

# **SATAN EVICTED**

A Redemptive Tale of Planet Earth

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## **WORKING DRAFT**



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Requires additional content refinement, revising, and proofreading.

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# WORKING DRAFT

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Incomplete, fragmented, and requiring extensive revision

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**\*Sections under active development**

## INTRODUCTION

### PREFACE

Some thirty years ago, the Lord led me into a study of biblical prophecy. At that time the Internet was in its infancy and information was scarce relative to today's standards. Armed with a *New American Standard Bible*, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, *Cruden's Complete Concordance*, and Clarence Larkin's *Dispensational Truths*, I proceeded to seek an understanding of end time prophecy. The study was interesting and enlightening; however, the results were also disconcerting:

*How can so many learned scholars be so misguided?*

A plain reading of prophetic passages by this unlearned youth revealed that much of what we are taught in Sunday School and from the pulpit concerning the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is simply inaccurate... The problem was puzzling, but I felt no calling to address the issue.

Three decades later, I return to that study armed not only with an abundance of informational resources but also with much greater maturity and experience, both worldly and spiritually. Once again the study is both interesting and enlightening; however the results are even more distressing:

*How can so many learned scholars be so misguided about so many things?*

A plain reading of all biblical passages again reveals that much of what we are taught in Sunday School and from the pulpit concerning God's plan for mankind is simply inaccurate... The problem is puzzling; however, this time the Internet provides an avenue to publically express those concerns.

### THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW

The learned scholars have it wrong, at least many things wrong. Why? I'm not sure. Perhaps Daniel's instructions to go his way because the "words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end?" Perhaps Satan's work to misled and deceive has been more effective than we think? Perhaps mankind, a stiff-necked people, just wants to see what it wants to see? In any case, things will not be the way they are frequently described. Of worthy notation:

1. Today's current events are not predictive of the proximity of the end times. All the wars, famines, plaques, natural disasters, and wickedness are very, very, very minor compared to those of the end time. In WWII, some 68 million people died; during the latter days, over 3.5 billion will die.
2. The Book of Revelation has a clear, distinct chronology: the breaking of the seven seals. The 7th Seal leading to the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet leading to the bowls of wrath. Intermingled among this timeline are interludes that describe certain actors and events that define and clarify the primary narrative.

3. The Rapture of the Church will occur at the breaking of the Sixth Seal of the scroll described in Revelation 6 & 7. The Rapture will not be silent nor will the people left behind wonder where the saints went – they will see the Lord coming in the clouds and they will mourn their wickedness.
4. Although we are not destined to know the hour, day, or season of Christ's return for His Church, we will know well in advance that He is near, even at the door. Redeemed Christians, the ones who have studied their Bible, will not be forced to guess when the First Seal is broken, the signs will be unmistakable.
5. Christians will experience the Great Tribulation; they will be persecuted, imprisoned, and martyred, not from the Wrath of God but rather the unrestrained, satanic influenced wickedness of mankind. Take heart, however, for greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4).
6. Those left behind after the Rapture will NOT be afforded an opportunity to be "saved" or "born again." The Church will have left the planet in preparation for its marriage to the Lamb, Jesus Christ... there will be no second chance. The Church Age will have ended!
7. The Antichrist will be one of many. Certainly, the Antichrist will gain prominence and ultimately gain authority over all nations; however, perilous times with many false messiahs and false prophets will precede him. Don't expect turbulence from a single source... the sources of trouble will abound.
8. The breaking of the first four seals of the scroll described in Revelation 6 & 7 will occur well before the Antichrist makes his covenant with the "many," the beginning of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, the Time of Jacob's Trouble. The perilous times may ramp up slowly, but they will certainly be unmistakable for those who love the Word of God.
9. Don't expect the Jews to stand up for their Christian brothers; in fact, the Jews may be one source of Christian persecution – much like Christian Nazis during WWII tortured the Jews. The Jews, in their own time, will face the wrath of the Antichrist and his legions.
10. There is a distinction between the Great Tribulation, the Time of Jacob's Trouble, and the Wrath of God. Prophecies from the Old Testament focus on Israel, prophecies from the New Testament focus on the Church. While those prophecies intermingle, the role and destiny of the Church and Israel are different.
11. Israel, orthodox Jews, will NOT become saved Christians nor will the 144,000 sealed from each tribe serve as evangelists. Certainly, Israel will be saved, but not in the same manner or consistency as redeemed Christians. Israel will be reestablished in Palestine during the Millennial Reign of Christ, and commemorative sacrifices in a third Temple will resume.
12. Not all people surviving the Wrath of God will fall into only one of two categories: the saved and the condemned. Mortal men and women, in the same form as humans today, will populate the Millennial Kingdom. Certainly, the vile and wicked, those who conspired with Satan and his legions, will meet a fiery end. Certainly, the vast number of mortals will die during the Great Tribulation or the Wrath of God. But a remnant, perhaps one-fourth of the earth's population, those from the sheep, will survive and repopulate the earth.

13. The Millennial Kingdom will not be a perfect utopia... there will be sin, there will be death, and there will be rebellion. While most certainly a vast improvement over the current world, the Millennial Kingdom will NOT be heaven on earth.

In all things, events, and experiences, we should give God the Father and Jesus Christ praise and glory because it is God's eternal plan that redeems mankind's sinful souls; it is God's eternal plan that redeems a groaning planet that yearns to be free from the plague of mankind's wickedness.

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## PURPOSE OF STUDY

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The purpose of this study is to share my personal quest and discoveries. I offer this study as a viable, not exclusive, interpretation of the events that will transpire as humankind transitions from the current age into the next.

No attempt has been made to exhaust the materiel under discussion. An Internet search reveals that supporters of any particular issue can present countless arguments and allude to hundreds of scriptures in support of their specific view. While I offer basic reasoning for each claim, I make little attempt to either prove each point or disprove the contradictory points of other. This is not an attempt to "convert" those with differing eschatological viewpoints... It's a simple sharing of my personal findings.

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## BACKGROUND

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Following my retirement as a public school teacher, I finally found the time to quietly settle down and read; to simply read without being concerned about planning lessons, grading papers, or coaching students. Among the many books that first summer were apocalyptic novels by James BeauSeigneur and Joel C. Rosenberg. I found their narratives entertaining and intriguing; however, their storylines seemed to depart from my usual understanding of end time events. Several decades earlier I had conducted a preliminary investigation into John's Revelation but had never brought the project to completion. Retirement seemed to perfect time to correct that shortcoming.

There are a number of views on what will occur at the close of this age; so many views that it seems rather arbitrary to simply pick one and adopt it as the foundation for personal belief. But how does a person go about understanding the cryptic messages contained within biblical prophecy? Certainly if the learned scholars haven't figured it out correctly, a common layperson has little chance of success?

Unfortunately, learned scholars may be the root of the problem. The Bible was not written exclusively for academics with a Ph.D. in theological studies... Jesus Christ did not select disciples from among the Pharisees or Sadducees but from simple men – fishermen, tax collectors, physicians, and tent makers. Christ's audience was not the upper-crust of society but the poor, the down-trodden, and the humble. A great many early followers were not literate:

**Luke 11:28:** But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." (NASB)

The Book of Revelation is filled with an array of symbols, allusions, analogies, and other literary devices that make for difficult understanding. However, the Gospels and John's Revelation are deeply rooted in the oral tradition – testimony that is transmitted orally so that it would be understood by the masses. Throughout the New Testament we encounter verses such as:

**Matthew 11:15:** He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

**Mark 4:9:** He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

**Revelation 13:9:** If any man have an ear, let him hear.

The Bible is not a deeply encrypted code that requires special gifts or special skills to understand. It is a collection of passages intended for the common person who, with patience and endurance, can read, understand, and apply its wisdom. Besides, we are not alone in this quest. After Christ's ascension, God sent us the Holy Spirit that comforts us in times of tribulation and guides our path into the truth.

For centuries, the doctrine of Christian belief was controlled by the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches. Much of that time access to God was held hostage to the whims of learned scholars. Fortunately, the Reformation and the translation of the Bible into the vernacular – various native languages – enabled the common person to seek a personal understanding of God. This freedom empowers the individual but it also entails a responsibility – a responsibility to seek and discover God's will for our personal lives.

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## FOUNDATION OF STUDY

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The Bible contains sixty-six books, over one-thousand chapters, and some thirty-one thousand verses. Each verse is a small fragment of truth that, when properly pieced together, paints a portrait of God's plan for humankind. The task of piecing each splinter into a single, unified picture seems to be an overwhelming task, but it is not.

We approach the task as we would a thirty-one thousand piece jigsaw puzzle. We sort the pieces that share similar characteristics into individual piles and then work each pile until a coherent picture emerges. At times we realize that a piece simply does not fit in the section we're working and must be moved to a different pile. At times we become frustrated because none of the pieces fit so we stand up and take a break. Eventually, with patience and endurance, the pieces become disjointed images, and the disjointed images become a unified portrait, and the unified portrait provides a glance into God's purpose for our lives.

In my quest to understand the transition from the current age to the next, I first set out to discover the basic organizational structure of the book of Revelation... it was much like a puzzle solver who looks for a straight line in a wall or a curved line in a face to build a section of a complex puzzle. Ignoring the small details of each passage, I found a common thread and built an outline that represented the book as a whole. Once satisfied with my working draft, I searched for existing viewpoints, solicited news ideas, and identified potential flaws.

I expected to locate a few competing theories; but to my amazement, I found a wide array – some familiar, some unusual, and some outright bizarre. Many were relatively easy to reject because they

made outlandish claims with scant scriptural support while others either ignored basic scriptural evidence or required distorted interpretations. Those that remained served to test my working draft and forced me to consider alternatives or justify my own.

This became the foundation for my study. Once I developed a specific, coherent line of thought, I searched the Internet for competing views. I would then examine those views in detail considering where beliefs originated, the soundness of scriptural support, and the impact on my thoughts. This method led to a close examination of scripture, new discoveries, and, at times, alterations in my original beliefs.

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## INTERPRETATION: A PLAIN READING

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- **BIBLE VERSIONS**

Some Christians claim that the authorized King James Version of the Bible is the only inspired version of the English language Bible and other versions misinterpret and leave out vital passages. I'm not sure if I agree, but I trust the King James Version. However, its language and grammar is rather archaic and makes it difficult to understand. For study I prefer the King James Version, for reading the New American Standard, and for sharing the New Living Translation. The Internet provides us with easy access to study using the various English versions as well as Greek and Hebrew. Scriptural passages within this work use the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

**2 Timothy 2:15:** Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

- **TWO OR THREE WITNESSES**

Complete an Internet search on John's Apocalypse and you will find scores if not hundreds of different interpretations. Most of these scholars have good intentions, but something is definitely amiss. Many of the more unusual interpretations build elaborate, detailed images from one, perhaps two isolated scriptures. While such interpretations may be interesting the obscure and confuse... they should be avoided. We can reduce the chances of such errors by insisting that any new idea is validated by two, preferably three scriptures that confirm one another.

**Deuteronomy 19:15:** "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

- **LITERAL PREFERENCE**

The Bible is not a secretive book filled with hidden, encrypted messages. While it is a complex work of literature and employs a wide array of authors, genres, styles, and literary devices, it is intended to be read to or by the common person. Therefore, it is not the exclusive domain of trained academics and must be interpreted in light of the intended audience. When considering figurative language, interpretation must be limited by context, subject matter, and biblical

convention. A basic, limited approach reduces the chances of introducing strange or erroneous interpretations. Whenever possible, a basic literal interpretation is preferential.

**Revelation 22:18:** For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

- **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**

A basic, limited approach to biblical interpretation does not mean that the reader must ignore the figurative nature of scripture. When we read the phrase, “Behold, the Lamb of God,” we immediately grasp two qualities of Jesus Christ: (a) he is docile and gentle, and (b) he is the sacrifice for our sins. In fact, figurative language is imperative if we earthly beings have any hope of visualizing the spiritual. Imagine John’s description of the throne scene in heaven if he did not use similes, metaphors, and allusions – the task would not be possible.

Figurative language, however, does not grant the reader a dramatic license. Attaching meaning to a figurative element, beyond the personal, requires careful consideration and scriptural justification. Far too frequently, fanciful scholarly interpretations have led to wide divisions and confusion within the Church.

**Matthew 13:13:** Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand...

- **CONTEXTUAL AWARENESS**

The human mind is limited in its capacity to absorb information within a single sitting. Biblical passages observe this limitation by narrowing their focus and omitting extraneous information. An error occurs when the reader transfers information from one context to a dissimilar context or when the reader assumes that something does not exist because it is not included. Contextual awareness is difficult at times because a passage may suddenly shift focus, contain multiple messages, or serve a dual purpose. Nevertheless, the reader has a responsibility to carefully consider the context before formulating meaning.

**2 Peter 1:20-22:** Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost.

- **FLUIDITY OF SCRIPTURE**

Biblical scripture is not a historical documentary that merely records speeches and historical events. It is the living, breathing Word of God that is just as relevant today as it was the day the words were first written. One technique used to enhance its timelessness is fluidity... ideas are presented not as concrete hard facts but rather as a flow of thought. For example, John 12:31 declares that “now” is the time for judgment of the world. Did the great white throne judgment occur at that moment in time? No, Christ had not yet completed his earthly ministry; however,

Christ's mission was in the "process" of completion and the end results a foregone conclusion... it was the same as done.

**John 12:31-32:** Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all [men] unto me.

- **BEWARE OF LEARNED SCHOLARS**

One would think that those with the best education and the greatest knowledge are better prepared to understand the complexities of the Bible than the common individual. Unfortunately, that is not the case. The learned Jewish scholars of the first century missed the Messiah's arrival. Apparently, they believed that he would come as a conquering king to establish a physical, earthly kingdom. Jesus took his message not to the learned but to the common person... and, perhaps, we also best assume a humble posture in our biblical study.

**1 Corinthians 2:7-8:** No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

- **FRAGMENTED PIECES**

The scriptures in John's Revelation are just a few of thousands of prophetic scriptures interwoven throughout the Bible, each with varying authors, time periods, and viewpoints. Each scripture is a single piece to an elaborate and complex puzzle. In some cases, one piece alludes to another piece located elsewhere such as:

**Matthew 24:15:** So when you see the abomination of desolation – spoken about by Daniel the prophet– standing in the holy place...

-- alludes to --

**Daniel 9:27:** On the wing of abominations will come one who destroys, until the decreed end is poured out on the one who destroys.

In isolation, a single scripture, like a single piece of a complex jigsaw puzzle, doesn't portray a precise image of the whole picture. We need several pieces correctly assembled together before we begin to get an accurate glimpse. We must also avoid forcing dissimilar pieces together just because we think that they share similar traits.

- **BLURRY IMAGES**

The Bible provides us with glimpses into God's spiritual realm, but these glimpses are simplistic, blurry images. We may assume that someone is at our front door if we see a shadow through the frosted pane, we may even be able to determine if that person is a male or female; but until we meet that person face to face, we only see a fuzzy figure. The same holds true for prophecy – regardless of how hard we study, the images will remain imprecise until the event actually occurs.

**1 Corinthians 13:12:** For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

- **REVELATION REQUIRED**

Prophetic verse seems cryptic because the prophets are describing events beyond their own, personal experiences; they are forced to rely on metaphors, symbols, allusions and other literary devices to communicate complex scenes with elements that well beyond their comprehension. Additionally, the experiences of the prophets vary from ours by hundreds of years and vastly different cultures. Our only hope is to rely on the Holy Spirit for clarity.

**Proverbs 3:5:** Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

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## STATEMENT OF FAITH

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I do not personally subscribe to any specific religious doctrine or “end times” belief system (eschatology). As there is no settled theological framework among Christians, each individual is responsible to search the scriptures using sound interpretation guidelines and develop a personal framework according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The following statement of faith outlines the foundation for my search:

1. That all humans have sinned and that the wages of sin is death;
2. That Jesus Christ died on the cross as a personal sacrifice for the sins of humankind;
3. That Jesus Christ was resurrected, glorified, and is now seated at the right hand of God;
4. That Jesus Christ, having denied the earthly desires of the flesh, conquered death and now serves as an advocate for humankind;
5. That an individual, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, may elect God’s gift of grace not through works but through repentance, confession, and faith;
6. That once elected an individual experiences a spiritual awakening, becomes a child of God, and is empowered to live a victorious, though not turmoil free, life;
7. That the Bible is the infallible, inspired Word of God and that, through its study and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can acquired a basic, personal understanding of God’s plan; and
8. That all individuals, both the elected and the unredeemed, will be held accountable on a day of judgment.

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## AUTHOR’S QUALIFICATIONS

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I possess no qualification, spiritual or academic, to speak authoritatively on the matters of God; I submit that this work is an account of my personal study and is offered only as a personal confession. It is my hope that these words may inspire others to conduct an individual exploration and obtain a personal understanding of God’s plan for their life.

### THE SECOND COMING IS NOT THE END

Throughout this study one primary question continually plagued my mind:

*How did the learned Pharisees and Sadducees miss the first coming of Jesus the Nazarene as the Messiah?*

Completed some 400 years before the time of Christ,<sup>1</sup> the Old Testament provides adequate prophetic scripture to indicate that Jesus the Nazarene was the prophesized Messiah. However, because Israel's heart was focused outwardly instead of inwardly, they failed to recognize the Messiah within their midst – He came as a lamb, not as a Lion. In fact, many Jews accepted Shimon bar Kochba, a pious Jew, as their messiah during the early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century exactly because he exhibited the qualities of the Lion of David – he raised an army of 350,000, recaptured Jerusalem, and laid plans to rebuild the temple.<sup>2</sup> However, the Bar Kochba revolt did not firmly establish a strong national Israel but rather greatly contributed to the Jewish Diaspora (exile).

Today, the Jews are not looking for a savior – an innocent, divine or semi-divine being who will sacrifice himself to save us from the consequences of our own sins.<sup>3</sup> They continue to hope for an earthly messiah who will restore a strong and vibrant national Israel:

*from "Mashiach: The Messiah"<sup>4</sup>*

The mashiach will bring about the political and spiritual redemption of the Jewish people by bringing us back to Israel and restoring Jerusalem (Isaiah 11:11-12; Jeremiah 23:8; 30:3; Hosea 3:4-5). He will establish a government in Israel that will be the center of all world government, both for Jews and gentiles (Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:10; 42:1). He will rebuild the Temple and re-establish its worship (Jeremiah 33:18). He will restore the religious court system of Israel and establish Jewish law as the law of the land (Jeremiah 33:15).

Unfortunately, the general Christian view on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ shares a similar flaw with that envisioned by the Jewish community – while the Jews envision national Israel as the pinnacle in God's plan for mankind, Christians consider the redemption of the Church as its zenith. Within much of Christian doctrine, the Second Coming and the "end times" are seen as synonymous – that connection is misleading.

The world does not come to an end at Christ's second coming – mankind will not be divided into the "saved" and the "unsaved," and God's plan will not be complete. The coming age will not be a thousand years of utopian rest but will involve a "working" of God's plan for mankind. Although the nature of that "work" is unclear, the Messianic Age will not be a Millennial Sabbath:

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Jack L. Arnold, "THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON," *Clear Theology*, ND. <<http://cleartheology.com/topic/Bibliology/Bibliology%2006.pdf>> August 1, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Berel Wein, "Bar Kochba," *Jewish History*, ND. <<http://www.jewishhistory.org/bar-kochba/>> August 1, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Tracey R Rich, "Mashiach: The Messiah," *Judaish 101*, 2011. <<http://www.jewfaq.org/mashiach.htm>> August 1, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Tracey R Rich, "Mashiach: The Messiah," *Judaish 101*, 2011. <<http://www.jewfaq.org/mashiach.htm>> August 1, 2012.

**Isaiah 2:3:** And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (NAS)

To correct divide the Word of God, we need to understand that the Messianic Age is not an age of completeness, but rather another step in that direction. We should be cautious not to make the same error that the Sadducees and Pharisees made during Jesus Christ's earthly ministry... there is more to the coming age more than what is being taught in Sunday School and from the pulpit.

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## CREATIONISM THEORY: A DISTRACTION

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Did God create the heavens and the earth in six days? Absolutely, positively, utterly, totally, entirely. Yes, beyond any shadow of a doubt God created the world in six day! The Bible clearly indicates that such was the case; therefore, the fact is beyond dispute:

**Genesis 2:2:** By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. (NIV)

**Exodus 20:11:** For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (NIV)

**Exodus 31:17:** It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested." (NIV)

Now, admittedly, the definition of the length of a creation "day" is debatable. Certainly scripture indicates that our view of time does not coincide with that of God's:<sup>5</sup>

**Ezekiel 4:6:** After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the house of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year. (NIV)

**2 Peter 3:8:** But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (NIV)

Thus, a creation day can biblically be a twenty-four hour day, a lunar year, a solar year, a thousand years, a week of thousand years (7,000), a thousand-thousand years (million), or a thousand-million years (billion). The timing is, as it should be, beyond our comprehension or necessity to know:

**Psalms 90:4:** For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. (NIV)

We could dedicate our time to understanding the "numerology" of the Bible, but doing so, I believe, would distract us from weightier theological matters.

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<sup>5</sup> See the "Time: God's Concept of Time" section of this study.

Rather, we could spend our time and resources in examining the theories of creation. Some assert that the creation in Genesis takes place over a span of six, literal twenty-four hours – the fossil and other geographical evidence are lies planted by the devil to deceive mankind. Others assert that the creation in Genesis is purely allegorical – the events simply represent or symbolize a theological idea. Others assert that the creation in Genesis is merely a myth – just one of a myriad of creation myths attempting to explain, in the absence of science, man’s place in the universe. Still others assert that the creation in Genesis 1:2+ is actually a “re-creation” – the original earth was destroyed in a conflagration with Lucifer:

*from “The Gap Theory of Genesis Chapter One”<sup>6</sup>*

The gap theory postulates that an indefinite span of time exists between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. This time span is usually considered to be quite large (millions of years) and is also reputed to encompass the so-called “geologic ages.” Proponents of the gap theory also postulate that a cataclysmic judgment was pronounced upon the earth during this period as the result of the fall of Lucifer (Satan) and that the ensuing verses of Genesis chapter 1 describe a re-creation or reforming of the earth from a chaotic state and not an initial creative effort on the part of God.

Some assert that how we view the creation in Genesis affects our understanding of all scriptures – if we err in this one part, we err in all parts. If we assume a literal, or figurative, or allegorical, or mythical viewpoint here, then we assume the same view throughout the entire Bible. I tend to disagree...

Man’s mind is finite; God’s mind is infinite. Our understanding is imperfect; God’s understanding is perfect. We see only in part; God sees in whole:

**1 Corinthians 13:12:** Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. (NIV)

We should not, we cannot, expect the Bible that contains only sixty-six books, 774,746 words, to provide all the details necessary for a full understand the universe and God’s eternal plan. Instead, we should, we can, expect the Bible to provide us with sufficient text to paint the portrait God wishes us to see. Thus, our focus should be on what is in the Bible, rather than what is not.

God created the heavens and the earth in six days, and on the seventh day he rested. We may not know the minute details of that creation, but we know that in those six days, God created the heavens and the earth.

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<sup>6</sup> Jack C. Sofield, “The Gap Theory of Genesis Chapter One,” *Sofield Science Services*, 1997, <<http://bible.org/article/gap-theory-genesis-chapter-one>> July 28, 2012.

## STUDY FRAMEWORK

In any work of substantial length and depth, the details have a tendency to obscure the overall picture, “You can’t see the forest for the trees.” In order to address this difficulty, this section paints an overall portrait using a variety of views. Scriptural and supporting evidence are provided elsewhere within the study text.

Questions, concerns, comments, and rebuttals are encouraged and emailed to [mail@satan-evicted.com](mailto:mail@satan-evicted.com).

## DEFINITIONS FIRST

Most scholars force their discussions on “end time” prophecy to conform to a single seven year period referred to as Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. Under such forced conformity, a distorted and misleading picture emerges. Unfortunately, the events related to the Christian Church do not fit within such a timeframe... events begin prior to the confirms a “covenant with many” and events end prior to the physical return of Jesus Christ to establish His Millennial Kingdom.

There is a difference between the **Great Tribulation**, the **Wrath of God**, **Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week**, and the **Time of Jacob’s Trouble**. Treating these four distinct periods as if they were a single, unified period leads to great confusion and misunderstanding. The transition from the current Church Age to the future Millennial Age involves both the Christian Church and the remnant of Israel. While they overlap and sometimes share common traits, these periods are not identical nor should their labels be used as synonyms. Understanding these difference helps bring the events and relationships into sharper focus:

Transition from Church to Millennial Age		
	The Great Tribulation of the Church	The Christian Church in Heaven
Church Age	Daniel’s 70 <sup>th</sup> Week	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Half of the Week (3 ½ Years)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Half of the Week (3 ½ Years)
	Israel at Relative Peace Rule of the Antichrist	Time of Jacob’s Trouble
		Day of the Lord (Wrath of God)

### Explanation of the Events within the Table

- **Transition from Church to Millennial Age:** The time period spanning from the transfer of the scroll with seven seals from the Father to the Son until Jesus Christ establishes His physical kingdom on earth.
- **The Great Tribulation of the Church:** The time period spanning from the breaking of the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal (removal of the “restrainer”) until the Rapture of the Christian Church at the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal.
- **The Christian Church in Heaven:** The time period spanning from the Rapture of the Christian Church until Jesus Christ establishes His physical kingdom on earth.
- **Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week:** The time period spanning from the making of the covenant between the Antichrist and “the many” until Jesus Christ establishes His physical kingdom on earth.
- **1<sup>st</sup> Half of the Week (3 ½ Years):** The time period spanning from the making of the covenant between the Antichrist and “the many” until the Antichrist sets up the Abomination of Desolation.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Half of the Week (3 ½ Years):** The time period spanning from the Antichrist sets up the Abomination of Desolation Jesus Christ establishes His physical kingdom on earth.
- **Time of Jacob’s Trouble:** The time period spanning from the Antichrist and his armies surrounding Jerusalem until Jesus Christ establishes His physical kingdom on earth.
- **Day of the Lord: The Wrath of God:** The time period spanning from the Rapture of the Christian Church until Jesus Christ establishes His physical kingdom on earth.

## THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW

The learned scholars have it wrong, at least many things wrong. Why? Perhaps the meaning of end time prophecy has remained sealed since the days of Daniel? Perhaps Satan has been more effective in misleading the scriptural message than one would think? Perhaps the mankind's obstinate mind prefers the teaching of man rather than the voice of the Holy Spirit? Perhaps the mankind strives to protect their fragile ego rather than admitting possible error? I'm not sure. There are many things we cannot know about the latter day events, but the Holy Scriptures are clear on several issues:

1. **Today's current events do not predict that we are in the last days.** Commentaries from a century ago proclaimed that the "signs of the time" confirmed that they were in the final days. Preachers today proclaim the same message; however, all these wars, famines, plagues, natural disasters, and wickedness are very, very minor compared to those of the end time. Some 68 million people died in World War II; over 3.5 billion will die during the transition from the current age to the next.
2. **The book of Revelation has a clear, distinct chronology.** Some scholars assert that John's Revelation contains three major divisions that parallel each other. Other scholars assert that the book is written in a purely chronological order. Both beliefs ignore the clearly defined organization structure – seven seals leads to seven trumpets that lead to seven bowls of wrath. Interspersed within this primary narrative are several interludes that provide explanations and additional details.
3. **There is a distinction between the Great Tribulation, the Wrath of God, Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, and the Time of Jacob's Trouble.** Although the periods may overlap and share common elements, the purpose, principals, and outcome are different. Prophecies from the Old Testament focus on Israel; prophecies from the New Testament focus on the Christian Church. While those prophecies may intermingle at times, the role and destiny of the Church and Israel are different.
4. **The prophecies within the Olivet Discourse are not directly only at the Jews.** There is no scriptural evidence indicating that Rapture of the Christian Church will not occur prior to the start of the Great Tribulation. In fact, the Rapture will occur at the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal on the scroll with seven seals well after the Antichrist has assumed authority over the nations. The Rapture will not be silent, but all nations and people will see Jesus Christ coming in the clouds to gather His elect.
5. **The Rapture of the Christian Church will not come upon us suddenly or unexpectedly.** Although the Bible does not provide clues about when events begin, Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul provide significant details about the things that will occur prior to Christ's coming in the clouds. We may not know the day or the hour of His coming, but those who study the Bible and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit will recognize "all these signs" and know that He is near, even at the door.
6. **Redeemed Christians will experience tribulation, persecution, and martyrdom.** The early Christians faced extensive persecution. In fact, scriptures clearly indicate that such suffering should be considered a normal part of a Christian's daily walk. *Open Doors USA* reports, "An estimated 100 million Christians worldwide suffer interrogation, arrest and even death for their faith in Christ."<sup>7</sup> The world and Antichrist will persecute Christians, but the Lord will never leave their side (1 John 4:4).
7. **Those "left behind" after the Rapture will NOT have an opportunity to be "saved."** Some scholars assert that the 144,000 Jews become preachers, the two witnesses in Jerusalem become evangelists, and only "saved" will inhabitants the Millennial Kingdom initially; however, there is no scriptural

<sup>7</sup> Jerry Dykstra, "Islamic-Majority Countries Top Open Doors 2012 World Watch List," *Earned Media*, January 4, 2012. <<http://www.earnedmedia.org/odusa0104.htm>> August 26, 2012.

evidence to support those claims. Once the Christian Church, the body of Christ, is translated to heaven, the Church Age will close and human redemption will assume a different form.

8. **Israel, orthodox Jews, will not become “saved” or “born again” Christians.** Certainly, Israel will be saved, but not in the same manner or consistency as redeemed Christians. Israel will be reestablished in Palestine with its capital in Jerusalem. Israel will be ruled by a King, Jesus Christ, who sits on King David’s throne. Memorial sacrifices and offerings in a third Jewish temple will resume. Christians will receive imperishable, spiritual bodies and rule with Christ.
9. **There is a distinction between a Jew and a Christian.** A Christian is an individual who has accepted and confessed Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Son of God, and Lord... heritage has no bearing whether Jew or gentile. All Christians share in the same promises and the same body of Christ. However, a small Jewish population who remain faithful to their Jewish tradition. This group has not accepted Jesus as the Christ and do not share in the new covenant. They are the remnant of Israel.
10. **The Antichrist will only be one of many.** Many scholars tend to concentrate on the beast from out of the sea, the Antichrist, and his partner, the false prophet. Certainly, the Antichrist will gain prominence and ultimately acquire authority over all nations and peoples; however, prior to his rise to power, numerous false messiahs and false prophets performing great wonders and deceiving many people. Perilous times will arise and the sources of trouble will abound.
11. **The Great Tribulation will begin prior to the Antichrist’s covenant with the many.** Many scholars attempt to fit all latter day events into a neat, concise package of seven years, Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. However, the Antichrist must have enough time to grow in stature and fame. He must have ample time to acquire sufficient influence to enact his covenant. The Antichrist will remain a minor player until the restrainer is moved out of the way; that takes place at the breaking of the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal.
12. **Israel and the Jews will not stand up for their Christian brethren.** Although Christians and Jews share a portion of Holy Scripture and a common heritage, Jews will not forget their treatment by the bloody hands of Christians throughout the past two millennia. Similar to the Christians who remained silent during the Holocaust, the Jews will turn their backs on suffering Christians. Israel place their own security and survival over that of the Christian neighbors.
13. **The initial inhabitants of the Millennial Kingdom will not be “saved” individuals.** Certainly, the wicked and those in allegiance with the Antichrist will share his fate and not pass into the Millennial Kingdom. A quarter to a third of the earth’s population will survive the distress of the latter days. Those who lack the traits consistent with the Kingdom of God will pass to Christ’s left during judgment. But the meek, the merciful, the persecuted, and the charitable will pass to the right.
14. **The Millennial Kingdom will not be a perfect utopia.** Old Testament tends to focus on the positive aspects of the Millennial Kingdom while minimizing the negative. Certainly, manmade environmental devastation from millennia of neglect, warfare, and abuse will heal. Certainly, Satan and his legions will be bound and unable to nurture wickedness and suffering. However, there will be sin, there will be illness, there will be death, and there will be rebellion. Not yet a perfect world.
15. **Prophetic utterance can serve more than one purpose.** Many scholars assert that a prophecy can only serve one purpose and be fulfilled once. This is an error. The Word of God is a living, breathing document that speaks to individuals and ages differently. The words do not change, but the function may apply differently. The Olivet Discourse provides an excellent example; it forewarned 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews of the coming Diaspora and also describes the latter days of the current age.

16. **Christians can surrender their individual salvation.** The doctrine of eternal security, once saved always saved, is generally true in principle – a person can never be forced to surrender their salvation and God will always provide an avenue of escape during times of extreme duress. However, the scripture clearly preaches that the one who endures to the end will be saved. As angels long ago, a saved Christian can reject and rebel against God; a person can abandon the faith.
17. **King David's throne will be in Jerusalem within an earthly kingdom.** Some scholars assert that Jesus Christ is ruling from David's throne in heaven at this very minute. This is an error. Jesus Christ is currently sitting at the right hand of the throne of God the Father. He is serving as a priest, in the order of Melchizedek, to His Church on earth. When the time is right, that role will change and Christ will assume the role of conquering king and establish King David's throne on earth in Jerusalem.

## CHRISTIANS WILL FACE PERSECUTION

Many proponents of a pretribulation Rapture firmly assert that Christians will not suffer persecution under the Antichrist. This belief is so firm that they ignore clear historical and scriptural evidence demonstrating that persecution is a normal component of a Christian's life. This error is significant and dangerous. It discourages Christians from arming themselves for possible future battles.

1. **The Lord sought not to remove Christians from this world but interceded for protection:**

**John 17:14-15:** I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. (NIV)

2. **The scriptures clearly indicate that the Antichrist will have authority over the saints:**

**Revelation 13:7:** He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them... (NIV)

3. **Statistics clearly indicates that Christian martyrdom is not restricted to the past:**

*The Catholic Standard and Times*, 2008: Even the average church-going Christian is not likely to know that 45.5 million of the estimated 70 million Christians who have died for Christ did so in the last century.<sup>8</sup>

4. **Out earthly life and physical body are temporal; our souls are everlasting:**

**Matthew 10:28:** Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (NIV)

5. **Persecution, suffering, and martyrdom is a normal component of Christian life:**

**Hebrews 11:35-38:** But others were tortured, not accepting release, to obtain resurrection to a better life. And others experienced mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, sawed apart, murdered with the sword; they went about in sheepskins and goatskins; they were destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (the world was not worthy of them); they wandered in deserts and mountains and caves and openings in the earth.

<sup>8</sup> Susan Brinkmann, "The Greatest Story Never Told: Modern Christian Martyrdom," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, December 5, 2008. < <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/-religion/2143770/posts>> August 22, 2012.

## THREE DIMENSIONAL PROPHECIES

Also referred to as **DUAL PURPOSE PROPHECIES, DUAL PURPOSE LITERARY DEVICES, or DUAL FULFILLMENT PROPHECIES**

### BACKGROUND

**Amillennialism** – the Kingdom of God has already arrived, we are already in the millennial kingdom, and the first resurrection occurs upon spiritual rebirth. **Preterism** – prophetic events described in the Bible are historical; they have already occurred. **Idealism** – prophetic events should be viewed figuratively as imagery, symbols, and allegories not to be interpreted literally. **Premillennialism** – the Kingdom of God was delayed and Jesus Christ will return to establish His earthly kingdom one thousand years before the White Throne judgment. Which viewpoint is correct? Well, in a manner, each is based upon a partially correct view of the whole picture.



Matthias Gerung, *The Giving of the Seven Bowls of Wrath / The First Six Plagues, Revelation, 1530-1532*

Of the competing views, the amillennial portrayal of the Kingdom of God seems relatively accurate. The Kingdom of God has already come and, if we accept Christ as Lord, we are living within that spiritual kingdom. The Preterism assertion that prophetic events have already occurred is at least partially correct. The Olivet Discourse accurately warned 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews of the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the Diaspora. A partial Idealism view seems virtually imperative. If we do not interpret the beast in Revelation 13 as symbolic, our picture of the Antichrist would be incomplete. The Premillennialism accurately claims that Jesus Christ will return and establish an earthly, millennial kingdom prior to the final judgment. Unfortunately, each takes a flat view of prophetic events... they don't view biblical scripture as multidimensional. They emphasize supporting passages, diminish opposing passages, or spiritualize passages to suit their purpose. This approach is problematic preventing us from forming a full and comprehensive portrait of God's message.

### DISCUSSION

All too frequently, Christians forget that God created everything that has ever been created, that God nourished Israel while they wandered in the desert for forty years, that Jesus healed the sick and resurrected the dead, and that Christ arose from the grave. Biblical scriptures are not restricted by the limits of the human mind or human understanding but are omnipotent, infinite, and everlasting. The words were written by humans but inspired by the Holy Spirit. They transcend time, language, and interpretation. The Bible is the living, breathing Word of God. Holy Scripture is fully capable of transcending time:

**Revelation 1:8:** "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

**Revelation 1:19:** Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. (NIV)

The simplest and best example can be found in Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15-16:

**Daniel 9:27:** ...In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him. (NIV)

**Matthew 25:15-16:** So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (NIV)

According to some versions of the Jewish tradition, the “abomination that causes desolation” was committed by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC by erecting a stature of Zeus within the Jewish Temple. Another view considers it as an allusion to Manasseh, who set up a carved image in the house of God.<sup>9</sup> However, some 200 years later, Jesus Christ referred to it as a yet future event. Is there a discrepancy? No. Throughout history, we can see “types” that foreshadow future reality.

Some scholars argue that a prophecy can only be fulfilled once. Others argue that a prophecy can be partially fulfilled in one event and fully fulfilled at a later date. And, still others argue partial fulfillments serve only as an example of a future event. This debate is fruitless... the scholars argue technicalities while overlooking the intended messages. They are placing the limits of human logic on a document that transcends the human mind.

Early Christians understood that prophetic utterances had multiple applications in time:

**Acts 2:17-21:** <sup>(17)</sup>“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. <sup>(18)</sup>Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. <sup>(19)</sup>I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. <sup>(20)</sup>The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. <sup>(21)</sup>And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (NIV)

These words from Joel 2:28-32, spoken by the Apostle Peter, correctly applies to Pentecost when early Christians were initially baptized in the Holy Spirit. Notice the events used in verse 20 parallels that used by Jesus Christ within the Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24:29, Isaiah 13:10, and Isaiah 34:4.

Preterism asserts that those verses were thus fulfilled. Did Jesus Christ return during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century to gather His elect? Did the Day of the Lord, the final judgment, take place on Pentecost? Did the Apostle Peter misapply Joel’s prophecy? Of course the Day of the Lord did not occur during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century; the events of Pentecost simply serve as a “type” and foreshadow the latter days.

Adhering to a strict, rigid interpretation of scripture makes it impossible to acquire a comprehensive understanding of Bible messages. We must remain flexible. Acquiring a full meaning requires examining the words, figurative language, audience, context, intent, related examples, and parallel passages. Of course, too much flexibility can be equally destructive... We can over-read a passage assigning more meaning than intended. We can also spiritualize a passage distorting the intended

<sup>9</sup> “ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906. <<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/353-abomination-of-desolation>> August 27, 2012.

meaning. We must use great caution; we must be flexible but not too flexible. Naturally, the addition of a second or third witness helps validate the perceived meaning.

## DIVIDING PROPHECIES

Some scholars assert that individual elements of a prophetic vision can be fulfilled on different occasions. For example, some claim that portions of the Olivet Discourse were specific to 70 AD siege of Jerusalem and will not be repeated while other portions of the same discourse are reserved for the “end times.” We see a similar pattern when John’s prophetic visions within Revelation are spread over a period of two-thousand years.

There are examples of where two different elements of a prophecy are fulfilled on two separate occasions such as the resurrection of the saints and the resurrection of the wicked. There are also prophetic visions that are fulfilled over an extended period of time such as Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of the great statue. However, we must be very, very careful in dividing single prophetic visions into individual parts, and there must be ample justification for such divisions. In the case of the great statue, Daniel’s interpretation provides clear and sufficient evidence. In the case of two separate resurrections, the division is less clear and requires far more than a cursory glance – it requires a careful comparison and detailed analysis of related scripture.

## THREE DIMENSIONAL EXAMPLES

<b>Abomination of Desolation</b> Daniel 9:27 – Matthew 24:15-16		
Past	Short Future	Distant Future
Antiochus Epiphanes Sets Statue of Zeus in Temple 168 BC	Titus Destroyed Temple 70 AD	Antichrist Sits in Temple as God ~2037 AD

<b>The Seven Churches</b> Revelation 2-3								
1st Century	33 - 100 AD <sup>10</sup>	100 - 312 AD	312 - 590 AD	590 - 1517 AD	1517 - 1750 AD	1750 - 1925 AD	1925 AD →	Latter Days
Ephesus	Ephesus Apostolic	Smyrna Caesar	Pergamum Constantine	Thyatira Roman Catholic	Sardis Reformation	Philadelphia Missionary	Laodicea Apostate	Ephesus
Smyrna								Smyrna
Pergamum								Pergamum
Thyatira								Thyatira
Sardis								Sardis
Philadelphia								Philadelphia
Laodicea								Laodicea

<b>The Olivet Discourse</b> Matthew 24, Mark 13, & Luke 21			
Church 32-70 AD	Israel 70-100 AD	Church Latter Days	Israel Latter Days
By Jews Hated Persecution Martyrdom	By Titus Siege of Jerusalem Jews Flee Judea Temple Destroyed	By Antichrist Hated Persecution Martyrdom	By Antichrist Siege of Jerusalem Jews Flee Judea Abomination

<sup>10</sup> Dates derived from Jim A. Cornwell, *The Alpha and the Omega - Chapter Six*, 1995. <<http://www.mazzaroth.com/ChapterSix/SevenHistoricalChurchAges.htm>> August 27, 2012.

<b>The Woman and the Dragon</b> Revelation 12	
Current Age	Latter Days
Israel Pursued by Romans Hides within Nations Protected for Time, Times, and Half a Time Protected within Nations ← Satan makes war with Christians → ← Satan makes war with Jews →	Israel Pursued by Antichrist Hides within Desert Protected for three and one-half years Protected within Desert ← Antichrist war with Christians → ← Antichrist wars with Jews →

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The human organ that gives the body its shape, framework, and durability is its skeleton; without a skeleton, the human would be a squishy blob without recognizable form and without meaningful function. Biblical prophecy can have a similar problem if we don't have a proper framework to build a proper understanding. Luckily, the book of Revelation provides just such a structure for those events occurring during the transition between the current age and the next.

Some scholars assert that events within John's Revelation occur in the exact order that they are presented. I have difficulty with this approach because it would force several events into an unnatural and illogical sequence. For example, the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ is described in Revelation 12:5; we know, of course, those events occurred nearly 2,000 years ago and are unlikely to be repeated. A purely chronological framework is unworkable.



*Matthias Gerung, The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets, Revelation, 1530-1532*

Other scholars assert that John's Revelation is divided into seven parallel sections each representing events occurring during the current Church Age (Progressive Parallelism). These scholars assert that Christ's work was essentially complete at the cross, and the "thousand years" mentioned in Revelation 20 is symbolic of the current age. Although an interesting construct, a plain reading reveals that the seven trumpets follow the seven seals, and the seven bowls of wrath follows the seven trumpets. This sequence is most notable in Revelation 8:1-2. Progressive parallelism requires far too much "spiritualization" to be considered a viable framework.

John does utilize a number of transitions throughout his narrative such as "and I saw," "and I beheld," "and I heard," and "and I looked." These transitions help us understand that John's experience was not a one, coherent vision but rather a single, primary narrative intermingled with other related but non-sequential scenes (interludes) that provide explanation, additional details, or justification of the events within the primary narrative.

If we could imagine John watching his revelation on a television, it is highly unlikely that he that he would be watching on a single television monitor, but, more likely, he would be standing in a room with

multiple monitors, perhaps something similar to a television control booth. Periodically, his focus would shift from the action on the main monitor to images being displayed on secondary monitors. When these secondary images play out, John's focus would then shift back to primary monitor. These secondary images do not necessarily share the same time sequence as the main event but provide additional information to help us acquire a better understanding. Although determining when John's focus shifts from one vision to another can be difficult, the book actually contains a clear, coherent organizational structure – much like a bulleted list within a formal business presentation.

John's narrative reads as a legal justification for God's outpouring of judgment and wrath. Several non-sequential scenes (interludes) are placed within the narrative to justify these outpourings. For example, although the two witnesses (11:1-13) give their testimony beginning with the first trumpet, they are not introduced into the narrative until after the sixth trumpet. Through their testimony, humankind has an opportunity to repent of their evils ways, but they will not (9:21). God's outpouring of wrath, therefore, is justified and begins at the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

**Table: Study Framework: Revelation: Brief**

Introduction	<p><b>INTRODUCTION:</b> (Rev. 1) The prologue, greetings, doxology, and introduction</p> <p><b>STUDY FRAMEWORK:</b> (Various) Outlines, brief descriptions and summaries of this study.</p> <p><b>KINGDOM OF GOD:</b> (Various) A discussion on the misperceptions of the Kingdom of God within the Gospels</p> <p><b>COSMIC WARFARE:</b> (Rev. 12) The cosmic battle between Satan and redemption of mankind</p> <p><b>THE MESSAGE TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES:</b> (Rev. 2-3) Messages of encouragement and warning.</p> <p><b>SCENE IN HEAVEN:</b> (Rev. 4) The Holiness of God; description of the heavenly throne room.</p>
The Great Tribulation	<p><b>THE SCROLL WITH THE SEVEN SEALS:</b> (Rev. 5) The transition from the Church Age to the Millennial Age</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>White Horse:</b> (Rev. 6:1-2) A rider with bow &amp; crown who goes out to conquer. (1<sup>st</sup> Creature calls)</li> <li>2. <b>Red Horse:</b> (Rev. 6:3-4) A rider with sword who takes peace from the earth. (2<sup>nd</sup> Creature calls)</li> <li>3. <b>Black Horse:</b> (Rev. 6:5-6) A rider with scales causes massive monetary inflation. (3<sup>rd</sup> Creature calls)</li> <li>4. <b>Pale Green Horse:</b> (Rev. 6:7-8) Death &amp; Hades who kills ¼ of population. (4<sup>th</sup> Creature calls)</li> <li>5. <b>Martyred Saints:</b> (Rev. 6:9-11) Martyrs cry for revenge but told to wait.</li> <li>6. <b>The Rapture:</b> (Rev. 6:12-17) Natural Calamities: earthquake, sun to black, moon to blood...</li> <li>7. <b>THE SEVEN JUDGMENT TRUMPETS:</b> (Rev. 8) God's Final Warning</li> </ol>
The Wrath of God	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Hail &amp; Fire Mixed with Blood:</b> (Rev. 8:7) 1/3 of the earth is burned.</li> <li>2. <b>Mountain of Burning Fire:</b> (Rev. 8:8-9) 1/3 sea, 1/3 of sea life, and 1/3 of ships.</li> <li>3. <b>Fiery Star:</b> (Rev. 8:10-11) The fresh water becomes bitter and many people die</li> <li>4. <b>Sun, Moon, and Stars Struck:</b> (Rev. 8:12) There is darkness for 1/3 of the days and nights.</li> <li>5. <b>Locus From Abyss:</b> (Rev. 8:13, 9:1-12) Torture but not permitted to kill. (1<sup>st</sup> Woe)</li> <li>6. <b>A Hideous Army:</b> (Rev. 9:13-21) 1/3 killed by fire, smoke, &amp; sulfur. (2<sup>nd</sup> Woe)</li> <li>7. <b>THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH:</b> (Rev. 11:15-19, Rev. 15, 16:1) God's Wrath (3rd Woe)             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Great Sores:</b> (Rev. 16:2) Boils on those with the mark of the beast.</li> <li>2. <b>Seas Turn to Blood:</b> (Rev. 16:3) Everything in the seas dies.</li> <li>3. <b>Fresh Water to Blood:</b> (Rev. 16:4-7) Rivers and springs turn to blood; reframe.</li> <li>4. <b>Sun Scorches:</b> (Rev. 16:8-9) Sun scorched people with an intense heat.</li> <li>5. <b>Beast's Kingdom Plunged into Darkness:</b> (Rev. 16:10-11) Intense agony.</li> <li>6. <b>Armies Gathered at Euphrates:</b> (Rev. 16:12-16) Armageddon</li> <li>7. <b>CHRIST ON A WHITE HORSE &amp; ARMAGEDDON:</b> (Rev. 16:17-21, 19:11-21) Second Coming</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
	<p><b>THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM OF CHRIST:</b> (Rev. 20:1-10) The establishment of Christ' earthly kingdom.</p> <p><b>THE GENERAL RESURRECTION:</b> (Rev. 20:11-15) The Resurrection and Great White Throne Judgment.</p> <p><b>A NEW HEAVEN, NEW EARTH, AND NEW JERUSALEM:</b> (Rev. 21, 22:1-6)</p>

# JOHN'S REVELATION: DETAILED OUTLINE

Introduction

**INTRODUCTION:** (Rev. 1) The prologue, greetings, doxology, and introduction  
**STUDY FRAMEWORK:** (Various) Outlines, brief descriptions and summaries of this study.  
**KINGDOM OF GOD:** (Various) A discussion on the misperceptions of the Kingdom of God within the Gospels

The Great Tribulation

- **COSMIC WARFARE:** (Rev. 12) The cosmic battle between Satan and redemption of mankind  
**Satan Evicted:** (Rev. 12) A redemptive tale of planet earth.
- **THE MESSAGE TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES:** (Rev. 2-3) Messages of encouragement and warning.  
**Christian Types:** (Rev. 2-3) Praise, warning, and encouragement for present day Christians.
- **SCENE IN HEAVEN:** (Rev. 4) The Holiness of God; description of the heavenly throne room.
- **THE SCROLL WITH THE SEVEN SEALS:** (Rev. 5) The transition from the Church Age to the Millennial Age
  - 1. **White Horse:** (Rev. 6:1-2) A rider with bow & crown who goes out to conquer. (1st Creature calls)  
**1<sup>st</sup> Judgment Message:** (Rev. 14:6-7) Warning to worship the God in heaven.
  - 2. **Red Horse:** (Rev. 6:3-4) A rider with sword who takes peace from the earth. (2nd Creature calls)  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Judgment Message:** (Rev. 14:8) Global government and economic systems have failed.
  - 3. **Black Horse:** (Rev. 6:5-6) A rider with scales causes massive monetary inflation. (3rd Creature calls)  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Judgment Message:** (Rev. 14:9-13) Warning against worship of the Antichrist  
**Two Beasts:** (Rev. 13) Description of the Antichrist and false prophet.
  - 4. **Pale Green Horse:** (Rev. 6:7-8) Death & Hades who kills ¼ of the earth's population. (4th Creature calls)  
**Antichrist Assumes Power:** (Daniel 9:27) Antichrist makes a covenant with the many  
**The Great Harlot:** (Rev. 17) Global government and economic systems that leech their power from the weak.
  - 5. **Martyred Saints:** (Rev. 6:9-11) Martyrs cry for revenge but told to wait.  
**Antichrist Breaks Covenant:** (Daniel 9:27) Antichrist invades Jerusalem and sits in Jewish Temple
  - 6. **The Rapture:** (Rev. 6:12-17) Natural Calamities: earthquake, sun to black, moon to blood...  
**144,000 Israel Sealed:** (Rev. 7:1-8) 12,000 from each tribe sealed w/ God's seal; Israel hidden in desert  
**Multitude Before Throne:** (Rev. 7:9-17) Rapture Christians sing praises of redemption

The Wrath of God

- 7. **THE SEVEN JUDGMENT TRUMPETS:** (Rev. 8) God's Final Warning
  - **Two Witnesses in Jerusalem:** (Rev. 11:1-6) Witnesses declare the cause of the outpouring of God's wrath
    - 1. **Hail & Fire Mixed with Blood:** (Rev. 8:7) 1/3 of the earth is burned.
    - 2. **Mountain of Burning Fire:** (Rev. 8:8-9) 1/3 sea, 1/3 of sea life, and 1/3 of ships.
    - 3. **Fiery Star:** (Rev. 8:10-11) The fresh water becomes bitter and many people die
    - 4. **Sun, Moon, and Stars Struck:** (Rev. 8:12) There is darkness for 1/3 of the days and nights.
    - 5. **Locus From Abyss:** (Rev. 8:13, 9:1-12) Torture but not permitted to kill. **(1st Woe)**
    - 6. **A Hideous Army:** (Rev. 9:13-21) 1/3 killed by fire, smoke, & sulfur. **(2nd Woe)**  
**Little Scroll:** (Rev. 10) Final judgment pronounced; no further chance of redemption
  - 7. **THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH:** (Rev. 11:15-19, Rev. 15, 16:1) The Outpouring of God's Wrath **(3rd Woe)**
    - **Babylon Destroyed:** (Rev. 18) The great harlot of global power destroyed.
    - 1. **Great Sores:** (Rev. 16:2) Boils on those with the mark of the beast.
    - 2. **Seas Turn to Blood:** (Rev. 16:3) Everything in the seas dies.
    - 3. **Fresh Water to Blood:** (Rev. 16:4-7) Rivers and springs turn to blood; reframe.
    - 4. **Sun Scorches:** (Rev. 16:8-9) Sun scorched people with an intense heat; no repentance.
    - 5. **Beast's Kingdom Plunged into Darkness:** (Rev. 16:10-11) Intense agony because of the plague.  
**Two Witnesses Killed:** (Rev. 11:7-14) Testimony end; martyred by the Antichrist
    - 6. **Armies Gathered at Euphrates:** (Rev. 16:12-16) Armageddon: Kings of the East and entire world  
**Wedding Ceremony:** (Rev. 19:1-8) Rejoicing in heaven for the joining of Christ & His bride, Jerusalem.
    - 7. **CHRIST ON A WHITE HORSE & ARMAGEDDON:** (Rev. 16:17-21, 19:11-21) The Second Coming  
**The Harvest:** (Rev. 14:14-20) Removal of the wicked and servants of the Antichrist  
**144,000 on Mount Zion:** (Rev. 14:1-5) The remnant of Jews who rebuild the kingdom of Israel

Millennial Reign

- **THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM OF CHRIST:** (Rev. 20:1-10) The establishment of Christ' earthly kingdom.
  - **The Wedding Feast:** (Rev. 19:9-10, Luke 14:15-23) Bride - Jerusalem, groom - Christ, and honored guests - Saints
  - Satan bound and thrown into the abyss.
  - Saints rule with Christ for a thousand years.
  - Satan Released from the abyss to go about deceiving the nations. The Battle of Gog and Magog.

