign of Jesus"?

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- Mt 24
 - Acts 15:13-18
 - Rom 9-11 where Paul says that the promises to Israel have not been fulfilled and are not being fulfilled right now
 - 2 Thess 2

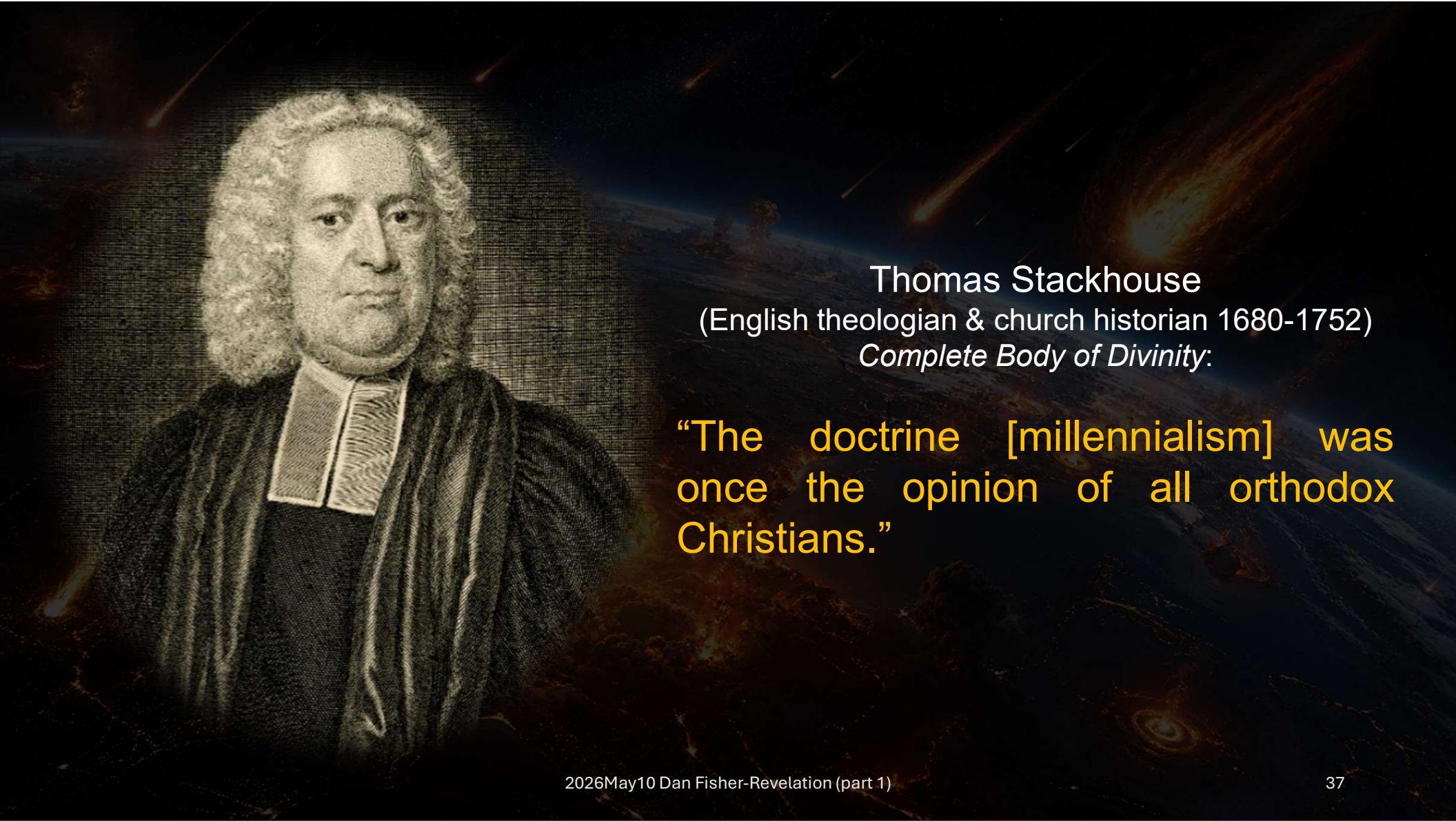


Eusebius (260 – 339 AD), the early historian of the Church, admitted that most of the theologians of his day were millenarians

An engraving of William Chillingworth, an English theologian. He is depicted from the chest up, wearing a dark, textured robe with a white collar. He has long, wavy hair and a prominent mustache. The background is dark and textured.