— **THE GENERAL RESURRECTION:** (Rev. 20:11-15) The Resurrection and Great White Throne Judgment.

— **A NEW HEAVEN, NEW EARTH, AND NEW JERUSALEM:** (Rev. 21, 22:1-6)

**Appendix:** (Apologetics)

- King David's Throne
- Great Tribulation Misnomer
- King David's Throne
- Interpretation Guidelines
- Israel & the Church
- The Olivet Discourse
- Pretribulation: Rebuttal
- Progressive Parallelism
- Progressive Revelation
- The Resurrections
- Is Satan Bound
- Scripture 2 Scripture
- Theological Viewpoints
- Time: God's Viewpoint

# DANIEL'S 70<sup>TH</sup> WEEK: DETAILED OUTLINE

(a) Transition from Church to Millennial Age			
The First Six Seals <i>(The beginning of labor pains)</i>		The Seventh Seal	
		The First Six Trumpets <i>(The final warning)</i>	The Seventh Trumpet The Seven Vials of Wrath
<sup>(d)</sup> The Great Tribulation of the Church		<sup>(e)</sup> The Church in Heaven	
← <sup>(d)</sup> 1 <sup>st</sup> Seal Broken →      ← <sup>(e)</sup> 6 <sup>th</sup> Seals Broken → ← <sup>(f)</sup> Coming of Christ in the Clouds (Rapture) → ← <sup>(g)</sup> Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse → ← <sup>(h)</sup> Great Distress upon the Earth → ← <sup>(i)</sup> Persecution of Christian Saints → ← <sup>(j)</sup> Antichrist Grows in Stature →		← <sup>(k)</sup> The Church takes residence and prepares for the Wedding Feast →	
World	Daniel's 70 <sup>th</sup> Week		
Nations against Nation <sup>(l)</sup>	<sup>(m)</sup> 1 <sup>st</sup> Half of the Week (3 ½ Years)		<sup>(n)</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Half of the Week (3 ½ Years)
	<sup>(o)</sup> Rule of the Antichrist		<sup>(v)</sup> Day of the Lord - Wrath of God
	← <sup>(p)</sup> Antichrist Consolidates Power & Authority → ← <sup>(q)</sup> Antichrist Sign Covenant with the Many → ← <sup>(r)</sup> Relative Peace among Nations → ← <sup>(s)</sup> Israel Re institute Sacrifices & Offerings → ← <sup>(t)</sup> Israel Lives in Relative Peace → ← <sup>(u)</sup> Antichrist Breaks Covenant →		← <sup>(v)</sup> 7 <sup>th</sup> Seal Broken →      ← 6 <sup>th</sup> Bowl of Wrath → ← <sup>(w)</sup> Seven Trumpets & Seven Bowls of Wrath → ← <sup>(x)</sup> Antichrist gathers for Armageddon → ← <sup>(y)</sup> Christ Returns w/ Armies →
	← <sup>(u)</sup> Flight → ← <sup>(v)</sup> Abomination of Desolation → ← <sup>(w)</sup> Great Distress upon the Earth → ← <sup>(x)</sup> Antichrist Persecutes Christians →		← <sup>(z)</sup> Time of Jacob's Trouble → ← <sup>(aa)</sup> Two Witnesses in Jerusalem → ← <sup>(ab)</sup> Sealing of the 144,000 from Israel → ← <sup>(ac)</sup> Spiritual Israel Hidden in the Wilderness → ← <sup>(ad)</sup> Antichrist Persecutes Jews →
	← ~40 to 7 years from 1 <sup>st</sup> Seal to siege of Jerusalem →		← 1,335 days Siege of Jerusalem to establishment of Temple service →
Church	← Antichrist maintains covenant ~ 3.5 yrs →		← 1,290 days Siege of Jerusalem to Armageddon →
Age	← Antichrist authority over the saints 42 months →		← 1,260 days Abomination to Armageddon →
			45

7<sup>th</sup> Bowl, Armageddon, Kingdom, Marriage Feast

- (a) **Transition from Church to Millennial Age:** Encompasses all events from Jesus Christ accepting the scroll with seven seals until He physically establishes His Millennial Kingdom on earth.
- (b) **The Great Tribulation of the Church:** Encompasses all events from the breaking of the 1st Seal on the scroll with seven seals until the translation of the Christian saint to heaven.
- (c) **The Church in Heaven:** Encompasses all events from the translation of the Christian saints to heaven until those saints accompany Jesus Christ during His Second Return to take physical possession of earth.
- (d) **1st Seal Broken:** Jesus Christ breaks the 1st Seal on the scroll with seven seals (Revelation 6:1) and the "one who now holds it back" is "taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Transition from the current age to the future age beings.
- (e) **6th Seal Broken:** Jesus Christ breaks the 6th Seal on the scroll with seven seals (Revelation 6:12) and the coming of Christ in the clouds to gather His Christian elect – the Rapture (Thessalonians 4:16-17, Matthew 24:30-31).
- (f) **Coming of Christ in the Clouds:** The translation of redeemed Christian to heaven – the Rapture (Matthew 24:40-41, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-6, John 14:1-3, Acts 1:9-11, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Philippians 3:20-21).
- (g) **Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse:** The breaking of the first four seals on the scroll with seven leading to conquest, war, famine, and plagues primarily the result of man's wickedness and cold-heartedness (Revelation 6:1-7, Matthew 24:4-8, Luke 21:8-11, Mark 13:5-8).
- (h) **Great Distress upon the Earth:** False messiahs, false prophets, wars and rumors of wars, nation against nation, famines, earthquakes, wickedness (Matthew 24:4-8, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 2 Peter 3:3-7).
- (i) **Persecution of Christian Saints:** Christian witnesses brought before rulers, persecuted, flogged, put to death, hated by all, apostasy, love grown cold, betrayal, preach the gospel to whole world (Matthew 24:9-14, Luke 21:12-19, Mark 13:9-13)
- (j) **Antichrist Grows in Stature:** The Antichrist is empower by Satan and grows in stature, power, and authority (Revelation 6:1, 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7, Revelation 13:1-4)
- (k) **The Church in heaven takes residence and prepares for wedding feast:** The bride, Jerusalem, prepares in heaven for the wedding feast. (John 14:1-4, Matthew 22:1-4, Matthew 25:1-13, Ephesians 5:22-32, Revelation 19:6-9)
- (l) **Nation Against Nation:** A time of conflict and conflagration between nations prior to the Antichrist assuming authority over all nations. (Matthew 24:6-7, Mark 13:7-8, Revelation 6:1-4)
- (m) **1st Half of the Week:** (3 ½ Years) Time of relative peace between nations and Israel (Daniel 9:20-27)
- (n) **2nd Half of the Week:** (3 ½ Years) The Antichrist's covenant broken, and the dragon pursues Israel. (Daniel 9:20-27)
- (o) **Rule of the Antichrist:** Antichrist consolidates power and assumes authority over all people and nations. (Daniel 7, 9:20-27, 11:36-45, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12, Revelation 12, 13, 17, Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14)
- (p) **Antichrist Sign Covenant with Many:** A peace treaty between warring nations including Israel. (Daniel 9:27)
- (q) **Relative Peace among Nations:** Nations united under covenant of Antichrist; Christians targeted as scapegoats.
- (r) **Israel Re institute Sacrifices & Offerings:** Third Temple rebuilt, covenant with Antichrist permits use (Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12)
- (s) **Antichrist Breaks Covenant:** Jerusalem conquered, Abomination of Desolation. (Daniel 9:27, Luke 21:20, Matthew 24:15)
- (t) **Flight from Judea:** Jerusalem conquered, Jews flee Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-24, Matthew 24:15-23, Mark 13:14-20)
- (u) **Sealing of the 144,000:** Spiritual remnant of Israel sealed & hidden in wilderness (Revelation 7:1-8, 12)
- (v) **Wrath of God:** Day of the Lord – 7th Seal Broken, 7 Trumpets, and 7 Bowls of Wrath (Revelation 8-11, 15-16, 19)
- (w) **Antichrist gathers for Armageddon:** 6<sup>th</sup> Bowl of Wrath (Revelation 16:12-16, Revelation 19:11-21)
- (x) **Christ Returns w/ Armies:** The physical coming of Jesus Christ as King and conqueror. (2 Thessalonians 2:8, Rev. 19:11-21)
- (y) **Time of Jacob's Trouble:** Israel regathered & hidden; Jews persecuted. (Jeremiah 30, Daniel 7:21-25, Rev. 7:1-8, 12, 14:1-5)
- (z) **Two Witnesses:** Elijah and Enoch or Moses witness in Jerusalem (Malachi 4:5, Zechariah 4, Revelation 11:1-14)

## THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

The information provided with the book of Revelation is incomplete – it does not contain all the information necessary for a complete portrait. This is not an uncommon trait within biblical scripture... many passages omit information when they assume the listener is already familiar with the material or the information does not directly impact the lesson being taught. For example, in Matthew 24:15 Jesus does not provide a detailed description of the “abomination of desolation” – he assumes his listeners are aware of Daniel’s prophecies. Similarly, John’s Revelation relies on other scripture to fill in many details.

Jesus Christ described many events that will occur at the end of this age within his Mount Olivet Discourse detailed within Matthew, Mark, and John. In conjunction with the book of Revelation, we can acquire a fairly detailed outline of the events at the close of the current age:

Matthew	Luke	Mark
<b>Beginning of Birth Pains</b>		
False teachers, preachers, & prophets. Wars and rumors of war. Nation against nation Kingdom against kingdom. Famines and earthquakes. Elect handed persecuted & killed.  Elect hated by all nations.  Love grows cold because of lawlessness.  Many led into sin, betrayal, and hatred. Gospel preached to entire earth.	False messiahs. Wars and rumors of war. Nation against nation Kingdom against kingdom. Earthquakes, famines, and plagues. Elect seized, persecuted, & killed. Handed over to synagogues and prisons. Elect will be hated by everyone.  Betrayal by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends.  Time for Christians to witness.  Claims that the end is near. Terrifying signs in the heavens.	False messiahs. Wars and rumors of war. Nation against nation Kingdom against kingdom. Earthquakes and famines.  Handed over to synagogues.  Hated by everyone because of His name. Brother against brother and a father hid child & child against parent. Witness to governors and kings.  Gospel preached to all nations.
<b>Signs of Impending Desolation</b>		
Daniel’s abomination of desolation. Time to flee. Greater suffering than any that has ever been.	Jerusalem surrounded by armies. Time to flee. Jerusalem trampled by Gentiles until time of the Gentiles fulfilled.	Abomination of desolation. Time to flee. Greater suffering than any that has ever been.
<b>Caution about Deception of the Elect</b>		
Time will be cut short. False messiahs and false prophets. Performs great signs and wonders. Comes like lightning from the east and flashes to the west. The eagles will gather wherever the corpse is.		Time will be cut short. False messiahs and false prophets Performs signs and wonders to deceive.
<b>Signs of the Imminent Return</b>		
After the suffering of those days. Sun and moon will go dark. Stars will fall & heavens shaken. The sign of the Messiah will be seen in the heavens. All tribe will mourn. They will see the Messiah in the clouds with power. Angels will gather his elect from the four winds.	Signs in sun, moon, and stars. Fear from expectation... the powers of the heavens will be shaken.  Nations in distress for signs in seas. They will see the Messiah in the clouds with power.	After the suffering of those days. Sun and the moon go dark. Stars will fall & heavens shaken. Everyone will see the Messiah in the clouds with power.  Angels will gather his elect from the four winds.

## THE OLIVET DISCOURSE AND REVELATION

The Olivet Discourse closely parallels the breaking of the first six seals on the scroll with seven seals – Revelation 6-7. Although most scholars deny any relationship, it seems self-evident. This parallelism enables us to view Great Tribulation events from a second point of view:

The Olivet Discourse	The Scroll with Seven Seals
<b>Seal 1: Conquest and False Messiahs</b>	
<b>Matthew 24:4-5, 22:</b> ...For many will come in my name, claiming, “I am the Christ,” and will deceive many... For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect...	<b>Revelation 6:2:</b> ...there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.
<b>Seal 2: War</b>	
<b>Matthew 24:6-7:</b> You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom	<b>Revelation 6:4:</b> Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.
<b>Seal 3: Famine</b>	
<b>Matthew 24:7:</b> There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains...	<b>Revelation 6:5-6:</b> ...there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand... “A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages...”
<b>Seal 4: Death</b>	
<b>Matthew 24:22:</b> If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.	<b>Revelation 6:8:</b> ...here before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.
<b>Seal 5: Martyrs Call for Revenge</b>	
<b>Luke 21:12, 16-17:</b> .. they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors... You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me.	<b>Revelation 6:9-10:</b> ...I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?”
<b>Seal 6: Cosmic Disturbances</b>	
<b>Matthew 24:29:</b> Immediately after the distress of those days, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.	<b>Revelation 6:12-14:</b> The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up...
<b>Seal 6: Nations See Christ &amp; Mourn</b>	
<b>Matthew 24:30:</b> At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.	<b>Revelation 6:15-16:</b> Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!”
<b>Seal 6+: Jewish Remnant Gathered on Earth</b>	
<b>Matthew 24:30:</b> And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.	<b>Revelation 7:3-4:</b> “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.
<b>Seal 6+: Christians Saints Raptured to Heaven</b>	
<b>Matthew 24:30:</b> And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.	<b>Revelation 7:9:</b> After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands... These are they who have come out of the great tribulation

## A FICTIONAL NARRATIVE

The following narrative is purely fictional with events having little or no scriptural support. It is provided to the reader visualize what **might** happen, **not what will happen**.

This fictional narrative is based largely upon the ideology of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, "Anyone who loves freedom and justice must strive for the annihilation of the Zionist regime in order to pave the way for world justice and freedom."<sup>11</sup> There is no intent to cause offense to peace loving people of any religious, cultural, or ethnic background. It is my fervent prayer that all come to know God and find peace and redemption within His message to mankind.

1. **BREAKING OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> SEAL: CONQUEST:** (*Revelations 6:1-2*) The "restrainer" is moved out of the way and the transition from the current age to the next begins (*2 Thessalonians. 2:6-7*). The Antichrist is empowered by Satan and begins to grow in power and stature (*Revelation 13:6*). Proud and arrogant leaders rise to positions of authority especially in the Middle East (*Matthew 24:6*). Efforts by Israel to ensure its survival and security are increasingly frowned upon by the global community (*Psalms 83:2-4*). The frequency and influence of false messiahs and false prophets increases exponentially (*Matthew 24:5, 11*). Christianity and their beliefs are increasingly considered radical, archaic, and socially unacceptable (*Matthew 24:9-14*). Self-interest reigns supreme in the absence of moral codes.
2. **BREAKING OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> SEAL: WAR:** (*Revelations 6:3-4*) The proud and arrogant leaders form an alliance and strike Israel (*Psalms 83:508*). Although initially a regional conflict, global powers step in as the tides of battle ebbs and flows. With focus on the Middle East, other regional conflicts – Pakistan and India, North Korea and South Korea, and Vietnam and China – flare. Some rogue nations may resort to use of tactical nuclear weapons on a limited scale. (*Matthew 24:6-7*) Trade sanctions and embargoes are employed, shipping lanes and ports become hazardous, and global trade comes to a virtual standstill. (*Matthew 24:7*) The arrogance of the Christianized West is banner song among non-Western nations and fuels acts of barbarism on its own citizens and nonmilitary targets.
3. **BREAKING OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> SEAL: FAMINE:** (*Revelations 6:5-6*) In the absence of significant global trade, devastation to transportation and infrastructure, and damage to the environment, economies sputter and scarcity permeates societies (*Matthew 24:7*). Taxation to support war efforts coupled with rampant inflation compounds the effects of scarcity, especially food stuffs. Because of vigilance and frugal lifestyles, Christians fair relatively well. Moderate leaders are toppled by civil unrest, and they are replaced with radical activists advancing unrealistic promises (*earthquakes: Matthew 24:7*) and shifting the blame for social and economic ills on the "radical Christian extremists" who "encouraged Israel to attack her peaceful neighbors" (*Matthew 24:9-12*).
4. **BREAKING OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> SEAL: DEATH:** (*Revelations 6:7-8*) Death and disease become rampant through war, malnourishment, disease, and repressive regimes (wild beasts). Infrastructure lies in ruins. Monetary systems have collapsed. Sound military strategy is replaced by religious fanaticism... humans are thrown into battle with little equipment, supplies, and ammunition. Marshall Law is declared throughout the world. Christians are blamed for shortages of food, medicine, and clothing; authorities assert that "radical Christian extremists" are promoting death and mayhem in order to hasten the return of their Hebrew Messiah. The prevailing attitude among the young is "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." Rioting and vandalism become widespread. Dead bodies are collected and burned daily to suppress contagion.

**THE COVENANT WITH THE MANY: RISE OF ANTICHRIST:** (*Daniel 9:27*) People, nations, and armies are exhausted. Miraculously, Israel has survived the onslaught and exists as a permanent military encampment. In the midst of conflict, they have built the third Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount; they intend to remove the Islamic Dome of the Rock to make way for the Temple's outer court. But a young charismatic leader arises from the North to promote a seven year armistice between Israel and her Arab neighbors:

*Let us rest our armies and weapons for a season so that we might turn our energies to feeding and clothing our young. Burn your sacrifices and incense to your God but let the Rock lay barren for a time. Let our women and children mourn their dead this night; and when the sun rises in the morning, we will talk of future things.*

An uneasy peace emerges, and the world is able to momentarily turn from war to rebuilding its infrastructure, its trade, and its monetary system. Domestic disruption continues but diminishes as the properties of "radical Christian extremist" are confiscated and redistributed to the masses.

<sup>11</sup> Joanna Paraszczuk, "Ahmadinejad: World forces must annihilate Israel," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 2, 2012. <<http://www.jpost.com/IranianThreat/News/Article.aspx?id=279864>> August 28, 2012.

**PEACEFUL INTERLUDE: RULE OF THE ANTICHRIST:** (*Revelations 13*) Through his charisma and the diplomacy of his religious adviser, the young leader guides the nations out of the darkness of war. An international bartering system replaces monetary systems and permits the trade regional resources necessary to rebuild civilization: grain, crop seed, medicine, labor, livestock, fertilizer, energy, textile, and other commodities. Nations tap into the system enabling rationing of supplies in exchange for products and labor... local farmer and goods markets are forbidden. The charismatic young leader is viewed as a Godsend by the masses.

Muslims view Jewish Temple service in such close to the Dome of the Rock as profane and an affront to Islam; they hotly strain at their leash desiring end the atrocity. The charismatic young leader keeps the peace by quietly promising his Arab allies that they will strike when the time is right. He silently siphon the profits from the trading system exchanging food, clothing, and medicine for weapons of war.

5. **BREAKING OF THE 5<sup>TH</sup> SEAL: MARTYRDOM OF THE SAINTS:** (*Revelations 6:9-11*) Despite relative peace, shortages of vital commodities such as food, clean water, clothing, and shelter remain critically low causing widespread rioting and looting. Civil authorities, seeking appease the masses, institute rigid anti-Christianity laws that (1) bans confessing Christians from holding government, professional, or public positions, attending public schools, or receiving treatment from publicly supported medical facilities; (2) permits the search, upon "reasonably suspicious cause," of private property and seizure of any "communal" property, weapon, or "excessive" supplies of food or clothing; (3) forbids the publication or distribution of "unauthorized" religious or political materials; (4) prohibits the private assembly of two or more individuals not related by close kinship; and (5) permits the confiscation of any land, property, or structure considered "vital" to reconstruction efforts.

Local authorities, in an effort to quell local uprisings, are granted permission to perform public summary executions for "any individual who publically displays intolerance for a peaceful society striving for the 'enlightenment of humanity' through mutual aspiration, tolerance, and cooperation." Local authorities may grant a reprieve to any individual who publically repents from their transgressions against society, renounces any philosophical or religious doctrine harmful to peaceful coexistence of mankind, and publicly demonstrates remorse through a permanent "exhibition" of loyalty to the "enlightenment of humanity."

**THE MIDDLE OF THE WEEK: ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION:** (*Daniel 9:27, Daniel 11:36-45, Luke 21:20-24*) Radical Arabs, dressed as Hasidic Jews, bombing the Dome of the Rock causing extensive exterior damage; Israeli officials enter the Dome area to assess the damage and conduct an investigation. Arab nations are enraged and return of authority to manage the Temple Mount. The government of Israel refuses.

Under the guidance of the charismatic young leader, Arab armies strike Israel with three primary objectives: (a) decapitate Israeli leadership through the use of mujahedeen forces, (b) avoid Israeli military strongholds, and (c) seize control of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Within hours, the armies lay siege to Jerusalem. Israeli citizens are captured, imprisoned, deported, and executed. Many escape the city through a labyrinth of underground tunnels. Levitical Priests hide within the catacombs beneath the Temple Mount. Jerusalem succumbs to the siege and the Arab armies turn their focus on the remaining Israeli military encampments.

In an internationally televised event from the Temple Mount, the charismatic young leader is seen entering the Jewish Temple, and upon his exit, he announces from the Inner Court:

*Humanity has suffered long enough from the bloody hands of Zionist pigs and their whoring lapdogs. Their filthy spew has contaminated the enlightenment of humanity for far too long. The day of the Mahdi has come; immorality, oppression and injustice will cease. Find them, kill them, and purge the land from this heinous plague.*

6. **BREAKING OF THE 6<sup>TH</sup> SEAL: RAPTURE/SEALING:** (*Revelations 6:12-17, 7*) A calm creeps over the earth, the winds do not blow, and birds do not sing. A slow, building rumble penetrates the stillness, and darkness descends. A star emerges from the east growing in brilliance and magnitude, and then it explodes as if the sun itself had burst. Humans fall to the ground, they shield their eyes, their knees tremble, and their hearts quiver; the earth trembles violently and fear permeates the air. A pillar of fire descends over the Temple in Jerusalem purging the interior with tongues of fire. Christians stand and gaze at the heavens while the Jew kneels in silent prayer.

A grave darkness and heavy silence encases the earth... the only sound a muffled weeping of small children and their young mothers.

**To Be Continued...**

7. **BREAKING OF THE 7<sup>TH</sup> SEAL: THE SEVEN JUDGMENT TRUMPETS:** *(Revelations 8:1-5)*
- **TWO WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM: TESTIMONY:** *(Revelation 11:1-6)*
  - **TRUMPETS 1, 2, 3, 4: JUDGMENT:** *(Revelation 8:7-12)*
  - **TRUMPETS 5 & 6: THE FIRST WOES:** *(Revelation 8:13, 9:1-21)*
  - **THE 7<sup>TH</sup> TRUMPET: THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH:** *(Revelation 11:15-19,15, 16:1)*
    - **BOWLS 1, 2, 3, 4: WRATH:** *(Revelation 16:9)*
    - **BOWLS 5 & 6 : THE GATHERING:** *(Revelation 16:10-16)*
    - **THE 7<sup>TH</sup> BOWL: ARMAGEDDON:** *(Revelation 16:17-21, 19:11-21)*

**THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM:** *(Revelation 20:1-10)*

- ✓ **THE WEDDING FEAST:** *(Revelation 19:9-10, Luke 14:15-23)*
- ✓ **SATAN BOUND:**
- ✓ **RULE OF THE SAINTS:**
- ✓ **KINGDOM INHABITANTS:**
- ✓ **ISRAEL:**
- ✓ **THE FINAL BATTLE:**

**THE GENERAL RESURRECTION:** *(Revelation 20:11-15)*

**THE WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT:** *(Revelation 20:11-15)*

**THE NEW HEAVEN & EARTH:** *(Revelation 21, 22:1-6)*

# INTERPRETATION GUIDELINES

## INTRODUCTION

The modern Christian Church is far from a monolithic, unified body of believers but rather a diverse set of individuals adhering to a wide array of beliefs and customs. According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity there are some 41,000 Christian denominations worldwide.<sup>12</sup> Most Christians, I assume, are members of the denomination of their parents or join the denomination that first led them to Christ. Others select a denomination based on a wide array of criteria including core beliefs, youth programs, location, size, facilities, economic similarities, ethnic composition, missionary efforts, congregational age, and minister's personality.

While diversity addresses individual cultural, economic, and personal needs, it is also divisive leading to confusion, conflict, and divergent doctrine, but God's message is coherent, harmonious, and unified. While we celebrate secular diversity, scripture directs us to be of one mind, one heart, and one voice:

**Acts 4:32:** All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. (NIV)

**1 Corinthians 1:10:** I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. (NIV)

**Romans 15:5-6:** May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV)

When we read the Bible, we should strive for an understanding that is consistent with God's intended message avoiding moral, cultural, and social relativism – the Bible should not be forced to conform to modern thought or values. Instead, modern thought and values should conform to the universal, static thought and values of the Bible. Does this mean that we should enslave our enemies? No, absolutely not. The New Testament did not teach that we should own slaves but rather we should become slaves to the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Many fundamentalists view "interpretation" as an evil; the scriptures, they assert, "mean what they say." A severely rigid, literal approach is problematic as it ignores the Bible as a literary masterpiece filled with the beauty of language. On the opposite spectrum, allegorical interpretations examine passages as if they were all figurative even if the passage contains no figurative language – it seeks to find the "spiritual" meaning "beyond those persons, things, and events explicitly mentioned in the text."<sup>13</sup> This method is problematic as it can easily add meaning that was never intended. The Bible is neither inflexibly literal nor invariably mysterious.

It is inevitable that each of us will derive a slightly different meaning from an identical text. Each of us come from differing backgrounds, possess differing frames of reference, and experienced differing joys and suffering. However, our differences do grant us an artistic license – an ability to distort wording, grammar, and language. We should not stylize God's portrait, the Word of God.

<sup>12</sup> "Global Christianity," Center for the Study of Global Christianity, ND. <[http://www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Religious\\_Affiliation/Christian/ChristianityAppendixB.pdf](http://www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Religious_Affiliation/Christian/ChristianityAppendixB.pdf)> August 28, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> "allegorical interpretation". Encyclopædia Britannica. 2012. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/16068/allegorical-interpretation>> August 28, 2012.

## A PLAIN READING

Jesus Christ's disciples were not "learned men." They were fishermen, tax collectors, physicians, and tent makers. Jesus Christ's primary audience was not the experts in the law, Sadducees, and Pharisees but the downtrodden, the poor, the lame, the beggar, the sick, and the sinner. Biblical scripture is the only source of for the inspired, infallible Word of God, not the apocrypha, not the writings of the Church, not scholarly commentary, and certainly not academic critiques. The Bible is not an easy work, but neither is it an intellectual academic dissertation. Our first and primary approach, therefore, is a plain reading... What would the passage mean to a common and ordinary person?

**James 1:18:** He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. (NIV)

What is a plain reading? A plain reading assumes that a biblical passage is not a cryptic message written in secret code nor is it a technical manual written in a clear, precise manner. Rather scripture is a piece of literature and must be read as a piece of literature examining purpose and setting, audience and context, genre and language, and grammar and terminology. The Bible is also a work of volumes, sixty-six volumes with some passages requiring foreknowledge and understanding of other passages. Bible verses mean what they say, and we have a responsibility to figure out what they actually say... not what we want them to say:

### Passage Analysis

1. **PURPOSE:** Why was this passage written? What is the intended purpose? What is hoped to be achieved? What promises are offered? What threats are made?
2. **SETTING:** What were the times, seasons, places, and circumstances? What had been occurring before the message was delivered? What will occur after the message?
3. **AUDIENCE:** To whom was this passage directed and under what circumstance? What information do they need? What information do they already understand?
4. **CONTEXT:** What was the theme of the chapter? What is discussed in the previous passages? What is discussed in the next passages? What is the theme of the chapter? Of the book?
5. **GENRE:** Is the passage a song, hymn, story, sermon, letter, prophecy, argument, parable, history, or exposition?
6. **LANGUAGE:** Is the language literal, figurative, commanding, mournful, joyful, pleading, or judgmental?
7. **GRAMMAR:** What is the subject, verb, predicate? What function do the key words serve? How are the words related to each other?
8. **TERMINOLOGY:** What is the denotation and connotation? What word was used in the original language? How else is it used within the Bible?
9. **RELATED PASSAGES:** What other verses address the same issues? What verses utilize similar words or patterns?
10. **WHAT THE VERSE ACTUALLY SAYS:** What is the surface meaning of the verse? What does it say before we attach any spiritual or deeper meanings?

Naturally, we can and should read the Bible for pleasure, for comfort, and for inspiration. These readings do not require complex analysis. However, if we are developing doctrine, understandings, or belief constructs, then we should go beyond a cursory scanning of the text; we should take the time to study.

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## **SAMPLE STUDY: THE FLOOD ANALOGY**

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The allusion to Noah and the Flood within the Olivet Discourse is often misinterpreted in at least two ways. First, some utilize the analogy in partial support of the belief that the Rapture will be a complete surprise. Second, some utilize the analogy in partial support of the belief that only “saved” individuals will initially inhabit the Millennial Kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

**Matthew 24:36-39:** “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. (NIV)

### **Passage Analysis**

1. **PURPOSE:** To illustrate “No one knows the day or hour.”
2. **SETTING:** Olivet Discourse following Jesus’ visit to the Temple prior to His passion.
3. **AUDIENCE:** Christ’s disciples – Messianic Jews who possessed a limited understanding of the kingdom of God and the sacrificial offerings of Jesus Christ.
4. **CONTEXT:** In response the disciples’ questions, “When will the Temple be destroyed?” “What are the signs of Christ’s return,” and “What are the signs of the end of the age?”

Within the allusion, all of humanity, except for Noah and his immediate family, were excessively wicked, “every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.” When the flood came, they were caught off-guard and destroyed by the flood waters.

5. **GENRE:** Discourse – a discussion; a monologue between a teacher and His students.
6. **LANGUAGE:** Allusion to the days of Noah; an analogy – a comparison.
7. **GRAMMAR:** Preface, “No one knows the day or hour written,” in present tense. A switch to future tense, “coming of the Son of Man.” Then a comparison of past conditions, “days before the flood,” to future conditions, “That is how it will be.”
8. **TERMINOLOGY:** **knows:** *eidó:* be aware, behold, consider, perceive.<sup>15</sup> **They:** pronoun referring to the people who were eating, drinking, and marrying.
9. **RELATED PASSAGES:** Genesis 6-9; Mark 13:32; Act 1:7; Luke 17:29-30  
**Acts 1:7:** He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. (NIV) **Luke 17:29-30:** But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. (NIV)
10. **WHAT THE VERSE ACTUALLY SAYS:** In the days immediately prior to Christ’s returns, the people who are wicked will be going about their routine daily activities and will be caught off-guard by Christ’s return.

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<sup>14</sup> The most comprehensive explanation of the view that I have found to date may be found from Allen Beechick, “Who Will Populate the Millennium?” Rapture Solutions, 1999. <<http://www.rapturesolution.com/beeckick/Book/Mill.htm>> July 25, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> “eidó,” Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/1492.htm>> August 29, 2012.

This passage is narrowly focused on the “knowing” of the day and hour of Christ’s return. It does not address the manner of Christ’s coming, the manner of destruction, or the characteristics of those who will be saved. Those issues are addressed elsewhere, and it would be inappropriate to draw any conclusions concerning those issues from this passage.

- **DOES THIS ALLUSION SUPPORT THE BELIEF THAT THE RAPTURE WILL BE A SUDDEN SURPRISE TO ALL OF MANKIND?**

No, absolutely not. Noah and his immediate where not caught off-guard by the flood.

First, verse 36 is the preface to the allusion indicating the topic to be discussed and is written in present tense “knows” indicating that at that time, the time when the words were spoken, no one knew the day or hour. Verse 37 is written in the future tense “will be” indicating that in the future the “knowing” part is comparable to the days of Noah. Although there are no discernible conjunctions joining these two verses, some people read the verse as if they say:

*No one knows the day or hour of His coming, not even the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father. The same will be true in the future, and as in the days of Noah...*

This is an error. We must not add or detract from biblical texts. The allusion, therefore, compares the “knowing” at the time of the second coming to the “knowing” at time of Noah, not to the “knowing” when Jesus Christ spoke the words.

Second, when God instructed Noah to build the ark, He told Noah specifically what was going to happen (Genesis 6:13-21), and it took Noah and his family some 98 years to build the ark<sup>16</sup> and seven days to load the ark (Genesis 7:4). Certainly, Noah might not have known the exact “day or the hour” during the years it took to build the Ark, but he and his family certainly knew “about what would happen.” When they started to load the animals, they certainly knew the timing was very, very close.

Who were the people who know nothing about what would happen? They were the people who were “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.” They were the people who were taken away by the flood. It was the unbelievers, the wicked, who were caught off guard, not the righteous, the blameless, and the ones who walk with God (Genesis 6:9). Instead of supporting the belief that all will be surprised by the Rapture, this passage tends to indicate that the true believer will have an awareness of what will soon occur (Matthew 24:32-35).

- **DOES THIS ALLUSION SUPPORT A BELIEF THAT ONLY “SAVED” INDIVIDUALS WILL INITIALLY INHABIT THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM?**

No, absolutely not.

First, we need to remember that the focus of this passage is the “knowing” of the “day and hour.” It does not focus who was saved and who was damned during Noah’s days much less who will survive the turbulence of the latter days and initially inhabit the Millennial Kingdom. Those topics are addressed elsewhere in scripture.

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<sup>16</sup> “How Long did it Take Noah to Build the Ark?” God’s Point of View, ND. <[http://www.godspointofview.com/public/qanda/how\\_long\\_to\\_build\\_the\\_ark.htm](http://www.godspointofview.com/public/qanda/how_long_to_build_the_ark.htm)> July 25, 2012.

Second, if we are to consider the flood as an analogy of the last days, then we must do so very reluctantly and carefully. In this instance, the story of the flood tends to contradict the belief that only the “saved” will initially inhabit the Millennial Kingdom:

There were eight people who entered the Ark and were saved from the flood:

**Genesis 6:18:** But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you [Noah] and your sons [Shem, Ham, and Japheth] and your wife and your sons’ wives with you. (NIV)

The scripture indicates that Noah was righteous and blameless; it remains silent on the others:

**Genesis 6:9-10:** This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. (NIV)

**Genesis 7:1:** The Lord then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. (NIV)

It might be safe to assume that the wives and sons supported Noah building the Ark and perhaps contributed to the effort – they were obedient. However, it would be a stretch to conclude that they were “righteous” or “saved” in God’s eyes.

The story of Ham tends to indicate that he was not “righteous” but rather wicked and accursed:

**Genesis 9:21-22, 24-25:** When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father’s nakedness and told his two brothers outside... When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, “Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.” (NIV)

Certainly, Noah was “righteous” and could be considered “saved.” Ham, however, probably should not be considered one of the righteous. The individuals saved from the flood could be considered “obedient” to Noah, but it would be a stretch to consider them “saved.”

We should carefully examine biblical passages to determine what they actually say and not force upon them a meaning that was never intended. A “plain reading” of biblical passages requires us to consider purpose and setting, audience and context, genre and language, and grammar and terminology. We should be careful not to read too little or too much into a passage – we should play the role of Goldilocks striving for an interpretation that is just right.

## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

I taught high school literature classes for twenty years and found it difficult to teach students how to correctly apply figurative language. Students were accustomed to reading textbooks – fact based writing containing little, if any, figurative speech. With effort, students began to “see” the pictures painted by the author and began to understand that there is more to language than the words on a page.

**FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE DEFINITION:** Figurative language is a purposeful departure from the literal meaning of words and phrases in order to achieve a particularly vivid, meaningful, or imaginative image. In brief, figurative language “paints” a picture to convey meaning beyond the literal definition of the words – “A picture is worth a thousand words.”

**TYPES OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE:** Many consider the Bible a book of “symbols.” However, figurative language within scripture goes well beyond the use of simple symbols. Common types include:

1. **ALLEGORY:** a poem, play, picture, etc, in which the apparent meaning of the characters and events is used to symbolize a deeper moral or spiritual meaning.<sup>17</sup>

**Matthew 25:1-2:** At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise... (NIV)

*Instructs us to be continually filled with spiritual matters in preparation for meeting the Lord.*

2. **ALLUSION:** a reference; an incidental mention of something located outside the passage, either directly or by implication such as referring to Christ’s millennial throne as the throne of King David.

**Matthew 24:37:** As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

*References Noah and the great flood of the Old Testament.*

3. **ANALOGY:** a comparison made to show such a similarity such as comparing the heart and a pump.

**Matthew 24:37:** As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

*Asks the reader to apply the traits of the days of the great flood to the days of Christ’s coming.*

4. **EUPHEMISM:** an inoffensive word or phrase substituted for one considered offensive or hurtful such as using “dearly departed” for the dead.

**1 Corinthians 15:51:** Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – (NIV)

*Uses the term “sleep” in place of the term “die.”*

5. **HYPERBOLE:** an extravagant statement or figure of speech not intended to be taken literally such as claiming that you are as hungry as a horse.

**Psalms 119:136:** Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed. (NIV)

*Although tears may flow down one’s cheek, they do not flow with the same volume as a stream.*

6. **METAPHOR/SIMILE:** a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action that it does not literally denote in order to imply a resemblance such as “he is a lion in battle.”

**1 Corinthians 3:16:** Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? (NIV)

*Compares the human body with that of the Jewish Temple.*

<sup>17</sup> Definitions from Collins English Dictionary: Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition. <<http://dictionary.reference.com/>> August 29, 2012.

7. **METONYMY**: the substitution of a word referring to an attribute for the thing that is meant such as the use of the crown to refer to a monarch.

**1 Corinthians 11:26**: For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (NIV)

*The cup represents much more than the wine of the Last Communion or the spilling of Christ's blood. It represents all of the distrust, hatred, suffering, persecution, and sacrifices of Jesus Christ.*

8. **PARABLE**: a short story that uses familiar events to illustrate a religious or ethical point such as the Parable of the Talents.

**Matthew 24:45-46**: Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. (NIV)

*The moral of the story – the kingdom of heaven is worth sacrificing everything we own.*

9. **PARADOX**: a statement or proposition that seems self-contradictory or absurd but in reality expresses a possible truth such as "I know that I know nothing."

**Matthew 10:39**: Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (NIV)

*One would think that losing one's life would result in total loss – death.*

10. **PERSONIFICATION**: the representation of an abstract quality or idea in the form of a person or creature such as "The wind sung through the leaves."

**Isaiah 55:12**: You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. (NIV)

*Mountain and hills are not physically capable of singing, nor are trees and field capable of clapping.*

11. **SYMBOL**: a material object used to represent something abstract such as white representing purity.

**Revelation 2:4**: If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. (NIV)

*A lampstand is a bearer of light and is symbolic of Christ. The church bears witness to Christ.*

12. **SYNECDOCHE**: a part is used for the whole or the whole for a part, the special for the general or the general for the special such as ten sails representing ten ships.

**Acts 27:37**: And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. (KJV)

*The term "souls" represent the entire person – body, mind, soul, and spirit.*

**APPLICATION OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**: When possible, figurative language should be taken at face value, read plainly. If we say, "She has a heart of gold," we readily understand that we are not literally referring to the woman's heart, but her display love, compassion, and charity. We also readily understand that her heart is not literally made of gold metal, but rather she exhibits qualities that are highly attractive, precious, and desirable. These metaphors contain NO deep, hidden meanings, but plain, simple truths.

The presence of figurative language within a verse does not give the reader artistic license to interpret the verse in any fashion they choose. The Bible is not a highly encrypted, mystical book filled deep, hidden meanings. It is a book written for common men with plain truths.

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## **SAMPLE STUDY: THE 1<sup>ST</sup> SEAL**

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Some proponents of a pretribulation Rapture assert that the rider of the white horse in Revelation 6:1-2 is the Antichrist going forth to conquer. He accomplishes this task, they assert, through diplomatic means as he possesses a bow without arrows.<sup>18</sup> Others assert that the rider on the white horse is Jesus Christ. Still others insist that the rider is the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> Why the confusion? I believe that people are attempting to force scripture to say more than what it actually says.

**Revelation 6:1-2:** I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest. (NIV)

### **Passage Analysis**

1. **PURPOSE:** A part of a much wider narrative revealing prophetic events occurring prior to Christ's return. John's Revelation also seems to be an immediate, literal message of encouragement against persecution and suffering. Christ will be the ultimate victor.
2. **SETTING:** John is in heaven observing events surrounding the heavenly throne of God.
3. **AUDIENCE:** The seven churches in Asia Minor who are receiving admonishment and praise for their actions and deeds associated with their Christian walk.
4. **CONTEXT:** Jesus Christ has just been handed the scroll with seven seals from God the Father. The right to accept the scroll was earned through Christ's earthly ministry and sacrifice. Three more horsemen follow – war, famine, and death.
5. **GENRE:** Prophetic narrative: describes images of future events.
6. **LANGUAGE:** Symbolic: thunder = authority of God; white = purity; horse = conquest, speed, strength; crown = authority; bow = war; white horse = nobility
7. **GRAMMAR:** The horse performs the action of going forward. The rider was given a crown. The rider is given authority to conquer and he intends to conquer.
8. **TERMINOLOGY:** **come:** *erchomai*: I come, go.<sup>20</sup> **bent:** *nikaó*: to conquer, prevail<sup>21</sup> **he rode:** *exerchomai*: to go or come out of<sup>22</sup>
9. **RELATED PASSAGES:** Matthew 24:4-5; Zechariah 6:1-8; Zechariah 1:7-17; Revelation 19:11-21
10. **WHAT THE VERSE ACTUALLY SAYS:** With the breaking of the first seal, God (thunder) sends forth (Come!) a conqueror (bow) with nobility (white horse), authority (crown) and the intent to conquer (bent).

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<sup>18</sup> "The First Seal: The Antichrist Political Aggression," *People Get Ready*, August 20, 2012. <<http://peoplegetready.org/end-times/seals-trumpets-bowls-series/seal-antichrists-political-aggression/>> August 29, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Trofern, "The True Identity of the Rider on The White Horse," *Bible Prophecy Revealed*, ND. <<http://www.bibleprophecyrevealed.us/rev/the-true-identity-of-the-rider-on-the-white-horse-3/>> August 29, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> "erchomai," 2064. *Strong's Concordance: Bible Concordances*, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/2064.htm>> August 29, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> "nikaó," 3528. *Strong's Concordance: Bible Concordances*, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/3528.htm>> August 29, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> "exerchomai," 1831. *Strong's Concordance: Bible Concordances*, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/1831.htm>> August 29, 2012.

In isolation, this passage provides very little insight into the latter days... it provides only a very small piece to a very large puzzle. The passage says no more and no less than:

*With the breaking of the first seal, God sends forth a conqueror with nobility, authority, and the intent to conquer.*

**Arrowless Bow: Reading too much into a passage?** The following commentary provides an example of how people can read more into a passage than what it actually contains:

*People Get Ready, August 20, 2012: Arrowless bow: the Antichrist's authority will initially increase without any bloodshed. The arrow is an ancient symbol of war that speaks of striking one's enemies from a distance. This rider is pictured as ready to go to war with a bow in hand on a horse. However, since the bow does not have arrows, it is understood as a "threat of war without war actually breaking out."<sup>23</sup>*

Where in this passage does it mention that there are no arrows? The passage doesn't mention a saddle, but we assume there is one unless we are told otherwise. The passage doesn't describe the rider's clothing, but we assume he is dressed unless told otherwise. Not all passage explicitly states every detail within an image, message, or story... To list every possible detail within every passage would result in a very large and very cumbersome Bible.

Common human convention dictates that if there is a bow, then there are also arrows UNLESS specifically mentioned otherwise. If the lack of arrows was important to this passage, then John could have listed an "empty quiver" within the description. Without additional scriptural support, the assertion made in the above commentary should be considered speculative.

**Can we determine the identity of the rider?** Unfortunately, no. Many scholars assert that we can identify the rider as the Antichrist because of the color of his horse, white, and his non-diadem crown. The Antichrist, they claim, pretends to be Jesus Christ – he is the great deceiver. However, that claim is speculative at best; there is insufficient information within the passage to accurately identify the rider. Since the fourth rider is specifically identified, we should assume that the first three riders would have also been identified if their identity was important to our understanding.

**What can we do with such little information?** Passages within Revelation 6:1-8 are not intended to create a detailed illustration of the people, places, and events of this time period. Rather, they are quick snapshots intended to serve as an outline, a place marker, within the primary narrative. Other passages, such as the Olivet Discourse and Revelation 13, provide additional details and assist us in creating an elaborately detailed mosaic of the people, places, and events. Children who work complex jigsaw puzzles may attempt to force pieces together; the end results is a jumbled, distorted picture with little resemblance the picture on the box. As adults, we should avoid doing the same thing with prophetic scripture. We should allow the prophetic scriptures to paint the portrait... we should accept the portrait God wishes for us to see.

<sup>23</sup> "The First Seal: The Antichrist Political Aggression," *People Get Ready, August 20, 2012.* <<http://peoplegetready.org/end-times/seals-trumpets-bowls-series/seal-antichrists-political-aggression/>> August 29, 2012.