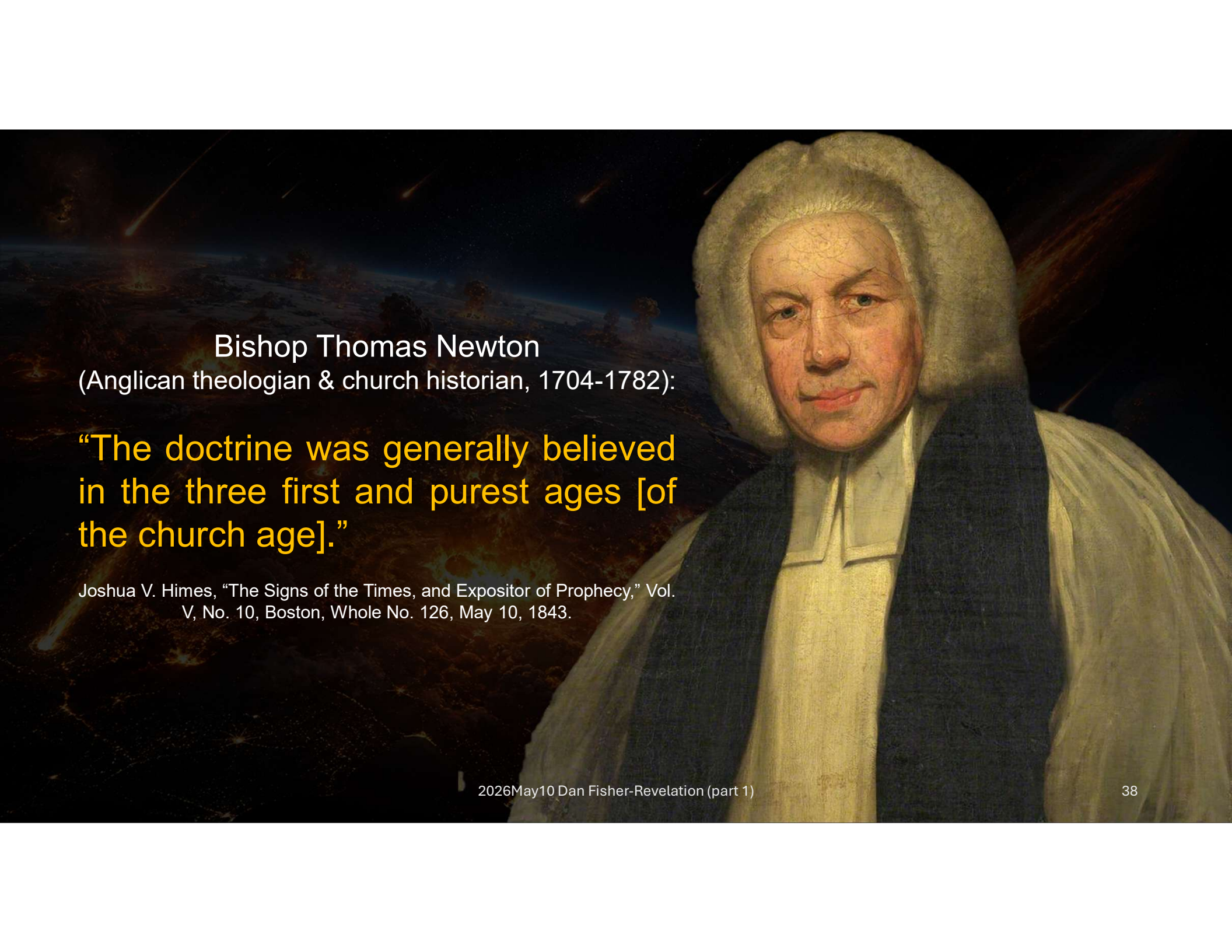
William Chillingworth
(English theologian outspoken opponent of
Catholicism 1602 – 1644):

“[T]he doctrine of the millenarians was believed and taught by the most eminent fathers of the age next after the apostles, and by none of that age opposed or condemned, therefore it was the universal doctrine of those times.”



Thomas Stackhouse
(English theologian & church historian 1680-1752)
Complete Body of Divinity:

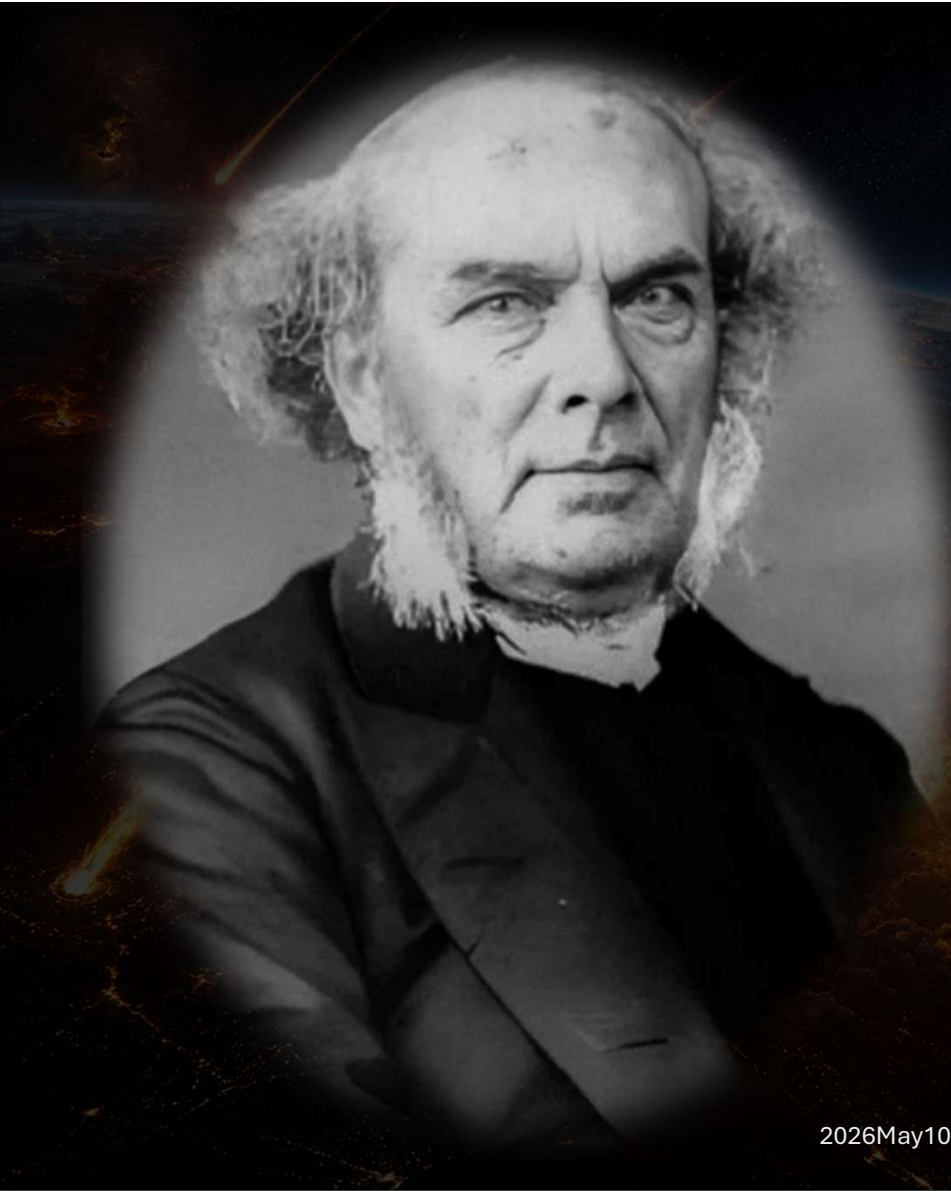
“The doctrine [millennialism] was once the opinion of all orthodox Christians.”



Bishop Thomas Newton
(Anglican theologian & church historian, 1704-1782):