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## SAMPLE STUDY: WHEAT & TARES PARABLE

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Some assert that the parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) proves: (a) There is only one resurrection and one judgment partially supporting an amillennial or postmillennial view. (b) Humans fall into one of only two groups – the saved and the unsaved partially supporting the belief that the initial inhabitants of the Millennial Kingdom will be “saved” individuals. Neither belief can be substantiated by this parable:

**Matthew 13:24-30:** Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

“‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

“‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’” (NIV)

**Matthew 13:36-43:** Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

### Passage Analysis

1. **PURPOSE:** To reveal the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.
2. **SETTING:** Sitting beside a lake with a large crowd gathered before Him.
3. **AUDIENCE:** General Jewish audience; a large crowd before a lake.
4. **CONTEXT:** Kingdom of heaven parables specifically related the spread of the Word of God and separation of the righteous and the wicked.
5. **GENRE:** Parable: teaching general principles through everyday activities and events.
6. **LANGUAGE:** Figurative riddles: Matthew 13:11: The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. (NIV)
7. **GRAMMAR:** Extended narrative followed with an explanation of key elements.

8. **TERMINOLOGY: weeds:** *zizanian*: *zizanium* (a kind of darnel resembling wheat). Spurious wheat, darnel; a plant that grows in Palestine which resembles wheat in many ways but is worthless.<sup>24</sup> **age:** *aión*: an age, a cycle (of time), especially of the present age as contrasted with the future age, and of one of a series of ages stretching to infinity.<sup>25</sup>
9. **RELATED PASSAGES:** Matthew 13:4; Matthew 8:12; Acts 13:10; Matthew 3:12; Matthew 24:31
10. **WHAT THE VERSE ACTUALLY SAYS:** Satan spreads deception amongst the good news of the Gospel. At the end of the age, the wicked will be removed and those that remain will stand out within the kingdom.

First, we must be cautious not to over analyze kingdom of heaven parables. Parables are not intended to impart complex, specific truths but rather to reduce complex truths into more general principles... We err in attempting to draw more from a parable than originally intended. This parable teaches about the effects of the two separate forces at work within the world:

1. Jesus Christ whose “seed” will result in plants bearing good fruit (wheat).
2. The devil whose “seed” will result in plants resembling wheat but bearing bad fruit (darnel).
3. The wicked, the weeds, will be removed and destroyed at the end of the age.
4. The righteous, the wheat, will remain and stand out within the kingdom.

Second, this is a kingdom of heaven parable and is, therefore, applicable for all time – past, present, and present. The parable would be just as appropriate during the days of Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, or the Church. The parable is also just as appropriate for the Millennium Kingdom because Satan’s “tares” will be sown during the latter days of that age. The parable teaches a universal truth – the Word of God results in good, and the word of Satan results in evil. Eventually, at the end of time, the wicked from all ages will be separated and destroyed.

**Can a deeper analysis reveal greater insight into the kingdom of heaven?** Absolutely! The term “weeds” used in the NIV, tares in the KJV, is the translation of the Greek term *zizanian*:

**weeds:** 2215 *zizánion* (plural, tares/zizania) – a tare (darnel); (figuratively) a pseudo-believer (false Christian); a fruitless person living without faith from God and therefore is “all show and no go!”<sup>26</sup>

*from “Lolium temulentum”<sup>27</sup>*

Darnel usually grows in the same production zones as wheat and is considered a weed. The similarity between these two plants is so extensive that in some regions, cockle is referred to as “false wheat”. [1] It bears a close resemblance to wheat until the ear appears. The ears on the real wheat are so heavy it makes the entire plant droop downward, but *L. temulentum*, whose ears are light, stands up straight. The wheat will also appear brown when ripe, whereas the darnel is black. [2] When the *Lolium* matures, the spikelets turn edgeways to the rachis, where the wheat spikelets remain as they grew previously.

<sup>24</sup> “zizanian,” 2215. *Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordance*, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/2215.htm>> July 22, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> “aión,” 165. *Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordance*, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/165.htm>> July 30, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> “2215 zizánion,” HELPS Ministry: HELPS Word-Studies, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/2215.htm>> July 22, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> “*Lolium temulentum*,” Wikipedia, June 14, 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darnel>> July 23, 2012.

The darnel can be infected by an endophytic fungus of the genus *Neotyphodium*, and the endophyte-produced, insecticidal loline alkaloids were first isolated from this plant.[3] It parasitizes wheat fields. The French word for darnel is *ivraie* (from Latin *ebriacus*, intoxicated), which expresses that weed's characteristic of making one feel poisoned with drunkenness, and can cause death. This characteristic is also alluded to in the scientific name (Latin *temulentus* = drunk).

From this term we can learn that the agents of the devil may not have a different presentation than the agents of Jesus Christ – they look, act, and talk like Christians. Their initial message may seem Christian in nature; however, examination of their full doctrine reveals deceptive imitators.

When I lived in Hawaii, I was approached by a young man who looked, acted, and talked like a Christian. In fact, he appeared to be an ideal Christian as he spent his spare time repairing the homes of the aged, buying groceries for the poor, and performing other small “Christian” chores for the needy. When he talked religion, he used the same Holy Bible that we use. However, he wasn't a Christian in the traditional sense; he was a member of the Unification Church. They view Sun Myung Moon as the messiah and believe Jesus will take an earthly bride and father children.

There are other religious movements that carry the Holy Bible but teach a gospel different than that taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles. These gospels may consist of noncanonical books, traditions derived outside of biblical sources, or belief systems centered on an individual and their teachings. They may have the appearance of truth but lead individuals astray:

**Galatians 1:8:** But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! (NIV)

**Can a deeper analysis reveal that there is only one resurrection?** No. Kingdom of heaven parables impart universal truths and are relevant to all times, ages, and periods. Although the parable specifically mentions that the tares are collected first (v. 30) and the wheat is then gathered into the barn, the focus of the explanation (v.40-42) is on the **weeding** of the kingdom. If we assume a literal view, the wicked are removed and the righteous remain within the kingdom – they are never removed. This parable is **not** teaching universal truths concerning the resurrection(s) but truths concerning the **effect** of the work of Jesus Christ and Satan. This parable lacks sufficient detail to support a single resurrection theory.

**Does this parable support the theory that only “saved” individuals will initially inhabit the Millennial Kingdom?** No. Kingdom of heaven parables impart universal truths and are relevant to all times, ages, and periods. Although the use of angels as harvesters may parallel some latter day prophecies, the “end of the age” within this parable **remains undefined**. If we apply a literal, dispensational approach from the parable's perspective, the “end of the age” would have occurred between 30 AD and 135 AD, the end of the previous age. Naturally, proponents of “only the ‘saved’ will initially inhabit the Millennial Kingdom” attempt to shift the parable to the end of the current age. Such a shift is speculative at best.

Secondarily, the theory invokes an either-or fallacy (false dilemma). The question of who will be resurrected when and where and under what conditions contains multiple facets not addressed within the parable. According to a pretribulational viewpoint, the “sons of the kingdom” are raptured from the world prior to the beginning of the Great Tribulation... thus parable's “sons of the kingdom”

would be restricted to those were “left behind” and later saved... thus the parable would be restricted to the last seven years of the current age... Such an assertion doesn’t seem to fit well within the overall theme of the parable, are well beyond the scope of the passage, and are well beyond the scope of parables that impart simple universal truths.

We must be judicious in our interpretations of scripture. The Word of God is certainly a living and breathing instrument that imparts individual messages and meanings to each individual; however, we error if we read more into a passage than what is actually contains.

## ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION

**Allegorical interpretation** is an interpretive method which assumes that the Bible has various levels of meaning and tends to focus on the spiritual sense (which comprises the allegorical sense, the moral sense, and the anagogical sense) as opposed to the literal sense of scripture.<sup>28</sup>

As a living, breathing instrument of God, the Bible has a voice that speaks in the quiet, still voice of the Holy Spirit. All of us, as individuals, have either heard or read a Bible passage and received a special, personal message that speaks to a particular need or circumstance. The Bible becomes a personal letter of communication between a loving Father and His child. These messages are precious, meaningful, and purposeful, and they illustrate the living nature of Holy Scripture.

As a living, breathing instrument of God, the Bible contains an infinite volume of knowledge despite having a finite number of words. The Bible contains less than 750,000 words, but describes the creation of man, the wickedness of humanity, the exploits of great men, the travails of nations, the forces of evil, the nature of the kingdom of God, the sacrifices of Jesus Christ, the mysticism of the Church, and God’s eternal plan for mankind. It can do this because, “The whole is more than the sum of its parts.”<sup>29</sup> Certainly, the words impart more meaning than their simple definitions; however, their meaning is not unlimited and their application can be easily distorted:

**Matthew 4:5-6:** Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” *from Psalm 91:11-12 (NIV)*

Allegorical interpretations become problematic when they exceed the scope of a passage – when more meaning is attributed to the passage than revealed through a plain reading. This is especially problematic in the development of doctrine or when they lead to strange teachings, philosophies, and practices.

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## EXAMINATION: REVELATION 1-18 & THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Within Protestantism, a common allegorical interpretation asserts that the Roman Catholic Church is the harlot within Revelation 17-18:

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<sup>28</sup> “Allegorical interpretation,” Wikipedia, May 28, 2012. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegorical\\_interpretation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegorical_interpretation)> August 29, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysica*

*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*: I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore; that noted and famous one, known before to John by the names of Jezabel and Babylon, who taught and caused many to commit fornication, Revelation 2:20 Revelation 14:8 and is no other than Rome Papal; for that a city or state is meant is clear from Revelation 17:18 and it is usual for idolatrous or apostate cities to be called whores or harlots, see Isaiah 1:21 Ezekiel 23:2 and she is called a "great" one, because of the largeness of the Papal see...<sup>30</sup>

*Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*: 17:1-6 Rome clearly appears to be meant in this chapter. Pagan Rome subdued and ruled with military power, not by art and flatteries. She left the nations in general to their ancient usages and worship. But it is well known that by crafty and politic management, with all kinds of deceit of unrighteousness, papal Rome has obtained and kept her rule over kings and nations.<sup>31</sup>

Could the Roman Catholic Church be a "type" of the harlot and the Pope a "type" of the Antichrist? Certainly, just as Adolf Hitler, Nero Caesar, and Antiochus IV Epiphanes were types of the Antichrist... they provide examples... they foreshadow... they share characteristics in common with the Antichrist; but, they are not the Antichrist.

Speculating about individual prophecies can be a healthy activity. It permits us to compare traits described within a prophecy to those traits exhibited is a potential model. Revelation 17-18 can serve as an example:

#### Revelation 17: Traits of the Harlot

1. **She sits on many waters**: The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages (v. 15). She transcends a single, physical geographical location; global in nature.
2. **Kings committed adultery with her**: Adultery: idolatry, or the worship of false god, e.g. money, power, wealth, sexuality, mysticism, etc.
3. **People intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries**: Her sinfulness excessively alluring, desirable.
4. **Dressed in purple and scarlet**: Along with blue, scarlet, and crimson, purple is used to describe hangings and fine materials.<sup>32</sup> Purple = royalty; scarlet = blood, sin; authoritative
5. **Glitters with gold, precious stones and pearls**: sparkle, attractive, desirable, alluring; wealth
6. **Golden cup filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries**: May parallel cup of the covenant; detestable things, lewdness; may refer to false teachings, especially paganism.
7. **Mystery Babylon the great**: The Empire Babylon was the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth, cradle of world paganism.
8. **Drunk with the blood of the saints**: Took pleasure/delight in persecuting the saints, specifically Christian – testimony of Jesus.

Certainly, in centuries past, the traits exhibited by the Roman Catholic Church resembled many of the traits. However, the fit is less convenient when considering the modern Catholic Church. It no longer has significant sway over world leaders, and it is doubtful that she can be considered drunk

<sup>30</sup> "Revelation 17:1," *Exposition of the Entire Bible* by John Gill [1746-63]. <<http://bible.cc/revelation/17-1.htm>> August 29, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> "Revelation 17:1-6," *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary: Online Parallel Bible*, ND. <<http://mhc.biblecommenter.com/revelation/17.htm>> August 30, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> "Color Symbolism and Color Meaning in The Bible," *Riding the Beast*, ND. <<http://www.ridingthebeast.com/articles/colors/>> August 30, 2012.

with the blood of saints. Could this change in the future? Absolutely, but a different form, such as humanism, might be a closer match in the near future:

*Progressive Living*: Humanism is a down-to-earth philosophical movement that represents a turn toward the satisfaction of human needs, both material and spiritual, and the fulfillment of human potential, here and now.<sup>33</sup>

Using an allegorical interpretation approach to scripture is similar to looking for shapes within the clouds, we can find virtually anything we want; the meaning of scriptures becomes arbitrary, relative, and subjective. It should be used with great caution when developing formal beliefs and doctrine:

*James R. White, 2002*: It is simply unverifiable. In other words, no person using the allegorical method can honestly and logically affirm that his or her conclusions are actually based upon the text that is being interpreted. Because the actual meaning of the text is ignored, the allegorical meaning can have no more weight than one invests in the allegorical interpreter. Since each allegorical interpreter may “see” or “feel” something different in the text, allegorical interpretations can never be verified by others working with the same text.<sup>34</sup>

## BIBLICAL HYPERBOLES & IDIOMS

Two common figurative devices used in everyday conversation are hyperboles and idioms. If I told you, “I’m so hungry that I could eat a horse,” you wouldn’t take that statement literally – you would understand that I was hungry. You wouldn’t assume that I really wanted to eat a horse. If I told you that I was burning bridges, you wouldn’t assume that I was an arsonist – you would understand that I wanted eliminate past relationships.

Within our own communities, such subtle nuances of our personal language are understood by our family and peers. When we leave our community, detecting these subtle nuances becomes more difficult. When we leave our geographical region, the task becomes much, much more difficult. When we speak with foreigners, the task may become nearly impossible even if we speak the same language.

We face similar difficulties when we read the Bible. Not only were the words written in a different language, they were written centuries ago by men with vastly different experiences, cultures, and traditions. Of course, we have the Holy Spirit who speaks softly and quietly in our ears, but the task remains difficult. We should keep this in mind as we read and study passages within the Bible.

**The Bible is filled with hyperboles. Some hyperboles are easy to detect:**

**Matthew 23:24**: You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. (NIV)

**Matthew 5:29**: If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. (NIV)

**Luke 14:26**: If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple. (NIV)

<sup>33</sup> “What is Humanism?” *Progressive Living*, ND. <<http://www.progressiveliving.org/humanism.htm>> August 30, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> James R. White, “Harold Camping,” *Christian Research Journal*, volume 25, number 1, 2002. <<http://www.equip.org/articles/harold-camping/>> August 30, 2012.

Did the teachers of the law and Pharisees go around swallowing camels? Did Jesus really desire a person to pluck out their eyes? Must you really hate your family to be a disciple? No, these passages are not intended to be read literally. Certainly, the Pharisees focused on trivial matter instead of the more important matters. Certainly, we need to remove those things that nurture sin. Certainly, we must place God before our family. The use of hyperbole clearly communicates and emphasizes that Jesus Christ felt these topic were of great importance.

**John 12:19:** So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!" (NIV)

**Mark 1:4-5:** John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan... (KJV)

**Matthew 11:23:** And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. (KJV)

Did the whole world go after Jesus? Were all the inhabitants in Judea baptized by John? Was the town of Capernaum brought down to Hell for disbelief? No. These are all extreme exaggerations that express the large numbers or the severity of the crime. Certainly, each passage would have far less impact if hyperbole was not used.

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## **SAMPLE STUDY: THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS**

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Some hyperboles and idioms are subtle, hard to recognize, and difficult to understand:

**Matthew 24:34-35:** I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (NIV)

We should notice that this the Lord is swearing an oath, an affidavit – a solemn statement or promise undertaking to do something or affirming that something is true.

- **I can hear what you are thinking. Yes, the New Testament is very specific about oaths:**

**Matthew 5:34-37:** But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. (NIV)

- **However, oaths are not uncommon within New Testament scripture:**

**Romans 1:9:** For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers. (KJV)

**Romans 9:1:** I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost. (KJV)

**2 Corinthians 1:23:** Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. (KJV)

**2 Corinthians 11:31:** The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. (KJV)

**Galatians 1:20:** Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. (KJV)

- **An oath generally has three components:** (1) the affirmation – a declaration of telling the truth, (2) content – the listing of the facts, and (3) the authority – the power. The statement made in Matthew 24:34-35 contains all three components:

(1) **Affirmation:** I tell you.

(2) **Content:** this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

(3) **Authority:** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

- **Why is this important?** Before we understand the content, we need to understand the rhetoric, the type of language, being used. Will heaven ever pass away? No, the earth might, but not heaven. So we can see that the Lord is using an idiom... making a statement that is not intended to be read literally but is nevertheless understood by the listener. This use is not unique:

**Matthew 10: 14-15:** If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. (NIV)

**Matthew 10:23:** When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. (NIV)

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone – everything was totally consumed. It would be more than 1,980 years before Jesus Christ's return plenty of time to travel through the cities of Israel. Neither component should be understood literally... they are idioms... they are used rhetorically for emphasis, not for factual accuracy.

An idiom is a term or phrase whose meaning cannot be deduced from the literal definitions and the arrangement of its parts, but refers instead to a figurative meaning that is known only through common use.<sup>35</sup> Examples include: I'm going to blow my top, I swear on a stack of Bibles, he's sweating bullets, and you need to mend fences.

- **Are there other similar examples from our Lord?** Yes, they are not infrequent:

**Matthew 16:28:** I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." (NIV)

**Matthew 5:18:** I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (NIV)

- **Do we use similar structures, a combination of oaths, hyperboles, and idioms?** Yes, although most Christians attempt to avoid swearing, many of us are guilty of using mild expletives such as "goodness," "my, my," and "great Scott." We may also use those mild expletives in combination

<sup>35</sup> "The World of Idioms," English Exercises, ND. <<http://www.englishexercises.org/makeagame/viewgame.asp?id=3608>> August 30, 2012.

with hyperboles and idioms. The use of a heavenly authority is generally discouraged, e.g. “I swear to God,” “my heavens,” or “Jesus Christ”:

*I swear, that child didn't get beat enough as a child.*

*Goodness, I'm going to beat that child black and blue.*

Within our community, “spanking” children continues as an acceptable form of discipline (Proverbs 13:24, Proverbs 22:15); however, “beating” a child is socially and legally unacceptable. Therefore, using a dysphemism for the term “spank” is readily understood as a hyperbole. The phrase becomes idioms when it would easily be misunderstood outside the local community.

Now, the realization that our Lord and the apostles employed such forms of figurative language does not grant us an unlimited license. No, our language should always be guarded as to not cause offense or serve as a stumbling block. But we should be “mature” enough to recognize such speech and its effect within biblical passages.

- **How does this affect our study of the Bible?** It should cause us pause, “Why has the Lord become so severe in this passage?” In this case, we should recall the previous chapter within Matthew and the seven woes to the teachers of the law and the Pharisees:

1. ***Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!*** You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.
2. ***Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!*** You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.
3. ***Woe to you, blind guides!*** You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind fools!...
4. ***Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!*** You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness...
5. ***Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!*** You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence...
6. ***Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!*** You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean...
7. ***Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!*** You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’...

***You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?***

Matthew 24:34-35 should cause us pause and encourage us to examine our own life to see if we are guilty of stirring the Lord's anger.

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## SAMPLE STUDY: 2 PETER 3:7, 10

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Many scholars assert that the earth and the sky will be burned away either at the end of this age or at the end of the Millennial age. Regardless of their scriptural and logical evidence, such descriptions do not seem to fit into the events in either. Is there a discrepancy? Yes, there is, but the problem is unrelated to biblical prophecy. The problem relates to a rigid, inflexible literal interpretation. Unfortunately, some fail to recognize the passage for what it is – a hell and brimstone sermon:

**2 Peter 3:7, 10:** and the present heavens and the earth, by the same word are treasured, for fire being kept to a day of judgment and destruction of the impious men.... it will come – the day of the Lord – as a thief in the night, in which the heavens with a rushing noise will pass away, and the elements with burning heat be dissolved, and earth and the works in it shall be burnt up. (YLT)

### PASSAGE ANALYSIS

1. **PURPOSE:** 2 Peter 3:1: “to stimulate you to wholesome thinking”
2. **SETTING:** 2 Peter 2:1: “there were also false prophets among the people...They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord ...”
3. **AUDIENCE:** Churches in general
4. **CONTEXT:** Destructive heresies, turning away from the scriptures and gospel.
5. **GENRE:** A fire and brimstone sermon
6. **LANGUAGE:** Imagery: language employed to conjure images of a major conflagration, fire = passion, jealousy, consuming, purifying; destruction = wrath, vengeance
7. **GRAMMAR:** compare-contrast; promises v. destruction
8. **TERMINOLOGY:** Peter uses a good guy, bad guy approach. He addresses the individual as “dear friend” but the other as false prophets, ungodly people, and scoffers
9. **RELATED PASSAGES:** Isaiah 66:15; Malachi 4:1; Matthew 10:15; Isaiah 34:4
10. **WHAT THE VERSE ACTUALLY SAYS:** We should remain rooted in the scriptures and the teachings of the apostles because wicked people will come and attempt to convince us that we will not be judged purposely omitting examples of God’s past judgment. But we need to remember the wrathful God of the Old Testament, and we need to live a Godly life else our wickedness, in time, will be exposed and punished.

This passage should not be interpreted literally but rather figuratively. Perhaps the easiest way to recognize the nature of this passage is to examine the phrase “works in it shall be burnt up”:

**works:** *ergon*: task, employment; a deed, action; that which is wrought or made, a work.<sup>36</sup>  
**will be burnt up:** *heuriskó*: to find, learn, discover, especially after searching.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> “*ergon*,” 2041. Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/2041.htm>> September 1, 2012.

People think they can hide their evil... bank robbers cover their identity with masks, burglars carry out their work at night, and the wife beaters ply their trade behind closed doors. Mankind may verbalize that God is omniscient, all knowing; but, they act as if God cannot detect their sins:

**John 3:20:** Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. (NIV)

However, fire, within this passage, burns away those disguises uncovering what lies beneath:

**Luke 8:17:** For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. (NIV)

**Why are the heavens and earth reserved for judgment?** Both are used symbolically. The heavens (the sky) as a covering that separates mankind from God, a blanket that conceals evil deeds. The earth as mankind's dwelling place, the place where the deeds are committed. Frequently, some believe that they can "get away" with their sins until death and judgment which occurs in God's terrain, thinking of the earth as their turf and heaven as God's turf. Those fallacies will be exposed on the day of the Lord:

1. **The heavens will disappear with a roar:** The cover allegedly hiding evil deeds from the eyes of God will be removed.
2. **The elements will be destroyed by fire:** The rudiments of belief, misconceptions, and delusions that mankind can escape the consequences of wickedness – they will be removed.
3. **The earth and everything in it will be laid bare:** The Lord will come and expose all iniquity.

**Matthew 10:26:** So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. (NIV)

**Luke 12:2:** There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. (NIV)

Humanity's deeds will be uncovered and the quality of those deeds will be tested by fire:

**1 Corinthians 3:12-13:** If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. (NIV)

**Why a metaphor of fire?** If you have ever been seriously burned by fire, then you understand that burns are extremely painful. Fire is not passive but aggressive... If not kept in check, fire will run rampant and consume everything in its path. Fire symbolizes violence, revenge, judgment, and hell. Fire is the cornerstone of fire and brimstone sermons:

**Jude 1:22-23:** Be merciful to those who doubt; ***snatch others from the fire and save them***; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

<sup>37</sup> "heuriskó," 2147. Strong's Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/2147.htm>> September 1, 2012.

**Ezekiel 22:31:** So I will pour out my wrath on them and **consume them with my fiery anger**, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD. (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

### *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*

Jonathan Edwards

The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them...

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours...

In summary, we error if we assume that the sky and the earth literally will be consumed by fire either at the end of this age or the next. 2 Peter 3 is a sermon, a hell and brimstone sermon. It is intended warn, frighten, and invoke those who have strayed back onto the straight and narrow.

## SCRIPTURE TO INTERPRET SCRIPTURE

On the surface, “scripture to interpret scripture” seems logical and appropriate; unfortunately, in application, the results are anything but...

A good definition for this concept is provided by Phillip M. Way, *TIME in the Word Ministries*:<sup>38</sup>

### What is the “Analogy of Faith”?

My good friend Steve Owen wrote in answer to this question:

The Analogy of Faith is a Scriptural concept revived at the Reformation. The expression is derived from Romans 12:6 (‘katates analogian tes pistews’ - according to the analogy of the faith). According to this principle, the Scriptures can never contradict themselves, so the exegete should study all relevant biblical passages on any one topic to avoid contradictions and achieve harmony.

Simply put – the Bible does not ever contradict itself. Therefore we must study through it to be sure we are not applying a text in a way that runs contrary to what the rest of the Bible says. We use Scripture to interpret Scripture. If a portion of Scripture is not clear, then we use other Scriptures to help us understand.

Sounds like a logical and appropriate approach for careful biblical interpretation, correct? That’s what I thought when I first encountered the phrase. However, after reading several works based upon the approach, I discovered the approach actually meant something entirely different:

*Scriptures can never contradict my doctrine of belief, so we should seek an explanation for those seemingly contradictory passages until they conform and harmonize with my beliefs.*

<sup>38</sup> Phillip M. Way, “What is the ‘Analogy of Faith?’” *TIME in the Word Ministries*, ND <<http://timeintheword.wordpress.com/2008/03/04/what-is-the-analogy-of-faith/>> Nov. 12, 2011.

Scholars who employ this approach possess a preset notion of what they will find within biblical scripture, and they study the Bible for verification of that notion. New scriptural discoveries are permissible but only to the extent that they conform and harmonize with existing doctrine. Biblical contradictory passages become the “difficult” or “unclear” passages and must be explained or “spiritualized” until the apparent contradiction has been overcome.

This difficulty is most recognizable when examining prophetic passages especially the book of Revelation:

When dealing with the book of Revelation, which is filled with symbolic imagery, one must define this imagery not by the morning newspaper or CNN but by examining the clearer portions of Scripture where many of John’s pictures are clearly defined. Scripture must be used to interpret Scripture. The clear passages must be used to interpret the less clear.<sup>39</sup>

**Satan Bound:** The most dramatic example of this difficulty rests in the assertion that Satan was bound during the first coming of Christ. They appeal to Matthew 12:28-29 as evidence (binding of the strongman). They also appeal to John 12:31, “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” If Satan was truly bound during Christ’s earthly ministry, why then is he still called the “god of this world” within the epistles (2 Corinthians 4:4). Their response?

This does not imply that Satan can do no harm whatever while he is bound. It means only what John says here: While Satan is bound he cannot deceive the nations in such a way as to keep them from learning about the truth of God.<sup>40</sup>

What is the connection between casting out demons and deceiving nations?

Jesus Christ bound the strongman of the house. *[True premise]*

Jesus Christ and his disciples cast out demons. *[True premise]*

Jesus Christ charged his followers to make disciples of all nations. *[True premise]*

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**Therefore:** Satan’s binding is restricted to no longer deceive the nations. *[Invalid conclusion]*

The argument lacks an internal link between casting out demons and deceiving the nations. If the “house” refers to planet Earth, then we would expect Satan to be bound in all ways not just one way, but advocates of this view restrict it to only one specific area... Something that’s counterintuitive.

Is Satan bound today? Has Satan been cast out? I think not. One need only consider the evil within our world to understand that Satan is active and seeking to devour those who are ill equipped with the truth. Ample scriptural evidence supports this simple observation. 1 Peter 5:8, 1 Corinthians 5:5, 2 Corinthians 2:11, 2 Corinthians 4:4, James 4:7, Ephesians 6:11, 1 Timothy 3:7, 2 Timothy 2:26, and 1 Thessalonians 2:18 provide a few examples.

Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry, sacrifice on the cross, and victorious resurrection took all the steps necessary to redeem the earth from Satan’s grasp, but He has not yet taken the concrete steps to evict Satan as the God of this world – this will take place after Christ’s Second Advent, Revelation 20:1-3.

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<sup>39</sup> Brian Schwertley, “The Premillennial Deception: Chiasm Examined in the Light of Scripture,” Reformed Online Library, 1996 <<http://www.reformedonline.com/view/reformedonline/milenium.htm>> Nov. 12, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Anthony Hoekema, Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminar, “Amillennialism,” *The Highway*, c. 1977. <[http://www.the-highway.com/amila\\_Hoekema.html](http://www.the-highway.com/amila_Hoekema.html)> Sep. 30, 2011.

However, for some scholars, Revelations 20:1-3 cannot chronologically follow Revelation 19:11-21 because that would result in a unique age where Jesus Christ physically reigns over planet Earth, and such an age is outside their acceptable doctrine. Therefore, those scholars employ “scripture to interpret scripture” until a suitable explanation can be found to explain away any contradictions.

**Judging the Twelve tribes of Israel:** A second example of how using “scripture to interpret scripture” can be abused is found in the amillennial interpretation of Matthew 19:28.

**Matthew 19:28:** Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (NIV)

In his essay, “The Premillennial Deception: Chiliasm Examined in the Light of Scripture,” Reverend Brian Schwertley, Westminster Presbyterian Church, provides a detailed explanation of why a premillennial interpretation should be rejected:

Furthermore, this passage cannot be taken in the literal sense, for the ten tribes carried away by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. have forever been lost, being absorbed among the Gentiles. Thus, the only way the apostles could judge the twelve tribes would be by judging the Gentiles and the Jews, which is precisely what Christ instructed them to do (cf. Mt. 28:18-20).<sup>41</sup>

Does God possess limited or unlimited capabilities? While reading essays on various biblical topics, I was amazed by how an author could allude to the power of God in one paragraph and then restrict that same power in the next... such is the case of statements such as Reverend Schwertley’s. He asserts that Christ is currently ruling the kingdom from his heavenly throne, but then he asserts that God cannot locate members from the ten “lost” tribes – God created the entire universe, but he has difficulty locating a remnant from his chosen people? The two concepts do not logically blend.

Please don’t misunderstand my intentions. Reverend Schwertley’s arguments are thorough, thoughtful, intellectual, and, I believe, sincere. Unfortunately, far too many scholars have become “academics” where Bible study is an academic exercise, not divine revelation. While they assert that Christ’s kingdom is spiritual – and I believe that it is – they employ human logic to understand the spiritual.

All biblical verses are the inspired Word of God and carry the same weight as if spoken directly by God:

**2 Timothy 3:16:** All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

It is an error to place more emphasis on those passages that agree with our personal belief system than those that disagree. Yes, we should look to other passages to assist us understand more difficult passages but it is an error to ignore the meaning of those difficult passages.

If a scripture says that Christ’s disciples will sit upon twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel, then Christ’s disciples will be granted authority to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. We should not

<sup>41</sup> Brian Schwertley, Westminster Presbyterian Church, “The Premillennial Deception: Chiliasm Examined in the Light of Scripture.” Reformed Online, 1996 <<http://www.reformedonline.com/view/reformedonline/milenium.htm>> Nov. 13, 2011.

“spiritualize” the twelve tribes by claiming that they are the Church unless there is strong, concrete scriptural evidence indicating that the Israel is now the Church, and such evidence simply does not exist.<sup>42</sup>

God’s Word is difficult, but we have little chance of acquiring a greater understanding if we restrict our understanding to what we already believe. Within this current study, I have encountered ideas that were contrary to my understanding. Occasionally, I attempt to ignore or explain those contradictions away, but they didn’t seem to want to go away. I have to set aside my prejudices... I have to go outside and feed the chicken, collect the duck eggs, watch a television program, read the news, eat lunch, sit out under the trees, or take a nap... I have to do something to give my mind (and spirit) a chance to listen...

## TIME: GOD’S CONCEPT OF TIME

Man’s concept of time does not match God’s. In some instances, a day represents one 360 degree rotation of the earth; in other instances, a day can represent a thousand year. Biblical scholars have frequently attempted to make sense of Biblical time; Charles Wesley predicted that the world would end in 1794 and William Miller predicted sometime in 1843 or 1844. We must approach biblical time cautiously, what is a wink of an eye in God’s mind may be a lifetime ours:

**John 12:31-33:** “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” This he said, signifying what death he should die.

now: *nun*: adverb (a) of time: just now, even now; just at hand, immediately, (b) of logical connection: now then, (c) in commands and appeals: at this instant.<sup>43</sup>

John 12:31 seems to claim two things took place at the time the verse was spoken:

1. The world was judged.
2. Satan was cast out of this world.

Yet, we know from 2 Corinthians 4:4 that Satan was not in fact cast out and the judgment of this world will not materially occur until the latter days of the current age:

**2 Corinthians 4:4:** In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Do these two scriptures contradict each other? Absolutely not! The problem lies not within the scriptures but within human logic and human perception of time. Let’s take a look at a similar passage:

**John 19:30:** When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Was Jesus Christ’s work finished on the cross? Well, yes because he had accomplished the sacrificial offering, but no because ample work remained ahead such as sending the Holy Spirit, advocating the plight of mankind before the throne, and redeeming planet Earth from the clutches of Satan.

<sup>42</sup> See “Apologetics: Israel & the Church.”

<sup>43</sup> “nun,” Strong’s Concordance: Biblos.com, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/3568.htm>> Nov. 13, 2011.

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## MULTI-STEP EVENTS

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We need to understand that a single event may involve two or more steps. The first step occurs when the justification for the act is accomplished; the second step occurs when the act is materially completed. For example, evicting a renter from leased property takes at least three steps – giving notice, obtaining an eviction judgment, and then physically removing the renter by law enforcement officials. The process can take as little as twenty days but may take several months or even years. The giving notice and subsequent removal does not occur simultaneously.

We find similar multi-step events within the Bible. <sup>(1)</sup>Jesus Christ gave notice to Satan when He resisted Satan's temptation in the wilderness, <sup>(2)</sup>He obtained an eviction judgment through His sacrifice on the cross, and <sup>(3)</sup>He will physically remove Satan as the "god of this world" during His Second Advent. The entire process will take at least 1,985 years, possibly much, much longer.

Let's take a look at another example of a multi-step event:

**Revelation 11:15:** And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become [the kingdoms] of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever."

A plain reading of this verse would seem to indicate that Christ is taking possession of the earth at the very moment the seventh trumpet sounds; however, that is not the case. After the sounding, angels pour six bowls of wrath; then at the pouring of the seventh bowl, Jesus Christ takes the physical steps necessary to remove Satan and his crew – the final step of a twenty-one step process:

1. **Steps 1-6:** During the breaking of the first six seals, the world is placed on notice that the end of the age is quickly approaching – this giving notice is accomplished by the three angels with the three messages (Rev. 14:1-12). Those who heed the warning and place their trust in God are raptured at the breaking of the sixth seal. Those who do not heed the warning remain on earth and endure the plagues of the first six trumpets.
2. **Steps 7-13:** The breaking of the seventh seal releases the seven angels with the seven trumpets. During the sounding of the first six trumpets, the world is placed on notice that God is about to pour his wrath upon the planet – this serving of the eviction judgment is accomplished by the two witnesses (Rev. 11:1-13). Those who heed the warning might survive God's wrath and become inhabitants of the millennial age. Those who do not heed the warning endure the coming bowls of wrath.
3. **Steps 14-20:** The sounding of the seventh trumpet releases the seven angels with the seven bowls of wrath. The pouring of the first six bowls of wrath warns the inhabitants of the earth that God's judgment is upon them. Unfortunately, those who have not yet repented from their wickedness will not do so during these final hours (Rev. 16:11).
4. **Step 21:** At the pouring of the seventh bowl of wrath, Jesus Christ comes in his glory with his angels and saints and forcibly evict Satan, the Antichrist, the false prophet, and all of their coconspirators.

When examining scripture that involves an event, we need to consider the number of steps involved in completing that event. Is it a single step process? Or, are there two or more steps? Far too often, biblical scholars interpret a multi-step event as a single step process. Failing to grasp the complexities involved, they make assumptions that lead to interpretation errors. This problem, I believe, is just one of the reasons there is such diversity among Christian beliefs.

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## EXTENDED TIME PERIODS

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Some futurists, those who believe that most prophecies have yet to be fulfilled, love 2 Peter 3:8:

**2 Peter 3:8:** But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day [is] with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Some use this single verse to extrapolate the year of Jesus Christ's Second Advent, for example:

It took God six days to create the earth.

The seventh day God rested (the Sabbath).

The millennial reign represents the seventh day or the Sabbath for the earth.

According to 2 Peter 3:8, one day equals a thousand years.

Jesus Christ will begin his millennial reign 6,000 years after Adam's birth.

Adam was born in 4004BC.

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**Therefore:** the Second Advent of Jesus Christ will occur in the year 2004 AD.

Of course, this calculation is in error; the Second Advent of Jesus Christ did not occur in 2004. Several variations of this argument exist with some excluding Jubilee years or using lunar calendars. In any event, those who calculate Christ's Second Advent have, thus far, been inaccurate, and it tends to show the folly of attempting use human logic to calculate God's timing.

A good example of how biblical timing does not parallel human logic can be found in Revelation 12:

**Revelation 12:1-6:** Then I witnessed in heaven an event of great significance. I saw a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant, and she cried out because of her labor pains and the agony of giving birth.

Then I witnessed in heaven another significant event. I saw a large red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, with seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept away one-third of the stars in the sky, and he threw them to the earth. He stood in front of the woman as she was about to give birth, ready to devour her baby as soon as it was born.

She gave birth to a son who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. And her child was snatched away from the dragon and was caught up to God and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place to care for her for 1,260 days. (NLT)

If we were to paraphrase the meaning of this passage, it might sound something like:

The woman with the crown of twelve stars on her head represents the nation of Israel. The red dragon, we are told in verse 9, is Satan. The son who was to rule all the nations is Jesus Christ, and he went and sat at the right hand of God after his resurrection. Israel, of course, ceased to exist as a nation after the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD – ethnic Jews were scattered (fled) among the nations (wilderness) where God sheltered a remnant against extinction (a place to care for her) until the end of the age (1,260 days).<sup>44</sup>

The state of Israel gained independence in 1948, and Israel recaptured Jerusalem during the six-day war in 1967. It would take a great deal of speculation to align the 1,260 days with either of these two

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<sup>44</sup> See "Revelation 12: The Woman, Child, and Dragon" for an analysis of this passage.

events... or any other dates in the foreseeable future. Yet, numbers such as these are frequently used to calculate future events.

Interestingly, this passage is a dual occurrence passage. A slightly different description of the event is also given in Revelation 12:13-17 with the 1,260 days converted to time, times, and half a time (3 ½ years). A number frequently used to calculate the seven year transition period between this age and the next. What then does the 1,260 days represent? My best estimate is that the number represents a very long but specific period of time... Can we calculate when this regathering will occur? No, not really because only God the Father knows (Matthew 24:36) when the harvest of Christian believers is full (Romans 11:25).

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## A BIBLICAL DAY IS INCALCULABLE

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Many Bible scholars assert (X) must be true else God is a liar. Unfortunately, statements such as these ignore the nature of biblical scripture and of God's timing. The exact meaning within biblical passages is difficult, if not impossible, to determine; this is especially true of time:

**Zephaniah 1:18:** Your silver and gold will not save you on that day of the LORD's anger. For the whole land will be devoured by the fire of his jealousy. He will make a terrifying end of all the people on earth.

Is the "day of the Lord" a literal, twenty-four hour day? Unlikely. A biblical "day" can have various lengths:

**Ezekiel 4:6:** And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.

**Numbers 14:34:** After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

**2 Peter 3:8:** But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day [is] with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

**Psalms 90:4:** For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

A direct application of the "a biblical day is incalculable" can be found in the following verse:

**Genesis 2:17:** But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Did Adam die the same day as he ate of the tree? Some claim that he died spiritually, that he was separated from God. However, that would be over simplifying the verse. We see from later verses that God continued to interact with mankind – he spoke directly to Cain (Genesis 4:6). Altogether Adam lived 930 years (Genesis 5:5) which is nearly one-thousand years...

## SATAN EVICTED: THE FOUNDATION

The tale of God's dealing with mankind is long, complex, and multifaceted... It is humanly impossible to summarize God's plan within a few brief paragraphs; therefore, within this study, I will present simplified elements illustrating a single facet of the entire story. When pieced together, those elements help paint an overall portrait of God's message. I will begin with the role of Satan as "god" of this world.

### THE GARDEN: SATAN'S OBTAINS THE LEASE

**kingdom:** *basileia*: kingship, sovereignty, authority, rule, especially of God, both in the world, and in the hearts of men; hence: kingdom, in the concrete sense.<sup>45</sup>

The kingdom of God is not yet a physical, earthly kingdom. Since the Gospel of Jesus Christ now belongs to the Gentile as well as the Jew, an individual may either be a subject in the kingdom of God or of the ruler of this world – Satan. It's really just a matter of legal status.

**Genesis 1:27-28:** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (KJV)

**subdue it:** *kabash*: to subdue, bring into bondage<sup>46</sup>

**dominion:** *radah*: reign<sup>47</sup>

When God created man, he made Adam the ruler of planet Earth... The world was the kingdom of Adam – God gave Adam an eternal lease on the planet Earth. There was only one requirement for Adam to retain this dominion – obedience to God. Unfortunately, Adam was not obedient to God; instead, he (through Eve) succumbed to the serpent's (Satan) temptation... he was obedient to the Satan... he surrendered his dominion to Satan.

**2 Peter 2:19:** They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you. (NLT)

Thus, the Satan became the sovereign (god, prince) of this world.

**2 Corinthians 4:3-4:** Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. (NLT)

**John 12:30-31:** Then Jesus told them, "The voice was for your benefit, not mine. The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be cast out. (NLT)

<sup>45</sup> "basileia," Strong's Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/932.htm>> Oct. 15, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> "kabash," Strong's Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/hebrew/3533.htm>> Oct. 15, 2011

<sup>47</sup> "radah," Strong's Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/hebrew/7287.htm>> Oct. 15, 2011

After man's second chance following flood, the authority given to Noah was different than that of Adam – there was no command to have “dominion” over the earth:

**Genesis 9:1-3:** And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. (KJV)

**fear:** *mora*: a fear, terror<sup>48</sup>

**dread:** *chath*: broken<sup>49</sup>

**delivered:** *nathan*: to give, put, set “nathan,” Strong’s Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/hebrew/5414.htm>> Oct. 15, 2011

Along with losing sovereignty over the earth, man experienced separation from God and physical death.

**Genesis 3:23-24:** Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. (KJV)

Thus, through the Adam's disobedience, the legal status of man and the earth was altered:

- Adam, through Eve, succumbed to the temptation of Satan.
- By being obedient to Satan, Adam surrendered his domain (earth) to Satan.
- By being disobedient to God, Adam was separated from God (spiritual death).
- By being disobedient to God, Adam eventually suffered physical death.

This penalty was applied not just to Adam, but to all men.

**Romans 5:12:** Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. (KJV)

## THE CRUCIFIXION: NOTICE OF INTENT TO EVICT

The Good News of the Gospel was that this legal situation was going to be reversed:

- **JESUS, A MAN OF THE FLESH, DID NOT SUCCEDED TO THE TEMPTATION OF SATAN**

**Luke 4:5-8:** And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, “All this power will I

<sup>48</sup> “mora,” Strong’s Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/hebrew/4172.htm>> Oct. 15, 2011

<sup>49</sup> “chath,” Strong’s Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/hebrew/2844.htm>> Oct. 15, 2011

give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.” And Jesus answered and said unto him, “Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (KJV)

**Matthew 4:8-10:** Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” Then saith Jesus unto him, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (KJV)

- **BY BEING OBEDIENT TO GOD, JESUS RECLAIMED THE EARTH FROM SATAN**

**Matthew 3:16-17:** And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (KJV)

**Luke 22:42:** Saying, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” (KJV)

**Acts 26:18:** ...to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (KJV)

**Colossians 1:13-14:** For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (KJV)

- **BY BEING OBEDIENT TO GOD, JESUS CLOSED THE SEPARATION FROM GOD (SPIRITUAL REBIRTH)**

**John 3:5-17:** Jesus answered, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again... And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” (KJV)

**John 6:38-39:** For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. (KJV)

**Romans 5:18-21:** Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the

obedience of one shall many be made righteous... That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. (KJV)

- **BY GIVING HIS LIFE ON THE CROSS, JESUS PAID THE PENALTY OF PHYSICAL DEATH (THE RESURRECTION)**

**Luke 22:15-17:** And he said unto them, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it [the real Passover] be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. (KJV)

**1 Corinthians 15:21-22:** For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (KJV)

**Hebrew 2:9:** But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. (KJV)

At one point during Christ’s crucifixion, the total weight of man’s sin is assumed by the Jesus and God the Father turned his back on the Son. Engulfed with the grief of separation, Christ calls out, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?” Then a short while later, Christ asks for some vinegar and then proclaims, “It is finished.”

I’ve read articles that discussed the “difficulty” with Christ taking the vinegar (a form of wine) while on the cross. During the last communion with his disciples, Christ asserted that he would not drink wine until the kingdom of God comes:

**Luke 22:18:** For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. (KJV)

**Matthew 26:29:** But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. (KJV)

**Mark 14:25:** Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. (KJV)

I see no “difficulty” with Christ drinking the “fruit of the vine” at this point on the cross. He had just assumed the full burden of man’s disobedience and incurred the penalty due – spiritual death – the separation from God. Thus, the gulf between God and man had been fully bridged... the kingdom of God had fully come. Christ, the disciples, and all who are obedient to God could now drink it new...

However, there remained one more phase in the redemption process remaining – the penalty of physical death. When that penalty was paid, the legal requirements for redemption of planet Earth and mankind were complete. Among the events and earthquake of that moment, there is a scripture of special note:

**Matthew 27:52-53:** ...the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. (KJV)

This event only appears in Matthew’s Gospel and cannot be validated; however, it does help to illustrate a few points:

- Individuals obedient under previous covenants were redeemed through Christ's sacrifice,
- That the kingdom of God on earth had fully come through Christ's sacrifice, and
- Christ had been anointed king of David's earthly throne.<sup>50</sup>

Those with a realized eschatology view might be inclined to say, "This was it. Christ is now reigning in heaven and all New Testament prophecy is being fulfilled within the current age." However, we need to remember that it was several years between David's anointment and his ascension to the throne.

## THE CURRENT AGE: THE EVICTION HEARING

### THE EVICTION PROCESS

Although the "legal" requirements for the redemption of planet Earth and mankind were fulfilled at the cross, Jesus Christ has not yet taken physical possession of planet Earth.

Many biblical scholars claim that we are now living in the "millennial" reign with Jesus Christ ruling from King David's throne in heaven. They assert that Satan is already bound and unable to deceive the nations. They also contend that the next great global action will be the general resurrection followed by the white throne judgment and the new heaven and new earth. What these scholars fail to realize is that the eviction of Satan as the god of this world is a multistep process.

Within the United States, there are several steps a landlord must take in order to evict a tenant from their property. Although the process varies from state to state, the process generally follows four steps:

- Notification that there is intent to evict.
- Obtaining an eviction judgment.
- The posting of a notice to vacate.
- Physical removal of the tenant by law enforcement officials.

The process can take as little as twenty days and may take several months or even years. The giving notice and subsequent removal does not occur at the same moment. In the case of planet Earth, nearly two millennia have passed since the tenant (Satan) was given his "Notice of Intent to Evict."

Why the delay? God is just and compassionate. Just as an earthly judge provides wayward tenants an opportunity to correct rental deficiencies, God provides mankind an opportunity to "get right with God." As an individual, we have a chance to continue down the path of disobedience, demonstrating an allegiance to Satan, or we have a chance to accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, demonstrating an allegiance to God. God is patiently waiting for all souls elected for salvation to be born and saved. This concept is best illustrated in the Parable of the Wheat and Weeds:

**Matthew 13:24-29:** The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. But that night as the workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat, then slipped away. When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew.

<sup>50</sup> The anointing does not mean that he had assumed King David's throne; after David's anointing, several years passed before he assumed the throne.

The farmer's workers went to him and said, "Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?"

"An enemy has done this!" the farmer exclaimed.

"Should we pull out the weeds?" they asked.

"No," he replied, "you'll uproot the wheat if you do. Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn." (NLT)

**Matthew 13:37-43:** Jesus replied, "The Son of Man is the farmer who plants the good seed. The field is the world, and the good seed represents the people of the Kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the evil one. The enemy who planted the weeds among the wheat is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the harvesters are the angels.

Just as the weeds are sorted out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand! (NLT)

God is patiently waiting until the wheat harvest is full:

**2 Peter 3:9:** The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. (NLT)

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## THE WRITTEN COMPLAINT

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Within our eviction analogy, God the Father serves as the judge and Jesus Christ serves as the landlord. In order to obtain an eviction judgment, Christ needs to demonstrate two requirements before the judge:

- That he has acted in good faith in his conduct as landlord, and
- That the tenant, Satan, has not fulfilled his requirements as a faithful tenant.

Jesus Christ's actions during his earthly ministry and upon the cross demonstrate that he has fulfilled the conditions of the first requirement:

**Revelation 5:9-10:** And they sang a new song with these words: "You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth." (NLT)

Revelation, Chapter 12, outlines seven counts of conspiracy that compose a written indictment of Satan's offenses towards God, Jesus Christ, and mankind. Although this is a criminal indictment, it is sufficient to demonstrate that Satan has not fulfilled his requirements as a faithful tenant:

- Conspiracy to overthrow a lawful reigning authority (Revelation 12:4).

- Conspiracy to commit the murder of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:4).
- Conspiracy to undermine a legally constituted authority (Revelation 12:9).
- Conspiracy to present false witness against the human race (Revelation 12:10).
- Conspiracy to commit terroristic acts against the nation of Israel (Revelation 12:13).
- Conspiracy to commit murder of the nation of Israel (Revelation 12:15).
- Conspiracy to commit acts of war against the Christian believer (Revelation 12:17).

The term “conspiracy” is defined as:

*from Random House Dictionary*

- an evil, unlawful, treacherous, or surreptitious plan formulated in secret by two or more persons; plot.
- a combination of persons for a secret, unlawful, or evil purpose: He joined the conspiracy to overthrow the government.
- an agreement by two or more persons to commit a crime, fraud, or other wrongful act.

The unindicted coconspirators are numerous and include:

- One-third of the heavenly host of angels who joined Satan in a plot to overthrow God.
- Herod the Great who sought to murder Jesus Christ by mass murder of the male infant children within his kingdom.
- The High Priest, Sanhedrin, and others Jewish authorities who sought to protect the status quo by accusing Jesus Christ of blasphemy and having him executed on the cross.
- The generation of Jews existing during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ who collectively chose Barabbas for commutation of sentence rather than an innocent Jesus Christ (John 18:38-40).
- Vespasian, emperor of Rome, was appointed military commander in 66 AD to suppress the Great Jewish revolt in Judea and, as emperor of Rome, responsible for the siege of Jerusalem.
- Titus, emperor of Rome, military commander of the Roman forces during the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the second Jewish temple.
- Nero, emperor of Rome, the first major state sponsor of Christian persecution and a biblical type for the coming Antichrist.
- The Antichrist and false prophet who will attempt deceive the elect of God and usurp Jesus Christ’s authority on planet Earth.
- Other individuals and individuals acting as a group who throughout the age attempted to systematically and collectively eradicate either Jewish and/or Christian populations, e.g. Nazi Germany.
- Anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ and has come in the flesh (1 John 2:22, 2 John 1:7).

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## THE EVICTION JUDGMENT

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As of this very moment, all requirements necessary to satisfy an eviction judgment have been fulfilled; however, the judge, God the Father, has not yet rendered the Eviction Judgment nor has the Notice of Intent to Vacate been posted. At the end of the current age, when the harvest is full, the judge will hand law enforcement officials the Eviction Judgment – God the Father will hand Jesus Christ the scroll with the seven seals (Revelation 5:1) and the final removal process will begin (Revelation 6:1-20:3):

1. **THE NOTICE TO VACATE:** The breaking of the first four seals notifies Satan and his legions that an Eviction Judgment has been rendered and they have seven years to vacate the premises (Revelation 6:1-7).
2. **PHYSICAL REMOVAL:** When Jesus Christ returns with his legions of saints and angels at the battle of Armageddon, the seventh vial of wrath, he will physically evict Satan and his legions (Revelation 19:11-16). The Antichrist and the false prophet will be thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19:20), their supporters will be killed (Revelation 19:21), and Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss (Revelation 20:1-3).

The book of Revelation provides a description of the final eviction process, justification for that eviction, Satan's final efforts to retain possession of planet Earth, and the ultimate results of that eviction. Many Christians feel that the book is too "difficult" for individual study, and there is widespread confusion and conflict over the book's meaning. However, the book of Revelation is the inspired Word of God and an equal partner with the other books in the Bible. It is worthy of our attention:

**Revelation 2:7, 2:29, 2:11, 2:17, 3:6, 3:13, 3:22:** Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.

**Revelation 1:3:** Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

**Revelation 22:7:** Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book."

### REV. 12: JUSTIFICATION FOR THE OUTPOURING OF WRATH

Revelation, Chapter 12, also serves as a criminal indictment against Satan and those individuals who show allegiance to Satan. The placement of Chapter 12, after the sounding of the seventh trumpet, serves to justify the seven vials of wrath that will be poured out upon the earth. Make no mistake, this wrath will be poured out upon all humans who have denied Jesus is the Christ and has come in the flesh:

**1 John 2:22:** And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist. (NLT)

**2 John 1:7:** I say this because many deceivers have gone out into the world. They deny that Jesus Christ came in a real body. Such a person is a deceiver and an antichrist. (NLT)

Just as those who repent, confess, and have faith in Jesus Christ will be saved; those who deny Jesus Christ are antichrists and have already been condemned:

**2 Peter 2:3-6:** ...But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed. For God did not spare even the angels who sinned. He threw them into hell, in gloomy pits of darkness, where they are being held until the day of judgment. And God did not spare the ancient world—except for Noah and the seven others in his family... Later, God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and turned them into heaps of ashes. He made them an example of what will happen to ungodly people. (NLT)

God is a loving God; however, he is also a God of wrath and revenge:

**Deuteronomy 32:35:** 'Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them.' (NASB)

**Deuteronomy 32:41:** If I sharpen My flashing sword, And My hand takes hold on justice, I will render vengeance on My adversaries, And I will repay those who hate Me. (NASB)

Before he pours his wrath upon mankind, God has repeatedly provided opportunities and warnings to the earth's inhabitants:

- **THE CREATION, OUR UNIVERSE, BEARS WITNESS TO THE DIVINE NATURE OF GOD**

**Romans 1:20:** For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. (NLT)

- **DURING JESUS CHRIST'S EARTHLY MINISTRY, HE PROVIDED AMPLE WARNING OF THE SIGNS THAT WILL OCCUR JUST PRIOR TO THE OUTPOURING OF WRATH**

**Matthew 24:33:** In the same way, when you see all these things, you can know his return is very near, right at the door. (NLT)

- **THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST AND SERVES AS A WITNESS TO JESUS CHRIST**

**John 15:26:** But I will send you the Advocate--the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. (NLT)

- **DURING THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE, THE BREAKING OF THE FIRST SIX SEALS WARNS MANKIND THAT THE END OF THE AGE WITH ITS SUBSEQUENT OUTPOURING WRATH IN UPON THEM**

**Revelation 6:8:** I looked up and saw a horse whose color was pale green. Its rider was named Death, and his companion was the Grave. These two were given authority over one-fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword and famine and disease and wild animals.

- **DURING THE TIME OF JACOB’S TROUBLE, GOD WILL SEND THREE ANGELS WITH THREE MESSAGES TO DIVINELY DELIVER THE GOSPEL AND WARNINGS TO ALL OF MANKIND**

**Revelation 14:6-10:** And I saw another angel flying through the sky, carrying the eternal Good News to proclaim to the people who belong to this world—to every nation, tribe, language, and people... Then another angel followed him through the sky, shouting, “Babylon is fallen—that great city is fallen—because she made all the nations of the world drink the wine of her passionate immorality.” Then a third angel followed them, shouting, “Anyone who worships the beast and his statue or who accepts his mark on the forehead or on the hand must drink the wine of God’s anger... (NLT)

- **DURING THE LATTER PORTION OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION, GOD WILL SEND TWO WITNESSES WHO GIVE WARNING OF GOD’S WRATH SOON BE Poured OUT UPON MANKIND**

**Revelation 11:3-4:** And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will be clothed in burlap and will prophesy during those 1,260 days.” These two prophets are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of all the earth. (NLT)

The inhabitants of earth are without excuse. When Jesus Christ comes in the clouds with his angels to gather his elect from the four corners of the earth, those who will be left behind will fully comprehend the event:

**Matthew 24:30:** And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (NLT)

**Luke 21:26-27:** People will be terrified at what they see coming upon the earth, for the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then everyone will see the Son of Man coming on a cloud with power and great glory. (NLT)

**Revelation 6:10-11:** Then everyone—the kings of the earth, the rulers, the generals, the wealthy, the powerful, and every slave and free person—all hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they cried to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. (NLT)

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Reading the literature generated by the various eschatological systems<sup>51</sup> can be a bit confusing because many utilize the phrase “kingdom of God” rather loosely – they do not provide solid boundaries as to what constitutes the “kingdom of God.” Some amillennialism contend that the kingdom of God arrived during Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry specifically at Christ’s crucifixion. They believe that Jesus is currently ruling the kingdom from King David’s throne in heaven. Some premillennialists contend that the kingdom of God was delayed because the Jewish authorities rejected Jesus as the Messiah. They believe that the kingdom will not arrive until Christ’s Second Advent. Other viewpoints made the issue even more confusing.

<sup>51</sup> “Christian term that means the study of the end of history from a religious perspective.” from “Christian belief systems: Competing theories of eschatology, end times, and millennialism,” *Religious Tolerance.org*, Nov. 10, 2009. <<http://www.religioustolerance.org/millenni.htm>> Nov. 21, 2011.

Before beginning this study, I had assumed that the kingdom of God had come at Christ's crucifixion but would not be fully realized until the millennial reign. However, shortly after taking a closer examination I realized that assumption was inexact and greater precision was necessary. Therefore, one of my first tasks was to determine the meaning for the following verse:

**Matthew 3:1-2:** In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

**Matthew 4:17:** From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

**Mark 1:15:** And saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

I approached the problem like a jigsaw puzzle. I searched through the scriptures and isolated those pieces that shared similar characteristics. In this case, I performed a word search for "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven," read the context of each passage, cut & pasted each passage into a text document, provided a label to indicate the primary characteristic, and then organized the passages according to the assigned labels. The following reflects my discoveries:

## THE KINGDOM IS BEYOND HUMAN LOGIC

The kingdom of God is God's kingdom, not ours... his rules, not ours... his purpose, not ours... his logic, not ours... Although we humans were created in God's image, our minds are those of infants – we simply cannot comprehend the vastness of the creation, the expanse of God's glory, or the complexity of His justice. Our best scientific minds search the cosmos in a vain attempt for a key to understanding the universe, but they fail miserably.

**Matthew 5:3:** Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Luke 7:28:** For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

**Matthew 20:1, 16:** For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder...So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

**Matthew 18:1-4:** At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Albert Einstein was perhaps the greatest mind of the last century. He found Sir Isaac Newton's scientific theories deficit and postulated new theories such as special and general relativity. Yet, even those theories were insufficient to explain the mechanics of the cosmos and the new theories such as dark matter and dark energy were required. Neither dark matter nor dark energy can be seen or measured but scientists believe in them because they have no other explanations for our universe. Their failing is not specifically in their scientific theories but generally in their reliance on the limited human mind to comprehend the vastness of God's creation.

We, as humans, make a similar error if we apply purely human logic to the biblical text. Many scholars analyze biblical passages not as the “Word of God” but as the words of men who were inspired by God. Certainly a God who created the universe, formed man, and resurrected the dead could fashion a text that was a living, breathing creation – one that changed, not in substance and form, but in application as circumstances and humanity changed. The Bible is not a history book or an instruction manual but an instrument used by the Holy Spirit to bring salvation to the sinner and enlightenment to those born of the spirit and with ears that will hear.

One of the best examples of the failing of human logic can be found in the debate of free will and predestination.

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## SIDE BAR: FREE WILL VS. PREDESTINATION

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**PREDESTINATION:** The doctrine that God has foreordained (predetermined) all things, especially that God has elected certain souls to eternal salvation.<sup>52</sup>

Proponents of predestination argue that God is all powerful, all knowing, and created all things... He made you the way you are, and you have no choice but to comply with your nature. There are ample biblical scriptures that illustrate predestination is true:

Evil individuals are brought into this world to achieve God’s purpose:

**Isaiah 46 10-11:** Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

**Romans 9:17:** For the scripture says unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Those that will be saved by Christ’s redeeming work are also predestined:

**Romans 8:28-30:** And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

**Revelation 13:8:** And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

**FREE WILL:** The power of making free choices unconstrained by external circumstances or by an agency such as fate or divine will.<sup>53</sup>

Proponents of free will argue that although God made you the way you are and knew from the beginning of creation what choices you would make, they are your choices – he may influence, but he does not force. There are ample biblical scriptures to illustrate that free will is true:

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<sup>52</sup> "predestination," Yahoo Education: Houghton Mifflin, 2009. <<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/predestination>> Oct. 12, 2011.

<sup>53</sup> "free will," Yahoo Education: Houghton Mifflin, 2009. <<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/free%20will>> Oct. 12, 2011.

Individuals were given “choice” in the Old Testament:

**Deuteronomy 30:19:** I call heaven and earth as witness this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live:

**Joshua 24:15:** And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Individuals were given “choice” in the New Testament:

**Luke 13:3:** I tell you, Nay: but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.

**Revelation 3:20:** Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will eat with him, and he with me.

It is interesting to read articles that explore this controversy. Authors are very passionate about their particular view... even to the point of calling their opponents’ arguments false doctrine generated by the devil... other are even less kind... and still others simply argue that it doesn’t really matter.

I contend that free will and predestination does really matter... that all scripture is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). But, we need not argue about which position is correct because they both are. Our fate was absolutely predetermined by God before the creation of the universe, and we have absolute free will to choose whatever course we desire. God is absolutely justified in rewarding or punishing our decisions even if he gives us no alternative but to make those decisions.

The matter is similar to an oxymoron – an apparent contradiction that is nevertheless true – such as bitter sweet, deafening silence, and a silent scream. The problem lies not within the biblical scriptures but in our inability, or unwillingness, to comprehend two seemingly contradictory concepts. Our task, therefore, is to place God’s logic over human logic and strive to understand God on his terms, not ours.

One of my biggest struggles is to overcome preconceived ideas, beliefs, and notions. We have a natural affinity to think of our thoughts as correct and resist any notion that our ideas are wrong. Once we develop a line of thought, we want to find verification that that line is true. Within this study, I’ve found it difficult to accept that still, quiet voice telling me to open my mind... to realize that a belief needs adjusting and refining.

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We cannot “prove” that something is “true” or “false” concerning the kingdom of God because His kingdom defies human logic. We can only gain a glimpse, a childish impression, that slowly grows and matures as we learn to trust in the Holy Spirit.

**Proverbs 3:5:** Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

## THE KINGDOM IS NOT PHYSICAL BUT SPIRITUAL

Many believers look for Jesus Christ's physical return to earth – often called the Blessed Hope (Titus 2:13). Unfortunately, only a lucky generation will escape the grip of death to meet the Lord in the air. The rest of us will live out our lives in quiet, but unfulfilled, anticipation.

**Romans 14:17:** “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

**John 3:5-8:** ...”Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Marvel not that I said unto thee, “Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

**Luke 17:20-21:** And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”

If we desire a mature and meaningful relationship with God we must look inward – entos: within, inside, the inside.<sup>54</sup> On earth there are constant battles being waged... not just battles between good and evil, but battles between our worldly desires and our spiritual needs. Far too often we depend on our own capabilities to pull us through the difficult times. Yes, we pray but we don't really expect divine intervention. If God does answer prayers, we believe, it is only indirectly. Yes, we believe in miracles, but they are simply that, miracles... not everyday occurrences.

We, as humans, make an error if we place our trust in the physical world. Once we accept Christ as our savior, we become born of the spirit, but that infant spirit requires nurturing, feeding, and experience. If we trust only in the physical world we never learn to rely on the spiritual world – we remain infants who are reliant on others for our daily needs. It is good to read the works of others and to listen to our pastor's sermons, but we also need to do some of the heavy lifting for ourselves – we need to study to show ourselves approved.

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### SIDE BAR: THE TRIUNE NATURE OF MAN

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Within the book of Genesis, the Bible asserts three times that man was created in God's image, something that we probably ought to pay attention to... We should ask ourselves, “What do we know about the image of God?” If we understand the answer, then we'll have a better understanding of who we are meant to be.

**Genesis 1:27:** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

There is but one true God, but that God has three distinct, divine elements that coexist in perfect harmony – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:

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<sup>54</sup> “entos,” Strong's Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/1787.htm>> Oct. 13, 2011.

**Luke 3:22:** And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.”

**Hebrew 9:14:** How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

**Acts 7:55:** But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

Thus, if God possesses three distinct elements and man is created in his image, then man must possess three distinct elements:

**1 Thessalonians 5:23:** And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. **BODY:** *sóma*: a body, flesh.<sup>55</sup> The part of man which is composed of organic elements – the dust of the ground. That part of man that perceives the physical world through the senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. That part of man that seeks to please his primal instincts.
2. **SOUL:** *psuché*: vital breath, the soul, the human person.<sup>56</sup> The part of man which is his psyche – life, the self, consciousness, the sentience. That part of man which permits him to feel, comprehend, become aware, think, and reason. That part of man that must choose his pathway.
3. **SPIRIT:** *pneuma*: wind, breath, spirit.<sup>57</sup> The part of man which is “dead” because of sin with death being define as the absence of God. That part of man which is awakened upon reception of God’s Grace, sometimes referred to as a form of resurrection. That part of man that seeks to please God.

When God created man, he formed his body (*sóma*) from the dust of the earth, formed his soul (*psuché*) by giving him the breath of life, and nurtured his spirit (*pneuma*) by communing with him in the garden. In the day that Adam disobeyed God by eating of the tree of knowledge, Adam died spiritually... he was barred from the garden... he was spiritually separated from God.

**Romans 5:12:** Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...

When we are born into this world, we physically depend upon our five senses to portray the world around us. But these five senses seek to fulfill our physical needs... “the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise.”<sup>58</sup>

However, our spirit is awakened when we become the elect of God:

**John 3:5-8:** ...“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

<sup>55</sup> “*sóma*,” Strong’s Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/5590.htm>> Oct. 13, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> “*psuché*,” Strong’s Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/5590.htm>> Oct. 13, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> “*pneuma*,” Strong’s Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/4151.htm>> Oct. 13, 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Genesis 3:6.

This spiritual rebirth or awakening permits us to commune with God. Unfortunately, while we are adults in the physical sense, we are infants in the spiritual sense. We must make a sustained, concerted effort to nurture our fledgling spirit...

**Galatians 5:16-17:** This I say then, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

Many believe that our soul (psuché) is the same as our spirit (pneuma). But that is an error. God created man in his image, God has three elements – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and man has three elements – soul, flesh, and spirit. We think with our psyche, but we feel with our spirit. We must train our mind to “see” less with the physical and more with the spiritual.

**Matthew 15:12-14:** Then came his disciples, and said unto him, “Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?” But he answered and said, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”

## THE KINGDOM IS NOT HEAVEN

When the thief being crucified next to Christ asked to be remember when Jesus arrived in his kingdom, Jesus did not respond, “Verily I say unto thee, ‘Today shalt thou be with me in my kingdom.’” No, he responded, “Verily I say unto thee, ‘Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.’” Why? The kingdom of God is a spiritual state of being (condition of existence) and heaven is a tangible, physical location. The thief entered the kingdom of God the exact moment he realized he was in need of and Jesus could provide spiritual redemption – while he was yet alive. He entered heaven after he experienced physical death.

**Luke 23:40-43:** But the other answering rebuked him, saying, “Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?” “And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.” And he said unto Jesus, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” And Jesus said unto him, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

The apostle Paul referred to “paradise” as the third heaven:

**2 Corinthians 12:2:** I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

Some scholars believe that the first heaven is our sky (the atmosphere), the second heaven the space within our universe (the moon, sun, planets, and stars), and God’s abode beyond our universe – the third heaven.

The apostle John envisioned heaven differently with entry through an open door:

**Revelation 4:1:** After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, “Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.”

So whether physically or metaphorically, heaven is a location where a soul can physically go, perhaps on a separate plane than our universe, but nevertheless, a location in existence.

Scripture metaphorically illustrates that “heaven” is within the physical realm:

**Genesis 28:12-13:** And he [Jacob] dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it...

**2 Kings 2:11:** ...there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

**John 1:51:** And he saith unto him, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”

God created three physical abodes – places where a person can exist: heaven, earth, and sea:

**Acts 4:24:** ...Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is...

**Revelation 5:13:** And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying...

**Psalms 146:5-6:** Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever...

**NOTE:** The phrase “under the earth” and “in the sea” indicate the abode of the dead.

Heaven is a location; the kingdom of heaven is a state of being – the two are not synonymous... they are not the same.

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## **SIDE BAR: DO OUR SOULS GO TO HEAVEN AT DEATH?**

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During my research, I encountered an interesting topic – where do the souls of the elect go upon their death? I had assumed that the Christian soul went to heaven and the unsaved soul went to hell while the physical bodies of both remained in the grave. That assumption, I discovered, was not quite accurate.

Some argue that our souls along with our bodies remain in the grave (Hell or Hades) until the resurrection. For this discussion we’ll call them proponents. Others argue that our souls go to heaven while only our bodies remain in the grave. We’ll call them opponents.

Proponents base their claim upon the following line of thought:

**John 14:2-3:** In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

The clause “I will come again” seems to indicate that the elect will not occupy those mansions until the resurrection of the elect. Opponents tend to refer to 1 Thessalonians to illustrate their view:

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18:** But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Unfortunately, this passage also refers to the Rapture (the first resurrection) and does not provide any evidence that our souls will be waiting in heaven to “meet up” with our resurrected bodies.

Another popular passage for opponents references the criminal who was crucified alongside Christ:

**Luke 23:43:** And Jesus said unto him, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

However, Jesus did not ascend into heaven until the third day – some claim that Paradise is actually the Hades – the grave or the abode of the dead. Thus, this passage does not seem to provide any evidence that our souls ascend to heaven upon our death:

**John 20:17:** Jesus said unto [Mary], Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”

It’s rather amazing that the scriptures do not contain more clarity on the subject. Indeed, John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, asserted that there was no scriptural evidence that our souls go to heaven upon death:

It is, indeed, very generally supposed that the souls of good men, as soon as they are discharged from the body, go directly to heaven; but this opinion has not the least foundation in the oracles of God. On the contrary our Lord says to Mary, after the resurrection, “Touch me not; for I have not yet ascended to my Father.”<sup>59</sup>

Those who believe that we remain in the grave until the resurrection also point to the following passages:

**Ecclesiastes 9:5:** For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

**Psalms 146:4:** His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

<sup>59</sup> John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions, Volume 1*, London: Thomas Tegg, 1829, pg. 509.

Both sides site similar passages and explain how each supports their viewpoint. However, the debaters rarely consider the full context of each passage:

1. Is the passage discussing the soul, spirit, or fleshly body?
2. Is the passage from the Old Testament, the Gospels, or the Epistles?
3. Is the passage discussing circumstances before or after Christ's death and resurrection?
4. Does the passage consider the "natural man" who will live during the Millennial Reign?

In my opinion, the debaters fail to consider the triune nature of man; that man is fleshly body, soul, and spirit.

1. Jesus' physical body remained in the grave for three day, but there is no indication that his soul and spirit remained with his body. Mary was not permitted to touch Jesus' body because it had not yet been glorified.
2. Jesus' physical body did not ascend into "paradise" the same day he died, but there is no indication that his soul and spirit remained with his body.

We, as humans, are so wrapped up in our physical bodies that we forget that our earthly container comprises only one-third of our being. Yes, we are looking forward to the resurrection because until our soul and spirit – our essence – meet up with our bodies we are incomplete, but our essence will not remain in the grave.

There is clear evidence that our soul and spirit are separated from our earthly bodies at death:

**Acts 2:29:** Men [and] brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day

**Matthew 17:2-3:** And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

In this example, we can see two separate things. First, King David, beloved of God, remains in the grave until this day; however, we can see from the second passage that perhaps it is only David's earthly body in that sepulcher. While Elijah did not suffer physical death (2 Kings 2:11), Moses died at the age of 120 (Deuteronomy 34:6-7). In Matthew 17:3, we see Jesus talking to both Moses and Elijah... our essence surely extends beyond our earthly body.

There is evidence that the early Christians believed that our souls departed for heaven upon death:

**Acts 7:59-60:** And they stoned Stephen, calling upon [God], and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

This passage specifically mentions the Christian "spirit" and seems to indicate that Stephen believed Jesus Christ would receive his spirit upon death. There are other indicators:

**2 Corinthians 5:8:** We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

**Philippians 1:21- 23:** For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain... For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

Some argue that these passages are contextually discussing the bodily resurrection, but I don't think so... both are contrasting living here on earth versus the benefits of dying and being with Christ. There is one last passage that I would like to share, and it is found within the book of Revelation:

**Revelation 6:9-10:** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

I'm afraid John Wesley was incorrect. There is scriptural evidence that the souls and spirits of the elect join Christ in heaven upon their death; we need only differentiate between a person's earthly body, their soul, and their spirit... We look forward to our earthly resurrection, but our essence will be in heaven until that day arrives.

## THE KINGDOM WAS NOT DELAYED BECAUSE OF REJECTION

To be consistent with Old Testament prophecy, Jesus offered Israel the Kingdom. This was not fulfilled by the spiritual Kingdom that Jesus actually established through the Church. So, clearly the literal Kingdom was not established. Rather it was postponed and God inserted an Age... If Israel had accepted Jesus as their King, He would have been able to establish the Kingdom that very year (A.D.33). However, because they rejected Him, the Kingdom was postponed for 2000 years.<sup>60</sup>

This theory has some elements of truth. First, the ministry of John the Baptist was in preparation of the arrival of the kingdom of God, and Jesus assumed that role once John was imprisoned:

**Matthew 3:1-2:** In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

**Mark 1:14-15:** Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

Second, it is also true that the Gospel was first offered exclusively to the Jews:

**Matthew 10:5:** These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into [any] city of the Samaritans enter ye not."

Third, it is also true that the Jewish authorities rejected the messianic role of Jesus:

**Luke 10:33:** [Saying], "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles."

<sup>60</sup> "Key 7: The Kingdom Rejected and Postponed," Oxford Bible Church, ND. <<http://www.oxfordbiblechurch.co.uk/pages/books/end-time-prophecy/etp-index/kingdom-rejected.php>> Oct. 31, 2011.

**Mark 15:1-3:** ... the chief priests with the elders and the experts in the law and the whole Sanhedrin tied Jesus up, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. So Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He replied, "You say so." Then the chief priests began to accuse him repeatedly.

The rejection by Jewish authorities was not unexpected. Jesus taught that the Gospel would be rejected by the Jewish authorities, and the Gospel subsequently given to the Gentiles. The kingdom of God was not delayed, but its residency was extended to the Gentiles:

**Matthew 8:10-11:** [speaking of the Roman Centurion] When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

**Luke 13:26-30:** Then shall ye begin to say, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." But he shall say, "I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."

**Matthew 21:42-43:** Jesus saith unto them, "Did ye never read in the scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?'" Therefore I say unto you, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

Unfortunately, what this theory fails to comprehend is that the kingdom of God was a spiritual realm not a physical, earthly kingdom. Like the Pharisees and the Sadducees, supporters of this theory mistake the spiritual for the physical. The kingdom has come, just not in the way many expected.

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### **SIDE BAR: THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS...**

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The following verse is a curious verse. If we take it at face value, as we probably should, then the events described in this chapter, and those in Luke 21 and Mark 13, should have already been fulfilled.

**Matthew 24:32-35:** Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Within the Bible, the term "generation" generally refers to the people who were born about the same time – the Israelites who came out of Egypt died before Israel crossed into the Promised Land – or about forty years:

**Psalms 95:10-11:** Forty years long was I grieved with [this] generation, and said, It [is] a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

**Judges 13:1:** And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

Matthew 23, which contains the Seven Woes to the scribes and Pharisees, seems to support the claim that Jesus Christ was pronouncing judgment upon the Jews for rejection of his ministry:

**Matthew 23:33-36:** Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Preterism asserts that these scriptures clearly demonstrate that the prophecies in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 were fulfilled place in 70 A.D. during the Roman siege of Jerusalem and destruction of the Second Temple. Preterism also contends that the prophecies contained within the book of Revelation were fulfilled during the first century.

Let's take a closer look at the problem created by Matthew 24:

**Matthew 24:1-3:** And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, "See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

We have three separate elements within these introductory scriptures:

1. When will the temple be destroyed?
2. What will be the signs of Christ's coming?
3. What will be the signs of the end of the world (age)?

Preterism interprets these three elements as:

1. When will the second temple be destroyed?
2. When will Christ come to establish his Church?
3. When will Christ judge the dead or when will the Jewish economy be destroyed?

Futurism interprets these elements as:

1. When will the third temple be destroyed?
2. When will Christ come for the elect?

### 3. When will Christ come to establish his millennial reign?

The arguments answering these questions are intriguing, but irrelevant.

Were the prophecies fulfilled within forty years of their declaration? Yes, at least in part. We know that the temple of Jesus Christ (John 2:19) was destroyed and raised again in three days. We know that all that was dear to the scribes and Pharisees (Mathew 23) was destroyed with the sacking of Jerusalem and the destruction of the second temple. Fulfillment of other individual elements is open to debate; but again, it is all irrelevant. What is relevant is the following verses:

**Matthew 24:30-31:** And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

It's rather difficult to argue that these verses were fulfilled in 70 AD, at least in a meaningful way.

Preterism might argue, "Well yes, but this refers to the general resurrection at the end of the Church age." However, there are two problems with this response. First, the passage specifically mentions the "elect" – eklektos: chosen out, elect, choice, select, of those chosen out by God for the rendering of special service to Him.<sup>61</sup> Second, the general resurrection is clearly well beyond the standard forty years for a generation.

The problem lies not with the term "this generation," but with human interpretation – we have human minds applying human logic when we should be using spiritual minds applying spiritual logic. Biblical passages are not dead words written by dead authors. The Bible is living, breathing, and nurturing. We can see this through dual occurrence and dual purpose passages:<sup>62</sup>

**DUAL OCCURRENCE:** The "abomination of desolation" in Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11 was fulfilled when Antiochus IV Epiphanies erected a statue of Zeus in the second temple around 167 BC... well before Christ's Olivet Discourse.

**DUAL PURPOSE:** The mournful message of Ezekiel 28:11-19 is directed to the earthly king of Tyre, and the passage also provides a colorful description of Satan's fall. The passage claims that the king of Tyre was in the Garden of Eden; he wasn't of course. This is an extended metaphor comparing the fall of the king of Tyre to the fall of Satan. This extended metaphor gives us a glimpse of the prince of Tyre as well as Satan before his fall, the nature of his fall, and the result of his fall.

Complex and confusing? Absolutely! But that is the nature of the living, breathing Word of God. We should remember that the Bible is the inspired words of God, not the historical recordings of human beings. Understanding the nature of Dual Role–Dual Occurrence scripture helps us to understand that the Bible applies not only to time past, but to the present, and to the future.

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<sup>61</sup> "eklektos," Strong's Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/1588.htm>> Oct. 30, 2011.

<sup>62</sup> See *Topic Analysis: Dual Purpose Literary Devices*

## THE KINGDOM EXISTED PRIOR TO CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION

Some realized eschatologists assert that the kingdom of God arrived following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; however, that theory is somewhat misleading.

**Mark 1:14-15:** Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

**Matthew 4:17:** From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

**Luke 10:9:** And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

For some reason, biblical scholars often translate the term "at hand" or "nigh" as being "near in time." However, I believe this is an error. I assert that the term more accurately reflects "near in place."

**1448 eggízō** (from 1451 /eggýs, "near") – properly, has drawn close (come near). 1448 (eggízō) occurs 14 times in the Greek perfect tense (indicative mood) in the NT which expresses "extreme closeness, immediate imminence – even a presence ('It is here') because the moment of this coming happened (i.e. at the beginning of Jesus' ministry)" (J. Schlosser).<sup>63</sup>

Notice that in the following verse, the term "not far" seems to indicate distance – not "makran" at a distance, far away, remote:<sup>64</sup>

**Mark 12:33-34:** "And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God..."

In this discourse with the Pharisees, Christ indicated that the kingdom of God has already arrived:

**Matthew 12:28:** "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

**Luke 11:20:** "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you."

In his lament of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, Christ indicated that they were already obstructing the path into the kingdom of God:

**Matthew 23:13:** But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither allow you them that are entering to go in.

<sup>63</sup> "eggizo," HELPS Word Studies, Helps Ministries, Inc., [div.org/greek/1448.htm](http://div.org/greek/1448.htm) Oct. 31, 2011.

<sup>64</sup> "makran," Strong's Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/3756.htm>> Oct. 30, 2011.

**Luke 11:52:** Woe unto you, lawyers! for you have taken away the key of knowledge: you entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in you hindered.

Interestingly, the twelve disciples apparently understood the message of the kingdom of God without understanding the need for Christ's crucifixion and resurrection:

**Mark 4:11:** And he said unto them, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are outside, all these things are done in parables."

**Matthew 16:21-22:** From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You."

**Luke 18:31-34:** Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again." The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.

It is also interesting to understand that the disciples were to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God without revealing that Jesus was the Christ:

**Matthew 16:16, 20:** And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God..." Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

**Luke 9:20-21:** He said unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter answering said, The Christ of God. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing.

**Mark 8:29-30:** And he saith unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?" And Peter answereth and saith unto him, "Thou art the Christ". And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

All too frequently, scholars focus their attention on Jesus as the Christ instead of his message. Although Christ's death and resurrection are essential to our salvation, that message was not what Jesus preached during his earthly ministry.

If it's been awhile since you've read Matthew, Chapter 5, 6, and 7, read them... do it in one sitting. If those chapters don't describe your life, perhaps you need to rethink your spiritual walk.

**Romans 14:17:** For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

**Luke 9:27:** But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

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## SIDE BAR: EXPLORING ALLEGORIES

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In some circles, there is profound criticism for viewing scripture as allegorical literature; in fact, extreme fundamentalists will spit bile, call down curses, and expel demons if the term "allegory" and scripture are used in the same sentence. This is unfortunate and ignores the main difficulties in interpreting the Bible –

God's spiritual world is vastly different than our own and our small minds cannot comprehend the vastness of God's eternal plan. Thus, the Bible uses allegories to help our simple minds along.

The term "allegory" may be defined as:

- ✓ a representation of an abstract or spiritual meaning through concrete or material forms; figurative treatment of one subject under the guise of another. (Dictionary.com, Random House Dictionary, Random House, Inc. 2011)
- ✓ a story, play, poem, picture or other work in which the characters and events represent particular qualities or ideas, related to morals, religion or politics. (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus © Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Allegories can take a variety of forms such as extended metaphors, allusions, foreshadowing, and archetypes. The antecedent for an allegory (the item of reference) can be found within Biblical text, historical events and characters, or real life.

- ✓ The prince of Tyre – who saw himself as greater than God – is used as a "type" for the Devil (Ezekiel 28). If we examine the prince's characteristics, we can acquire a sense of what the devil is like.
- ✓ Some claim a resurrected Nero Caesar will be the antichrist in John's Revelation. I personally doubt the validity of that claim; however, if we examine Nero's persecution of early Christian, perhaps we can acquire a sense of what the Antichrist will be like during the first half of the Great Tribulation.

Allegory doesn't mean reality. The prince of Tyre was not an embodiment of the Devil; and Nero Caesar is not the Antichrist. However, it is through such examinations that allow us to "see" a facsimile version of heavenly things; it's sort of like a model car – it looks like the real thing, but it's not.

**Matthew 13:13:** Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

Many think of allegories as a symbols, but I believe that association is misleading. Heavy reliance on symbolism encourages readers to "see" things that don't exist. Let's use Revelation 6:2 as an example.

**Revelation 6:2:** I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

white horse = nobility | rider = warrior | bow = battle | crown = authority

We can conclude from this verse that a person of nobility and military tendencies will be given authority to go out and conquer. That's it, nothing more. Even if we complete extensive research into how these items are used within the Bible and the culture of the time, we cannot reliably conclude more than a person of nobility and military tendencies will be given authority to go out and conquer.

Some have theorized that this verse refers to the initial granting of power to the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation, and perhaps that claim is legitimate. However, we cannot reliably conclude that the rider is the Antichrist based on this verse alone... there just isn't sufficient scriptural evidence.

Symbolism adds color, depth, and detail to an image, but symbolism in isolation cannot validate a belief construct.

**EXAMPLES OF ALLEGORIES:** A good example for exploration of biblical allegories can be found in Daniel's "abomination of desolation."

**Daniel 9:27:** And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

**Daniel 11:31:** And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.

**Daniel 12:11:** And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

In Rabbinical literature, many rabbis believe these passages were fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes around 167 B.C. when he set up an altar to Zeus in the Second Temple and sacrificed a pig on the altar. Others see it as an allusion to Manasseh who set up a carved image in the house of God (2 Chronicles 33:7).<sup>65</sup> However, we know that these views are incomplete since Jesus' futuristic reference to Daniel's "abomination of desolation" can be found in Matthew, Mark, and possibly Luke:

**Matthew 24:15:** When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)...

**Mark 13:14:** But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand)...

**Luke 21:20:** And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

Some modern scholars believe that these New Testament references were fulfilled when the Roman general Titus sacked Jerusalem in 70 AD. However, we know that this view is incomplete because Jesus specifically said that people will faint from fear after seeing the heavens shaken and Jesus arriving in a cloud (Luke 21:26-27). I have found no historical references indicating that people saw either after the 70 AD sack of Jerusalem.

Some biblical scholars believe these prophecies are purely symbolic and were fulfilled when Christ was crucified. Others contend that the "abomination of desolation" takes place in the heart when a Godly path is rejected. Still others believe that Daniel's prophecy was written after 167 BC and the Gospel accounts after 70 AD.

Unfortunately, while these "interpretations" might possess elements of historical or symbolic merit, they contribute to disharmony among Christians and fail to substantially contribute to our understanding of the mysteries of God.

For a more fruitful understanding, we must first recognize that these prophecies specifically and literally refer to the signs of Christ's second coming and the end of the age (Matthew 24:3). We can then examine individual scriptural elements and parallel earthy example to glean a more concrete understanding:

**Scriptural Element**

**Parallel Earthly Example**

<sup>65</sup> LouisGinzberg, "Abomination of Desolation," *JewishEncyclopedia.com*. <<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com>> Sep. 27, 2011.

Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.	World War II fought between 1939-45 AD
There will be great earthquakes.	The great Chile earthquake of 1960 AD
There will be various places plagues and famines.	The great Irish famine of 1740-41 AD
There will be terrors and great signs from heaven.	The great Galveston hurricane of 1900 AD
They will lay their hands on you and will persecute you.	Nero's persecution of Christians in 64-68 AD
When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies.	The siege of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD
When you see the abomination of desolation in the holy place.	Antiochus' erection of an altar to Zeus

From the individual earthly examples we can construct a powerful, detailed portrait of what the end of the age will closely resemble, and this portrait will help us gain a better understanding of the mystery of that age.

When it comes to prophecy, we must be careful not to see things in earthly examples that are not really there. Three decades ago I read an interesting book by Clarence Larkin, c. 1918.<sup>66</sup> In one section, he lists the signs of the end of the age and then attempts to illustrate how those signs were being fulfilled in his day. Please understand, that Reverend Larkin was not predicting that Jesus would return in his lifetime only that, in his opinion, that all of the signs of Jesus' return were present. While we most certainly should be diligently prepared, false predictions can harm the believing as well as the unbelieving.

## HOW DO WE ACCESS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

What then is the kingdom of God? Thus far, we have identified that:

1. The kingdom is beyond human logic.
2. The kingdom is not physical but spiritual.
3. The kingdom is not heaven.
4. The kingdom was not delayed because of rejection.
5. The kingdom arrived before Christ's crucifixion.

But we have yet to identify the nature of the kingdom of God.

**kingdom:** *basileia*: kingship, sovereignty, authority, rule, especially of God, both in the world, and in the hearts of men; hence: kingdom, in the concrete sense.<sup>67</sup>

All of creation, all the universe, all outside the universe, all that is is under the authority and rule of God:

**Revelation 22:13:** I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Nothing occurs that occurs without the expressed or implied will of God:

<sup>66</sup> Several of Clarence Larkin's books and charts are available in digital form on the Internet at <http://www.preservedwords.com/>.

<sup>67</sup> "basileia," Strong's Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/932.htm>> Oct. 15, 2011.

**Isaiah 46:10-11:** Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish. I will call a swift bird of prey from the east— a leader from a distant land to come and do my bidding. I have said what I would do, and I will do it. (NLT)

The kingdom of God has always existed and humans have always had access to it. Enoch and Elijah were taken away without experiencing physical death. Moses, who died at the age of 120, was in heaven during Jesus Christ's earthly ministry. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the Old Testament prophets had access to the kingdom of God:

**Matthew 17:2-3:** And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

**Luke 13:28:** There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.

Thus, the "kingdom of God" is not a literal expression because all things are already within the sovereignty of God. Rather the "kingdom" of God is a metaphor – it is a literary device that using something familiar to help explain something that is unfamiliar. Unfortunately, as a figurative language device it is subject to misinterpretation and misapplication.

As discussed in the previous section, access to the kingdom of God existed prior to Christ's crucifixion and the Gospel did not include Christ's redemptive work on the cross – the disciples preached the Gospel (Luke 9:1-6) prior to the realization that Jesus was the Messiah (Luke 9:18-20) and prior to the revelation of Jesus' sufferings (Luke 9:22-26). This is an important distinction.

Biblical scholars frequently portray that access to the kingdom of God is dependent upon the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. This is a serious theological error. It results in multiple mixed metaphors – a combination of two or more metaphors that together produce a ridiculous effect.<sup>68</sup> Some amillennialists assert that the kingdom is found in the Church and that Christ is ruling on King David's throne in heaven. Some premillennialists assert that the kingdom was delayed because the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah and that the kingdom will not arrive until Christ's Second Advent.

The "Church" may be a form of a kingdom but it is not the "kingdom." The "Millennial Reign" may be a form of a kingdom but is not the "kingdom." Jesus Christ's sacrificial work during his earthly ministry was essential in bridging the gap between mankind and God, but it was not the "key" to the kingdom.

Covenant theology, while possessing a fairly accurate portrait of the kingdom of God, is bewildered by the thought of unredeemed human beings living on earth during the earthly, millennial reign of Christ. They assert that God's main purpose in history is Christ and secondarily the Church. The Church is the culmination of God's saving purpose for the ages. Most hold to a form of unconditional election and irresistible grace.<sup>69</sup> Redemption, according to the Five Points of Calvinism, is not based on an individual's faith nor does the individual have a choice in the matter.

<sup>68</sup> "mixed metaphor," Vocabulary.com, 2011 <[http://www.vocabulary.com/definition/mixed\\_metaphor](http://www.vocabulary.com/definition/mixed_metaphor)> Nov. 21, 2011.

<sup>69</sup> "Dispensationalism - A Reformed Evaluation," First Presbyterian Church of Jackson Mississippi, ND <[http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/apologetics/covenant%20theology%20&%20justification/ligons\\_covtheology/09.htm](http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/apologetics/covenant%20theology%20&%20justification/ligons_covtheology/09.htm)> Nov. 21, 2011.

Premillennialism also frequently misses the mark in understanding the character and nature of the kingdom of God. Many see the attributes described within the kingdom of God parables as attributes that will be prevalent during the Millennium, not necessarily present during the current age. They tend to simplify individual salvation frequently rendering it a momentary act of contrition rather than a permanent change in heart.

Please note, at no point do I wish to diminish the power or necessity of Christ's redemptive work during his earthly ministry. It is through this work that Jesus Christ has disproven Satan's accusations against mankind, it is through this work that the breach between God and mankind has been bridged, it is through this work that my sins are forgiven, and it is through this work that the earth will be redeemed from its wickedness. However, it is important for us to understand that the Gospel was preached prior to and apart from Christ's sacrificial work. We need to understand the human role in accessing the kingdom of God.

Metaphors are useful figurative language devices as the characteristics of the concrete help us to understand the characteristics of the abstract. In this case, a "kingdom" possesses at least three attributes that help us understand the "kingdom of God."

from *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*: 1. The territory or country subject to a king... 2. The inhabitants or population subject to a king... 4. A region; a tract; the place where any thing prevails and holds sway...<sup>70</sup>

1. A kingdom has a ruling king or monarch.
2. A kingdom has subjects or inhabitants.
3. A kingdom has a territory, country, or region.

**The Monarch of the Kingdom:** Within the current age, the ruling monarch is under dispute. While Jesus Christ completed all the work necessary to redeem the earth, he has yet to take physical possession.<sup>71</sup> Thus, technically, Satan remains the "god" of this world and retains full authority.

**Luke 4:5-6:** The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours." (NIV)

**The Subjects of the Kingdom:** Within the current age, the subjects of the kingdom include both Jew and Gentile with no distinction between the two:

**Romans 10:11-13:** As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (NIV)

The dispute, however, is not over which humans are potential subjects of the kingdom but rather the condition of the human heart:

<sup>70</sup> "kingdom," *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*, ND <<http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/word/kingdom>> Nov. 21, 2011.

<sup>71</sup> See *Satan Evicted: The Foundation within this study*.

**Matthew 18:3:** And said, “Truly, I say to you, If you do not have a change of heart and become like little children, you will not go into the kingdom of heaven.” (BBE)

The Territory of the Kingdom: Within the current age and as previously discussed, the kingdom is not a physical realm but rather a spiritual one:

**Luke 17:20-12:** Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.” (NIV)

Within the current age, there are two potential kingdoms – the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, and the inhabitants of each kingdom is determined by the condition of the individual human heart. By default, an individual is a subject within Satan’s kingdom; however, the good news of the Gospel is that an individual can switch his allegiance (loyalty, commitment, and adherence) and become a subject of the kingdom of God.

One’s allegiance is determined not by a single act, not through a religious act, not through works, not through doctrine, and not through heritage, but by the condition of the human heart:

**Matthew 6:21 & Luke 12:34:** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (NIV)

**Luke 6:4-5:** The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. (NIV)

Jesus Christ’s sacrificial work and right to assume the throne of King David are essential, but they remain fruitless unless the individual properly conditions their heart to receive the message of the Gospel:

**Mark 13:19-23:** When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” (NIV)

The focus of this parable is not on the sower or the seed, but on the condition of the soil – the condition of the human heart. What then is a properly conditioned heart? That, my friend, is the message of the Gospel, the parables, the teachings of Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry... We can briefly summarize these teachings:

1. **That we must repent:** We must decide that this world holds little of real value; we must recognize that the ways of this world are wicked, fruitless, and brings little lasting joy.
2. **That we must be humble:** We must understand that we possess little of real value; we must recognize that our wisdom is foolishness, our strengths are weakness, and our achievements are insignificant.

3. **That we must be righteous:** Not holiness, but righteousness – justness, integrity, morality. We must have a strong yearning to do what is morally correct; not for want of reward or fear of punishment but because it is fitting.

**Micah 6:8:** No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. (NIV)

We are incapable of altering our hearts in a meaningful way... The Old Testament is filled with examples of the insufficiencies of human will; however, once we nurture a yearning, then the Lord will take the remaining steps necessary to transfer our citizenship from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God:

**Mark 10:26-27:** The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” (NIV)

**Colossians 1:13:** For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son. (NIV)

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## **SIDE BAR: IS SIMPLE BELIEF SUFFICIENT FOR SALVATION?**

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**James 4:7-8:** Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.

Many individuals who claim to be Christians claim that all one only needs to “believe” in order to be saved. I’m a little concerned about that simplicity. Satan believes in God and has been before God’s throne; yet, he will be thrown into the Lake of Fire:

**James 2:19-20:** Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

All humans, I believe, are well aware of God’s existence even if they have never heard the Gospel:

**Psalms 19:1:** The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

**Romans 1:20:** For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

Grace is a free gift from God and cannot be earned through any effort on our part:

**Romans 5:18-21:** Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous...

But, Satan continues his de facto<sup>72</sup> reign on this world, and humans who show allegiance to worldly concerns are subjects of Satan’s kingdom. However, through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, God

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<sup>72</sup>in fact by physical possession but not by right according to law.

established a de jure<sup>73</sup> earthly kingdom, and humans who show allegiance to spiritual matters become subjects of God's spiritual kingdom.

Children of earthly parents tend to imitate their parents' traits including personalities, beliefs, and behaviors. Spiritual children will also mimic their parent – either the God in heaven or the god of this world.

**James 3:12:** Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

A Jew will not be granted admittance to the kingdom of God simply because of his heritage; a Christian, likewise, will not be granted entry just because they claim a Christian heritage.

**Matthew 7:21:** Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD: THE BATTLE CONTINUES

**Matthew 13:37-40:** He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

While the mortgage for mankind and planet earth has been paid in full, the Father has not yet permitted the Son to take possession. The individual may wonder why God delays the process, but the longer he delays, the greater the harvest of souls:

**Luke 13: 18-19:** Then said he, "Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it."

**Luke 13:20-21:** And again he said, "Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

Throughout the current age, scholars have attempted to calculate the timing of Christ's return... but that's simple not in the cards for mortal men to know:

**Matthew 24:36:** But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

**Acts 1:6-7:** When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" And he said unto them, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

When all of the souls destined for salvation are saved, then will the end of this age will come:

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<sup>73</sup> by right according to law but not demonstrated in fact by physical possession.

**2 Peter 3:8-9:** But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

**Revelation 6:10-11:** And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

But until that time, the battle between good and evil continues. Many amillennialists believe that Satan was bound at Christ's death and resurrection; however, the scripture teaches that Satan is unshackled and prowling among us today:

**1 Peter 5:8:** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

**2 Corinthians 4:3-4:** But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

**Revelation 12:17:** And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Probably the most effective of Satan's tool is false doctrine and false teachers:

**Ephesians 6:11-12:** Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

**2 Corinthians 11:13-15:** For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will correspond to their actions.

The battle continues on a global scale, but each will be held accountable for the gifts given to us individually. What is the best weapon to use in our personal battle? The scriptures of the Bible:

**2 Corinthians 5:10:** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

**2 Timothy 2:15:** Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

## REVELATION 12

### The cosmic battle of the ages...

## PLACEMENT WITHIN THE PRIMARY NARRATIVE

Some biblical scholars believe that the events within book of Revelation follow a purely chronological sequence – the events occur within the order that they are described within John’s vision. This view is in error as the birth of Jesus Christ is described in Revelation 12:5 long before John ever received his vision. A purely chronological framework simply is not feasible.

However, God is not a God of confusion and any deviation within John’s primary narrative must be justified. In this case, the narrative break is readily apparent and indicates that the events within Chapters 12, 13, and 14 occur outside the primary narrative:

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### THE OPEN TABERNACLE

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At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the heavenly temple of God is opened and the ark of his covenant becomes visible within his temple:

**Revelation 11:19:** And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail. (KJV)

The interludes of Chapters 12, 13, and 14 then occur describing (a) the woman, dragon, and war in heaven, (b) the two beasts, (c) the song of the 144,000, and (d) the three angels with three messages

John’s primary narrative then resumes at the beginning of Chapter 15 with the final plagues originating from an open heaven and temple:

**Revelation 15:5:** And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened... (KJV)

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### TRANSITIONAL TEXT

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The content of the actual text indicates a break within the narrative. In Revelation 12:1, John is distracted from the primary action by a great and wondrous sign in the heaven:

**Revelation 12:1:** And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. (KJV)

The primary narrative is once again resumed by a similar distraction calling John’s attention back to the events occurring within the primary narrative:

**Revelation 15:1:** And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. (KJV)

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### TEXT CONTENT

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With Chapter 12, there are several events that chronologically occur long before John was ever shown his vision, namely:

1. The dragon in Revelation 12:3 has seven diadem crowns whereas later the beast who is empowered by the dragon will have ten diadem crowns (Revelation 13:1). This change, I believe, represents a change in time periods – the addition of three more kingdoms.
2. The dragon makes his appearance before the woman gives birth to Jesus Christ, around 3 BC (Revelation 12:4).
3. Jesus Christ is born, completes his earthly ministry, is crucified, is resurrected from the dead, and ascends to heaven which occurs around 30 AD (Revelation 12:5).