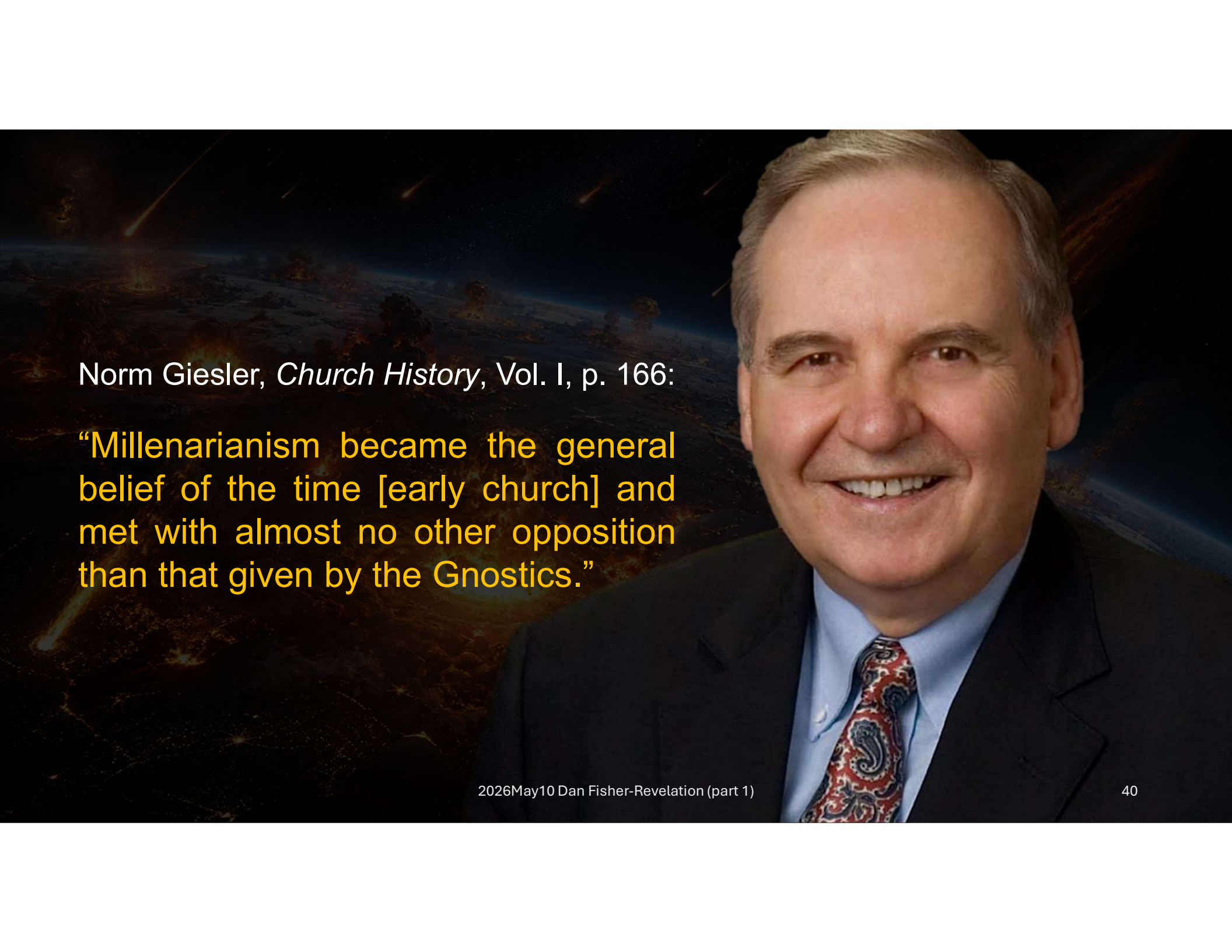
**“The doctrine was generally believed
in the three first and purest ages [of
the church age].”**

Joshua V. Himes, “The Signs of the Times, and Expositor of Prophecy,” Vol.
V, No. 10, Boston, Whole No. 126, May 10, 1843.



Dr. Horatius Bonar
(Scottish preacher/theologian, 1808-1889)
Prophetic Landmarks

“Millenarianism prevailed universally during the first three centuries. This is now an assured historical fact and presupposes that chiliasm was an article of the apostolic creed.”

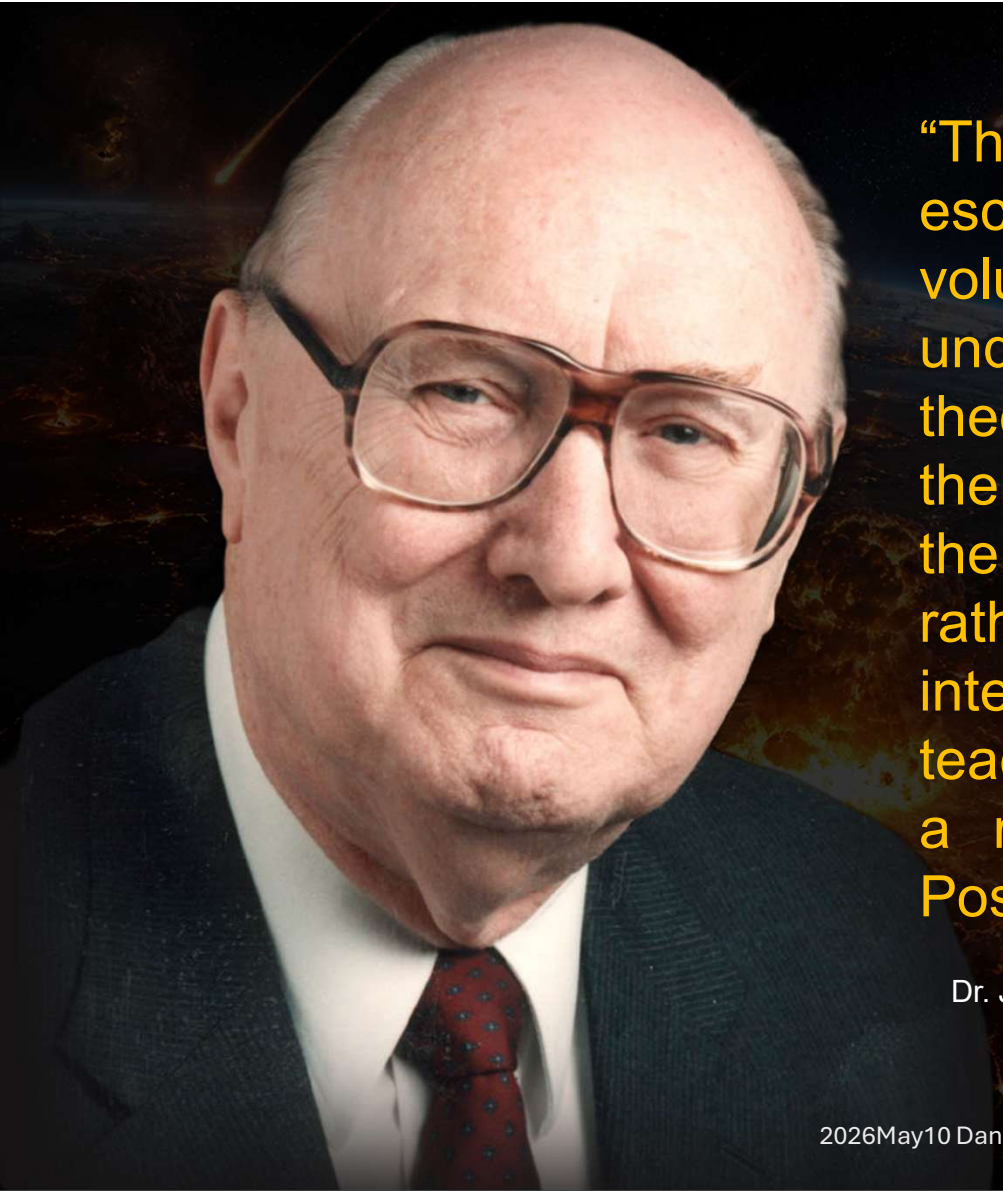


Norm Giesler, *Church History*, Vol. I, p. 166:

“Millenarianism became the general belief of the time [early church] and met with almost no other opposition than that given by the Gnostics.”

A dramatic space scene with a large meteor streaking across the sky and a view of Earth's horizon. The background is dark with several other smaller meteor streaks and a view of Earth's horizon. The text is overlaid in a bright yellow color.

11. As it turns out, a literal interpretation of Rev (ex: Millennial Reign) is critical to understanding all of Scripture




“Though millennial truth is essentially eschatological, it is integral to the entire volume of Scripture, and its proper understanding is an important essential to theology as a whole. Millennialism cannot therefore be brushed aside as a dispute on the interpretation of Revelation 20 but is rather the product of a system of Biblical interpretation established as the positive teaching of both Testaments. It constitutes a refutation of both Amillennialism and Postmillennialism.”

Dr. John Walvoord, “The Prophetic Context of the Millennium,” May 24, 2008
<https://walvoord.com/book/export/html/326>



12. When did the church begin to move away from a literal interpretation of Revelation (Scripture)?

A portrait of Dr. Karl August Auberlen, a German theologian, is shown on the right side of the slide. He is wearing glasses and a dark coat with a white shirt and cravat. The background of the entire slide is a dark, cosmic scene with a blue and orange nebula and several bright, streaking meteors or comets.

Dr. Karl August Auberlen (1824-1864)
German theologian:

“Chiliasm (millennialism) disappeared in proportion as Roman Papal Catholicism advanced.”

Dr. Karl August Auberlen, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 375