**Revelation 12:5:** And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and [to] his throne. (KJV)

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## JUSTIFICATION OF THE SEVEN PLAGUES

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Christians tend to view God as a loving God, but his Old Testament qualities remain. God remains a jealous and wrathful God, and the scripture provides ample justification for and warnings to avoid that wrath.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet calls forth God's wrath in the form of the seven final vials. However, God will provide several warnings that mankind can avoid this horrendous time period: the breaking of the first four seals (Revelation 6:1-7), the three angels with the three messages (Revelation 14:6-13), the rapture of the Christian saints (Revelation 6-12-17), the two witnesses (Revelation 11:1-13), and the sounding of the first six trumpets (Revelation 8:7-9:21).

Revelation Chapters 12 and 13 provide justification for the wrath that will begin to be poured upon the earth in Chapter 15. Chapter 12 specifically indicts Satan, the devil, the great accuser and deceiver of mankind while Chapter 13 specifically indicts the Antichrist, false prophet, and those individuals who chose to walk in darkness, deception, and wickedness. (In Chapter 14, the three angels with the three messages provide warning of the wrath to come.)

God places the scene of the woman, the child, and the dragon in Chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation to justify his outpouring of wrath in Chapter 15. I place it at the beginning of my narrative because the primary events took place at the beginning of the current age – they were a part of the transition between the Mosaic Age and the Church Age. They also reflect the long term struggle between the forces of good (God, Jesus Christ, and Christians) against the forces of evil (Satan, the Antichrist, and the children of deception).

## PROMINENT ACTORS WITHIN THE SCENE

The scene presented in Revelation 12:1-7 introduce five prominent actors, individuals who participate in or become targets of the actions within the chapter. Thus, our first job is to identify each of these actors:

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### THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

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**Revelation 12:1-2:** a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

The woman represents Old Testament, national Israel who ceased to exist as a unified, identifiable entity in 70 AD following the siege of Jerusalem and destruction of the second Temple. Although her people have been scattered (hidden) throughout the nations, God will regather a remnant during the transition between the current and next age.

**ALLUSION:** Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9. In this dream, Joseph dreamed that the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed low to him. Upon telling his dream to his father Jacob (37:10), his father responded, "Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?" The moon represents Rachel, Jacob's wife; the sun represents Jacob, Israel, and the eleven stars represent the eleven patriarchs of the tribes of Israel with Joseph composing the twelfth.

- **ALTERNATIVE VIEWS**

Among the differing eschatological systems, the woman is believed to represent someone other than the nation of Israel. While each viewpoint demonstrates some merit, their overall arguments are flawed:

1. **THE WOMAN REPRESENTS THE CHURCH:** Some scholars assert that the woman represents the Church, both the Old and New Testament saints. They believe that there is one body of believer – Israel in the Old Testament with an incorporation of Jews and Gentiles into a single body within the New Testament. However, this correlation is flawed:
  - The woman is introduced as being in labor with the male child, Jesus Christ. It is the Old Testament that describes the travails of Israel as a nation, and it is those travails that will eventually lead to the birth of the Messiah. This introduction, paints the woman with the traits of the Old Testament... the Christian saints are not mentioned until verse 17, the last verse in this particular chapter.
  - It was Jesus Christ who gave birth to the Church, and the Church that is the body of Christ. It is hardly fitting that a child gives birth to its mother and then turns around and marries his mother – there would be something of an Oedipus complex.
  - Finally, after giving birth to the child, the woman flees into the desert and assumes an inactive status – the Church, on the other hand, is an active agent of God throughout the current age.
2. **THE WOMAN REPRESENTS EVE:** Some scholars assert that the woman represents Eve, the mother of all mankind. They base their claim on Genesis 3:15:

**Genesis 3:15:** And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

This claim asserts that Revelation 12 represents the struggle between the dragon, the serpent, and Jesus Christ, the "promised" seed of Eve. Once Jesus ascends to heaven, the struggle is between Satan, the god of this world, and Eve's remnant seed, redeemed Christian.

While Eve most certainly is the mother of the "promised" seed, the Messiah, and a prototype of Israel, Eve within biblical literature is not viewed as an entity that embodies a

unified group, such as Israel or the Church. What identifiable group was persecuted following ascension of Jesus Christ?

- **Eve:** Probably not. Eve is the mother of all of mankind, but biblical and historical literature does not generally associate her with persecution nor do we see references where she was specifically a target of satanic attacks.
  - **Israel:** Yes, they suffered at the hands of the Romans, were scattered among various nations, and suffered periodic persecution by a large variety of groups.
  - **The Church:** Yes, they suffered persecution at the hands of the Romans and periodically by other groups under varying conditions. However, we have already disqualified the Church as the woman – Christ gave her birth and she becomes the body of Christ.
3. **THE WOMAN REPRESENTS THE VIRGIN MARY:** Obviously on a literal level, the Virgin Mary gave physical birth to Jesus Christ and should be considered a candidate. However, like Eve, Mary does not represent an embodiment of a unique group, biblical and historical literature does not generally associate her with persecution, nor do we see references where she was specifically a target of satanic attacks.

**WHY THE ALTERNATE VIEWPOINTS?** A plain reading of the chapter seems to clearly indicate that the woman is the nation of Israel, the twelve stars seem to be a dead giveaway. Unfortunately, a plain reading contradicts some established theological constructs and, therefore, must be “spiritualized” until the “interpretation” conforms to established doctrine:

- ✓ For some, such as Reformed Theologians and amillennialism, the nation of Israel was totally dissolved in 70 AD with the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the second Jewish Temple. Israel, according to this view, was absorbed into and became indistinguishable from the New Testament Church. Therefore, all allusions to national Israel within both testaments must be spiritualized to representation of the Church.
- ✓ Perhaps Roman Catholic Church adopted the Virgin Mary viewpoint as a means to validate their belief that she is the "Queen of Heaven," "Mother of God," "Mother of the Church," the "Co-Redemptrix," and the "Mediatrice of all graces."<sup>74</sup> Or perhaps, this view was adopted to combat the belief originating during the Reformation that the Roman Catholic Church is the embodiment of the Whore of Babylon (Revelation 17:1-18) and the avenue for the rise of the Antichrist (Revelation 13:1-9).

Should these alternative views be rejected outright? I don't believe they should. Each has an element of truth and each adds a flavor to our overall understanding. When we close our minds to alternative viewpoints, we stop listening... and that can have dangerous results.

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## THE MALE CHILD OF THE WOMAN

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**Revelation 12:5:** she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

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<sup>74</sup> "Woman of the Apocalypse," Wikipedia, Sep. 23, 2011. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woman\\_of\\_the\\_Apocalypse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woman_of_the_Apocalypse)> Nov. 25, 2011.

The male child is Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God the Father, who came in the flesh in order to redeem mankind and the earth from human disobedience. He will return as a conquering king at the end of this age and physically rule the nations from Jerusalem.

The male child is Jesus Christ as indicated by the attributes of ruling all nations with an iron rod:

**Revelation 2:27-28:** They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots. They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star! (NLT)

**Revelation 19:15:** From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty, like juice flowing from a winepress. (NLT)

**Psalms 2:8-9:** Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession. You will break them with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots. (NLT)

The second portion of the verse “her child was caught up unto God, and [to] his throne” adds further to the identification of the child as Jesus Christ:

**Luke 22:69:** But from now on the Son of Man will be seated in the place of power at God’s right hand.” (NLT)

**Acts 7:55:** But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand.

Jesus Christ has only a secondary role within this scene, and his role as ruler of all nations, “king of kings,” will not be fully realized until his Second Advent (1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14, Revelation 19:16).

There seems to be little debate among biblical scholars as to the identity of the male child.

- **THE MALE CHILD REPRESENTS THE CHURCH:** There are some who contend that the male child is the Body of Christ, the church, and the “catching up” of the male child represents the rapture of the church.<sup>75</sup> Revelation 2:27-28, seems to be somewhat supportive of this view as the Church will also rule the nations with an iron rod. Additionally, the term used for the catching up – *harpazó* – is similar to that used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. However, since the Church is the body of Christ, representing her as a male child would result in a confusing, mixed metaphor. The use of *harpazó* in both passages tends to be a simple reflection of Acts 1:9-11 – Christ will return in the same manner he ascended.

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## A HUGE RED DRAGON

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**Revelation 12:3:** a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads

**Revelation 12:9:** that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world

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<sup>75</sup> Michael J. Svigel, “The Timing of the Rapture in Revelation 12:5: A Sequel (Part 1),” *RetroChristianity*, June 8, 2007. <[http://svigel.blogspot.com/2007/06/timing-of-rapture-in-revelation-125\\_08.html](http://svigel.blogspot.com/2007/06/timing-of-rapture-in-revelation-125_08.html)> Nov. 25, 2011.

The red dragon represents Satan. A former archangel who sought to lift his throne above God's and ultimately drew one-third of the heavenly host of angels into rebellion. After his fall, Satan assumed the role of accuser and deceiver of mankind and is the personification of evil.

Verse 9 clearly identifies the dragon as the Devil, otherwise known as Satan, and labels him as the deceiver of the whole world. Verse 10 also describes him as the accuser of our brothers and sisters – the voice providing the description is not identified but is assumed to be Christians whose souls are in heaven.

The dragon is said to have seven heads, seven diadem crowns, and ten horns:

- ✓ The number seven is used throughout the book of Revelation: seven stars, lampstands, churches, angles, seals, trumpets, vials, plagues, thunders, spirits, and crowns. In biblical terms, seven is the number of completion, e.g. the seven days of completion.
- ✓ Ten represents law and restoration: Noah was the tenth generation, the Ten Commandments, ten plagues on Egypt, ten virgins wait for the bridegroom, and the ten kingdoms controlled by the Antichrist.
- ✓ On a symbolic level, the seven heads, seven crowns, and ten horns may represent the dragon's complete authority over the earth (Luke 4:6, Ephesians 2:2, 2 Corinthians 4:4).
- ✓ Revelation 17:9 indicates that the seven heads are seven mountains and represents seven kings. Daniel's four headed beast (Daniel 7:7, 24) has ten horns with each representing ten kings. Revelation 17:12 describes the ten horns as ten kings who will receive their kingdoms and share authority with the beast for one hour.
- ✓ There has been much speculation as to the meaning of the seven mountains – everything from the seven hills that surround Rome to the seven hills that surround Jerusalem. The ten horns have received as much attention, everything from ten Roman emperors, to ten Roman Catholic popes, to the European Union, to the United Nations, to a ten nation Muslim confederacy.

The best we can do at this time is to speculate as to the nature and locations of the kings and kingdoms represented by the heads, crowns, and horns... and we are treading on dangerous ground, I believe, if we establish any specific speculation in concrete. All Christians should be familiar with the symbolic nature of the heads, crowns, and horns so that they may properly identify the Antichrist if he assumes authority during their lifetime.

There is a special distinction between the huge red dragon and the beast from the sea who is granted ruling authority from the dragon. The dragon, Revelation 12:3, has only seven diadem crowns while the beast from the sea has ten, Revelation 13:1. In my view, the difference is the result of a time difference between each appearance. The dragon first appears in Revelation 12 before the birth of Christ in 3 BC; he has seven diadem crowns at that time. The beast from the sea first appears in Revelation 13 at some point yet in the future, after 2011; within that two-thousand year time span, the dragon may have earned three additional diadem crowns. This view, of course, is purely speculative and should be treated as such.

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## THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

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**Revelation 12:7:** Michael and his angels fought against the dragon

Michael is one of the three original archangels who commanded one-third of the heavenly host of angels. Gabriel and Lucifer were the other archangel. Lucifer, known as Satan after his rebellion, commands the angels (one-third) who joined in his rebellion and currently reside either on or under the earth.

Mortal humans have only a very small glimpse of the spiritual world that exists outside our five physical senses, and this is especially true concerning the role and workings of angels. As God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent, he most certainly doesn't need angels to inform him of what events are occurring nor would he need an angel to perform a specific task – he could simply will it into existence. Yet, we see angels reporting to God about conditions here on earth (Job 1:6-7), carrying messages to mankind (Luke 1:30), struggling with earthly forces (Daniel 10:20), and performing chores about the earth (1 Chronicles 21:15).

I know that when I was in a horrific motor vehicle accident several years ago, an angel released my seatbelt preventing me from being crushed when the engine block breached the cab of my truck. I believe that angels look over and protect us. But, I also know virtually everything written about angels is speculative and based of sources outside of the Bible. Considering that Satan was once a beautiful covering angel, we should be very cautious when considering the topic:

**2 Corinthians 11:14:** But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (NLT)

There are only a few, specific scriptural references to Michael the archangel:

**Jude 1:9:** But even Michael, one of the mightiest of the angels, did not dare accuse the devil of blasphemy, but simply said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (This took place when Michael was arguing with the devil about Moses' body.) (NLT)

**Revelation 12:7:** Then there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. (NLT)

**Daniel 10:13:** But for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia. (NLT)

**Daniel 10:21:** Meanwhile, I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one helps me against these spirit princes except Michael, your spirit prince. (NLT)

**Daniel 12:1:** "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. (NLT)

According to rabbinic Jewish tradition, Michael performs the role of a protector and advocate of Israel:

One of the archangels one of the chief princes (Dan. x. 13), who is also represented as the tutelary prince of Israel (ib. x. 21, xii. 1). The signification of the name (= "Who is like El"?) was recognized by the Talmudists...

Michael is specially designated in early Jewish writings and very frequently in the Book of Enoch as "the prince of Israel," and in later Jewish writings, particularly in cabalistic works, as "the advocate of the Jews."<sup>76</sup>

Regardless of the exact nature and role of Michael, archangels, and angels in general, they have sufficient strength to succeed in their task of forcing Satan out of heaven.

- **JESUS CHRIST'S ROLE AS MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL**

Some scholars claim that the archangel Michael is the warrior side of Jesus Christ:

*from "Who Is Michael the Archangel?"<sup>77</sup>*  
Jehovah's Witnesses Official Web Site

**Archangel.** God's Word refers to Michael "the archangel." (Jude 9) This term means "chief angel." Notice that Michael is called the archangel. This suggests that there is only one such angel. In fact, the term "archangel" occurs in the Bible only in the singular, never in the plural. Moreover, Jesus is linked with the office of archangel. Regarding the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 states: "The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel's voice." Thus the voice of Jesus is described as being that of an archangel. This scripture therefore suggests that Jesus himself is the archangel Michael.

**Army Leader.** The Bible states that "Michael and his angels battled with the dragon . . . and its angels." (Revelation 12:7) Thus, Michael is the Leader of an army of faithful angels. Revelation also describes Jesus as the Leader of an army of faithful angels. (Revelation 19:14-16) And the apostle Paul specifically mentions "the Lord Jesus" and "his powerful angels." (2 Thessalonians 1:7; Matthew 16:27; 24:31; 1 Peter 3:22) So the Bible speaks of both Michael and "his angels" and Jesus and "his angels." (Matthew 13:41) Since God's Word nowhere indicates that there are two armies of faithful angels in heaven—one headed by Michael and one headed by Jesus—it is logical to conclude that Michael is none other than Jesus Christ in his heavenly role.

This view is more widespread than I originally imagined as it is found in several Bible commentaries such as Exposition of the Entire Bible by John Gill, the Geneva Study Bible, 1560, and Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Bible.

While interesting, this theory is problematic.

1. Daniel 10:13 states, "Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me..." indicating that there is more than one "chief prince" or archangel. Even if the word "one" means "first" as some scholars assert, this would place Michael as chief among many. This tends to lower

<sup>76</sup> Joseph Jacobs, M. Seligsohn, Mary W. Montgomery, "MICHAEL," *JewishEncyclopedia.com*, 2011. <<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10779-michael#1833>> Nov. 25, 2011.

<sup>77</sup> "Who Is Michael the Archangel?" *Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society*, 2009. <[http://www.watchtower.org/e/bh/appendix\\_11.htm#fnt1](http://www.watchtower.org/e/bh/appendix_11.htm#fnt1)> Nov. 25, 2011.

Jesus Christ from sovereign God to the chief angel (messenger) – an unacceptable view in my opinion.

2. If you ever served in the military, the sounds within 1 Thessalonians 4:16 present no confusion:

**1 Thessalonians 4:16:** For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. (NIV)

Within a military command, the battalion commanding officer issues a command, “Battalion, charge.” The subordinate company commanders then echo the command, “Company, charge.” The original command would then be followed by a bugle call ensuring all troops clearly hear the command.

The same command structure is seen in 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Jesus Christ descends from heaven issuing the command, the archangel echoes the command, and then the trumpet call reinforces Christ’s original command. The voice of the archangel need not be the voice of Christ for it to represent his command.

3. Michael, in Revelation 12:7, is named without any adjoining adjectives of adoration:

**Revelation 12:7:** Then there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. (NIV)

This is uncharacteristic of the references pertaining to Jesus Christ within the primary narrative:

**Revelation 5:5:** Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." (NIV)

**Revelation 5:6:** Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. (NIV)

**Revelation 19:11:** I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. (NIV)

Additionally, the name “Jesus” is used fourteen times within the book of Revelation; Michael is used once. I see no indications that the names are interchangeable. If Jesus Christ and Michael the archangel were one in the same, I would imagine that Michael’s name would be more prevalent not only in the book of Revelation but throughout the New Testament.

Within any hierarchical structure be it military, business, or government, subordinates act in the name and on the behalf of their superior. Such, I believe, is the case with Michael and Jesus Christ – they share attributes, but Michael is a subordinate to the “Commander in Chief” – Jesus Christ.

Michael is a created archangel, a messenger of God, and the protector of the nation of Israel. He, along with Gabriel and formerly Lucifer, are (were) “commanders” of one-third of the heavenly host of angels. All three, until Lucifer’s fall, were “covering” angels who “stood in the presence of God” (Ezekiel 28:14, Ezekiel 28:16, Luke 1:19). Jesus Christ is not an angel, not even the chief among angels; this is laid out clearly in Hebrews, Chapters 1 and 2.

In fact, I’m sure that Satan takes great pleasure when humans place Christ and Satan on the same level... I’m sure that is a key element in his grand strategy – minimize the stature of Jesus Christ’s stature and increase his own... this is part of the great deception.

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## THE REMNANT OF THE WOMAN’S SEED

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**Revelation 12:17:** the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The remnant seed represents the redeemed Christian during the entire Church age. An apostasy of the faithful, a falling away, will occur at the end of this age and the remnant of overcoming Christians will be subject to the persecution of Satan and his evil legions.

The term “remnant” is generally associated with Israel and the few who will be regathered at the end of the age (Revelation 7:1-8):

**Micah 2:12:** I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people. (NIV)

However, this verse specifically mentions those who hold to “the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Why refer to Christians as a remnant? The focus of the passage is on the woman, her travails, her persecution, and her flight into the wilderness. The remnant is what is left behind after she flees. This is consistent with the word remnant: *loipos*: the rest, the remaining, the others.<sup>78</sup> Unlike when used with Israel, the term remnant does not necessarily infer a small portion of the original... The “remnant of her seed” specifically refers to redeemed Christians.

**Is labeling Christians the seed of Israel consistent with biblical scripture?** Yes.

**Galatians 3:29:** And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (KJV)

**Romans 9:8:** In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. (NIV)

**Does Satan make war on the Christian believers?** Yes.

**Ephesians 6:11:** Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (KJV)

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<sup>78</sup> “*loipos*,” Strong’s Concordance, Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/3062.htm>> Nov. 28, 2011.

**1 Peter 5:8:** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: (KJV)

Some believe that “keep the commandments of God” implies that the remnant has a Jewish in nature; however, within the book of Revelation, the phrase specifically targets the Christian listener:

**Revelation 14:12:** Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. (KJV)

**Revelation 22:14:** Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. (KJV)

Several commentaries, e.g. *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*, and *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*, assert that the woman is the Christian Church; therefore, they tend to struggle to explain the remnant of her seed. Most assert that the remnant indicates the scattered church or the individually persecuted Christian; however, such designations seem rather arbitrary and inconsistent with the narrative.

## INDIVIDUAL EVENTS WITHIN THE SCENE

Many premillennialism scholars assert that the primary events within this passage occur at the end of this age during the great tribulation. Such a view, unfortunately, tends to ignore a plain reading and “spiritualizes” the passage ultimately missing the primary message... Satan role as man’s accuser before the throne of God ended with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**Might the passage serve a dual role, one describing the events after the resurrection and another describing the events at the end of this age?** Possibly. The passage describes the woman fleeing into the wilderness twice, once for 1,260 days and once for three and one-half years. Repetition within a literary work is frequently used for emphasis, e.g. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” However, I don’t believe that is the case here, and its particular use in this passage deserves a closer examination.

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## THE WOMAN IN LABOR ABOUT TO GIVE BIRTH

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**Revelation 12:2:** And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. (KJV)

The woman’s labor pains represent both the long and short-term troubles of the nation of Israel prior to the first arrival of Jesus Christ. It is the long-term travails that demonstrate a need for a Savior, the Messiah. The short-term travails results in the rejection and sacrifice of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Israel, after its regathering during the transition from the current to the next age, will once again suffer the travails of child birth as it struggles against Satan and his legions prior to the Second Advent of Jesus Christ.

Israel experienced a number of travails prior to the birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The following chart reflects a few of Israel’s troubles:

from "The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Introduction to Chapter 12" <sup>79</sup>				
Labor and Pain	Story	Satanic Strategy	God's Counter	Verses
Cain & Abel Cain	kills Abel	Stop righteous seed	Birth of Seth	Genesis 4,5
Fallen angels & Mankind	Fallen angels corrupt mankind	Corrupt men constantly violent	Destroy mankind except Noah & family	Genesis 6:1-13
One language, one people	All of man united as one people	Corrupt mankind by universal government	Scatter man, diverse language, calling of Abraham	Genesis 10,11,12
Abraham & Sarah	Sarah offers Hagar as substitute	Cause Sarah to not trust God. Create rival to God's promise.	Birth of Isaac, Send Hagar and Ishmael away	Genesis 21,22
Dinah & Shechem	Residents of Shechem try to assimilate Jacob family after Dinah is raped. Jacob's son kill people in the city.	Corrupt Israel through assimilation and prevent Messiah birth. Surrounding cities destroy Jacob for killing men of Shechem	God allows Jacob and family to escape and protects them from surrounding people	Genesis 34
Moses & Pharaoh	Destroy all male Hebrew children in Egypt	Assimilate Israel into Egypt.	Moses raised to deliver Israel. Plagues on Egypt.	Exodus 1-12
Queen Esther	Destroy all Jews in Persian Kingdom	Destroy Jews, prevent birth of Messiah	Queen Esther is a Jew and the Queen of Persia intercedes. Israel enemies destroyed	Esther 1-10
Kill male children in Bethlehem	King Herod kills all the children in Bethlehem 2 years and younger	Kill Messiah as a child	Mary, Joseph warned in a dream go to Egypt till Herod dies.	Matthew 2

The chart does not include many other troubles including the stiff-nakedness of Israel during their exodus from Egypt, the personal tragedies of King Saul and David, the rejection of God resulting in the destruction of the Israel by Assyria, and the carrying off of the Judah into the Babylonian Captivity. During the time of Christ's earthly ministry, Israel was suffering a form of spiritual apostasy (a departure from the faith) – probably much like the described of the Sardis Church:

**Revelation 3:1-3:** I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. (NIV)

Matthew, Chapter 23, describes the many attributes of the apostasy of the Jewish authority during Jesus Christ's earthly ministry:

**Matthew 23:23-24:** "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. (NIV)

Will a similar apostasy occur among the Christian Church at the end of the current age? Yes.

<sup>79</sup> "The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Introduction to Chapter 12," Truthnet.org. ND. <<http://www.truthnet.org/christianity/revelation/revelation12>> Nov. 25, 2011.

**2 Thessalonians 2:3:** Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction. (NASB)

**1 Timothy 4:1:** But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. (NASB)

In fact, the Olivet Discourse, a dual occurrence prophecy, uses similar wording, labor pains, to describe the transition from the Mosaic Age to the Church Age and then from the Church Age to the Millennial Reign:

**Matthew 24:7-8:** For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. (NASB)

**Mark 13:8:** For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. (NASB)

**How then should we apply this passage?** When we consider the history of Israel, we wonder how God's chosen people could repeatedly and consistently turn away from God. But, we seldom consider that the Christian Church suffers from a similar plight. In ancient Israel, God dwelt among his people within an earthly tabernacle, but Christians have something far greater – the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Yet, the tragedy of Israel tends to pale in comparison with the atrocities committed in the name of Christ.

During the last transition between ages, Israel suffered for her sins by having her temple destroyed, her country dissolved, and her people scattered throughout the nations:

*from "Oh Jerusalem, Thou that Killeth the Prophets"<sup>80</sup>*  
by Darrell G. Young

By 70 A.D., Jerusalem and Judea were left desolate, most of the people either killed or being held in captivity, or had become refugees fleeing to remote lands. All that remained in Israel was the defiant little garrison atop the mount at Masada, a fortress complex south of the Dead Sea, which was built by Herod the Great. Thus when the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 the period of the second exile began. (Diaspora) The Jewish people were soon to be scattered throughout the earth. For the next 1900 years the Jews would have no authority in the land God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

I suspect that during the next transition between ages, from the current Church Age to the Millennial Reign, the world will experience a similar "travailing in birth" and that the Christian Church will not go unscathed. Yet, like Israel, the woman within this passage, God will not permit an absolute and total annihilation of those who remain faithful to the testimony of Jesus Christ:

**Revelation 13:7:** It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. (NASB)

<sup>80</sup> Darrell G. Young, "Oh Jerusalem, Thou that Killeth the Prophets," *Focus on Jerusalem*, Vol. 68, Issue 1, Feb. 2004 <<http://focusonjerusalem.com/thefallofjerusalem.html>> Nov. 29, 2011.

**Revelation 14:12:** Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. (NASB)

**Revelation 3:10-11:** Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. (NASB)

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## THE DRAGON SWEEP 1 / 3 OF THE STARS FROM THE SKY

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**Revelation 12:4:** And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth

The stars represent one-third of the heavenly host of angels who joined Lucifer in his rebellion against God. This event occurred before the creation of Adam and Eve. The fallen angels who sinned with mankind prior to the Great Flood currently reside in the abyss symbolically located within the bowels of earth. The other fallen angels currently reside on earth in the form of demons.

- **SYMBOLISM: STARS OF HEAVEN**

Although stars within biblical scripture have a variety of meanings, the context of this passage indicates that the stars represent angels:

**Revelation 12:7:** And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.

**Matthew 25:41:** "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (NIV)

**Judges 5:19-20:** The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money. They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

**Revelation 1:16, 20:** In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance... The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Stars can also represent things other than angels, e.g. a cataclysmic upheaval within the human social, cultural, religious, and political realm; the morning star is used to represent Satan and then Jesus Christ; and they can also represent saints.

**Cataclysmic Events:** A cataclysmic event results in a change within a situation in a sudden, violent, and unpleasant way, e.g. a volcanic eruption, major earthquake, or a hurricane. Biblical prophecy assert that the second coming of Jesus Christ will be accompanied by a great cataclysm, e.g. earthquakes, the sun and moon going dark, and the stars falling from the sky.

**Matthew 24:29:** Immediately after the distress of those days “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.” (NIV) (Isaiah 13:10; 34:4)

**Revelation 6:12-14:** I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. (NIV)

Are these descriptions literal or are they figuratively? Will stars physically fall from the sky? Revelation 11:13 seems to be very specific that such cataclysmic events can result in physical destruction:

**Revelation 11:12-13:** Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. (NIV)

Cataclysmic events can represent sudden and massive social, cultural and political changes, e.g. the Reformation, the Great Awakening, and the Great Depression. Such cataclysms can cause such upheaval that the “natural” order is overturned. In 70 AD, Israel suffered such a cataclysm when the Romans dismantled its nation identity. The old “stars” – the Jewish religious, cultural, and political authorities “fell from the sky.” This cataclysm was predicted in the Olivet Discourse and serves as a biblical type of Christ’s second coming.<sup>81</sup>

We see biblical prophecies applied in similar fashions in God’s judgment on Edom (Isaiah 34:4-5), Egypt (Ezekiel 32:7-8), and Babylon (Isaiah 13:9-10). Stars can represent existing social, cultural, religious, and political order. Stars falling from the sky can represent a great upheaval in that order... creating a great and lasting change.

**The Morning Star:** In the Vulgate and King James versions of the Bible, the king of Babylon (figuratively Satan) is referred to as Lucifer, the morning star, in Isaiah:

**Isaiah 14:12:** How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! (KJV)

**Isaiah 14:12:** How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! (NIV)

Those who remain faithful and overcome adversity are promised the morning star:

**Revelation 2:26-28:** To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery’— just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. (NIV)

<sup>81</sup> See Apologetics: Olivet Discourse: The Rapture?

Who or what is the morning star? In the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ refers to himself as the morning star:

**Revelation 22:16:** I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. (KJV)

The “morning star” is the planet Venus and is the third brightest object of the sky following the sun and the moon. Within biblical texts, the morning star may best be interpreted as enlightenment through the Word of God:

**2 Peter 1:19:** And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. (NIV)

What does this have to do with Satan (Isaiah 14:12)? Some say that Isaiah 14:12 pertains only to the king of Babylon and has nothing to do with Satan. Others claim that Satan was the original “light bearer” and the third brightest light in all of creation following the God the Father and Jesus Christ. The answer is widely disputed and depends of broad speculation.

**Earthly Saints:** Daniel 8:10 presents a passage that seems similar to Revelation 12:4 in that the Antichrist will also draw down stars from the heavens and cast them to the earth. In this case, however, the stars are earthly saints as interpreted in Daniel 8:24:

**Daniel 8:10-13:** It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low. Because of rebellion, the host [of the saints] and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground. (NIV)

host: *tsaba*: army, war, warfare<sup>82</sup>

stars: *kokab*: a star<sup>83</sup>

**Daniel 8:23-24:** In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. (NIV)

Is the relationship between Revelation 12:4 and Daniel 8:10 strong enough to indicate that Revelation 12:4 serves as a dual role prophecy? Might the passage represent both the heavenly host of angels who joined Satan in rebelling against God as well as those saints martyred at the hands of the Antichrist? Possibly, although the parallel is probably not strong enough to make a firm assertion.

<sup>82</sup> “*tsaba*,” Strong’s Concordance: *Biblios.com*. ND. <<http://concordances.org/hebrew/6635.htm>> Dec. 1, 2011.

<sup>83</sup> “*kokab*,” Strong’s Concordance: *Biblios.com*. ND. <<http://concordances.org/hebrew/3555.htm>> Dec. 1, 2011.

**Daniel 7:21:** As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them. (NIV)

**Revelation 12:17:** Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring--those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (NIV)

**Revelation 13:7:** He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. (NIV)

- **FALLEN ANGELS**

The Bible provides little in the way of clear, definitive scripture pertaining to fallen angels and demons. Many of the detailed articles on angels and demons rely on extra-biblical books such as the book of Enoch or Jubilees. As these are non-canonical resources, we must use great caution in including them in any theological belief system. For interesting, but unvalidated, views on angels and demons consider reading:

1. "Survey of Bible Doctrine: Angels, Satan, Demons," by Sid Litke.<sup>84</sup>
2. "FALLEN ANGELS AND DEMONS," by Bryan T. Huie.<sup>85</sup>
3. "SATAN—THE DEVIL, AND DEMONS— THE FALLEN ANGEL," by Rick Reinckens.<sup>86</sup>

On a simplified level, there are two basic classifications of fallen angels and demons:

**Those angels who colluded inappropriately with humans and are currently bound in the abyss:**

**Genesis 6:2, 4:** The sons of God saw the beautiful women and took any they wanted as their wives... In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times. (NLT)

**Jude 1:6:** And I remind you of the angels who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. God has kept them securely chained in prisons of darkness, waiting for the great day of judgment. (NLT)

**2 Peter 2:4:** For God did not spare even the angels who sinned. He threw them into hell, in gloomy pits of darkness, where they are being held until the day of judgment. (NLT)

Those angels, I believe, will be released at the fifth trumpet in order to torture those who are not among the 144,000 sealed with the seal of God (Revelation 9:1-11).

**Revelation 9:1-3:** Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen to earth from the sky, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. When he opened it... locusts came from the smoke and descended on the earth, and they were given power to sting like scorpions. (NLT)

**Those fallen angels (demons) who are free to traverse the earth and plague mankind:**

<sup>84</sup> Sid Litke, "Survey of Bible Doctrine: Angels, Satan, Demons," bible.org. ND. "<<http://bible.org/seriespage/survey-bible-doctrine-angels-satan-demons>> Dec. 3, 2011.

<sup>85</sup> Bryan T. Huie, "FALLEN ANGELS AND DEMONS," Here a little, there a little. Oct. 5, 2011. <[http://www.herealittletherealittle.net/index.cfm?page\\_name=Demons](http://www.herealittletherealittle.net/index.cfm?page_name=Demons)> Dec. 4, 2010.

<sup>86</sup> Rick Reinckens, "SATAN—THE DEVIL, AND DEMONS— THE FALLEN ANGEL," God On The Net, 2011. <<http://www.godonthenet.net/evidence/satan.htm>> Dec. 3, 2011.

**Matthew 8:29:** They began screaming at him, "Why are you interfering with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before God's appointed time?" (NLT)

**Mark 5:9:** Then Jesus demanded, "What is your name?" And he replied, "My name is Legion, because there are many of us inside this man." (NLT)

**Luke 8:30-31:** Jesus demanded, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, for he was filled with many demons. The demons kept begging Jesus not to send them into the bottomless pit. (NLT)

**Matthew 25:41:** "Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. [angels] (NLT)

**These fallen angels, the legions of Satan, are preventing human souls from being redeemed:**

**Ephesians 6:12:** For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. (NLT)

**1 Timothy 4:1:** Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. (NLT)

**2 Corinthians 11:15:** So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve. (NLT)

Why did these angels rebel against God? Simple response – because that was part of God's plan. Complex response – pride, power lust, and/or envy.

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## THE WAITING TO DEVOUR THE CHILD WHEN IT IS BORN

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**Revelation 12:4:** the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

This event specifically represents Satan's use of King Herod who attempted to destroy the infant Jesus during the Massacre of the Innocents.

Some scholars list a long litany of strategies that Satan employed to prevent the Messiah from ever being born. While interesting, I believe that those correlations go beyond the passage. A plain reading tends to point to King Herod's fear that Jesus' birth as the king of the Jews represented a threat to Herod's throne:

**Matthew 2:1-4:** Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him." King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?" (NLT)

In an attempt to safeguard his throne, Herod had all the male children less than two years of age killed:

**Matthew 2:16:** Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance. (NLT)

Jesus escaped this incident of infanticide by escaping to Egypt:

**Matthew 2:13-15:** After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my Son out of Egypt."

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## THE BIRTH OF THE MALE CHILD

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**Revelation 12:5:** And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and [to] his throne.

The male child is Jesus Christ who is destined to rule the world from David's throne physically located in Jerusalem. Jesus Christ's first coming was not to establish an earthly, messianic kingdom but to preach the Gospel, to reject Satan's temptation, to live a obedient, holy life as a human being, to suffer at the hands of mankind, to assume the penalty of death for mankind's disobedience, and to overcome death through his resurrection. Christ, after his ascension, did not assume David's throne but rather took the position at the right hand of God.

- **RULE ALL NATIONS WITH A ROD OF IRON**

Jesus Christ was born to inherit the throne of King David:

**Luke 1:30-33:** But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." (NIV)

**Matthew 2:1-2:** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." (NIV)

Through his rejection of Satan's temptation, earthly ministry, redeeming sacrifice, and victorious resurrection and ascension, Christ has earned all authority (*exousia*: power, authority, weight, especially: moral authority, influence<sup>87</sup>) in heaven and earth:

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<sup>87</sup> "exousia," Strong's Concordance: Biblos.com. ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/1849.htm>> Dec. 4, 2011.

**Matthew 28:18-20:** Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (NIV)

**Revelation 3:21:** To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. (NIV)

Jesus Christ’s current role is High Priest:

**Hebrews 2:17:** For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. (NIV)

**Hebrews 7:23-24:** Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. (NIV)

**Hebrews 9:15:** For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (NIV)

Jesus Christ currently resides at the right hand of God the Father:

**Mark 16:19:** After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. (NIV)

**1 Peter 3:21-22:** ...It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. (NIV)

**Acts 7:55-56:** But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (NIV)

Is Jesus Christ currently reigning on King David’s throne in heaven? No, although Jesus Christ has been anointed to David’s throne (*de jure* – by right according to the law), but he has not yet physically assumed David’s throne (*de facto* – in fact, whether with a legal right or not). See “Topics for Analysis: David’s Throne and Christ’s Reign?” for a more thorough analysis.

- **THE HARPAZÓ OF JESUS CHRIST**

The term “caught up,” *harpazó*: to snatch away, is the same word used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the Rapture of the Church. Some assert that since this *harpazó* takes place before the dragon pursues the woman, it supports a pretribulation Rapture. This view, however, fails to fully consider the context of the *harpazó* of Jesus Christ.

The term *harpazó* implies force and is found in numerous New Testament scriptures:

*harpazó*: to seize, catch up, snatch away, obtain by robbery.<sup>88</sup>

**726** *harpázō* – properly, seize by force; snatch up, suddenly and decisively – like someone seizing bounty (spoil, a prize); to take by an open display of force.<sup>89</sup>

**John 6:15:** Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. (NIV)

**Matthew 11:12:** From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. (NIV)

**John 10:12:** He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. (NASB)

In the case of Revelation 12:5, Satan's apparent, absolute victory over Jesus Christ was snatched (by force) away from him by Christ's unexpected resurrection and ascension:

Christ was betrayed by a Satan possessed Judas (John 13:27), endured a mock trial before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:59), rejected by his own people (27:25), mocked and scourged (27:28-31), crucified (27:35), separated from God (27:46), and finally, suffered death (27:50). Satan certainly believed at this point that he had won the victory.

If the phrase *harpazó* in Revelation 12:5 parallels the Rapture, then the Church will also first suffer an apparent, absolute defeat by Satan, such as the apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3) and the conquering of the saints (Revelation 13:7). After that defeat seems absolute, then the time will be cut short (Matthew 24:22) and the Church will be raptured (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Rather than supporting a pretribulation Rapture, Revelation 12:5 seems to be more supportive of a mid-, pre-wrath, or post-tribulation Rapture.

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## THE WOMAN FLEES INTO THE WILDERNESS FOR 1,260 DAYS

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**Revelation 12:6:** And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

**Revelation 12:14:** And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

The primary event of this prophecy took place in two primary installments: (1) a spiritual flight immediately following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ in c. 33 AD and (2) a physical flight following the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD when the nation of Israel was dissolved as a national, political, cultural, and religious identity and scattered (diaspora) among various Gentile nations. Although humans view Jews as individuals within a specific religious sect, God readily identifies the "true" Jew including their specific tribal root, e.g. Dan, Judah, etc.

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<sup>88</sup> "harpazó," Strong's Concordance: Biblos.com. ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/726.htm>> Dec. 5, 2011.

<sup>89</sup> "726 harpázō," HELPS Word Study: Helps Ministries, 2011 <<http://concordances.org/greek/726.htm>> Dec. 5, 2011.

As a secondary event, this event is tied to the “time of the end” through the parallel use of 1,260 days and three and one-half years. This parallelism indicates the scene serves a dual role with that secondary role being discussed within other relevant sections of this study.

**FLED:** *pheugó*: to flee, escape, shun.<sup>90</sup>

**WILDERNESS:** *erēmos*: properly, an uncultivated, unpopulated place; a desolate (deserted) area; (figuratively) a barren, solitary place that also provides needed quiet.<sup>91</sup>

**ALLUSION:** Possibly to Matthew 2:13 where Joseph fled into Egypt with Mary and the infant Jesus to escape King Herod’s Massacre of the Innocent:

**Matthew 2:13:** After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." (NLT)

**ALLUSION:** Possibly to the temptation of Jesus after his fasting in the wilderness:

**Luke 4:1-2:** Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.

**Mark 1:12-13:** The Spirit then compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness, where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. He was out among the wild animals, and angels took care of him.

**ALLUSION:** Possibly to Leviticus 26:14-17 and Luke 21:21-22 in response to their rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah:

**Leviticus 26:14-17:** However, if you do not listen to me or obey all these commands, and if you break my covenant by rejecting my decrees, treating my regulations with contempt, and refusing to obey my commands, I will punish you. I will bring sudden terrors upon you—wasting diseases and burning fevers that will cause your eyes to fail and your life to ebb away. You will plant your crops in vain because your enemies will eat them. I will turn against you, and you will be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you will rule over you, and you will run even when no one is chasing you! (NLT)

**Luke 21:21-22:** Then those in Judea must flee to the hills. Those in Jerusalem must get out, and those out in the country should not return to the city. For those will be days of God's vengeance, and the prophetic words of the Scriptures will be fulfilled.

**ALLUSION:** Possibly to Israel’s wandering in the wilderness after leaving Egypt:

**Numbers 14:33-34:** “And your children will be like shepherds, wandering in the wilderness for forty years. In this way, they will pay for your faithlessness, until the last of you lies dead in the wilderness. Because your men explored the land for forty days, you must wander in the

<sup>90</sup> "5343. *Pheugó*," Strong's Concordance: Biblos.com. ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/5343.htm>> Dec. 7, 2011.

<sup>91</sup> "2048 *erēmos*," HELPSWord Studies, Helps Ministries, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/2048.htm>> Nov. 15, 2011.

wilderness for forty years—a year for each day, suffering the consequences of your sins. Then you will discover what it is like to have me for an enemy.” (NLT)

The wilderness tends to be indicative of the need for one or more of four things:

1. Protection from enemies such as Pharaoh, King Herod, and the dragon.
2. Punishment for apostasy, failure to remain faithful to the spirit of God’s covenant.
3. Cleansing from cultural, spiritual, and political pollutants.
4. Divine nourishment, dependence upon God for sustenance.

The first occurrence of the woman fleeing is placed immediately after the ascension of Jesus Christ and immediately prior to the battle in heaven between Michael and Satan. This placement indicates that the first fleeing seems associated with the Jewish rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah and invokes Leviticus 26:14-17. Israel found themselves in a spiritual wilderness deserving divine punishment as well as a need for cleansing from the wicked and adulterous generation of hypocrites, fools, blind guides, snakes, and vipers (Matthew 12:39, 23:13-36).

The second occurrence of the woman fleeing is placed immediately after the battle in heaven between Michael and Satan. This placement seems to indicate that the second fleeing is associated with the siege of Jerusalem and destruction of the second temple in 70 AD and results in the dissolution of the national, political body of Israel. The Jews, a people without a nation, are scattered throughout the Gentile nations and, thus, experience a political wilderness.

Revelation 12:6 and 12:14 both mention nourishing the woman for 1,260 days (3 ½ years) and seems to be more of a protective nature than punishment. However, this is consistent with Israel’s trek in the wilderness following their exodus from Egypt:

**Exodus 16:35:** So the people of Israel ate manna for forty years until they arrived at the land where they would settle. They ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

**Hebrews 3:8-11:** ...don’t harden your hearts as Israel did when they rebelled, when they tested me in the wilderness. There your ancestors tested and tried my patience, even though they saw my miracles for forty years. So I was angry with them, and I said, ‘Their hearts always turn away from me. They refuse to do what I tell them.’ So in my anger I took an oath: ‘They will never enter my place of rest.’

As in their 40 year trek in the wilderness, Israel is currently being divinely sustained in the wilderness for 1,260 prophetic days:

1. The term 1,260 days is best viewed, within the primary context, as a very long but specific period of time. Attempts to interpret the term as years, one year for each day, although scriptural sound (Numbers 14:34, Ezekiel 4:4-6, Daniel 9:24-27) seems rather fruitless. The specific time period tends to have more relevance to the “time of the end” as it parallel other prophetic events found in Revelation 11:2-3, 13:5, Daniel 7:25, and 12:7. Like the Olivet Discourse, this scene serves a dual role, describing events that occur within in the near-term as well as those in the distant future.

2. The wilderness is best viewed, within the primary context, as the scattering of the people of Israel among the Gentile nations. Some biblical scholars assert that it is impossible to regather members of the twelve tribes of Israel because ten tribes were “lost” in 720 BC when Assyria destroyed the Northern Kingdom (Israel) with the remaining tribes from the Southern Kingdom (Judah) losing their tribal identity through dispersion and proselytization. This view, however, ignores the God’s omniscience – their identity may be hid from us but not from God.
3. National Israel was dissolved nearly two-thousand years ago yet Jews have been able to retain much of their distinct religious and cultural identity despite their scattering and numerous attempts at extermination. Today, there are some 13.42 million Jews worldwide.

**Does the establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 indicate that the regathering has begun?**

Possibly, but without a tabernacle or temple, their biblical relevance is difficult to determine. This scene provides no clues of a regathering and the topic will be discussed elsewhere.

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## THE BATTLE BETWEEN SATAN AND MICHAEL

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**Revelation 12:7-9:** And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry – his resistance to Satan’s temptation, his spotless, obedient life as a human being, his mocking and scourging at the hands of Roman soldiers, his physical suffering upon the cross, his separation from God upon the cross, and his sacrificial death upon – removed the “blight” upon mankind. Satan no longer had justification to stand before the throne of God as man’s accuser, and he was thrown out of heaven to earth. This event took place immediately after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

**WAR IN HEAVEN:** The commentaries on this verse are quite interesting ranging from Satan’s forces consisting of two Roman legions to the struggle between good and evil in the sky. The meaning is far simpler and was foreshadowed when the seventy-two disciples returned and reported that even the demons obeyed them:

**Luke 10:18:** “Yes,” he told them, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning!” (NLT)

**NEITHER WAS THEIR PLACE FOUND ANY MORE IN HEAVEN:** Within the Old Testament, Satan went before the throne of God to accuse mankind (Job 1:6, Job 2:1, Zechariah 3:1, Psalm 109:6, Revelation 12:10).

**Job 1:6:** One day the members of the heavenly court came to present themselves before the LORD, and the Accuser, Satan, came with them. (NLT)

**Zechariah 3:1:** Then the angel showed me Jeshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD. The Accuser, Satan, was there at the angel’s right hand, making accusations against Jeshua. (NLT)

The accusation? Disobedience... that human beings are incapable of being obedient to God's will.

**Romans 5:18:** "When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned." (NLT)

However, Christ's earthly ministry corrected that ill:

1. Jesus did not succumb to Satan's temptation in the wilderness.
2. Jesus led a spotless, obedient life of service to God the Father.
3. Jesus was scourged and humiliated at the hands of Roman soldiers.
4. Jesus the pains of physical suffering upon the cross.
5. Jesus experienced spiritual death when he took the sins of the world on his shoulders and he experienced a separation from God the Father.
6. Jesus then died on the cross as a sacrificial lamb.

**Matthew 27:46:** At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (NLT)

The "blight" on mankind was lifted and Satan's accusations before the throne were no longer valid:

**Romans 5:19:** Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous. (NLT)

Satan's presence in heaven no longer served a purpose so he was evicted from heaven. He was thrown to the earth, and there he remains the "god of this world" to those who continue in disobedience to God.

**John 12:31-32:** The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be cast out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself. (NLT)

**MICHAEL AND HIS ANGELS:** Some believe that Michael, the archangel, is the warrior side of Jesus Christ – that they are one in the same. However, this belief is a deception from the devil:

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|--|---|
| Satan is a created being.                      | Jesus Christ is God.                            |
| Satan is a fallen angel.                       | Jesus is the son of God.                        |
| Satan did not exist before the creation.       | Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega.            |
| Satan attempted to place his throne above God. | Jesus Christ humbled himself before the Father. |

Satan would like nothing better than for mankind to believe that he is the equivalent of Jesus Christ and possesses the power and ability to resist all of creation. Assuming that only Jesus Christ has the ability to expel Satan from heaven gives far too much credit to Satan. He is merely a created angel and it is beneath Christ's station directly deal with this "minor" task.

We should, however, be careful not to underestimate Satan's authority or capabilities:

**2 Corinthians 4:4:** The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (NIV)

**Jude 1:9:** But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (NIV)

If we assume that there were originally three archangels, Michael, Gabriel (Luke 1:19), and Satan (Lucifer – Isaiah 14:12) and if we assume that each commanded one-third of the heavenly host of angels (Revelation 12:4), then the cosmic battle of Revelation 12:7-9 involved two-thirds of all angels (Michael's one-third and Satan's one-third). This was quit a struggle. However, the importance of the event was not sufficient to require the direct intervention of God the Father or Jesus Christ the Son.

This was a battle between angels and demonstrates the established hierarchy within creation – Satan is a created being; his authority and capabilities are sharply limited.

**TIMING:** There is disagreement among scholars as when this war in heaven actually occurred:

1. Some believe that it occurred when Satan and his subordinates first rebelled against God. While logical, this placement seems unlikely as Satan is portrayed as the accuser before God's throne (Job 1:6) and these appearances seem to contradict "neither was their place found any more in heaven." In the Old Testament, Satan played a role before the throne of God; that role was no longer applicable following Christ's earthly ministry.

Additionally, placement after Jesus Christ's ascension within the scene tends to indicate that the war occurred sometime after that event.

2. Others believe that it will occur at some point in the future as part of God's judgment during the "time of the end." This view seems somewhat viable because although the world has already been judged (John 12:31) that judgment has been deferred... much like a criminal's prison sentence may be deferred pending successful completion of a probation period.

Placement after the first mention of the woman's fleeing into the wilderness for 1,260 days may also indicate that the war takes place sometime after the completion of those 1,260 prophetic days.

Revelation 12:12 also seems to bolster this view. The verse indicates that Satan knows his time is short and tends to contradict placing the war immediately following Christ's ascension – nearly 2,000 years can hardly be defined as a "little time." Additionally, the events of the "time of the end" – the works of the Antichrist and false prophet – seem to be the personification of Satan's "great wrath."

I tend to believe that this war in heaven took place long in the past, immediately following Jesus Christ's ascension. Narrative placement, immediately following the description of Jesus Christ's ascension, indicates that Satan's role as accuser of the brethren has been rendered moot. This view is further bolstered by verse 12:10 which seems to indicate that redemption follows the casting down:

**Revelation 12:10:** ... Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down... (KJV)

While Revelation 12:12 clearly indicates that Satan only has a short time remaining, we need to remember that only God the Father knows the time of the end (Mark 13:32, Matthew 24:36) and a sense of imminence in an inherent theme within the book of Revelation (1:3, 22:6). I'm sure Satan has prepped many an Antichrist and false prophet over the millennia in preparation for the time that God removes his restraints (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

## \*THE AGES OF MANKIND

### INTRODUCTION

God is omnipotent (all powerful) and omniscience (all knowing). Before he created the universe, he knew the final outcome and every event that would transpire in between. Make no mistake, God knew that Adam would listen to Eve, God knew that Abraham would sacrifice Isaac, God knew that David would have Uriah murdered, God knew that the Jewish authorities would reject Jesus as the Messiah, and God knows that that followers of the Antichrist will not heed his two witnesses. Mankind's outcome is predestined but mankind also has absolute free will... Our simple minds cannot fathom God's mind, but the Bible gives us a glimpse into his plan for a stiff-necked people.<sup>92</sup>

Throughout all the ages, God has desired obedience through faith from mankind. With only rare exceptions, such as Enoch and Elijah, humans have always missed the mark, even the beloved Peter denied Jesus Christ three times. Thus, the ultimate story within the Bible is how God sacrificed his only begotten son to pay the penalty for our human shortcomings. What more can we hope but that God loved us so much that he sacrificed his son to suffer the indignations of the flesh, the ridicule of mankind, the sufferings of inflicted wounds, the separation from God, and death on the cross? But, there is more to the story...

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### MAN'S PURPOSE FOR BEING

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In the current age, God seems to be distant... Humans pray to God, but they don't truly expect results. If a person claims that God talks to them, then we think they've stopped taking their medication. People say they believe in heaven but they fight death with all available resources. Christians claim they have faith in God, but they strive for material wealth. Momentary bursts of excitement for the Lord tends to give way to the burden and worries of daily life... and in the dark moments of our lives we wonder why God has abandoned us.

The first thing we need to consider is that God created man for the purpose of communion:

**Genesis 3:8:** And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

**Genesis 5:24:** And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

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<sup>92</sup> Exodus 32:9; 33:3,5

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## MAN'S PURPOSE: FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

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God created mankind not as a robot or a pet but as a companion. Scriptural evidence illustrates that God wishes to walk with us, talk with us, and live among us.

In the Garden of Eden, God walked in the garden and conversed with Adam and Eve:

**Genesis 3:8:** When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. Then the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" *(NLT)*

Even after the fall of mankind, God still walked and talked with mankind:

**Genesis 4:6:** "Why are you so angry?" the Lord asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."

Even during the turbulent years before the great flood, God walked with mankind:

**Genesis 5:22-23:** After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Enoch lived 365 years, walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him. *(NLT)*

Even after man multiplied and filled the earth, God visited mankind:

**Genesis 17:1-2:** When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai—'God Almighty.' Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly." *(NLT)*

Even after the stubbornness of Israel during their trek in the wilderness, God desired to live among them:

**Exodus 29:45:** Then I will live among the people of Israel and be their God, and they will know that I am the Lord their God. I am the one who brought them out of the land of Egypt so that I could live among them. I am the Lord their God. *(NLT)*

Even after being repeatedly abandoned by his chosen Israel, God came and dwelt among them:

**John 1:14:** So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unending love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. *(NLT)*

Even after God's only son was rejected, humiliated, and put to death, God desires to walk among us:

**1 John 3:24:** Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us. *(NLT)*

Unfortunately, the problem with this fellowship is mankind's disobedience. Adam disobeyed God and suffered a form of spiritual death – he was ejected from the Garden of Eden and spiritually separated from God. God is holy; God detests sin, evil, and wickedness:

**1 John 1:5-6:** This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. *(NLT)*

**Psalm 5:4:** O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness; you cannot tolerate the sins of the wicked. *(NLT)*

Within the tabernacle of the wilderness and the Jewish temples, a thick curtain separated mankind from the residence of God, and only the high priest was permitted

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## WHY DID GOD MAKE US THIS WAY?

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But if God is omniscient (all knowing) and omnipotent (all powerful), why did He create mankind in such a way as we would choose disobedience?

The most direct answer is because God decided to do it that way. The current generation is an obstinate generation. When ordered to perform a task, we resist, drag our feet, and ask "Why?" We demand the reasoning, we compel justification, and we insist on knowing its benefits. As a parent and school teacher, my response to such resistance was "Because I said so." God provides a similar response:

**Romans 9:14-18:** Are we saying, then, that God was unfair? Of course not! For God said to Moses, "I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose."

So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it.

For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth." So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen. *(NLT)*

In Genesis, we read of no justification why Adam and Eve were not permitted to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We are not told why God placed the tree in the midst of the Garden to serve as a temptation. We are told simply that Adam was not permitted to eat from the tree:

**Genesis 2:16-17:** But the LORD God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die."

What would happen if you placed a bowl of candy on a dining room table and told your teenagers not to eat from it? Your teenager might leave it alone, but mine would ask why they couldn't have a piece and then get their hands in it as soon as I turned my back. Doesn't seem fair, does it? But our logic is inconsequential in comparison to God's logic...

Of course God knew when He placed the tree of knowledge of good and evil within the grasps of Adam and Eve that they would disobey Him and that they would eat from the tree. God knew before He ever created the universe that mankind would be a stubborn, disobedient bunch and that He would be forced to sacrifice His only son in order to redeem His unruly children.

My wife and I have two English Springer spaniel pets. They are genetically hardwired to be affectionate, loyal, and obedient... they have no real choice. They bring us great joy, but they are only pets and cannot fulfill our need for human companionship. God could have created a pet-like creature, but that creature would be incapable of true companionship. Instead, God created man, a human being endowed with free will and a rather unruly independent streak. We need only look at the history of God's interaction with man to realize that it is against our nature to be obedient to the will of others...

When our children left home, my wife obtained an English Springer Spaniel that she named Sami. Sami is a beautiful dog, and she is a loving dog, a very loving dog. I never cared much for dogs, but Sami changed that, and a year later, I obtained a second Springer Spaniel, Pati. Now we have two dogs, Sami and Pati, and they are loyal and obedient, they meander about the house seeking attention, providing affection and entertainment, and occasionally getting in trouble... We often wonder how much easier it would have been if we started out with dogs instead of children.

Yet, our children are our children. They're not obedient like the dogs, they create bigger messes, and they're a great deal more trouble... but they are our children, we love them, and in essence, they are a physical, mental, and spiritual part of us. We raised our children to be independent, and they take full advantage of that upbringing. We have one child who is the prodigal child, one who works a distance off, one who desires a more sophisticated life, one who has yet to find himself, one that still lives at home, and, of course, one who is the golden child. And, yes, we have grandchildren, lots and lots of beautiful, mischievous grandchildren.

When I think of God's relationship with mankind, I think of my family and all the turmoil and difficulty that we've been through. I often wonder what our life would have been through if we focused more on obedience than independence... and I come to the conclusion that independence is better than obedience. Why? Well, our children have character, they have opinions, and they have their own hopes and dreams; they are not clones but living, breathing individuals. Unlike our dogs that would remain loyal even if we beat and neglected them, our children choose family because they have a choice and that choice is precious.

Mankind is only one of God's many created beings, but mankind is unique among those beings. He was created in God's image and he has a choice... a choice to choose self or to choose family.

As we read the story of creation and man, we also gain a glimpse into God's story. After God created man, he decided that it was not good for man to be alone, that man needed a companion, a helpmate. So God created all the animals and brought them before the man but none were suitable as a companion. Then he created woman from a part of man, and the woman became man's companion.

So to, I think that before the creation of man, God created all the angels and heavenly beings and none were suitable as a companion for God. Then God created man in his own image, and man

became God’s companion. What is the difference between man and other created beings? Man was created in God’s image... and that image was more than simple flesh like the animals that wonder about the earth... and that image was more than spirit like the angels that wonder about the heavens... God breathed the breath of life into the man and man became a living soul...

There has to be something greater in man than the ability to choose... Satan was one of God’s creation and had a choice. He chose to rebel against God, but he had that choice. So there still has to be something beyond simple choice that separates man from other created beings? In a way, God created god... In a way that we cannot possibly comprehend, God created children of God... Man had power, he had authority, and he had dominion. We see this as God gave Adam the commission over all the earth and we see this repeated to Noah after the flood.

Thus, man was not created to be one of God’s pets... but something much, much more.

Thus, when man fell in the Garden of Eden, his restoration was much more complex than simply undoing the wrong. The wonder and glory of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross should not be underappreciated, but that sacrifice is only part of the story...

Genesis 5:1-3: ...And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth:

Age	Type	Target	Promise	Failure	Punishment	Satan
1. <b>Edenic</b>	Innocence	Mankind	Life	Disobedience	Kicked out	Tempter
2. <b>Adamic</b>	Conscience	Mankind	Christ	Wickedness	Flood	Coconspirator
3. <b>Noahic</b>	Patriarchal	Mankind	Fruitful	Tower of Babel	Divided	Accuser
4. <b>Abrahamic</b>	Family	Israel	Nation	---	Enslaved	Accuser
5. <b>Mosaic</b>	Law	Israel	Access	Tradition	Scattered	Accuser
6. <b>Christian</b>	Gentiles	Mankind	Salvation	Apostasy	Tribulation	Devourer
7. <b>Davidic</b>	Kingdom	Israel	Peace	Rebellion	Judgment	Bound
8. <b>Edenic</b>	Eternal	The New Heaven – The New Earth – The New Jerusalem				Lake of Fire

## SECTION UNDER DEVELOPMENT

### \*THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Some biblical scholars believe that the seven churches described in John’s Revelation reveal the seven stages of the Church during the Church Age. They assert that the church in Ephesus was the very earliest stage, that we are currently in the Philadelphia stage, and that the church in Laodicea represents the Christians left behind by the Rapture. Other scholars hold a similar view; but since they don’t believe in a secret Rapture, they believe that the church in Laodicea represents the great apostasy that will occur just prior to the Second Coming of Christ. While these views may contain elements of truth, the Lord has not provided me with such an impression.

The seven churches in John’s Revelation existed simultaneously during the time of John’s writing, and the individual messages reflected positive attributes that needed reinforcement and negative attributes that needed correction. While those specific churches are long gone, these same types of attributes exist among Christians today... and in the future. In each of the seven messages, Jesus Christ warns, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” It would be wise on our part, to heed each message.

## JESUS CHRIST'S MULTIPLE ATTRIBUTES

Prior to addressing each of the seven churches, John first describes his vision introducing the seven messages. In this vision, John describes Jesus Christ and this description provides multiple attributes with some being later repeated and some attributes added in the individual messages:

**Revelation 1:12-16:** I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

While many Christians prefer to view Jesus Christ telescopically as a loving, gentle lamb, he possesses numerous attributes that we should cautiously observe for a full understanding of Christ's nature:

- 1. SOMEONE LIKE THE "SON OF MAN":**
  - **Simile:** Comparing the heavenly Christ to the earthly Jesus and his ministry.
  - ... is lord of the Sabbath: *Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28, Luke 6:5*
  - ... came to seek and to save the lost: *Luke 19:10*
  - ... came to serve: *Mark 10:45, Matthew 20:28*
  - ... sows the good seed: *Matthew 13:37*
  - ... seated at the right hand of God: *Luke 22:69, Acts 7:56*
  - ... will come in the clouds with glory: *Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27, Matthew 24:30*
  - ... will come like lightening from the east: *Matthew 24:27, Luke 17:24*
  - ... will come with his angels: *Matthew 16:27*
  - ... authority to execute judgment: *John 5:27*
  - ... authority to forgive sin on earth: *Mark 2:10*
- 2. HE WALKS AMONG THE SEVEN GOLDEN LAMPSTANDS: (Ephesus) (Sardis)**
  - **Symbol:** lamp - wisdom, Word of God, enlightenment
  - **Allusion:** The seven lampstands are the seven churches: *Revelation 1:20*
  - ... gives light to all in the house: *Matthew 5:15, Luke 8:16, Luke 11:33*
  - ... lampstands for the temple had seven lamps (Menorah): *Exodus 37:18*
  - ... made of pure, hammered gold: *Exodus 25:31, Exodus 37:17, Numbers 8:4*
  - ... ten gold lampstands in the temple; five on the right, five on the left: *2 Chronicles 4:7*
  - ... the light has come into the world: *John 3:19*
- 3. HE WAS DRESSED IN A ROBE REACHING DOWN TO HIS FEET:**
  - **Symbol:** robe - righteousness
  - **Allusion:** references on the scarlet-purple robe of the crucifixion - mockery: *Matthew 27:28, John 19:2*
  - ... worn by the saints coming out of the tribulation: *Revelation 7:14*
  - ... reflects required attire for a formal celebration: *Luke 15:22, Matthew 22:12*
  - ... reflects legal authority, expertise: *Mark 12:38*
- 4. HE WORE A GOLDEN SASH AROUND HIS CHEST:**
  - **Symbol:** gold - divine nature, immortality; belt - truth, justice
  - **Allusion:** reference to belt of truth, justice: *Ephesians 6:14, Isaiah 11:5*
  - ... contrast to John the Baptist & Elijah leather belt (humble): *Mark 1:6, Matthew 3:4, 2 Kings 1:8*

- ... the seven angels with the bowls of wrath worn golden belts: *Revelation 15:6*
  - ... angel messenger, possibly Christ: *Daniel 10:5*
  - ... a token of commemoration, e.g. wrestling, rodeo buckle: *2 Samuel 20:8*
5. **HIS HEAD AND HAIR WERE WHITE LIKE WOOL, AS WHITE AS SNOW:**
    - **Symbol:** white - cleanliness, purity; wool – warmth, comfort, simplicity; lamb - sacrifice
    - **Allusion:** Ancient of Days: *Daniel 7:9*
    - ... lamb: *Daniel 7:9*
    - ...sins forgiven: *Isaiah 1:18*
  6. **HIS EYES WERE LIKE BLAZING FIRE:** (*Thyatira*)
    - **Symbol:** divine presence, judgment, wrath, purifying
    - **Allusion:** covenant with Abraham: *Genesis 15:17*
    - ... Moses and the burning bush: *Exodus 3:2-4*
    - ... pillar of fire in the wilderness: *Exodus 13:21*
    - ... flame of the altar: *Judges 13:20*
    - ... consecration of Solomon’s Temple: *2 Chronicles 7:1*
    - ... God’s wrath: *Numbers 11:1; Numbers 16:35*
    - ... fire will dissolve the world: *2 Peter 3:12*
  7. **HIS FEET WERE LIKE BRONZE GLOWING IN A FURNACE:** (*Thyatira*)
    - **Symbol:** bronze – judgment, armor; furnace – purifying
    - **Allusion:** bronze serpent held up by Moses: *John 3:14*
    - ... Goliath wore bronze shin guards, helmet, etc.: *1 Samuel 17:6*
    - ... bronze altar, pillars, etc. in temple: *Exodus 27:2*
    - ... bronze pillars broken by the Babylonians: *Jeremiah 52:17*
  8. **HIS VOICE WAS LIKE THE SOUND OF RUSHING WATERS:**
    - **Symbol:** water – truth
    - **Allusion:** from water all things were made: *Genesis 1:2*
    - ... Moses struck a rock with his staff and water gushed out: *Numbers 20:11*
    - ... David desired to drink water from Bethlehem: *1 Chronicles 11:17*
    - ... lack of water caused great suffering: *Exodus 15:22, Deuteronomy 8:15*
    - ... water from Christ leads to everlasting life: *John 4:14*
    - ... Christ cleanses the Church with the washing water of the word: *Ephesians 5:25*
  9. **OUT OF HIS MOUTH CAME A SHARP DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD:** (*Pergamum*)
    - **Symbol:** two edge sword – Word of God, truth of wisdom
    - **Allusion:** Word of God, piercing, dividing, able to judge desires & thoughts: *Hebrews 4:12*
    - ... sword of the Spirit, the Word of God: *Ephesians 6:17*
    - ... take revenge on nations and punish foreigners: *Psalms 149:6-7*
  10. **HIS RIGHT HAND HE HELD SEVEN STARS:** (*Ephesus*)(*Sardis*)
    - **Symbol:** the seven angels (messengers) of the seven churches
    - **Symbol:** star – light bearers, divine messengers, angels
    - **Symbol:** seven – number of completion
    - **Allusion:** seven angels with the seven trumpets: *Revelation 8:2*
    - ... eleven stars in Joseph’s dream were patriarchs of Israel: *Genesis 37:9-10*
  11. **HIS FACE WAS LIKE THE SUN SHINING IN ALL ITS BRILLIANCE:**
    - **Symbol:** sun – life, brilliance, the Gospel
    - **Allusion:** righteousness: *Matthew 13:43*
  12. **HE IS THE FIRST AND THE LAST:** (*Smyrna*)
    - **Allusion:** Alpha and Omega; the Beginning and the End: *Revelation 22:13*
    - ... Israel’s deliverer: *Isaiah 48:12*

- ... Israel's King and Redeemer: *Isaiah 44:6*
  - ... the first will be last: *Matthew 19:30, Matthew 20:16, Mark 10:31*
  - ... in the beginning was the Word: *John 1:1-5*
13. **HE IS THE ONE DIED AND CAME TO LIFE AGAIN:** (*Smyrna*)
- **Allusion:** Christ's death and resurrection
  - ... Lord of the living and the dead: *Romans 14:9*
  - ...who was, is, and is to come: *Revelation 1:8*
  - ... compare to the beast with a lethal head wound but lives: *Revelation 13:3*
14. **HE IS HOLY AND TRUE:** (*Philadelphia*)(*Laodicea*)
- **Modifiers:** sacred, divine, spotless, worthy
15. **HE HOLDS THE KEY OF DAVID:** (*Philadelphia*)
- **Symbol:** key – control
  - **Allusion:** key to the bottomless pit: *Revelation 20:1*
  - ... to the shaft of the abyss: *Revelation 9:1*
  - ... of death and Hades: *Revelation 1:18*
  - ... access to kingdom heaven given to Peter: *Matthew 16:9*
  - ... access to knowledge of God: *Luke 11:52*
  - **Allusion:** key of David: *Isaiah 22:22*
  - ... heir to the earthly/spiritual throne of King David: *Luke 1:32, Isaiah 9:7*
  - ... everlasting covenant with King David: *2 Samuel 7:16, psalms 89:3-4*
  - ... rule over the Gentiles: *Romans 15:12, Acts 15:16*
  - ... descendant of David: *Luke 2:4, Matthew 1:17, Romans 1:3*
  - ... welcomed into Jerusalem as the son of David: *Mark 11:10, Matthew 21:15*
16. **HE OPENS AND SHUTS:** (*Philadelphia*)
- **Symbol:** door – threshold between two worlds – physical/spiritual – life/death – earth/heaven
  - **Metaphor:** gate keeper
  - **Allusion:** to the key of David: *Isaiah 22:22, Revelation 3:7*
  - ... threshold to salvation: *Luke 11:10, Luke 11:19, John 10:7-9, Matthew 7:7*
  - ... door of opportunity: *1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12, Colossians 4:3*
  - ... close in proximity/time: *Mark 11:4, Mark 13:29*
  - ... shutting out: *Luke 11:7, Luke 13:25, Matthew 25:10*
  - ... door of faith: *Act 14:27*
  - ...release Paul from prison: *Act 16:27*
17. **HE IS THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS:** (*Laodicea*)
- **Modifiers:** authentic, loyal, trustworthy, devoted
  - ... moon as faithful witness to God's covenant with David: *Psalms 89:35-37*
  - ... two witnesses during the Great Tribulation: *Revelation 11:3-4*
18. **HE IS THE RULER OF GOD'S CREATION:** (*Laodicea*)
- **Allusion:** creation of the world, David's throne, King of Kings
  - ... in the beginning was the Word: *John 1:1-5,10, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:2*
  - ... heir to David's throne: *Luke 1:32, Isaiah 9:7, Isaiah 22:22*
  - ...king of kings: *1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 21:24*

## THE POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES OF THE SEVEN

Instead of composing a commentary for each church type, I have chosen to list the individual positive attributes and attach a related New Testament passage to bring us into remembrance of that quality.

This approach, I hope, will help the individual Christian consider their Christian walk and make any changes as deemed necessary. The "Online Parallel Bible" <<http://bible.cc/>> provides an array of public domain scholarly commentaries that may be of interest.

1. **PRODUCE DEEDS, TOIL, & SERVICE:** (Ephesus, Thyatira, Philadelphia)

**John 15:1-4:** I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. (NLT)<sup>93</sup>

2. **PERSEVERANCE:** (Ephesus, Thyatira)

**James 1:2-4:** Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. (NLT)

3. **CANNOT TOLERATE EVIL MEN:** (Ephesus)

**1 Corinthians 5:9-11:** When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that. I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don't even eat with such people.

4. **TEST FOR FALSE DOCTRINE:** (Ephesus)

**2 Corinthians 11:13-15:** These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve. (NLT)

5. **ENDURE DIFFICULT TIME:** (Pergamum)

**Matthew 7:13-14:** You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

6. **ENDURE TRIBULATION:** (Smyrna, Pergamum)

**2 Thessalonians 3:3-5:** But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. And we are confident in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we commanded you. May the Lord lead your hearts into a full understanding and expression of the love of God and the patient endurance that comes from Christ. (NLT)

<sup>93</sup> The New Living Translation is used here for ease of reading and is not intended to serve as a foundation for essential doctrine.

7. **ENDURE POVERTY:** (Smyrna)

**Luke 9:23-25:** If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? *(NLT)*

8. **ENDURE PERSECUTION:** (Smyrna, Pergamum)

**Matthew 10:21-22:** A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. And all nations will hate you because you are my followers. But everyone who endures to the end will be saved. *(NLT)*

9. **LOVE AND FAITH:** (Thyatira)

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7:** Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. *(NLT)*

10. **UNSOILED GARMENTS:** (Pergamum, Sardis)

**James 1:12-15:** God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. *(NLT)*

11. **LITTLE POWER:** (Philadelphia)

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10:** Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong. *(NLT)*

12. **KEPT MY WORD:** (Pergamum, Philadelphia)

**1 John 2:3-6:** And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. *(NLT)*

13. **NOT DENIED CHRIST'S NAME:** (Pergamum, Philadelphia)

**2 Timothy 2:11-12:** This is a trustworthy saying: If we die with him, we will also live with him. If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. *(NLT)*

## THE NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTES OF THE SEVEN

Some biblical scholars claim the “penalties” listed in the messages to the seven churches are assigned to the church congregation, not the individual. Some adhere to the belief, “Once saved, always saved” – Eternal Security. Still others believe that all sin committed by a Christian is covered by the blood of Jesus. And still others believe that the elect were chosen before the Creation and that God’s Grace is irresistible. However, I’m not sure if these beliefs align correctly with the whole of New Testament scripture:

**Galatians 5:17-40:** For the flesh has desires that are opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit has desires that are opposed to the flesh, for these are in opposition to each other, so that you cannot do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, depravity, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envying, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and similar things. I am warning you, as I had warned you before: Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!

**Ephesians 5:1-5:** Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Now, we can do nothing to earn Grace; it is a free gift from God:

**Ephesians 2:8-10:** For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

And, we can be assured that God will not separate from his Grace:

**Romans 8:37-39:** Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

However, we are agents of free will, and free will is not extinguished after we come into belief:

**James 2:18-26:** Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, “Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.” Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works,

when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

It is by faith that we are saved, and, if we have faith, then we will also see the results of that faith. If we do not see the results, then something is wrong and we should be concerned. The messages to the seven churches serve as a warning to us as individuals:

1. **YOU HAVE LEFT YOUR FIRST LOVE:** (Ephesus)

**Mark 12:29-30:** Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’” (NLT)

**PENALTY:** Repent and do the deeds you did at first or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place.

2. **YOU HOLD THE TEACHING OF BALAAM:** (Pergamum)

**Balaam:** ...Balaam, in his day, was a genuine prophet, possessed great knowledge concerning God, and even received direct revelations from God. What, therefore, were his way, his error, and his doctrine?

“The way of Balaam” was a readiness to prostitute his high spiritual gifts and privileges for “The wages of unrighteousness” (II Peter 2:14), being willing to preach something contrary to God’s Word for personal gain.

“The error of Balaam” was evidently his willingness to compromise his own standards of morality and truth in order “greedily” to accommodate those of his pagan patrons (Jude 11).

Finally, “the doctrine of Balaam,” which even in John’s day was already infiltrating the church, was to use his own teaching authority to persuade God’s people that it was all right for them also to compromise these standards, even “to commit fornication” (Revelation 2:14) with their idol-worshipping enemies.<sup>94</sup>

**PENALTY:** I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

3. **YOU HOLD THE TEACHING THE NICOLAITANS.** (Pergamum)

**Nicolaitans:** These were, as is commonly supposed, a sect of the Gnostics, who taught the most impure doctrines, and followed the most impure practices. They are also supposed to have derived their origin from Nicolas, one of the seven deacons mentioned Acts 6:5. The Nicolaitanes taught the community of wives, that adultery and fornication were things indifferent, that eating meats offered to idols was quite lawful; and mixed several pagan rites with the Christian ceremonies.<sup>95</sup>

**PENALTY:** I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

4. **YOU TOLERATE THE WOMAN JEZEBEL:** (Thyatira)

<sup>94</sup> Henry Morris, *The Way of Balaam*, Bible.org. ND. <<http://bible.org/illustration/way-balaam>> Nov. 2, 2011

<sup>95</sup> Adam Clarke, “Revelation 2,” *Commentary on the Bible*, 1831. <<http://clarke.biblecommenter.com/revelation/2.htm>> Oct. 20, 2011

**Jezebel:** Jezebel refers to a literal woman who falsely claimed prophetic powers and who had somehow taken a position of leadership, perhaps because of her unusual gifts. Her actual name was probably not Jezebel, but she was a virtual Jezebel in her actions (1 Kings 16:31-33; 2 Kings 9:30-37). As the Jezebel of the Old Testament enticed God's servants to abandon their loyalty to the Lord and to participate in her idolatrous practices, so this woman of Thyatira was enticing Christians to abandon their loyalty to Christ and a separated life. Her teaching was probably similar to that of the Nicolaitans.<sup>96</sup>

**PENALTY:** I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

5. **YOU HAVE A NAME THAT YOU ARE ALIVE, BUT YOU ARE DEAD:** (Sardis)

**James 2:17:** So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. (NLT)

**James 2:26:** Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works. (NLT)

**PENALTY:** I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

6. **YOU ARE NEITHER COLD NOR HOT:** (Laodicea)

**1 Kings 18:21:** Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, "How much longer will you waver, hobbling between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" But the people were completely silent. (NLT)

**Matthew 6:24:** "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. (NLT)

**PENALTY:** I will spit you out of My mouth.

## \*REWARDS FOR OVERCOMING

1. **GRANT TO HIM TO SIT DOWN WITH ME ON MY THRONE:**

**Luke 22:29-30:** And just as my Father has granted me a Kingdom, I now grant you the right to eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom. And you will sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

2. **MAKE HIM A PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE OF MY GOD:**

3. **BE CLOTHED IN WHITE GARMENTS:**

4. **NOT ERASE HIS NAME FROM THE BOOK OF LIFE:**

5. **CONFESS HIS NAME BEFORE MY FATHER AND BEFORE HIS ANGELS:**

6. **GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS:**

7. **GIVE HIM THE MORNING STAR:**

<sup>96</sup> J. Hampton Keathley, III, "The Message to Thyatira (Rev 2:18-29)," Bible.org. ND. <<http://bible.org/seriespage/message-thyatira-rev-218-29>> Nov. 3, 2011

8. GIVE SOME OF THE HIDDEN MANNA:
9. GIVE HIM A WHITE STONE WITH NAME:
10. GRANT TO EAT OF THE TREE OF LIFE WHICH IS IN THE PARADISE OF GOD:
11. NOT BE HURT BY THE SECOND DEATH:

Working Draft

# THE SCROLL WITH SEVEN SEALS

## INTRODUCTION

There are many conjectures as to the exact nature of the scroll with the seven seals. A search through the Bible reveals similar scrolls in Daniel 12, Zachariah 5, and Ezekiel 2 that may provide additional insight. However, in its simplest form, the scroll is the title deed to planet earth:

*from "The Scroll of Seven Seals"*<sup>97</sup>

The scroll of Rev 5 is a deed of redemption, and as such becomes effectively a will of inheritance. It is the legal document proving that a qualified Kinsman has paid the price to redeem the land once forfeited by His family.

See "Satan-Evicted: The Foundation" section of this study.

### Commentary, Annotations, & Notes:

1. **Revelation 5:1:** Then I saw in the right hand [*place of authority*] of him who sat on the throne [*God the Father*] a scroll [*a papyrus roll, a book, a document*] with writing on both sides [*opistograph*] and sealed with seven [*number of completion/perfection*] seals [*a. mark of authenticity, b. fasten or close securely*].

- **The Seven Seals:** There seems to be a controversy over how the scroll is sealed. Hal Lindsey, author of the *Late Great Planet Earth*, claims that the scroll is internally sealed:

*from There's A New World Coming*<sup>98</sup>

a scribe would procure a long roll of parchment and begin writing. After a period of writing he would stop, roll the parchment enough to cover his words and seal the scroll at that point with wax. Then he would resume writing, stop again, roll the scroll, and add another seal. By the time he was finished, he would have sealed the scroll seven times.

Craig S. Keener, citing Robert Van Kampen, believes that all seals are on the outside:

*from "Scroll," Philologos*<sup>99</sup>

He writes in his book, "The Sign," that of the many scrolls in his possession not one has a seal on the inside. When sealed, the scrolls are all done so from the outside.... When more than one seal is present it indicates a series or set of conditions that must be met before the scroll can actually be opened. He also cites that the Shrine of the Book located on the grounds of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem has many scrolls that have multiple seals placed on them, yet not one scroll has a seal on the inside.

Still others describe the scroll as a book with seven sealed sections.

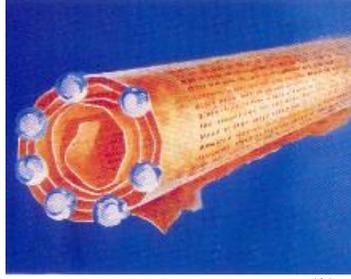
<sup>97</sup> "The Scroll of Seven Seals," *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, February 26, 2005. <<http://revjc.blogspot.com/2005/02/scroll-of-seven-seals.html>> August 8, 2012.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in "Scroll," *Philologos: Bible Prophecy Research*, October 3, 1998. <<http://philologos.org/bpr/files/s006.htm>> August 9, 2012.

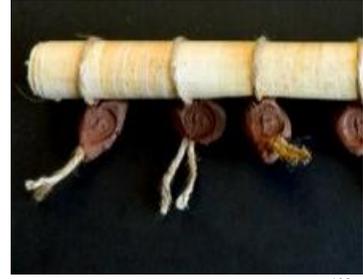
<sup>99</sup> Quoted in "Scroll," *Philologos: Bible Prophecy Research*, October 3, 1998. <<http://philologos.org/bpr/files/s006.htm>> August 9, 2012.



"Monceau," flickriver<sup>100</sup>



Images of the book of Revelation<sup>101</sup>



"Manuscripts," Historic Connections<sup>102</sup>

Does it make a difference whether the scroll is sealed on the inside or the outside? Perhaps. If the scroll is internally sealed, then the actions associated with the breaking of the first six seals are a part of the document. If the scroll is externally sealed, then the content of the document is not revealed until the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal is broken.

Some scholars assert the next verse, Revelation 5:2, illustrates that the portions of the book can be opened without breaking all of the seals, "to open the scroll and break its seals." However, word order in Greek is more variable than in English and word order is probably not indicative of chronological order in this instance.

I tend to believe that the term *biblion* is contextually best defined as a scroll primarily because of the description "with writing on both sides" (NIV) – "written within and on the back" (YLT). I also believe that the seven seals seal the outside primarily because the Apostle John can readily see all seven seals. Additionally, there is a distinct difference between the events of the first six seals (the prelude, the final warning) and those that follow the breaking of the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal (the Wrath of God).

- **Jeremiah 32: Law For Redemption of Land: A Parallel:** If a person was forced to sell land due to poverty, they or their nearest relative could redeem that land by repaying its discounted price. (All land reverted back to the original owner during the Year of Jubilee, Leviticus 25:23-28). Jeremiah describes this redemption process as used to redeem land for his cousin Hanamel:
  1. Pay the redemption price. (v. 9)
  2. In front of witnesses, sign two copies of the deed of purchase which contains the terms and conditions of the purchase. Seal one copy. (v. 10-11)
  3. In the presence of witnesses, Jeremiah handed both copies of the deed – the sealed and unsealed – to Baruch, his student scribe, who stored them in pottery jar to preserve them for a long time. (v. 12-15)

Jeremiah served to predict the future redemption of Israel following the Babylonian Captivity:

**Jeremiah 32:15:** For this is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: 'Someday people will again own property here in this land and will buy and sell houses and vineyards and fields.'" (NIV)

<sup>100</sup> "Monceau," flickriver, June 24, 2009. <<http://www.flickriver.com/photos/monceau/3700002007/>>

<sup>101</sup> "Seven Seals," Images of the book of Revelation: Make the Way Straight, Dec 20, 2009. <<http://bodyofyahshuakeptinyahvehsname.webs.com/apps/photos/photo?photoid=63017837>> August 9, 2012.

<sup>102</sup> "Manuscripts," HISTORIC CONNECTIONS: Bringing the Past Alive.... ND. <<http://historicconnections.webs.com/manuscripts.htm>> August 9, 2012.

**Why are there two copies?** Just as today, there are at least two copies of a land deed. The official copy, the sealed copy, is retained by the legal authority to ensure authenticity and to prevent alteration. The unofficial copy is retained by the land owner for general reference.

**Why were both copies sealed in a clay jar?** Jeremiah followed God's instructions – the Jews would soon be carried off by the Babylonians and it would be decades before the Jews returned to the land and the document executed.

**How does this passage help us to understand the scroll with the seven seals?** Jeremiah 32 foreshadows Christ's redemption of planet earth. (See also Ruth 4.) Jesus paid the redemption price during His earthly ministry, personal suffering, and sacrifice on the cross. However, there is an extended time delay between the redemption and taking possession – nearly 2,000 years so far. Taking this analogy one step further, the unsealed copy represents John's Revelation (possibly the entire Bible); unfortunately, the unsealed copy is subject to alteration – misinterpretation. The sealed copy is retained by the Father in heaven. When the time is ripe, the Father will hand the sealed copy to the Son, and the Son will take those steps necessary to take physical possession of planet earth.

Some scholars tend to "manipulate" either the customs related to land redemption, the actual passage, or both in order to forward a particular viewpoint concerning the seven seals. We must be very cautious to avoid such practices allowing the scripture to speak for itself:

- One interpretation of this analogy asserts that ancient land deals were sealed with seven seals with each seal representing a condition that must be fulfilled before the owner could take possession. I could find no authoritative evidence indicating land deals were sealed with seven seals or the seals represented conditions.
- Another interpretation claims that it was Jeremiah's cousin who was in prison, that the contracts for redemption were drawn up when the cousin sold the land, and that the sealed contract was stored in the temple. This view is clearly in error – Jeremiah was the one in prison, Jeremiah drew up the contracts of redemption, and both copies were sealed in a clay jar, not placed in the temple.
- Another interpretation asserts that the redeemer took the sealed contract to the temple where the priest would break the seals before the redeemer could take possession of the land. I could find no authoritative evidence supporting this claim. Certainly, the seals of a contract would only be broken when the authenticity or possible alterations were question.

At the end of this age, Satan, through his agents, will question Christ's legal authority to redeem the planet earth. At that time, God the Father will hand the sealed contract to his nearest kinsmen, Jesus Christ, who will break the contract's seven seals revealing the terms and conditions of the redemption. Only after all seven seals have been broken will the process of taking possession begin:

It is not possible to break a seal and open part of the scroll, and then break another seal and open more of the scroll. It is all or nothing. All seven seals must be broken before any of the scroll can be opened. And only as the scroll is opened can the trumpets be sounded.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Marvin J Rosenthal, *Zion's Fire*, March-April 1999. Quoted in "THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST: Chapters 6 & 7." <<http://webspaces.webring.com/people/kp/phulax/Revelation/rev6.html>> August 9, 2012.

- **Zechariah 5:1-4:** A two sided scroll: one side seems represent sins against mankind – thievery, the other side seems to represent sins against God – false oaths:

**Zechariah 5:1-4:** I looked again—and there before me was a flying scroll! He asked me, “What do you see?” I answered, “I see a flying scroll, thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide.” And he said to me, “This is the curse that is going out over the whole land; for according to what it says on one side, every thief will be banished, and according to what it says on the other, everyone who swears falsely will be banished. The Lord Almighty declares, ‘I will send it out, and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of him who swears falsely by my name. It will remain in his house and destroy it, both its timbers and its stones.’” (NIV)

- **Daniel 12:4:** A sealed document: This verse seems to indicate that the events of the “time of the end” will not be understood until the latter days – this sealing follows and precedes the infamous prophecies many scholars believe pertain to the Great Tribulation:

**Daniel 12:4:** But you, Daniel, keep this prophecy a secret; seal up the book until the time of the end, when many will rush here and there, and knowledge will increase.”

- **Ezekiel 2:9-10:** A two sided scroll sent to a rebellious, stubborn, and hard-hearted Israel:

**Ezekiel 2:9-10:** Then I looked and saw a hand reaching out to me. It held a scroll, which he unrolled. And I saw that both sides were covered with funeral songs, words of sorrow, and pronouncements of doom. (NIV)

2. **Revelation 5:2-4:** And I saw a strong angel, who shouted with a loud voice: “Who is worthy to break the seals on this scroll and open it?” But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll and read it. Then I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll and read it.

For those in heaven, the question “Who is worthy?” seems to reflect a rhetorical question (a question asked to make a point rather than elicit an answer) and the statement that no one was found worthy seems to be a dramatic pause (provides a period of silence to accentuate the tremendous sacrifice that was necessary in order to purchase earth’s redemption). John did not comprehend the dramatic elements of the previous verse and he began to weep. The bitter weeping seems to indicate that John clearly understood the contents of the scroll and what was at stake if no one was worthy to open the scroll.

3. **Revelation 5:5:** But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, “Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah [*Jesus Christ*], the heir to David’s throne [*Jesus Christ*], has won the victory [*sacrifice during the crucifixion*]. He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals [*paid the redemption fee*].”

Here John’s failure to recognize the previous verse’s dramatic elements is corrected as he is told that Jesus Christ is worthy to open the scroll. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah (the lion being the tribe’s emblem) and the genealogies in Matthew, Mark, and Luke illustrate that he was a descendent of King David. Perhaps more importantly, the titles clearly emphasize the Jewish nature to the scroll – these Jewish titles foreshadow the removal of Christians prior to the breaking of the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal and revelation of the scrolls content.

4. **Revelation 5:6-7:** Then I saw a Lamb [*Jesus Christ*] that looked as if it had been slaughtered [*Mosaic sacrificial lamb*], but it [*pronoun “it” used instead of “He” to emphasize that His sacrifice made Him worthy, not His position as Son of God*] was now standing between the throne and the four living beings and among the twenty-four elders [*Christ’s role*]. He had seven [*inifinite*] horns [*symbol of power and authority*] and seven [*inifinite*] eyes [*symbol of knowledge/wisdom*], which represent the sevenfold [*fullness*] Spirit of God [*God’s wholeness/completion*] that is sent out into every part of the earth [*complete inundation of the entire world*]. He [*Jesus Christ*] came and took [*accepts His new role*] the scroll from the right hand [*full authority*] of him who sat on the throne [*God the Father*].

In this verse we see a shift in Jesus Christ’s role and position. Prior to this verse, Jesus Christ sat at the right hand of God serving as mankind’s priestly intermediary in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6, Hebrews 6:20, Hebrews 7:11).

**Hebrews 8:1:** The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, (NIV)

In Revelation 5:6-7, Jesus Christ is being called away from that role and into the role of redeemer of the earth and ultimately the conquering and ruling King.

The attributes of the seven horns and seven eyes convey Christ will go forth fully and completely empowered with God’s infinite power, authority, and wisdom – God’s essence of being.

Jesus Christ accepts His new role – the commission given by God the Father.

5. **Revelation 5:8:** And when he [*Jesus Christ*] had taken it [*scroll*], the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb [*profound worship*]. Each one had a harp [*instrument of worship*] and they were holding golden bowls full of incense [*spiritual presence*], which are the prayers of the saints.

The acceptance of the scroll by Jesus Christ is a form of anointing Christ as the King of Kings.

Within the Jewish Temple, the golden altar of incense stood in front of the veil that separated the Holy place from the Holy of Holies. Incense was burnt twice daily with the aroma permeating the entire temple including the Holy of Holies. Similarly, the prayers of the saints permeate worship of the Lamb. In this case, the prayers are more witness, Revelation 5:9-14, than intercessory, Revelation 6:10.

6. **Revelation 5:9-14:** And they [*the 24 elders and 4 creatures*] sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain [*crucifixion*], and with your blood you purchased men [*us*] for God from every tribe and language and people and nation [*gentiles*]. You have made them to be a kingdom [*kings*] and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on [*over*] the earth.” Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand [*myriads, uncountable in number*]. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, [*all of creation*] singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise

and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The new song is the sung by the 24 elders and four creatures on behalf of the Christian congregation, the body of Christ, who are not yet assembled in heaven. Where verses 5-7 have a definite Jewish tenor, the new song has a Christian tenor – note the use of the term “slain” instead of the term “slaughter.” Whereas the scroll represents the redemption of the earth, the new song emphasizes the redemption of individuals.

The addition of myriad of angels and all creatures indicates that all of creation celebrates the steps that are about to be taken:

**Romans 8:22:** We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (NIV)

**Summary:** The scroll with the seven seals represents the title deed to planet earth. That deed was surrendered to Satan upon Adam’s, the father of mankind, obedience to Satan and disobedience to God. Jesus Christ – through His obedience to the Father, earthly ministry and sacrificial acts – paid the redemption fee for planet earth in accordance with the Law of Redemption for land. Both the sealed and unsealed deed, written during Christ’s earthly ministry and the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, were placed in pottery jars for safe keeping during Christ’s extended absence. Although sealed during Daniel’s time and throughout much of the Church age, the unsealed copy, biblical prophecy, will be made known to mankind during the latter days. The sealed copy, currently held in the right hand of God the Father, will be handed to Jesus Christ, the Son, at the beginning of the great tribulation. The breaking of the initial six seals serves as a warning to mankind, Satan, and Satan’s dominions that Jesus Christ intends to take possession of the redeemed planet earth – the physical steps in that process begins at the breaking of the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal.

## “GREAT TRIBULATION” LABEL IS A MISNOMER

### MISUSE OF THE LABEL “GREAT TRIBULATION”

The term “Great Tribulation” is a label of human construction that is frequently used to represent the time period beginning with the breaking of the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal (Revelation 6:1) and ending with Christ’s triumph over Satan at the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-21). This label probably originates from the Olivet Discourse and the multitude in white robes with Revelation 7:14:

**Matthew 24:21:** For then shall be *great tribulation*, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. (KJV) [*Emphasis added*]

**Revelation 7:14:** And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of *great tribulation*, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (KJV) [*Emphasis added*]

**Unfortunately, the label “Great Tribulation” is a misnomer** – an unsuitable name for the designated time period. If we utilize the term “Great Tribulation” as a label for end time events, then we must restrict its use to the time period occurring between the breaking of the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal (Revelation 6:1) and the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal – the Rapture of the Church (Revelation 6:12-17). This is the time period

described within the Olivet Discourse from the coming of false messiahs (1<sup>st</sup> Seal) to the wars between nations (2<sup>nd</sup> Seal) to the famines and distress (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Seal) to persecution of the saints (5<sup>th</sup> Seal) coming of Christ in the clouds and the gathering of His elect – the Rapture (6<sup>th</sup> Seal):

**Revelation 6:12-17:** I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. <sup>(a)</sup> The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, <sup>(b)</sup> the whole moon turned blood red, and <sup>(c)</sup> the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. <sup>(d)</sup> The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

<sup>(e)</sup> Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the <sup>(f)</sup> face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” (NIV)

**Matthew 24:29-30:** “Immediately after the distress of those days <sup>(a)</sup> the sun will be darkened, and the <sup>(b)</sup> moon will not give its light; <sup>(c)</sup> the stars will fall from the sky, and <sup>(d)</sup> the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ At that time the <sup>(e)</sup> sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and <sup>(e)</sup> all the nations of the earth will mourn. <sup>(f)</sup> They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. (NIV)

**Joel 2:30-31:** <sup>(c)(d)</sup>I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. <sup>(a)</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness and <sup>(b)</sup> the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

Parallelism between Revelation, Matthew, and Joel:

- (a) Sun turn to darkness
- (b) Moon turn to blood
- (c) Stars fall from the sky
- (d) Heavenly bodies shaken
- (e) All nations will mourn
- (f) Sight of Jesus Christ

Certainly, many of these signs – sun, moon, sky, and earthquakes – signify a disruption in the cosmic order and may be found in other unrelated passages (Isaiah 13:10, Acts 2:20-21); however, none match so completely and none are sandwiched between the martyred saints under the altar (Revelation 6:9-11) and the multitude of redeemed saints in heaven (Revelation 7:9-17).

The Olivet Discourse **DOES NOT** include a description of the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week nor does it include the outpouring of God’s wrath upon the earth’s inhabitants (Revelation 8:1-19:21). Using the term “Great Tribulation” to label the entire period between Revelation 6:1 and 19:21 misrepresents the period and confuses important issues.

The “End Times” deals with two separate and distinct entities – redeemed Christians of the Church and remnant Jews of Israel. Although there is some overlap, the Lord is concluding his dealings with an earthly Christian congregation and refocusing His attention on the promises to Israel. The “End Times” is a period of transition between the old and the new... the Church Age is receding and the

Kingdom Age is rising. In order to understand prophetic scripture, the reader must differentiate between the two.

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## DANIEL'S 70<sup>TH</sup> WEEK ? THE GREAT TRIBULATION

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In most prophetic commentaries, the label "The Great Tribulation" is used as a synonym for Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, the seven years between the Antichrist's signing of the covenant with many (Daniel 9:27) and the Christ's return to take physical possession of His earthly kingdom (Revelation 19:11-21). This is a misrepresentation of the two distinct time periods.

1. The events depicted in Revelation 4:1-19:21 reflect a transition between the Church Age and the Millennial Age – Kingdom Age. During the Church Age, the primary focus of God's covenant is on redemption of the body of Christ through the sacrifices of Jesus Christ. During the Kingdom Age, the primary focus of God's covenant will be on the earthly reign of Israel's Messiah – the Son of David.
2. Transition periods between ages are typical as the focus of God changes. There was some 100 years from the time Noah was given the command to build the ark and the time the flood came. Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years before they were permitted to cross into the Promised Land. A period of nearly forty years transpired between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the scattering of the Jews among the nations. Biblical trends suggest that we should also expect a transition from the current age to the next.
3. One difficulty in understanding the events of this transition is distinguishing between those scriptures pertaining to the Christian Church, those pertaining to Israel, and those pertaining to both. Amillennialism asserts that there is no distinction because Israel and the Church merged spiritually following the downfall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. However, this is simply not the case – see "The Church & Israel" section of this study. Examination of the book of Revelation reveals Old Testament references and allusions as well as New Testament references and allusions:

**Revelation 5:5:** Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." (NIV)

**Revelation 5:6:** Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders... (NIV)

Revelation 5:5 alludes to the Jewish Messiah, and Revelation 5:6 alludes to the Christian Messiah. Because the Church was a mystery prior to Pentecost, the distinctions are less clear in Old Testament prophecies. Nevertheless, individuals studying end time prophecy must make an effort to distinguish between the Church and Israel otherwise matters become very confusing.

4. Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week (seven years) begins with the Antichrist making a covenant with the many (Daniel 9:27). The Great Tribulation, if we apply that label, begins with the breaking the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal of the scroll with seven seals. The Great Tribulation ends with the Rapture of the Church during the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal and Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week does not end until Christ takes physical possession of the planet. The two events may overlap but they do not share starting or ending points:



## THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

Understanding the events of the first four seals requires us to return to the Olivet Discourse – a description of the events prior to the breaking of the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal and prior to the onslaught of God’s wrath:

**Matthew 24:4-9, 22:** Jesus answered: *[Seal 1]* “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. *[Seal 2]* You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. *[Seal 3]* There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains... *[Seal 4]* If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. (NIV)

**Luke 21:12, 16-17:** *[Seal 5]* But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name... You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. (NIV)

**Matthew 24:29:** *[Seal 6]* Immediately after the distress of those days, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.

The Olivet Discourse is a beautiful example of God’s living and breathing Word. Within these passages, the Lord provides a glimpse into three distinct events:

1. **The Destruction of the Second Temple:** Amillennialism and Preterism assert that the entire Olivet Discourse describes the destruction of the second Temple by Titus in 70 AD. They have good cause for such belief; clearly, Luke’s version predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish Diaspora – scattering among the many nations:

**Luke 21:20-24:** “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (NIV)

The prophecy also describes the persecution of early Christians by the Jewish and Roman communities:

**Luke 21:12:** “But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. (NIV)

However, the events of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century simply do not fulfill the prophecy in its entirety:

**Luke 21:25-27:** “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror,

apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (NIV)

Amillennialism and Preterism tend to “spiritualize” scriptures that don’t readily fit into their belief systems. For example, some scholars assert the requirement that the “gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world” (Matthew 24:14) was fulfilled because Jerusalem and Rome were centers of world commerce and learning. Unfortunately, they were the center of the Western World, not the East, Africa, or the Americas. Such spiritualization, I’m afraid, stretches the scripture and should be rejected.

Rather than spiritualizing scripture, we need to understand that the Word of God is a living, breathing document not limited by mankind’s diminutive mental capacity. For example, the Jewish learning community believes that Daniel’s prophecy of the “abomination that causes desolation” (Daniel 9:27) was fulfilled by the erection of a Zeus statue in its sacred precincts by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC.<sup>104</sup> However, we know Antiochus did not fulfill Daniel’s prophecy because Jesus Christ, some two centuries later, referred to it as a yet future event (Matthew 24:15).

Clearly, the Jews in Judea during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century could take warning from the Olivet Discourse; yet, these prophecies also have implications still yet future. It would be an error to point to any single, prophecy and declare “this means this, and only this.” God’s Word is infinite; man’s mind is finite.

2. **The Regathering of Israel:** Pretribulationists assert that the Olivet Discourse applies to the “end times” but applies to the Church in a very limited way. For example, many Pretribulationists assert that the gathering of the elect refers to the Jews, not the Christians:

**Matthew 24:30-31:** “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. (NIV)

This assertion frequently claims that the Church is raptured out of the world prior to the Time of Jacob’s Trouble and that the elect, therefore, must represent the regathering of the Jews from the Diaspora to Jerusalem. In partial support of this assertion, a scholar may claim (a) the target audience was Jewish and (b) God cannot have two chosen peoples on the earth at the same time.

Obviously, a partial regathering of ethnic Jews to Israel has been occurring since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century with Jerusalem being reclaimed from the “gentiles” in 1967. This occurrence, however, does not exclude an additional regathering of a spiritual nature. In fact, Revelation 7:1-8 describes four angels, standing on the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds until the servants of God, 144,000 – 12,000 from each tribe of Israel, are sealed. This sealing looks very similar to the gathering of the elect from the “four winds” within Matthew 24:30-31.

**Were the listeners of the Olivet Discourse Jews?** Yes, absolutely. Matthew 24:3 specifically indicates that the audience consisted of Christ’s disciples. Like himself, Jesus’ disciples were Jews and would understand His message as Jews. However, by the time of the Olivet Discourse, the disciples were beginning to understand that Jesus was the promised Messiah:

<sup>104</sup> “ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906. <<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/353-abomination-of-desolation>> August 11, 2012.

**Matthew 16:13-16:** When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (NIV)

Certainly, Christ’s disciples did not possess a full understanding of the Church Age until after the Day of Pentecost; however, this limited understanding does not restrict the meaning of Christ’s word to Israel. Christ’s knowledge and prophecy was not limited to the disciple’s understanding.

**Can God have two chosen peoples on the earth at the same time?** In response, I ask a simple question, “Why not?” Obviously, during Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry, there were no Christians as that would not be possible until after Pentecost; however, from Pentecost until the destruction of the second Temple in 70 AD, both Christians and Jews coexisted on the same planet. Prior to the Great Flood, the righteous Noah and his family coexisted with the wicked and damned. An overlapping of “dispensations” appears normal and should be expected.

Some scholars assert that the Daniel’s last week – the entire seven years of Jacob’s Trouble – involves God’s dealing with Israel, not the Church. And, I agree to a certain extent. However, there is a period of transition where the Church is winding down while Israel is winding up. I doubt this transition will take 40 years, but a transition period should be expected.

In the purest sense, the true Church and true Israel will not occupy God’s focus at the same time. At the breaking of the sixth seal, the Church is raptured and the 144,000 Jews are sealed – the true Church is removed to heaven and true Israel is set apart on earth. However, prior to this moment, national (ethnic) Israel has already begun to take world center stage. Thus, both coexist in a limited form...

3. **The Rapture of Faithful Christians:** Most Pretribulationists are rather rigid in their beliefs that (a) Christians will not face the Wrath of God and (b) we should expect the imminent Return of Jesus Christ. Rejection of the Olivet Discourse as the Rapture of the Church seems rooted in these two beliefs. (See also “Appendix: Pretribulation Rapture: Rebuttal” within this study.)

**GOD’S WRATH:** Certainly, true Christians will never face the Wrath of God; this is the absolute, unalterable truth:

**1 Thessalonians 5:9:** For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV)

However, there is a clear distinction between God’s wrath and tribulation. Christians are instructed to expect and endure tribulation:

**2 Corinthians 6:4-5:** Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger. (NIV)

A plain reading of the Olivet Discourse reveals great tribulation: false messiahs, false prophets, deception, war, rumors of war, strife between nations, famines, earthquakes, pestilence,

persecution, hatred, imprisonment, torture, wickedness, and betrayal. But God's people, for multiple generations, have long endured such things; it should not be unexpected for the last generation of Christians to suffer such things.... Such tribulation does not constitute the Wrath of God.

Perhaps some Christians find it untenable that the coming Antichrist will have the authority to make war on and conquer the true believer?

**Daniel 7:25:** He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. (NIV)

**Revelation 13:7:** He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them... (NIV)

Yet, we know from history, that many, many Christians met their death because of their belief in Jesus Christ. The martyrdom of Stephen is described in Acts 7:54-60 and James in Acts 12:1-2. The apostles Peter was allegedly crucified upside down and Paul was allegedly beheaded during the reign of Nero. Early Christians faced persecution and martyrdom at the hands of both Jews and Romans. Even today, missionaries in non-Christian nations face persecution and possible death. Persecution and martyrdom should be considered a normal and expected Christian experience:

**Luke 6:22:** Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. (NIV)

The events within the Olivet Discourse and the first six seals do not constitute God's wrath and provide no impediments for the Church's presence during this time.

**IMMINENT RETURN:** The term "imminent return" is best defined as the belief that Jesus Christ could return at anytime, any second, to gather His Church. Ironically, the primary passages many proponents of an imminence return use to support their belief, they also deny:

**Matthew 24:36:** No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (NIV)

**Matthew 24:44:** So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. (NIV)

These passages, and the parables that follow, specifically reference the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds to gather His elect (Matthew 24:30-31). Yet, proponents of the imminent return theory assert that this gathering does not reference the Church but rather (a) the Jewish remnant during the tribulation period,<sup>105</sup> (b) the Jews from around the world,<sup>106</sup> (c) the post-tribulation second coming of Jesus Christ,<sup>107</sup> or (d) the scattered resurrected saints from all over heaven.<sup>108</sup> While each provides support for their claim, their explanation more rationalization than reasoning... We must be very,

<sup>105</sup> Thomas Ice, "MATTHEW 24:31: RAPTURE OR SECOND COMING?" Liberty University, May 8, 2009. <<http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ice-Matthew2431RaptureOrS.pdf>> August 12, 2012.

<sup>106</sup> John Hoole, "The Rapture is not in Matthew 24," John's Notes, July 15, 2012. <<http://johnsnotes.com/RaptureisnotinMatthew24.htm>> August 12, 2012.

<sup>107</sup> John F. Hart, "A Defense of the Pretribulation Rapture in Matthew 24:36-44," Pre-Trib Research Center, ND. <<http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Hart-ADefenseoftheRapture.pdf>> August 12, 2012.

<sup>108</sup> "The Rapture In Matthew 24?" Grace Thru Faith, ND. <<http://gracethrufaith.com/ask-a-bible-teacher/the-rapture-in-matthew-24/>> August 12, 2012.

very careful in pulling individual scripture out of their context. If Matthew 24:30-31 does not reference the Church, then it is unlikely that any scriptures in Chapter 24 or Chapter 25 reference the Church.

Certainly, Christians should eagerly await the Rapture; however, this eagerness is expectancy not imminence:

**1 Corinthians 1:7:** Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

**Titus 2:13:** while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (NIV)

**Philippians 3:20:** But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV)

Certainly, scripture teaches that Christ is coming soon:

**Revelation 22:20:** He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. (NIV)

**Hebrews 10:37:** For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. (NIV)

Certainly, Christians do not know the exact day or the exact hour of Christ's return:

**Mark 13:35:** Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back--whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. (NIV)

**Acts 1:7:** He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. (NIV)

However, ample scriptural evidence indicates Christians should know when that time is near:

**Matthew 24:32-33:** Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, **when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.** NIV (Mark 13:29-29; Luke 21:29-31) [Emphasis added.]

**Luke 21:34:** **Be careful,** or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and **that day will close on you unexpectedly** like a trap. (NIV) [Emphasis added.]

**1 Thessalonians 5:4:** But you, brothers, **are not in darkness** so that this day should surprise you like a thief. (NIV) [Emphasis added.]

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-3:** Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him... Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for [that day will not come] **until the rebellion occurs** and the **man of lawlessness is revealed**, the man doomed to destruction. (NIV) [Emphasis added.]

Rather than hoping the Lord will remove us from the tribulation, we should seek preparedness so that day will not overtake us:

**John 17:15:** My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. (NIV)

**Summary:** The Olivet Discourse provides a glimpse into three distinct events: (a) the destruction of the second Temple in 70 AD, (b) the gathering of the 144,000 Jewish remnant prior to their sealing in Revelation 7:1-8, and (c) the rapture of Christ's Church prior to the assembly in Revelation 7:9-17. Although many believe that the Church will be raptured prior to the tribulation, such belief is at best speculative. The Olivet Discourse provides the foundation, an outline, for our understanding of the breaking the first seals of the scroll with seven seals...

## THIS GENERATION

**Matthew 24:34-35:** I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

*For a examination of this passage as hyperbole, idiom, and oath, please refer to the "Interpretation Guidelines: SAMPLE STUDY: This Generation Shall Not Pass" section of this study.*

## THE DISCIPLE'S CONTEMPORARIES

The use of an oath, as in this passage, indicates a serious, stern tone rather than the neutral, expository one used previously within the passage. This tone shift should provoke a question, "Why had the Lord become so severe in this passage?" The answer can be found in the previous chapter, the seven woes to the teachers of the law and the Pharisees:

**Matthew 23:33-35:** You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. (NIV)

We can also see this "cursing" of the contemporary generation several chapters earlier:

**Matthew 12:39-42:** He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here. (NIV)

Some scholars attempt to explain away this passage by altering the plain meaning of the phrase this "generation":

*Clarke's Commentary on the Bible:* This generation shall not pass - Η γενεα αυτη, this race; i.e. the Jews shall not cease from being a distinct people, till all the counsels of God relative to them and the Gentiles be fulfilled.<sup>109</sup>

Others assert that Christ is referring to the terminal generation, those living during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week; the one's that witness "all these things":

*Scofield Reference Notes:* Gr. "genea," the primary definition of which is, "race, kind, family, stock, breed." (So all lexicons.) That the word is used in this sense because none of "these things," i.e. the world-wide preaching of the kingdom, the great tribulation, the return of the Lord in visible glory, and the regathering of the elect, occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 70. The promise is, therefore, that the generation--nation, or family of Israel--will be preserved unto "these things"; a promise wonderfully fulfilled to this day.<sup>110</sup>

Such manipulation of the plain meaning of biblical passages, especially to avoid a Preterism view, seems to be of bad form. Certainly, the listener at the time the discourse would have taken the passage literally. Certainly, they would have interpreted the "great distress" as being directed at their contemporaries. Although surrounded by figurative language, the clause "this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened" **can and should be interpreted on a literal level**. Within this level we come to understand why the Lord was angry, the hypocrisy of the Sadducees and Pharisees, and why the great distress of the coming days would be so severe, the rejection of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah.

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## THE TERMINAL GENERATION

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While we can appropriately view the Olivet Discourse on a literal preterist level, we need not limit our view entirely on that simple level. A full examination illustrates that Jesus Christ was providing a complex response to a multilevel question:

**Matthew 24:1-3:** And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, "See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (KJV)

1. When will the temple be destroyed? (*tauta*: this)
2. What will be the signs of Christ's coming? (*parousia* – presence, coming)
3. What will be the signs of the end of the world? (*aión* - age)

We understand from history and the Bible that all two events were fulfilled during the first century. The temple was destroyed in 70 AD by the Roman forces under the forces of Titus, and the Mosaic Age essentially ended with the destruction of the second Temple. However, those historical events did not fulfill all of the prophecies contained within those chapters.

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<sup>109</sup> Adam Clarke, "Matthew 24:34," *Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*, by Adam Clarke, 1831. <<http://clarke.biblecommenter.com/matthew/24.htm>> August 31, 2012.

<sup>110</sup> "Matthew 24," *Scofield Reference Notes*, 1917. <<http://sco.biblecommenter.com/matthew/24.htm>> August 31, 2012.

The Preterist view should not be easily discounted as they make several sound arguments. However, just as Antiochus IV Epiphanes failed to entirely fulfill Old Testament prophecy, the first Jewish Revolt failed to entirely fulfill New Testament prophecy. Rather, both serve as a model, an example, a type of the events at the end of this age.

These passages serve a dual role.<sup>111</sup> First, a portion forewarned those living during Christ's earthly ministry of the end of the Mosaic Age and the scattering of the people of Israel – fulfilled with the Roman siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of the second Temple, the Roman conquest at Masada, the suppression of the Bar Kochba's revolt in 135 AD, and the subsequent scattering of the Jews among the various nations. Second, these passages provide a glimpse into the tribulation that will occur during the transition from the Church Age into the Millennial Age. The first century Roman suppression serves as a biblical type – it provides a glimpse into the types of things that will occur.

Can an omnipotent, omniscience God who created the universe write a passage that has application across generations? Yes, of course He can. We need not deny the plain meaning to understand that it has multiple applications.<sup>112</sup> We need not resort to an allegorical interpretation to apply this passage to the terminal generation – the last generation before Christ's return.

Clearly, futurists have difficulty dealing with the phrase "this generation" and have developed a number of theories defining its "true" meaning:

- ✓ The generation of Jews alive at the time the Olivet Discourse was delivered.
- ✓ The generation of new believers that begins to spring up after the rapture.
- ✓ The generation alive at the time the great tribulation begins.
- ✓ The generation alive at the time national Israel is reestablished (1948).
- ✓ The generation alive at the time Israel retakes the Holy City, Jerusalem (1967).
- ✓ The race of ethnic Israelites – Israel will not be terminated until all these things occur.
- ✓ The Church which was born during Christ's ministry and baptized at Pentecost – the Church will not be terminated until all these things occur.

The sheer diversity indicates that many scholars resort to speculation rather than sound interpretation techniques. The root of the problem, I believe, rests with the unclear antecedent of the possessive pronoun "this." Which generation shall not pass away?

In grammar, we can determine an unclear pronoun's antecedent by referring back to the previous noun. In this case, that the previous noun is the pronoun "you":

**Matthew 24:32-33:** Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, **you** know that summer is near. Even so, when **you** see all these things, **you** know that it is near, right at the door. (NIV) [*Emphasis added.*]

Since the Olivet Discourse was given by Jesus to His disciples, we naturally assume that the "you" refers to the disciples, and, thus, "this generation" would refer to the disciples' generation. However, this sentence contains a prerequisite – "when you see all these things." Did the disciple's generation see all the things listed within the discourse?

<sup>111</sup> See *Topic Analysis: Dual Purpose Literary Devices*

<sup>112</sup> See "Study Framework: Three Dimensional Prophecies" section of this study for a detailed discussion on how some prophecies have short-term and long term applications.

The Apostle John died around 99 AD living some 94 years; however, John did not live to see “all of these things,” even if we assume a Preterism view:

1. **JOHN DID NOT LIVE TO SEE ISRAEL LOSE ITS NATIONAL IDENTITY OR THE FINAL DIASPORA:**

**Luke 21:23-24:** And woe to those with child, and to those giving suck, in those days; for there shall be great distress on the land, and wrath on this people; and they shall fall by the mouth of the sword, and shall be led captive to all the nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by nations, till the times of nations be fulfilled. (YLT)

Preterism asserts that this and the abomination that causes desolation were fulfilled in 70 AD when the armies of Titus conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple.<sup>113</sup> However, national Israel was not “shattered” nor were the Jews “led captive to all nations” until after the Bar Kokhba revolt in c. 135 AD:

*Jewish Encyclopedia, 1906:* According to Dio Cassius, 580,000 Jews fell in battle, not including those who succumbed to hunger and pestilence. It must have been regarded as an evil omen by the Jews that the pillar of Solomon in Jerusalem fell of itself. Indeed, the end of the Jewish nation had come... Many were sold into slavery; and for this purpose a market was held under the terebinth, which tradition identified with Abraham's Oak, where Jews were sold for the price of a horse. Others were sold at the market at Gaza, and the remainder were transported to Egypt... Some were fortunate enough to be able to flee either to Asia Minor, or even to Armenia.<sup>114</sup>

Some may assert that the destruction of the Temple ended God’s spiritual dealing with Israel; however, that claim is probably a distortion. According to Jewish literature, God had already stopped dealing with Israel:

*Yoma 39b, Babylonian Talmud:* Our Rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot [‘For the Lord’] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the westernmost light shine; and the doors of the Hekal would open by themselves.<sup>115</sup>

2. **TITUS, A ROMAN GENERAL, DID NOT COMMIT THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION:**

Antiochus IV Epiphanes established the precedence (type) for the “abomination of desolation” by setting up a statue of Zeus and declaring himself to be god in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC. While Roman legions destroyed the temple in 70 AD and Hadrian erected a temple to Jupiter over the site some sixty-five years later, there are historical records indicating that an idol or statue of Caesar was placed within the temple. It is unlikely that the 70 AD event fulfilled the “abomination of desolation” portion of the prophecy (Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14).

<sup>113</sup> “The Abomination of Desolation,” SOVEREIGN GRACE PRETERISM, February 11, 2011. <<http://preterism.ning.com/profiles/blogs/the-abomination-of-desolation>> August 31, 2012.

<sup>114</sup> “BAR KOKBA AND BAR KOKBA WAR,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906. <<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2471-bar-kokba-and-bar-kokba-war>> August 31, 2012.

<sup>115</sup> Quoted from Yoma 39b, *Babylonian Talmud*, Soncino Press Edition in B.R. Burton, “The Secret of the Scarlet Thread,” *MessianicArt.com*, 2004.

<<http://messianicart.com/chazak/anti/scarletthread.htm>> August 31, 2012.

### 3. THE GOSPEL HAD NOT YET BEEN PREACHED TO THE ENTIRE WORLD:

Some scholars assert that Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome were the center of the world; therefore, the Christians in those cities there essentially preached the Gospel to the entire world. However, the use of the double emphatic “whole world” and “all nations” seems to indicate that that the literal “whole world” and “all nations” were intended. Literally, the Gospel had not been preached throughout the world through all nations, neither literally or allegorically. Even if we ignore “uncivilized” people, major empires existed outside of the influence of Rome, e.g. the Parthian Empire, the Chinese Hun Dynasty, and the Moche civilization in South America. This claim seems to violate the basic “spirit” of the prophecy – every nation should have an opportunity to hear the Word... the “end” will not come until all peoples have had an opportunity to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Other scholars cite New Testament passages asserting that the gospel had been preached to the entire world, specifically Romans 10:18 and Colossians 1:23.<sup>116</sup> Romans 10:18 is not exclusively referring to the whole world but rather quotes from Psalms 19:4 and addresses the rejection of the Gospel by the Israelites. Colossians 1:23, again, is not specifically referring to the whole world and all nations but rather the universality of Christ within creation. Neither, within textual context, supports the idea that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the **whole world** as a testimony **to all nations**, and then the end will come.”

### 4. THE DISTRESS SURROUNDING THE FIRST JEWISH REVOLT WAS NOT THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME:

Although Josephus claimed that some 1 million Jews were killed in the revolt, that number doesn't approach the some 6 million Jews killed during the Holocaust of World War II. It is unlikely that Matthew 24:21 is a hyperbole considering the comparison of numbers: 1million during the 1<sup>st</sup> Jewish Revolt, 6 million during the Holocaust, and some 1.74 billion during the breaking of the first four seals in Revelation 6. The numbers are simply too real to consider the verse an “extreme exaggeration.” It is unlikely that the 70 AD event fulfilled the worse tribulation that will ever be (Matthew 24:21, Mark 13:18).

### 5. JESUS DID NOT RETURN IN THE SKY DURING THE 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY:

Some Preterist allude to accounts written by Josephus, Tacitus, Eusebius, and Yosippon to indicate that the sign of Christ and the angelic activity in the sky were present during Jewish Revolt.<sup>117</sup> While the Jewish nation certainly mourned at the loss of Jerusalem and their Temple, it seems unlikely that all nations saw his sign in the sky and mourned at his appearing (Matthew 24:30, Luke 21:26).

Other scholars assert that the sign in the sky (Matthew 24:30) is the destruction of the Temple validating Christ's earthly claim that He was to become the temple. Others assert that Christ's coming in a cloud (Luke 21:27) is symbolic of Christ's sitting at the right hand of God's throne. Although these claims may be supported by complex arguments, they are allegorical and should be rejected is a more literal explanation is present.

Do we have a model of how Jesus Christ will return on a cloud? Yes, we certainly do:

<sup>116</sup> “Preterist Questions and Answers,” International Preterist Association, 2012. <<http://www.preterist.org/preteristQA.asp>> September 13, 2012.

<sup>117</sup> “Preterist Questions and Answers,” International Preterist Association, 2012. <<http://www.preterist.org/preteristQA.asp>> September 13, 2012.

**Acts 1:9-11:** After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” (NIV)

Did Jesus return to earth in this manner during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century? No, there is no historical or biblical evidence that He did.

#### 6. THE ELECT WERE NOT GATHERED BY CHRIST’S ANGELS:

Were the saints gathered from the four winds during the First Jewish Revolt? No, the saints, both Jewish and Christians, were scattered to the four winds – to gather, *episunagó*, means to collect, to assemble.<sup>118</sup> While many Christians gathered together in Jerusalem during the early days, Jewish persecution scattered them (Acts 8:1-2). The siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD resulted in either the death, enslavement, or scattering of many of the Jews. There are no indications that the saints were gathered either literally or allegorically.

Grammatically, “**this generation**” is defined in the previous sentence as **those individuals who will see “all these signs.”** While we initially assume that these are Christ’s disciples, they are disqualified because their generation did not “see all these signs” – they did not meet the prerequisites. Therefore, we should conclude that the “you” and the “this generation” refers to the terminal generation – those who will see all of the signs fulfilled.

Writers are generally discouraged from using the second person “you” within writing because it makes the reader the direct target of the writing – the writer is pointing their finger at the reader in an accusatory manner. In this instance, the use of second person is appropriate because it transcends generations making the text directly applicable to the present day reader – to you!

We should examine the 1<sup>st</sup> Century’s hypocrisy, wickedness, disbelief, and disobedience along with the resulting tribulation and destruction. These, I believe, provide a model of the terminal generation, the events, and the distress except the terminal days will be exponentially worse. We should not, however, confuse prototypes with the real people and events... that confuses the issues and distorts the portrait of God’s overall plan.

## DAYS AND SEASONS

God has an eternal plan, and that eternal plan has a timetable attached. All of creation groans under the burden of mankind’s wickedness; all of creation strains against its bondage eagerly awaiting redemption... like a race horse impatiently awaiting the start but held back by the gate:

**Romans 8:19-21:** The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. (NIV)

<sup>118</sup> *episunagó*, 1996, Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/1996.htm>> August 31, 2012.

In like manner, redeemed Christians eagerly await the Lord's return so we may join our imperishable bodies and reside always with our Lord:

**Philippians 3:20:** But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (NIV)

However, the Lord's timetable advances according to His own purpose, not ours and not creations. While the redemption lingers, prophetic events will not unfold until appointed time:

**Habakkuk 2:2-3:** Then the Lord replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay." (NIV)

**Why the seemingly delay?** Apparently, the Lord has predestined<sup>119</sup> a specific number of individuals to accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah, their Lord, and the Son of God. When this number has been redeemed, then the full number from the nations (gentiles) will have been achieved:

**Romans 11:25:** I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles [nations] has come in. (NIV)

Alternatively, the Lord is patiently waiting for the full harvest of souls... When all souls who will accept Jesus Christ as their Savior have done so, then the harvest time will arrive and earth reaped:

**2 Peter 3:9:** The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (NIV)

**James 5:7:** Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. (NIV)

**When will the appointed time arrive?** According to the Lord's own words, the apostles were not destined to know the time or seasons of the Christ's return:

**Acts 1:7:** He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority." (NIV)

Thus, New Testament scripture contains **no hints** as to the year the Great Tribulation will begin. Does the Old Testament contain hints? Some scholars assert that it does...

**Hosea 6:1-2:** "Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. (NIV)

<sup>119</sup> For additional information on Predestination and Free Will see the "Kingdom of God: SIDE BAR: FREE WILL VS. PREDESTINATION" section of this study. Also refer to Ephesians 1:5, Romans 8:30, Romans 8:29, and Ephesians 1:11.

If we assume that a day equals a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8) and God turned His back on the Jews (Hosea 5:14-15) after they rejected Jesus as the Messiah in 33 AD, then God will revive the Jews after two days (Hosea 6:2) or **2033 AD** (2 days = 2,000 years), and Jesus Christ will sit on David's throne in the Millennial Kingdom in **2037 AD** (1 generation or 70 years after the recapture of Jerusalem in 1967)... 1335 days after the Antichrist stops the daily sacrifices and offerings. **NOTICE: This calculation is sarcastic mocking complex formulas of biblical dates and numbers to calculate Christ's Second Return.** The Bible does **NOT** provide sufficient information to calculate the date.

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## **SIDEBAR: TIME OF THE GENTILES**

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Many biblical scholars assert that the "Time of the Gentiles" began in 586 BC with the conquest of Judah by the Babylonians and the destruction of the first Temple. Some scholars assert that this period ended seventy years later in c. 516 BC with building of the second Temple. Others claim that the Time of Gentiles has been continuous since 586 BC as the Jews have never been fully independent from foreign dominance. Both positions have merit; the first reflects a spiritual captivity and the second reflects a political captivity.

The New Testament, however, projects a new, distinct Time of the Gentiles with Luke 24 prophesying a second Diaspora... a scattering of Jews among the nations a second time:

**Luke 21:24:** They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (NIV)

This second scattering occurred after the rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah in 33 AD, the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD, and the expulsion from Jerusalem in 135 AD following the second Jewish revolt. During this time, Israel has had no national or political identity and no communication with God through a temple. According to the Apostle Paul, God placed the Jews into a partial trance until the end of the current age:

**Romans 11:11:** God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day. (NIV)

**Romans 11:25:** I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. (NIV)

Some scholars assert that the Time of the Gentiles came to an end in 1948 when national Israel was reestablished in Palestine and Jerusalem was wrestled from the Arabs during the 1967 war. Israel, however, does not enjoy full recognition. Thirty-two members of the United Nations do not consider it a legitimate state and most nations do not recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Spiritually, Israel remains in exile until construction of the third Jewish Temple.

The Old Testament contains numerous prophecies concerning the regathering and restoration of Israel during the last days, e.g. The Valley of Dry Bones, Ezekiel 37:1-14. Some of these prophecies have application to the Church, some are unique to Israel, and some apply to both.

Interestingly, the Jews continue to eagerly await the coming of their messiah – their Moshiach. Their vision of the messiah, however, differs significantly from the Christian's view. Their Moshiach mirrors the

Christian Messiah as he will be a descendant of King David, a preeminent Biblical scholar, righteous, charismatic, and inspirational. However, he will differ in that he will be a human being, not a deity.<sup>120</sup> The Moshiach is expected to rebuild the Jewish Temple, secure national Israel, and usher in a era of world peace.

According to the Daniel, the Antichrist will break the covenant with many in the middle of the week (after three and one-half years) by putting a stop to the daily sacrifices and offerings. Jesus, within the Olivet Discourse, prophesized that the Antichrist setup an “abomination that causes desolation” in the holy place. These prophecies indicate that Israel will build a new Temple – or at minimum a new Tabernacle – prior to the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

## THE RESTRAINER

The Apostle Paul, in 2 Thessalonians, outlines two events that must occur prior the Lord’s return for His church: (a) the great apostasy and (b) the Antichrist’s revealing. That revealing will not occur until the “he who now restrains” is taken out of the way:

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-7:** Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him... Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed... And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only **he** who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. (NASB) [*Emphasis added*]

**Who is the he who now restrains?** Scholars advocate a variety of theories as to the restrainer’s identity: the Church, the Holy Spirit, both the Holy Spirit and the Church, Christian prayer, civil governments, or Michael the Archangel. Some argue that it is not the man of lawlessness that is being held back, but rather Christ’s coming. While interesting, these distract from the purity of Paul’s message:

*You do not need to worry that you have been left behind because the Rapture will not occur until after the great apostasy and the identity of the Antichrist is revealed. Also remember that the Antichrist is bad, bad, bad...*

Certainly, there is a restraining force that prevents the Antichrist’s rise to authority until God’s appointed time. Only God the Father knows the day and hour of Christ’s return... Satan does not know... not even Jesus Christ knows... Satan must always have an agent prepared to assume the role of the Antichrist; there is no telling how many potential Antichrists have been primed throughout the past two millennia – one must be ready to go on a moment’s notice...

I suppose that each theory supports a particular end time perspective. For example, some proponents of a pretribulation Rapture claim that the “he who now restrains” is the Church and the “taken out of the way” is the Rapture. The Church, they claim, must be removed before the Antichrist will have free reign. Of course, this theory denies the primary purpose of the passage: The Thessalonians need not be concerned that Christ has already gathered His saints because that event will only occur AFTER the apostasy and AFTER the revealing of the Antichrist.

<sup>120</sup> “What does Moshiach mean? Is it a concept or a person?” Moshiach.com. ND. <[http://www.moshiach.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=99&Itemid=37](http://www.moshiach.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=99&Itemid=37)> August 14, 2012.

I prefer a much simpler explanation. First, the failure to clearly identify the restrainer indicates (a) the identity is unimportant or (b) God has no desire for us to know the identity. Second, as in all cases, nothing happens unless God permits it to happen; thus, the “he who now restrains” is, in its simplest form, the Hand of God. When God decides to remove his Hand, the events and characters of the tribulation will be released.

## THE SEALS ? THE DAY OF THE LORD

Some scholars assert that by breaking the first four seals, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, sends forth the four horsemen to wreak their havoc upon the earth; it is, they conclude, judgment (wrath) upon mankind for his wickedness. They claim that the seals are a part of “The Day of the Lord” (The Wrath of God). This representation, however, is misleading.

Certainly, all events within the Great Tribulation are contained in God’s eternal plan and nothing occurs without God’s expressed permission. The four horsemen of the apocalypse are “given” a crown, “given” the power to take peace, and “given” the authority to kill one-fourth of the earth’s population. The four horsemen of the apocalypse are called into action by a voice of “thunder” – the voice of divine authority spoken thru the four living creatures. But, unlike the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of wrath, the tribulation during the first four seals is initiated by riders – human agents. It is man’s wickedness that causes the tribulation, not the wrath of God... God permits it, but God does not throw the lightning bolts.

- **WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?**

Why is it important to understand the nature of the tribulation? For the same reason we study all scripture – because the Word of God is spiritual nourishment for our souls just as food is nourishment for our bodies:

**2 Timothy 2:15:** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (NIV)

**Matthew 4:4:** Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (NIV)

**Revelation 1:3:** Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (NIV)

Additionally, I am concerned for those dear Christian who believe that they will be removed from this world prior to these difficult days...

**1 Thessalonians 5:4:** But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. (NIV)

While it is difficult, if not impossible, for many Christians to envision the Antichrist successfully overcome the saints of God, the scripture clearly indicates that the Antichrist will be empowered to persecute, lead astray, prevail, conquer, and subdue the elect:

**Matthew 24:24:** For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. (NASB)

**Matthew 24:10:** At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. (NASB)

**Revelation 13:7:** It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them... (NASB)

**Daniel 7:21:** I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them. (NASB)

Many proponents of a pretribulation Rapture insist that the “elect” during this period are either Christians who have missed the Rapture or orthodox Jews; however, this, I believe, is an error. It is imperative that we put on the full armor of God so that when tribulation comes in any form we can stand firm against the wiles of the devil, his dominions, and his schemes:

**Ephesians 6:11-13:** Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (NIV)

- **HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THIS TRIBULATION IS NOT THE WRATH OF GOD?**

First, and perhaps most importantly, the martyred saints under God’s alter in heaven ask how long it will be before He **judges** and **avenges** (wrath) the inhabitants of the earth. This occurs after the breaking of the fifth seal... it occurs after the four horsemen have been released:

**Revelation 6:10:** They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (NIV)

Second, and perhaps just as important, the scriptures are clear that the Day of the Lord – the pouring out of God’s wrath upon the earth – follows the “distress of those days,” the gathering of Christ’s elect, and the breaking of the sixth seal:

**Joel 2:30-31:** I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood **BEFORE** the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

**Matthew 24:29:** Immediately **after the distress** of those days 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' (NIV)

**Revelation 6:12, 16-17:** I watched as he **opened the sixth seal**...They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! **For the great day of their wrath has come**, and who can stand?” (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

Third, if we examine the individual events of the tribulation, we should notice that they do not consist of fire being sent from heaven but rather turmoil of a human nature:

**Matthew 24:4-12:** ...For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars... Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes' in various places... Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. (NIV)

\*Yes, I realize that mankind cannot generate earthquakes; earthquakes originate from forces within the earth and by the Hand of God. However, we also know that all of creation, including the physical earth, groans under the stress of human wickedness. No doubt that the earth will quake under the increased wickedness of man just as labor contractions increase in frequency and strength as the delivery grows near:

**Romans 8:22:** We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (NIV)

**Matthew 24:7-8:** ...There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. (NIV)

Fourth, of the two prerequisites of the Lord's coming for the Rapture, one is the apostasy – defection, revolt, rebellion, departure, falling away – a seemingly human affair with horrible results:

**Matthew 24:10-12:** At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. (NASB)

**2 Timothy 3:1-5:** But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power... (NASB)

**2 Thessalonians 2:1, 3:** Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him... Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction. (NASB)

Fifth, rather than falling directly from heaven, the tribulation is attributed to four riders on horseback. Horses, within scripture, are often viewed as accessories to human rebellion:

Horses are used in the main to represent a carnal strength, a trusting in flesh; relied on by the enemies of God to their peril.<sup>121</sup>

In Israel, the horse became symbolic of God's people turning away from Him, assuming pagan customs, and placing their hope in their own strength or that of their allies.<sup>122</sup>

Finally, the contents of the scroll cannot be revealed until all seven seals are broken. The breaking of the seals serves as a countdown for God's wayward children providing last opportunity to repent...

<sup>121</sup> "Horses in Scripture," Acts 17:11 Bible Studies, ND. <[http://www.acts17-11.com/dialogs\\_horses.html](http://www.acts17-11.com/dialogs_horses.html)> August 12, 2012.

<sup>122</sup> Suzetta Tucker, "ChristStory Horse Page," ChristStory: Christian Bestiary. 1997. <<http://ww2.netnitco.net/users/legend01/horse.htm>> August 12, 2012.

similar to a parent counts down until they release their wrath on a wayward child. When the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal is broken, then God's wrath will fall upon those that remain.

See also "The Four Sore Judgments" within this section.

- **AREN'T THE EVENTS IN MATTHEW 24 JUST PRELUDES TO THE TRIBULATION?**

Many commentators on end day prophecy discuss current world events in order to convince their audience, "We are in the end times!" Yet, the content of these sermons are unreliable; such sermons have been delivered from the pulpit for over one-hundred years. For an interesting read, read the 34<sup>th</sup> chapter of Clarence Larkin's Book, *Dispensational Truth*, published in 1918.<sup>123</sup> Certainly, a Christian can't help but see the deteriorating conditions of our world and wonder, "How much longer can this go on?" But today's conditions pale in comparison to those of the first four seals when one-fourth of the global population dies from war, famine, plague, and wild beasts. The breaking of the first four seals will be remarkable... Christians, who have studied their scripture, will not need a preacher to proclaim the time has come... they will know.

Like the first labor contractions, the initial signs of the Olivet Discourse may be slight and infrequently... they may be barely noticeable. However, just like childbirth, they will increase in uniform frequency and intensity. A new mother may question the first contractions; however, the labor is unmistakable before long. When the tribulation begins, a true Christian may question the first signs; but before long, there will be no doubt that it has begun:

**Matthew 24:8:** All these are the beginning of birth pains. (NIV)

**Matthew 24:25:** See, I have told you ahead of time. (NIV)

**Revelation 6:12,15-16:** I watched as he opened the sixth seal...Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!

- **HOW LONG WILL THIS PERIOD OF TRIBULATION LAST?**

Some scholars limit Revelation's seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls of wrath to seven years based on Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week or seven years; however, the first four seals do not necessarily fall within that Daniel's timeframe.

The beginning of Daniel's week begins with the signing of a covenant between the Antichrist and "the many" including Israel (Daniel 9:27). The Antichrist will require time to gain in stature, power, and authority... sufficient prominence as to assume the global spotlight. He cannot acquire such prominence until the restrainer is removed:

**2 Thessalonians 2:7:** For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. (NIV)

<sup>123</sup> Clarence Larkin, "Chapter 34 - The Signs of the Times," *Dispensational Truth*, 1918, quoted in *Rapture Forums*, ND. <<http://www.raptureforums.com/ClarenceLarkin/chap34.cfm>> August 16, 2012.

The breaking of the 1st Seal and the removal of the restraining force, I believe, occur at the same time. Therefore, the earth will begin feeling the effects of the first four seals prior to Antichrist's rise to power and the signing of the covenant. There is no identifiable timeline for this period – we will know that the tribulation has begun but we will not know when the covenant will be signed.

**Will the redeemed Christian be capable of calculating the day and hour?** No, not likely. The signing of the Antichrist's covenant marks the beginning of Daniel's week, and Daniel 9:27 indicates that in the middle of that week (~3 ½ years) he will end Jewish sacrifices and setup the abomination of desolation. Matthew 24:15 indicates that this act demonstrates the time is near, right at the door. However, we do not know how long after these acts that the Rapture will occur – even then we will not know the day or hour:

**Matthew 24:29:** Immediately after the distress of those days... (NIV)

**2 Thessalonians 2:3:** Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for [that day will not come] until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. (NIV)

**Matthew 24:33:** Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. (NIV)

## THE FOUR SORE JUDGMENTS

In the previous section, I asserted that the tribulation was rooted in the wickedness of mankind, not the wrath of God, and that the first four seals are not components of "The Day of the Lord" or "The Wrath of God." The first four seals do, however, involve judgment and punishment of the wicked. Proponents of a pretribulation rapture might assert that I am "splitting hairs." They may be correct, but I don't think so...

**Wrath:** Greek: *orgé:* anger, wrath, passion; punishment, vengeance.<sup>124</sup>

Hebrew: *chemah:* heat, rage<sup>125</sup>

**Judgment:** Greek: *krisis:* judging, judgment, decision, sentence; generally: divine judgment; accusation.<sup>126</sup>

Hebrew: *din:* judgment, cause<sup>127</sup>

This difference is illustrated in the breaking of the sixth seal:

**Revelation 6:10:** They cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from **judging** and **avenging** our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (NASB) [Emphasis added]

**Revelation 6:10:** They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you **judge** the inhabitants of the earth and **avenge** our blood?" (NIV) [Emphasis added]

The wrath of God following the breaking of the 7th Seal involves both verdict and vengeance... The first four seals, however, reflect a verdict and punishment of the wicked, **not of the saints**.

<sup>124</sup> "orgé," 3709. Strong's Concordance: Bible Study Tools, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/3709.htm>> August 16, 2012.

<sup>125</sup> "chemah," 2534. Strong's Concordance: Bible Study Tools, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/2534.htm>> August 16, 2012.

<sup>126</sup> "krisis," 2920. Strong's Concordance: Bible Study Tools, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/2920.htm>> August 16, 2012.

<sup>127</sup> "din," 1799. Strong's Concordance: Bible Study Tools, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/1799.htm>> August 16, 2012.

**Why is this difference important?** Proponents of a pretribulation rapture assert that Christians will not suffer the wrath of God, which is true. They claim that the first four seals are judgment seals and, therefore, components of God's wrath, which is not true. They then use this claim in partial support of a pretribulation rapture, which is also not true. This theory, I believe, is an error and misleads believers into thinking that they will escape the tribulation – a potentially serious error.

**Will there be judgment upon the inhabitants of the earth during the first four seals?** Yes, absolutely, beyond any shadow of a doubt. Revelation 6:8 clearly states, "They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth" (NIV). If God gives an entity (Death and Hades) power to kill one-fourth of the earth's inhabitants, then certainly God is passing judgment – this fact is irrefutable. This type of judgment is illustrated in the Four Sore Judgments within Ezekiel:

**Ezekiel 14:13-22:** "Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send **famine** upon it and kill its men and their animals, even if these three men—Noah, Daniel and Job—were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign Lord.

"Or if I send wild **beasts** through that country and they leave it childless and it becomes desolate so that no one can pass through it because of the **beasts**, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate.

"Or if I bring a **sword** against that country and say, 'Let the **sword** pass throughout the land,' and I kill its men and their animals, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved.

"Or if I send a **plague** into that land and pour out my wrath upon it through bloodshed, killing its men and their animals, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor daughter. They would save only themselves by their righteousness. (NIV) [Emphasis added]

Ah, verse 19 specifically uses the word "wrath" and we must, therefore, conclude that these judgments are also representative of God's wrath, correct? Yes, perhaps, but **TAKE SPECIAL NOTE THAT IF NOAH, DANIEL AND JOB WERE IN THESE COUNTRIES, THEY WOULD BE SAVED BY THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS.** In the case of a redeemed believer, it would be Jesus Christ's righteousness.

**What about collateral damage?** Many proponents of a pretribulation rapture assert that Christian believers would be caught in the cross-fire... the natural result of extensive modern warfare includes civilian casualties, economic distress, famine, etc. Therefore, they claim, believing Christians would suffer God's judgment something, they assert, that clearly violates 1 Thessalonians 5:9. While a logical argument, Ezekiel 14:13-22 contradicts that claim. Ezekiel 14:16 declares, the righteous "would be saved, but the land would be desolate." Sometimes true Christians forget that God is not forced to adhere to the laws of the natural world; He can place a protective shield around His children if He so chooses.

**Do not damage the oil and the wine!** It is my firm belief that the time of the first four seals will be perilous times for the mankind, especially the believer. While true Christians are guaranteed in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 that they will not suffer God's wrath, they will suffer the tribulation of their fellow

humans. I envision a time very much like what the Jews experienced in Europe during World War II only with exponentially greater distress:

**Matthew 24:9:** Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. (NIV)

Proponents of a pretribulation rapture assert that persecution of the Church is redundant – persecution supposedly tests, strengthens, and purifies. That was accomplished, they claim, on the cross by Jesus Christ. In a manner, they are correct. But I never understood how someone could claim that Christians will never face persecution despite the fact that scripture teaches otherwise, countless early Christians were martyred, and numerous Christians in non-Christian countries suffer persecution today. Why should we expect a different fate?

**Romans 8:35-37:** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (NIV)

I often wonder how many "true" Christians exist. Certainly, there are millions if not billions of self-professed Christians; but of these, how many would willingly give their life in the name of Jesus? Perhaps, the Church does need to be purified? Perhaps, the Church has become too lukewarm?

Within the first four seals, the Lord does verify that He will protect those who stand in His name:

**Revelation 6:5:** ...do not damage the oil and the wine! (NIV)

The four horsemen of the apocalypse are given authority: given a crown, given power to take peace, given power to kill. But that authority was limited: do not damage the oil and the wine! Do not damage the oil – the oil from the olive tree, the symbol of Israel. Do not damage the wine – the wine from the communion cup, the symbol of the Church.

God will not pour out His wrath upon the true believer. In times of distress, God will give us the words to speak... we will be hated but not a hair on our head will perish (Luke 21:17-18).

**Luke 9:24:** For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. (NIV)

**Make No Mistake:** The elect, the true believer, those who confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Messiah, and their Lord will be present on this earth during the breaking of the first four seals of Revelation 6. The times will be perilous, but greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world:

**Matthew 24:21-22:** For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. (NIV)

# THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

A predominate view among premillennialists is that the horseman released by the 1st Seal represents the Antichrist. Other scholars argue, because of the white horse and crown, that the rider is actually Jesus Christ. Others have argued that the rider represents the gospel of Christ, humanity in its perfection, the blasphemous philosophies of the last days, the personification of the Lord's judgment, the king of France, Enoch, zodiac speculations, Parthians, and military conquest.<sup>128</sup> In Zechariah 1:8-17 and Zechariah 6:1-7, we see four horsemen and chariots representing angels – spirits or winds – that go out to the four corners of the earth. Is there a relationship?

It may be impossible to determine the exact representation of the four horsemen; but then again, it is not necessary that we do so. The Olivet Discourse provides an outline as to the nature of each horsemen, and other prophetic visions help us to fill in the details. The breaking of the seal and the consequent command of "Come!" is sufficient to release the "essence" of the event.

## SEAL 1: THE FIRST RIDER

- **WHITE HORSE:** (Conquest) Crown and Bow: Political discord, revolution, and conquest.

I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

- **SYMBOLS:**

- ✓ **White:** Purity, righteousness, refinement, heavenly victory
- ✓ **Crown:** (stephanos) honor, glory, victory, authority
- ✓ **Bow:** battle, judgment executed (no arrows mentioned)

- **RELATED SCRIPTURE:**

**Matthew 24:4-5, 24:** Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many... For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. (NIV)

**Mark 21:8:** ...For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. (NIV)

**Mark 13:6:** Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. (NIV)

- **COMMENTARY:**

False messiahs and prophets are often relegated to a very minor role within apocalyptic literature – they simply will increase in number towards the end of days. This, I believe, could be a serious error. While the Antichrist will certainly play the central role during the last days, we should not overlook the contributions of others under Satan and demonic influence. Certainly, there will be many who will assume a "religious" form using a wide array of economic, political, scientific, social, or spiritual approaches. Each performing signs and wonders (Matthew 24:24) possibly offering the cure for the

<sup>128</sup> Daniel K. K. Wong, "The First Horseman of Revelation 6," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April 1996. <<http://www.galaxie.com/article/5531>> August 13, 2012.

ills of mankind (white), each competing for a position of primacy (bow), and each collecting a multitude of followers (crown). It might not be wise to look for just one, mighty Antichrist; perhaps there will be multiple factions vying for allegiance and leading many astray:

**1 Timothy 4:1:** But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. (NASB)

**2 Thessalonians 2:3:** Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first... (NASB)

**2 Peter 3:3:** Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts. (NASB)

Certainly, one false messiah (white) will obtain supremacy among all the false messiahs (bow), be empowered by Satan, and exercise his authority (crown) over every tribe, people, language and nation for three and one-half years; this man we call the Antichrist. By his side will be a false prophet capable of performing all signs and wonders even bringing fire down from heaven. (Revelation 13) Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet comprise the dark trinity who will attempt to wrestle the earth from Christ's redemption during the latter days.

Some scholars assert that only seven years will transpire from the breaking of the 1st Seal until the pouring out of the final bowl of wrath. They derive this number from the seven year covenant (alliance) the Antichrist makes with the many, Israel (Daniel 9:27). This claim, I believe, is an error. Certainly, the Time of Jacob's Trouble will span seven years from the signing of the treaty where Israel is a party to Christ's return as a conquering King. However, the Antichrist must rise in prominence, consolidate power, and assume a leadership position before he signs the seven year covenant.

During this indeterminate time period, the other three seals will be broken and have their effect upon the world.

## SEAL 2: THE SECOND RIDER

- **RED HORSE:** (War) Large Sword: war and unrest

Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.

- **SYMBOLS:**

- ✓ **Fire:** cleansing, purging, testing
- ✓ **Red:** war, vengeance, temptation of sin, carnage of war
- ✓ **Sword:** war, legal authority, judgment executed

- **RELATED SCRIPTURE:**

**Matthew 24:6-7:** You will hear of wars and rumors of wars... Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. (NIV)

**Mark 21:9-10:** When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened... Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. (NIV)

**Mark 13:7-8:** When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed...Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. (NIV)

**Ezekiel 14:17-18:** Or if I bring a sword against that country and say, 'Let the sword pass throughout the land,' and I kill its men and their animals, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved. (NIV)

- **COMMENTARY:**

The Old Testament describes numerous wars and conflicts that may and may not have direct relevance to this time period. Sorting those descriptions and placing them in their proper period and context is a difficult task and, historically, has led to great speculation... something we should avoid if possible.

The second seal's description provides two details of note: (a) peace will be removed and (b) men will kill each other. The Olivet Discourse seemingly asserts that this conflict will be between nations bent on dominance – *egeiró*: to waken, to raise up.<sup>129</sup> Although Israel may be among the involved nations, there is no evidence that the rider of the red horse specifically targets Israel. While there will be a concerted attack against Israel and Jerusalem during this period (Luke 21:20), the 2nd Seal tends to describe a global, rather than regional, struggle.

Perhaps World War II foreshadowed this conflict, however, the intensity of this conflict will be exponentially greater (Matthew 24:21). Some 63 million people (6 million Jews) were killed in WWII; some 1.74 billion will die during this conflict (Revelation 6:8). That's 27.6 times more deaths. We should expect a similar increase in suffering.

- **FUTURE WARS & BATTLES:**

There is a great deal of speculation about the involved nations, timing, relationships, and the outcomes for the numerous battles predicted in Old and New Testament prophecies. Some commentators richly describe armed conflict with modern weaponry and potentially nuclear attacks. Unfortunately, I find no such detail and only more questions:

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**WAR OF EXTERMINATION**

*War between Israel and its Arab Neighbors?*

**Psalm 83:** ...See how your enemies are astir, how your foes rear their heads. With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish. "Come," they say, "let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more." With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against you—the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites... Even Assyria has joined them to lend strength to the descendants of Lot....

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**DANIEL 11-12**

*The Antichrist battles with the kings of the North & South*

**Daniel 11:40-45:** He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall... the land of Egypt will not escape. But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels. But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many ...

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**GOG OF MAGOG**

**Ezekiel 38-39:** I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with

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<sup>129</sup> "egeiró," 1453, *Strong's Concordance: Bible Concordances*, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/1453.htm>> August 15, 2012.

*Before or middle of Jacob's Trouble or even the end of the Millennium Reign?*

your whole army—your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords... In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel...

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**JERUSALEM**

*Middle of Jacob's Trouble?*

**Luke 21:20:** When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.

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**JERUSALEM**

*Middle of Jacob's Trouble?*

**Zechariah 14:2:** I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city.

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**JERUSALEM**

*End of Time of Jacob's Trouble?*

**Zechariah 12, 14:** Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.

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**ARMAGEDDON**

*End of Time of Jacob's Trouble?*

**Revelation 16:14-16:** they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty... Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

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**GOG AND MAGOG**

*End of the Millennial Kingdom?*

**Revelation 20:7-9:** When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves.

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In Daniel 12:4, Daniel is told to “conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time.” While some scholars claim that we are currently in those end times and the book has been unsealed. I tend to disagree. I believe we will only fully understand these prophecies as they occur in real time. Then, we will recognize their meaning and importance.

**What to Expect:** It is important that we have a general understanding in order to have a proper perspective on other prophetic events. My understanding is listed below:

2. After the breaking of the first four seals, many nations will experience conflict probably centered on the Middle East. Eventually, the Antichrist will move to end this conflict by proffering a seven year armistice among the nations in conflict including Israel. (Daniel's seventieth week begins.)
3. At the mid-point of the seven year armistice, the Antichrist accumulates sufficient power to break the armistice, invade Israel, conquer Jerusalem, and desecrate the Jewish Temple/Tabernacle. The inhabitants of Judea flee to the mountains, and the Church is Raptured.
4. During the last half of Daniel's seventieth week, the Antichrist struggles to retain power in the face of multiple natural calamities (God's wrath) blaming and persecuting the Jews for these plagues. The Antichrist gathers a large army from among his allies seeking to end the plagues by either confronting God directly or eliminating the Jews who remain in hiding. The Antichrist is defeated by Christ and His heavenly host and established His Millennial Kingdom.
5. Towards the end of the Millennial Reign, Satan is released from the abyss; he deceives individuals disgruntled by Christ's rigid, theocratic rule, forms a mighty army, and again challenges Christ's rule. He is defeated.

## SEAL 3: THE THIRD RIDER

- **BLACK HORSE:** (Poverty) Pair of Scale: Economic distress, inflation, and poverty.

There before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, “A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!”

- **SYMBOLS:**

- ✓ **Black:** sin, famine, death, judgment
- ✓ **Scales:** scarcity, measure, justice, judgment against a standard

- **RELATED SCRIPTURE:**

**Matthew 24:7:** ...There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. (NIV)

**Mark 21:11:** There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. (NIV)

**Mark 13:8:** ...There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. (NIV)

**Ezekiel 14:13-14:** Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its men and their animals, even if these three men—Noah, Daniel and Job—were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign Lord. (NIV)

- **COMMENTARY:**

**Manmade Famines:** Famine would seem to be a natural result of war and conflict; however, the most devastating famines in modern history had little to do with war or conflict but rather government policy. For example, the Holodomor, the Soviet Ukraine between 1932 and 1933, resulted from exceedingly high requisition quotas and, perhaps, an attempt to eliminate Ukrainian nationalism. The death toll is estimated at between 2.4 to 7.5 million. In China, poor weather conditions compounded by forced collectivization caused some 20 to 30 million deaths. The IPPNW predicts a limited, regional nuclear war involving as few as 100 nuclear weapons would disrupt the global climate and agricultural production resulting in 1 billion deaths over a decade.<sup>130</sup>

**Globalization:** Globalization significantly impacts world food supply decreasing dependence on local production while providing low-cost foodstuffs from foreign markets. According to 2010 estimates, industrialized world food production can feed 12 billion people.<sup>131</sup> Unfortunately, globalization becomes problematic in the face of regional and global conflict:

- Middle-East conflict disrupts oil supplies and increases the transportation costs.
- Military targeting of food shipments disrupts supply lines and food supply.
- Military blockades disrupt regional supply lines and food supply.

<sup>130</sup> “Nuclear Famine: climate effects of regional nuclear war,” *International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War*, 2012. ><http://ippnw.org/nuclear-famine.html>> August 23, 2012.

<sup>131</sup> Sam Rye, “Future of Food Trends: How Technology Will Decentralize the Global Food System,” *Food+Tech Connect*, May 25, 2012.

<<http://www.foodandtechconnect.com/site/2012/05/25/future-of-food-trends-how-technology-will-decentralize-the-global-food-system/>> August 23, 2012.

- Trade sanctions prevent acquisition of food production and transportation equipment.
- Disruption in international finances hampers trade with global markets.
- Forced exportation to foreign markets decreases local supply and availability.
- Economic collapses prevents countries from purchasing food on the global market.

In brief, globalization of food supplies enables world powers to use food as a weapon:

*from "Food as a Weapon of War"<sup>132</sup>*

Providing or withholding food during times of conflict can be just as potent a weapon as the guns, bombs, and explosives of opposing armies. Control of food supplies during war is important because wars disrupt the seasonal pattern of growing crops, displace farming populations, and prevent the transport of food within the area of conflict. The economic costs of war may so impoverish citizens and local governments that they are unable to purchase or distribute needed food, even if it is available...

Food can be withheld by preventing it from being grown and harvested, by destroying it after harvest, by preventing it from being shipped to where it is needed, or by contaminating it and rendering it unfit for consumption...

In modern times, sieges have expanded and evolved into embargos of critical war materials (for example, food, medicine, oil, strategic metals, technology, etc.) by nation-states. England imposed an embargo by sea for that area of Europe occupied by Napoleon, and Germany tried to embargo food and war materials to England and Russia by the United States in the Second World War. While food is now usually not embargoed for humanitarian reasons by the major powers, economic sanctions remain an implement of international policy and genocidal starvation as accepted strategy in some regional conflicts...

**The Mark of the Beast:** At some point within the breaking of the first four seals, the Antichrist will acquire "authority over every tribe, people, language and nation" (Revelation 13:7). At that point, he will force "everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark" (Revelation 13:16-17). The exact nature of "the mark" is unknown... It could consist of an infrared barcode tattoo or a EPS microchip surgical implant both capable of being scanned at the point of purchase.

It does not necessarily need to be a "mark" in the traditional sense: *xáragma*: properly, an engraving (etching); (figuratively) **a mark providing undeniable identification**, like a symbol giving irrefutable connection between parties<sup>133</sup> [*Emphasis added*]. Thus, the mark could consist of non-invasive biological markers such as a retina or fingerprint scan capable of being scanned at the point of purchase. In such case, permitting the scan could fulfill the requirement to "receive" the mark.

Old time commentators often envisioned people lining up in long line to receive the "mark." With modern technology, receiving the "mark" need not be such a dramatic affair. Distribution could be as simple as receiving the "mark" as a replacement for your current credit or Touch'n Go card.

Use of the "mark" need not be limited to simple payment for purchases. It could also act as a rationing mechanism determining what may be purchased by whom and in what quantities. The

<sup>132</sup> "Food as a Weapon of War." *Encyclopedia of Food & Culture*. Ed. Solomon H. Katz. Vol. 1. Gale Cengage, 2003. <<http://www.enotes.com/food-weapon-war-reference/>> August 23, 2012.

<sup>133</sup> "5480 *xáragma*," HELPS Word Study: *Helps Ministries, Inc.* 1987-2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/5480.htm>> August 23, 2012.

“mark” could be deployed as a behavioral control. Supporters of the Antichrist’s regime and policies could be rewarded through the “mark” enabling them to purchase unlimited supplies or luxury items; dissidents could be punished by restricting their purchases. With advances in modern technology, the “mark” could entail numerous applications.

Naturally, for the Christian and nonconformists the “mark” becomes troublesome. Many may attempt to bypass the “mark” by growing their own or foraging for food. Unfortunately, these may not be as easy as some assume. During the Holodomor in the Ukraine, the Soviet government stipulated that all food was government property and utilized youth brigades to prevent food theft and search out illegal food stashes. Enforcement measures were effective leading to some 3 million dying from starvation within the Ukraine alone.

**Do not Damage the Oil and Wine?** Revelation 6:6 specifically states, “do not damage the oil and the wine!” While many commentators find this phrase perplexing, a simple interpretation is possible:

- **Wine:** Wine is symbolic of the New Covenant; “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). As illustrated in the Wedding at Cana, the Lord can provide an unlimited supply of wine. Within this context, the wine likely represents redeemed Christians during this period of tribulation.
- **Oil:** A special blend of myrrh, cinnamon, cane, cassia, and olive oil made a special, holy anointing oil used to sanctify the tabernacle and the first temple, its contents, and the priests (Exodus 30:22-33). In the Bible olive-oil alone is mentioned.<sup>134</sup> The olive tree is a symbol of Israel (Jeremiah 11:16). Within this context, the wine likely represents remnant Jews during this period of tribulation.

Can the Lord miraculously provide His elect with food when famine permeates the land? Absolutely, positively, no problem! God fed Israel manna from heaven throughout their forty years of sojourning in the wilderness. Jesus Christ fed 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish, and He fed 7,000 with seven loaves and a few small fish.

I am not saying that redeemed Christians will not go hungry, that they will not be tempted to take the “mark” in order to avoid starvation, or that they shouldn’t take reasonable precautions to secure a food source. However, hoarding food in preparation of coming events seems unnecessary and contrary to a faithful reliance on God. God can provide for the needs of His elect:

**Psalms 37:16-19:** Better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked; for the power of the wicked will be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. The days of the blameless are known to the Lord, and their inheritance will endure forever. In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty. (NIV)

**Proverbs 10:3:** The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry but he thwarts the craving of the wicked. (NIV)

<sup>134</sup> “OIL,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906. <<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11679-oil>> August 23, 2012.

## SEAL 4: THE FOURTH RIDER

- **PALE GREEN HORSE:** (Pestilence) Death: famine, plague, and wild beasts.

There before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

- **SYMBOLS:**

- ✓ Pale Green: sickness
- ✓ Death: Death
- ✓ Hades: Hell
- ✓ Sword: war, legal authority, judgment executed

- **RELATED SCRIPTURE:**

**Matthew 24:7:** ...There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. (NIV)

**Mark 21:11:** There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. (NIV)

**Mark 13:8:** ...There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. (NIV)

**Ezekiel 14:15-16:** Or if I send wild beasts through that country and they leave it childless and it becomes desolate so that no one can pass through it because of the beasts, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate. (NIV)

**Ezekiel 14:19-18:** Or if I send a plague into that land and pour out my wrath upon it through bloodshed, killing its men and their animals, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor daughter. They would save only themselves by their righteousness. (NIV)

- **COMMENTARY:**

The cumulative effect of the first four seals will be devastating. The current world population is slightly larger than 7 billion people; thus, if these events happened today, we could expect some 1.8 billion people to die during the first four seals (25 percent). Comparatively:

Mortality Associated with Epidemics Prior to 1500 <sup>135</sup>			
Location	Date	Disease	Death
Athens	430 BC	Smallpox	one-quarter of the Athenian army
Roman Empire	165-180 AD	Smallpox	3.5-7 million died
Egypt	165-180 AD	Smallpox	30-90 percent decline in male taxpayers
Constantinople	541-542 AD	Bubonic plague	Population reduced by 40 percent
Mediterranean Region	6 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> Century	Bubonic plague	Population reduced by 40-60 percent
Izumi Province, Japan	735-737 AD	Smallpox	44 percent of total adult population died; 24-35 percent of the total population died

<sup>135</sup> Suzanne Austin Alchon, *A Pest in the Land: New World Epidemics in a Global Perspective*, University of New Mexico Press, 2003, pg. 21.

Japan	812-814 AD	Smallpox	Almost half of the population died
Cairo	1347-1349	Black Death/bubonic plague	Between one-third and one-half of the population died
Europe	1348-1420	Black Death/bubonic plague	Total population reduced by 30-60 percent

Historically, such devastation requires a scapegoat – someone or something to blame:

*American Thinker*: Almost everyone uses scapegoats. It is in our fabric. The word "scapegoat" has come to mean a person, often innocent, who is blamed and punished for the sins, crimes, or sufferings of others, generally as a way of distracting attention from the real causes. It is a potent human disposition to blame others for our failings.

Without scapegoats to blame, we are forced to look to ourselves for our problems. Examining ourselves can be very disturbing, particularly when we either lack the resources or the willingness to tackle our afflictions. So we take the good old easy way out of the mess by shifting our focus to the outside world for targets to blame.<sup>136</sup>

When the plague struck 14<sup>th</sup> century Europe, the Jew became just such a scapegoat:

*Jewish History Sourcebook*: In 1348 there appeared in Europe a devastating plague which is reported to have killed off ultimately twenty-five million people. By the fall of that year the rumor was current that these deaths were due to an international conspiracy of Jewry to poison Christendom. It was reported that the leaders in the Jewish metropolis of Toledo had initiated the plot and that one of the chief conspirators was a Rabbi Peyret who had his headquarters in Chambéry, Savoy, whence he dispatched his poisoners to France, Switzerland, and Italy.

By authority of Amadeus VI, Count of Savoy, a number of the Jews who lived on the shores of Lake Geneva, having been arrested and put to the torture, naturally confessed anything their inquisitors suggested. These Jews, under torture, incriminated others. Records of their confessions were sent from one town to another in Switzerland and down the Rhine River into Germany, and as a result, thousands of Jews, in at least two hundred towns and hamlets, were butchered and burnt...

On Saturday - that was St. Valentine's Day-they burnt the Jews on a wooden platform in their cemetery. There were about two thousand people of them. Those who wanted to baptize themselves were spared. [Some say that about a thousand accepted baptism.] Many small children were taken out of the fire and baptized against the will of their fathers and mothers. And everything that was owed to the Jews was cancelled, and the Jews had to surrender all pledges and notes that they had taken for debts. The council, however, took the cash that the Jews possessed and divided it among the working-men proportionately. The money was indeed the thing that killed the Jews. If they had been poor and if the feudal lords had not been in debt to them, they would not have been burnt. After this wealth was divided among the artisans some gave their share to the Cathedral or to the Church on the advice of their confessors.<sup>137</sup>

Famously, the Jew became the target of Nazi anger and hatred:

<sup>136</sup> Amil Imani, "The Scapegoating of Jews," *The American Thinker*, March 28, 2010. <[http://www.americanthinker.com/printpage?url=http://www.americanthinker.com/archived-articles/./2010/03/the\\_scapegoating\\_of\\_jews.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/printpage?url=http://www.americanthinker.com/archived-articles/./2010/03/the_scapegoating_of_jews.html)> August 23, 2012.

<sup>137</sup> "Jewish History Sourcebook: The Black Death and the Jews 1348-1349 CE," Paul Halsall, Fordham University, July 1998. <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/1348-jewsblackdeath.asp>> August 23, 2012.

*Mein Kampf*: The Jewish youth lies in wait for hours on end... spying on the unsuspecting German girl he plans to seduce... He wants to contaminate her blood and remove her from the bosom of her own people. The Jew hates the white race and wants to lower its cultural level so that the Jews might dominate.

Was there any form of filth or crime... without at least one Jew involved in it. If you cut even cautiously into such a sore, you find like a maggot in a rotting body, often dazzled by the sudden light - a Jew.<sup>138</sup>

**How does this apply to the four seals?** Exactly how the Great Tribulation will unfold is impossible to accurately predict. Perhaps examining previous world conflicts can provide a glimpse; and considering that World War II was the deadliest conflict in human history, it would be a good place to start.

Economic depression, nationalism, religious extremism, bigotry, natural calamities, poverty, greed, power, and hunger for natural resources can all initiate conflict. In the modern world, aggressive states are generally kept in check by the threat of retaliation by more powerful states of a coalition of states. For the past seventy years, wars have been relatively small and regionalized probably due to the potential of nuclear involvement. This will all change when the restrainer is moved out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

If the seals were broken today, the following scenario might unfold: Israel is threatening a preemptive strike on Iranian nuclear site in order to prevent the annihilation of Israel with nuclear weapons. Such an attack would certainly provoke a reaction from Arab countries surrounding Israel, provoking a reaction from the United States, provoking a reaction from Russia, and so forth... Limited military conflict in the region could result in the closing of the Strait of Hormuz, retaliatory naval strikes, destruction of oil ports, a global oil shortage, economic collapses, an inability to buy grain, starvation, unchecked disease, civil unrest, internal power grabs, and so forth...

Basic needs go unmet, people demand, governments cannot provide, chaos ensues, extremists influence, radicals attain power, empowered radicals fail but retain authority by finding scapegoats, and Christians will be persecuted...

Why Christians and not the Jews? Israel will probably be the initial target for retaliation; however, Israel has proven resilient to invaders and is protected by God. The enemies of Israel will look for another target (a scapegoat) and find just such a target in the West (Europe, Canada, Australia, and the United States). It is Western countries that supply Israel with military armament, especially the United States, and the West is in large part Christian – 76 percent in Europe, 86 percent in the Americas, and 73 percent in Oceania.<sup>139</sup> Additionally, Western countries are wealthier and enjoy a higher standard of living than other nations. Western countries will certainly suffer severely; however, their wealth will make them more resilient and better able to weather the storm... leading to envy... leading to resentment... leading to revenge... leading to appeasement... leading to internal resentment, especially of those suffering the least – Christians. Ultimately, Christians will be targeted for persecution.

<sup>138</sup> "Jews in Nazi Germany," *History Learning Site*, 2012. <[http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Jews\\_Nazi\\_Germany.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Jews_Nazi_Germany.htm)> August 23, 2012.

<sup>139</sup> "Western Culture," *Wikipedia*, August 20, 2012. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western\\_culture#Religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_culture#Religion)> August 23, 2012.

Additionally, the Antichrist makes a covenant with many probably including Israel, and that covenant seems to permit a general peace in and around Israel for three and one-half years. It is doubtful that widespread, global persecution of Jews would occur during this period of peace.

Of course, this is just one of many possible scenarios. A decade from now tensions with Iran could ease with a shift in focus to another “rogue” nation. The spark may start outside the Middle East: a limited nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan, naval battles between China and Japan over East China Sea islands, an incursion of South Korea by the North, dispute over Ukrainian natural gas between Russia and the European Union, or conflict in Africa involving oil rich regions and involving American intervention.

**We should not forget that God offers divine protection for His elect:**

**Job 5:19-26:** From six calamities he will rescue you; in seven no harm will befall you. In famine he will ransom you from death, and in battle from the stroke of the sword. You will be protected from the lash of the tongue, and need not fear when destruction comes. You will laugh at destruction and famine, and need not fear the beasts of the earth. For you will have a covenant with the stones of the field, and the wild animals will be at peace with you. You will know that your tent is secure; you will take stock of your property and find nothing missing. You will know that your children will be many, and your descendants like the grass of the earth. You will come to the grave in full vigor, like sheaves gathered in season.

• **BIBLICAL PLAQUES:**

Egyptian	Camp Animals	Seven Seals	Seven Trumpets	Seven Bowls
Exodus 7-19	Zechariah 14	Revelation 6, 8	Revelation 8-9, 11	Revelation 15-16
Exodus from Egypt	Armageddon	Tribulation Begins	Wrathful Warnings	Wrathful Plagues
Water to blood, Frogs, Lice , Flies, Livestock disease, Incurable boils, Hail and thunder, Locusts, Darkness, First-born die	Flesh decay Eyes rot away Tongue dissolve Attack each other	Rider of Conquest Rider of War Rider of Famine Rider of Death Martyrs u/ throne Cosmic Disturbances The Seven Trumpets	Hail: 1/3 earth burnt Mountain: 1/3 sea dies Star: 1/3 fresh water dies Darkness: 1/3 light Locust from Abyss Demonic Troops: 1/3 die Seven Bowls of Wrath	Painful Boils on marked Seas to Blood: sea life dies Fresh Water to Blood Sun Scorches People Kingdom -> Darkness Euphrates dries up Battle of Armageddon

• **UNEQUALED DISTRESS:**

Some scholars assert that these wars and associated suffering MUST be considered the Wrath of God else Christ’s words within the Olivet Discourse are a lie:

**Matthew 24:21-22:** For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. (NIV)

Surely, they claim, the first four seals will not have greater misery, death, and suffering than the seven trumpets, the seven bowls of wrath, and the battle of Armageddon; therefore, the seals, trumpets, bowls, and final battle must compose a single period.

**Speculative Response:** Certainly, God’s Word is true; that fact is beyond question. At first glance, their assertion seems to be correct; however, perhaps their perspective is slightly off kilter? (1) Perhaps, the verses focus on the suffering of the audience, the elect, and not on all of mankind? (2)

Perhaps the focus is on the persecution of the elect, *thlipsis*: persecution, affliction, distress, or tribulation?<sup>140</sup> (3) Perhaps Christ is speaking only of mankind's cruelty towards mankind? (4) Perhaps Christ is using a hyperbole to emphasize the distress of those days? (5) Perhaps we underestimate the intensity the first four seals? While it is impossible to calculate the suffering, misery and death of those days, the following chart estimates the potential deaths in order to provide some perspective:

Resulting Casualties				
World Population	6,973,738,433	6.97 Billion	2011	--
1st Four Seals (25%)	1,743,434,608	1.74 Billion	Deaths	Tribulation
Raptured Christians (20%)	784,545,574	.78 Billion	Resurrection	Rapture
Wrath of God (33%)	1,480,437,498	1.48 Billion	Deaths	Wrath
Armageddon (10%)	296,532,075	.30 Billion	Deaths	Wrath
<b>Total Wrath:</b>	<b>1,776,969,573</b>	<b>1.78 Billion</b>	--	--
<i>The total number of deaths during the wrath exceeds those of the tribulation; however, the numbers are far closer than I originally anticipated.</i>				

I believe that comparing the tribulation of the first six seals with the wrath of God is like comparing apples and oranges; although they share several similarities, they are a different species – Matthew 24:21-22 does not force us to merge the tribulation and the God's wrath

## THE ANTICHRIST

### ATTRIBUTES & NOTES

The term "Antichrist" is a human label used to identify the man of sin or man of lawlessness:

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 9-10:** Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for [that day will not come] until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God... The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. (NIV)

Within apocalyptic literature, the topic of the Antichrist swirls with speculation. While interesting, we should recognize speculation as speculation permitting our view to change as "real-time" information indicates. Once again, I sincerely believe that we will not be able to fully understand or recognize specific prophetic events until they occur. Therefore, we must be aware of descriptions and traits of prophetic events in order to recognize them as they appear.

Concerning the Antichrist, Revelation 13 provides the foundation with additional detail provided in 2 Thessalonians 2; 1 John 2; 2 John 7; Revelation 11-20;



*Whore of Babylon  
(french illuminated "Book of Revelation")*

<sup>140</sup> "thlipsis," Strong's Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/2347.htm>> August 15, 2012.

and Daniel 2, 7, 8, 11. The following provides a composite attribute listing, comparisons, and scratch notations associated with the Antichrist during the latter days:

• **ATTRIBUTES OF THE ANTICHRIST**

Attributes	Reference
fatal wound to head	Revelation 13:3, 14
exalts himself above every god	Daniel 11:36, 2 Thessalonians 2:4
shows himself that he is God.	2 Thessalonians 2:4
stands up against the Jesus Christ	Daniel 8:25
deny both the Father and the Son	1 John 2:22
blasphemies against God	Revelation 13:6, Daniel 7:25, Daniel 11:36
full of blasphemous names	Revelation 17:3
changes times and laws	Daniel 7:25
powerful	Daniel 8:9, Daniel 8:24, 2 Thessalonians 2:9
does according to his will	Daniel 11:36
destroys many by peace, master of intrigue	Daniel 8:23-25
conquers countries	Daniel 11:40, Daniel 11:42
authority over nations	Revelation 13:7, Revelation 17:13
empowered by Satan	2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, Daniel 8:24; Daniel 11:39
displays miracles	2 Thessalonians 2:9, Revelation 13:12
animates idols	Revelation 13:15
overcome saints	Daniel 8:10, 24; Daniel 7:21, 25; Revelation 13:7
worshipped by nations	Revelation 13:8, John 5:43
confirms covenant with many	Daniel 9:27
takes away the daily sacrifice	Daniel 8:11, Daniel 11:31, Daniel 9:27
Commits abomination of desolation	Daniel 9:27, Daniel 11:31
invades Israel	Daniel 8:9, Daniel 11:41
sits in the temple of God	2 Thessalonians 2:4
destroyed without human agency	Daniel 8:25, 2 Thessalonians 2:8, Revelation 19:15, 20

• **THE GREAT IMITATOR**

Antichrist		Jesus Christ	
man of sin (flesh)	2 Thessalonians 2:3	Word became flesh	John 1:14
son of Satan	Revelation 13:2	Son of God	1 John 4:15
dies and resurrected	Revelation 13:3, 14	dies and resurrected	Revelation 2:8
was, is not, and shall ascend	Revelation 17:8, 11	which was, is, is to come	Revelation 4:8
makes a covenant with Israel	Daniel 9:27	makes a covenant with Israel	Hebrews 8:8
revealed in his time	2 Thessalonians 2:6	revealed in the fullness of time	Galatians 4:4
performs signs and miracles	2 Thessalonians 2:9	performed signs and miracles	Acts 2:2
granted authority 3 ½ years	Revelation 13:5	public ministry for 3 ½ years	
comes as a prince of peace	Dan. 11:21, 1 Thess. 5:3	Prince of Peace	Isaiah 9:6-7
changes times and laws	Daniel 7:25	changes times and seasons	Daniel 2:21
sits in the temple of God	2 Thessalonians 2:4	sits at the right hand of God	Mark 16:19
rides a white horse	Revelation 6:2	rides a white horse	Revelation 19:11
ten horns with ten crowns	Revelation 13:1	head with many crowns	Revelation 19:12
mouth comes blasphemies	Revelation 13:5	mouth comes sharp sword	Revelation 19:15
authority over every nation	Revelation 13:7	rule nations with iron scepter	Revelation 19:15
inhabitants will worship	Revelation 13:4, 8	every knee shall bow	Philippians. 2:10
son of the Morning Star	Isaiah 14:12	entitle the Morning Star	Revelation 22:16
followers receive mark	Revelation 13:16-17	144,000 sealed	Revelation 7:3
false prophet as witness	Revelation 13:12	Holy Spirit as witness	Acts 5:32

• **SCRIPTURAL REFERENCE COMPARISONS**

Revelation 13	Revelation 12	Hosea 13	Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 11	History
BEAST	DRAGON	TO ISRAEL	STATUE	BEASTS	KING NORTH	KINGDOMS
out of sea				out of sea		
mouth lion		approach ~lion	head - gold	lion		Babylon
feet bear		angry ~bear	chest - silver	bear		Medo-Persia
looks of leopard		lurk ~leopard	abd. - bronze	leopard		Greece
		wild animal tear	legs - iron	iron teeth		Rome
10 horns	10 horns		feet - iron & clay	10 horns		Coming Kingdom
7 heads	7 heads			uproots 3		
10 crowns	7 crowns		rock	10 kings		
dragon power			threshing floor		helped by foreign god	

• **SCRATCH NOTES ON REVELATION 13:1-10**

The following provides the scratch notes developed during the study of this section. Items reflect thoughts, potential associations, and scriptural reference. These notes serve as a loose association rather than an expression of scriptural sound fact.

1. **The Dragon:** properly "seeing one," used of mythical dragons (huge serpents) seeing their prey from far away; (figuratively) Satan (Rev 12:7,9) exercising his subtle (indirect) impact on heathen governments (powers) – i.e. accomplishing his hellish agenda from "behind the scenes."; the great dragon of chapter 12; Satan or Azazel, give the same power and authority to the ruler of this future empire as he promised Jesus Christ in the temptation described in Luke 4:5-7. Satan finally gets his wish to have someone worship him!
2. **Stood on the Shore of the Sea:** Sin, corruption; peoples, multitudes, nations and languages, Rev.17:15; represents restless masses of society, usually unruly and lawless Isaiah 57:20.
3. **A Beast Coming Out of the Sea:** properly: a wild beast, hence: any animal; met: a brute; (figuratively) a brutal ("bestial") nature. Governments, Daniel 7; from the multitudes, Rev.17:15; scarlet (blood) in color, full of blasphemous names, Rev. 17:3; from the abyss (abode of the dead), Rev. 11:7; hate the harlot and make her desolate and naked, Rev. 17:16, Rev. 17:16; fulfills the purpose of God, Rev. 17:17.
4. **He Had Ten Horns:** properly, an animal horn; (figuratively) an instrument of power; ten kings/kingdoms Daniel 7:24; scattered Israel, Zec. 1:18-21; future kings, rule with beast for an hour, intent to give power to the beast, joins in battle with Christ, Rev. 17:12-14; hate the harlot and make her desolate and naked, Rev. 17:16; fulfills the purpose of God, Rev. 17:17; ten toes made of clay and iron, Daniel 2:42.
5. **Seven Heads:** (a) the head, (b) met: a corner stone, uniting two walls; head, ruler, lord; compare to red dragon with seven heads, ten horns and seven crowns, Rev. 12:3; the harlot sits on seven mountains, seven kings – five have fallen, one is, one is yet to come for a brief time, Rev. 17:9-10; beast is the eighth and one of the seven, Rev. 17:11 .
  - (1) **Egypt: [fallen]** Pharaoh, enslaved Israel
  - (2) **Assyria: [fallen]**
  - (3) **Babylon: [fallen]** Head of Gold, Daniel 2; lion w/ wings of an eagle, Daniel 7;
  - (4) **Medo-Persia: [fallen]** Chest and arms of silver, Daniel 2; bear w/ three ribs in mouth, Daniel 7;
  - (5) **Greece: [fallen]** Abdomen and thighs, bronze, Daniel 2; leopard w/ four wings on back and four heads, authority to rule, Daniel 7; divided into four kingdoms following Alexander's death:

- i. **Greece:** Cassander: Greece, Macedonia
  - ii. **Turkey:** Lysimachus: Thrace, Asia Minor
  - iii. **North:** Seleucus: Syria, Babylon, Persia
  - iv. **South:** Ptolemy: Egypt, Palestine
- (6) **Rome: [is]** Legs, Iron, Daniel 2; iron teeth, trampled all, ten horns, Daniel 7; Western Civilization
- i. **Roman Catholic Church:**
  - ii. **Holy Roman & Byzantine Empire:** (Eastern & Western Roman Empire) two legs
- (7) **The Ottoman Empire: [yet to come]**
- (8) **Revival of One of the Seven: [yet to come]** Feet and toes, iron, mixed with clay, weak/failed alliances, Daniel 2; ten horns, one horn (Antichrist) displaces three horns, Daniel 7;
6. **Ten Crowns on His Horns:** diadems; the pagan empires of ancient history which opposed God;
7. **Blasphemous Name:** abusive or scurrilous language, blasphemy; "switches" right for wrong (wrong for right); Daniel 7:25
8. **Resembled a Leopard:** Greece: swiftness of its conquest;
9. **Feet Like Those of a Bear:** Medo-Persia: power;
10. **Mouth Like That of a Lion:** Babylon: symbol of authority and power; seat of the apostate religion
11. **Dragon Gave the Beast His Power, Throne, Authority:** power - properly, "ability to perform";
12. **One Head Fatal Wound, But Healed:** "who was wounded by the sword and yet lived," Revelation 13:14. Possibly a resurrected Emperor, e.g. Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Nero; resurrected kingdom, e.g. Greece – King of the North, Seleucus.

- **DANIEL 11: THE SELEUCID KING ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES**

Daniel 11:29-45: -> future time

Antiochus Epiphanes -> Prototype of the Antichrist

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## **TIME, TIMES, AND HALF A TIME**

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The following list identifies various timeframes provided within prophetic scripture and their relative placement within Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week. **Please Note:** The tribulation of the Christian congregation begins prior to the Antichrist's confirmation of the covenant with the many.

**Daniel 9:27:** He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him. (NIV)

1. **Christ's Earthy Ministry to the Jews:** c. 29-33 AD – generally associated with three and one-half years.

2. **Before the Abomination of Desolation:** From the time the Antichrist confirms a covenant with the many until he sets himself up in the Temple as god. Establishes the unimpeded rule (authority) of the Antichrist over the nations including persecution of the Christian congregation.
  - **Revelation 13:5:** The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for **forty-two months**. (NIV)
  - **Daniel 7:25:** He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a **time, times and half a time**. (NIV)
  - **James 5:17:** Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for **three and a half years**. (NIV)
  - **Luke 4:25:** I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for **three and a half years** and there was a severe famine throughout the land. (NIV)
3. **After the Abomination of Desolation:** From the time the Antichrist sets himself up in the Temple as god until the return of Jesus Christ with His heavenly armies at Armageddon. The Antichrist continues to lead the nations but without the God's authority, e.g. riots, chaos, rebellions, marshal law, and totalitarian oppression.
  - **Revelation 11:2:** But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for **42 months**. (NIV)
  - **Revelation 11:3:** And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for **1,260 days**, clothed in sackcloth." (NIV)
  - **Revelation 12:14:** The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a **time, times and half a time**, out of the serpent's reach. (NIV)
  - **Daniel 12:7:** The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a **time, times and half a time**. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed." (NIV)
4. **Times to Restoration:** From the time the Antichrist sets siege to Jerusalem until the Temple services are reestablished:
  - **Daniel 12:12:** Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the **1,335 days**. (NIV)
  - **Daniel 8:14:** He said to me, "It will take 2,300 [**1,300 days**] evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated." (NIV) **NOTE:** *The Hebrew seems to indicate one thousand instead of two.*
5. **Times to Restoration:** From the time the Antichrist sets himself up in the Temple as god until the Temple services are reestablished:
  - **Daniel 12:11:** "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be **1,290 days**. (NIV)
6. **Other:** The first instance of a double instance: 1,260 days and three and one-half years; indicates, I believe, the first instance of Israel being hide in the nations beginning in 70 AD and ending in 1948. (1,260 = a long time)
  - **Revelation 12:6:** The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for **1,260 days**. (NIV)

## THE COVENANT WITH THE MANY

**Daniel 9:27:** He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." (NIV)

**Daniel 9:27:** And he hath strengthened a covenant with many -- one week, and in the midst of the week he causeth sacrifice and present to cease, and by the wing of abominations he is making desolate, even till the consummation, and that which is determined is poured on the desolate one.' (YLT)

### Definitions:

- **confirm:** *gabar*: exceed, confirm, be great, be mighty, prevail, put to more strength.<sup>141</sup>
- **covenant:** *berith*: confederacy, confederate, covenant, league.<sup>142</sup>
- **the many:** *rab*: in abundance, elder, enough, exceedingly, full, greatly, man, one.<sup>143</sup>
- **week:** *shabua*: a period of seven (days, years), heptad, week.<sup>144</sup>

**Commentary:** Many scholars assert that this covenant is between the Antichrist and Israel; however, that interpretation seems too limited as it ignores the term "many." Perhaps it helps if we consider the events occurring prior to the covenant:

1. **Olivet Discourse: War, Famine, Political Upheavals:** "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes [*political upheavals*] in various places." *Matthew 24:6-7*.
2. **2<sup>nd</sup> Seal: War:** "Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other." *Revelation 6:4*.
3. **3<sup>rd</sup> Seal: Hyperinflation and Famine:** "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!" *Revelation 6:6*.
4. **4<sup>th</sup> Seal: Pestilence and Death:** "power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth." *Revelation 6:8*.
5. **Battle of Gog of Magog:** "I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army..." *Ezekiel 38:2-3*.

I believe that widespread warfare, famine, and pestilence will place civilization on the brink of disaster. Throw hardcore religious zeal into the mix and there is potential for humanity to exterminate humanity. Having won the Battle of Gog of Magog decisively and backed by God Himself, Israel will be emboldened to throw off any semblance of tolerance – the occupied territories, the Temple Mount, and neighboring insurgence. Muslims countries, although still smarting from a disastrous defeat on Israel's mountains and fields, would be willing to sacrifice everything including every last man, woman, child, and even infant to prevent their third most treasured holy place, the Dome of the Rock, from being desecrated. Terrorism

<sup>141</sup> "gabar," 1396. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/hebrew/1396.htm>> September 11, 2012.

<sup>142</sup> "berith," 1285. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/hebrew/1285.htm>> September 11, 2012.

<sup>143</sup> "rab," 7227. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/hebrew/7227.htm>> September 11, 2012.

<sup>144</sup> "shabua," 7620. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/hebrew/7620.htm>> September 11, 2012.

and human wave attacks would assume a horrendous form. In such a case, a miracle worker could step in with an ideal solution to appease all sides – this is where the Antichrist steps in as the great peacemaker.

Many scholars assert that the covenant will be between the Antichrist and Israel. This I believe is far too limited. More likely, the covenant will be between the ten nation Muslim confederacy and Israel with the Antichrist serving as the moderator. While purely speculative, I believe that the thrust of the covenant may center on the Temple Mount. The Muslim confederacy promises not to invade Israel in any form (militarily, terrorism, insurgency, and human wave attacks), Israel promises to preserve the remnants of the Dome of the Rock, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and other Muslim holy sites, and both sides agree to revisit this armistice in seven years.

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## **SIDEBAR: BATTLE OF GOG OF MAGOG**

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There is wide diversity as to the timing and nature of the Battle of God of Magog. Some scholars place it before the beginning of the great tribulation, others associate it with the siege of Jerusalem and the Abomination of Desolation, others believe it is an alternative view of the Battle of Armageddon, and still others associate it with the final battle at the end of the Millennium Kingdom. I've long been reluctant to take a position as its description doesn't fit neatly into any scenario. However, that reluctance changed upon close examination of the general details:

### **Ezekiel 38-39 General Details**

1. **ACTORS:** Gog, of the land of Magog: will devise an evil scheme
  - **Asia Minor/Turkey:** Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth Togarmah<sup>145</sup>
  - **Iran:** Persia
  - **Egypt:** Cush<sup>146</sup>
  - **Libya and Ethiopia:** Put<sup>147</sup>
2. **WHEN:** After many days, in future years, in days to come, Israel brought out from the nations, now they live in safety, a peaceful and unsuspecting people,
3. **WHERE:** Israel: land that has recovered from war, mountains of Israel
4. **WHAT:** called to arms, invade a land, advancing like a storm, advance like a cloud
5. **WHY:** plunder and loot, rich in livestock and goods,
6. **BYSTANDERS:** Sheba, Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish
7. **THE BATTLE:** Sovereign Lord's hot anger will be aroused
  - **Lord's Anger:** a great earthquake in Israel, great trembling from all living creatures, mountains overturned, cliffs crumble:
  - **Location of Battle:** On the mountains of Israel, in the open field
  - **The Battle:** Every man's sword will be against his brother; plague and bloodshed; torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations

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<sup>145</sup> Joel Richardson, "Where is Magog, Meshech and Tubal?" *Prophezie: Bible Prophecy Today*, ND.

<[http://www.prophezie.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=517:where-is-magog-meshech-and-tubal&catid=41:top-headlines](http://www.prophezie.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=517:where-is-magog-meshech-and-tubal&catid=41:top-headlines)> September 10, 2012.

<sup>146</sup> "Ezekiel 38:5," *Clarke's Commentary on the Bible, Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Geneva Study Bible, Online Parallel Bible*, ND.

<<http://bible.cc/ezekiel/38-5.htm>> September 11, 2012.

<sup>147</sup> "Ezekiel 38:5," *Clarke's Commentary on the Bible, Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Geneva Study Bible, Online Parallel Bible*, ND.

<<http://bible.cc/ezekiel/38-5.htm>> September 11, 2012.

with him; food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals.

→ **Secondary Locations:** fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands

8. **POST BATTLE:** Israel will use the weapons for fuel for seven years; plunder and loot the invaders; The burial of Gog towards the Sea will take seven months
9. **ULTIMATE EFFECT:** God will display His glory among the nations; Israel spiritually returns to God; the Diaspora officially ends; Jews return to Israel; God begins dealing once again with Israel.

• **COMPARISON TO POSSIBLE BATTLES:**

1. **Siege of Jerusalem:** Although Israel is living in safety because of the seven year covenant, it is unlikely that the Battle of Gog occurs at this time. The siege and subsequent fall of Jerusalem occurs towards the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week with the Antichrist setting himself up in the Jewish Temple as if he were god. In the Battle of Gog of Magog, Gog's armies are destroyed on the mountains and open fields, not the city of Jerusalem.
2. **Battle of Armageddon:** Although the end results of the two battles seem similar, it is unlikely that the Battle of Gog occurs at this time. Three and one-half years prior to the Battle of Armageddon, the Antichrist captured Jerusalem and set himself up in the Jewish Temple as if he were god. Faithful Israel, especially the 144,000 sealed with the seal of the Living God are being protected in the wilderness, not in Jerusalem and probably not in Israel. It would be a logical stretch to consider Israel as living in safety during these turbulent years. Additionally, the valley of Armageddon is associated with the Euphrates river, not Israel.
3. **Battle at the End of the Millennium:** Although Gog and Magog are specifically associated with this final battle and are living in safety, it is unlikely that this particular Battle of Gog occurs at this time. Prior to this battle, Israel has recently been brought out of the nations, probably not a descriptive element at the end of the 1,000 year millennial reign. Additionally, the passage indicates that this is the turning point in God's relationship with Israel. Prior to the battle, Israel and the nations assume that God is not acting on Israel's behalf; after the battle, both Israel and the nations know that the Diaspora has ended.
4. **Prior to the Seven Year Covenant:** Although not a perfect match, it is likely that the Battle of Gog occurs prior to the Antichrist's confirmation of the covenant with many:
  - **Matching Alliances:** Although the Antichrist is not Gog, he will utilize this disaster to wrestle control from Gog. The geographical regions listed in this battle closely resemble the list of modern nations candidates for the Antichrist's ten nation confederacy:

Potentially some combination of Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Libya, and Ethiopia. Jordan will likely remain neutral as it seems to be the location of ancient Edom, Moab, and Ammon and will not fall under the influence of the Antichrist (Daniel 11:41).

- **Living in Safety:** Peace and safety is a relative term when speaking of Israel. Certainly, Israel faces threats from a number of potential areas: domestic terrorism, rocket attacks from Palestinian territories, insurgencies across its borders, and threats of annihilation for its Arab-Persian neighbors; however, there has not been a state-versus-state since

the Yom Kippur War, October 1973. Certainly, peace and safety is not a strong element of a *Prior to the Seven Year Covenant* view.

- **Turning Point in the Diaspora:** Ezekiel 39:21-29 speaks heavily of Israel's Diaspora, scattering among the nations. God declares, "I will no longer hide my face from them." This turning point, in my opinion, can logically only occur here at this battle prior to the seven year covenant or at the sealing of the 144,000 (Revelation 7). The sealing of the 144,000 occurs shortly after the Antichrist conquers Jerusalem. (See item #1 above.)
- **Occurs In Israel but not Jerusalem:** What causes "the many" to confirm a covenant with the Antichrist? Naturally, there could be numerous reasons, but what would cause Israel to sign an armistice after winning a tremendous victory? Perhaps the following scenario:

In response to a tremendous victory, the population places great pressure on the government to remove the Dome of the Rock (*Kipat Hasela*) from the Temple Mount. However, despite a horrific and humiliating defeat, Muslim nations vow to sacrifice their lives – men, women, children, and infants – in human wave attacks should Israel make any move to destroy the Dome of the Rock.

A seven year armistice, proffered by the Antichrist, would avoid additional bloodshed while giving the Israeli government a buffer to "study" the question. It would also bolster the Antichrist's stature, provide an avenue to uproot three of the alliance incompetent and disgraced leaders (Daniel 7), and ultimately assume full control of the ten nation confederation.

Naturally, all of my words are based on speculation and should not serve as a foundation for belief. There is simply insufficient information within Ezekiel 38-39 to confidently apply it to any specific position within the final days.

- **RESPONSES TO ARGUMENTS AGAINST A PRE-COVENANT OCCURANCE:**

When possible after developing a specific section, I review the related literature and attempt to verify that my beliefs can withstand scrutiny. For this topic, I will use the "Cons" from the section "Before Both the Rapture and the Tribulation" from the article "Timing Gog-Magog: When will Ezekiel 38-39 be fulfilled?" by Nathan E. Jones, Web Minister of Lamb and Lion Ministries, discussing the various views on the timing of the Battle of Gog of Magog.<sup>148</sup>

1. *Placing the invasion before the Rapture would contradict the first general time clue of the terms "latter years" (Ezek. 38:8) and "last days" (Ezek. 38:16). Old Testament prophets like Ezekiel used these terms to indicate a specific "time of Jacob's trouble" for Israel, which is the Tribulation.*

**Response:** Transitions between ages do not occur overnight or even a few short years. It took Noah some 100 years to build the ark, Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years, and the second Jewish Temple was not destroyed until some thirty-five years after Christ's earthly ministry. The Battle of Gog of Magog may very well be the initial event of the

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<sup>148</sup> Nathan E. Jones, "Timing Gog-Magog: When will Ezekiel 38-39 be fulfilled?" Lamb and Lion Ministries, ND. <[http://www.lambion.com/articles/articles\\_tribulation2.php](http://www.lambion.com/articles/articles_tribulation2.php)> September 11, 2012.

last days... the "time of Jacob's trouble" need not be limited to the seven years of the Antichrist's covenant with the many.

2. *Placing the invasion before the Rapture would contradict the fifth general time clue which tells of Israel living in unsuspecting peace before the attack. Unless the peace is derived from a Psalm 83 scenario where Israel has subjugated its surrounding neighbors, true peace may only come to Israel by the peace covenant made between the Antichrist and Israel (Dan. 9:27). That covenant starts the seven year countdown of the Tribulation.*

**Response:** Peace and security is a relative term... it depends on what you use for comparison. Today, Israel lives in relative peace and safety – it does not fear of being immediately overrun by its Arab neighbors. The Antichrist's covenant of seven years may bring a superficial sense of peace and security; however, the Israeli government would be naïve to think that such a covenant "guarantees" its safety. Additionally, considering the distress, suffering, and death caused by the breaking of the first four seals, the peace and security that Israel enjoys today (despite the constant threat of terrorist bombing, rocket launches, and threatening neighbors) is heaven on earth compared to the tribulation period.

3. *The New Testament teaching that no prophetic event has to occur before the Rapture, called "imminency." Imminency precludes such prophetic events like the Gog-Magog Battle from happening before the Rapture.*
4. *The removal of the "Restrainer" (2 Thes. 2:6-8) causes the Antichrist to emerge. Because the Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16), the Rapture has to happen before the Antichrist can come on the scene and provide the peace Israel's looking for.*

**Response:** I have combined items #3 and #4 because they both illustrate how "doctrine" can interfere with acquiring a clear understanding of scripture. Both items make assertions that simply are not scripturally sound. While it is true that the several New Testament passages impart a sense of urgency and others indicate that no man knows the day or hour of Christ's return, it is untrue that "no prophetic event has to occur before the Rapture." Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, and 2 Thessalonians 2:2-4 indicate that the Antichrist will be revealed **BEFORE** Christ returns in the clouds for His Christian elect. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11 **DOES NOT** teach us the either the Holy Spirit or the Church is removed from the earth prior to the revealing of the Antichrist. Both items #3 and #4 are assumptions based upon the "doctrine" of a Pretribulation Rapture. Apparently, for pretribulationists, the "doctrine" of "imminence" takes precedence over all other biblical passage; this is a significant error. See the "Pretribulation Rapture: Rebuttal" section for a more detailed analysis.

5. *A timing problem exists for Israel in that midway through the Tribulation the Antichrist's abomination in the newly built Temple will cause the Jews to flee into the desert (Matt. 24:15-16). The Jews will no longer have access to the Gog-Magog invader's weapons to burn. And so, the seven years of Tribulation can no longer match the seven years of burning the weapons.*

**Response:** This claim makes an assumption that the Antichrist's covenant with the many immediately follows the Battle of Gog of Magog. It also assumes that all Jews flee Israel and are hidden in the desert. Both assumptions are probably faulty. First, the Battle Gog of Magog may occur as many as forty or as little as three and one-half years prior to the

covenant with many; thus, Israel would have a full seven years to use the weapons as fuel. Second, Israel has a population of 7.76 million (2011) and it is doubtful that the full number will receive divine protection in the wilderness. It is more likely that many will hide in the mountains and have ready access to the fuel derived from the weapons of war.

- **OUTCOME OF THE BATTLE OF GOG OF MAGOG:**

**God’s Relationship with Israel:** Essentially the Battle of Gog of Magog serves as the start of Israel’s transition from the current age to the next Millennial Kingdom just like the breaking of the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal is the start of the Christian Church’s transition from the Church Age to the next age. For the past two millennia, God has “hid His face” from Israel (Ezekiel 39:29). The Apostle Paul asserted that Israel had a “spirit of stupor” and a “hardening in part” during the current age (Roman 11:8, 25); that hardening will end when God gives Israel the victory in this major battle. Will the switch be immediate? Unlikely, Christ’s earthly ministry lasted about three and one-half years before the Church was born on Pentecost. I imagine Israel will endure a similar three and one-half years before it is reborn—the Antichrist breaks the covenant in the middle of the week and the 144,000 are sealed following the Abomination of Desolation.

**Impact on Israel:** At some point in time, Israel will build the third Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount. Some sources assert that the exact site of the first and second Temple lay to the north or south of the Dome of the Rock.<sup>149</sup> If this is the case, then the third Temple can be built with tearing down the Dome of the Rock. If this is not the case, then Israel must either tear down the Dome of the Rock or the third Temple will not occupy the same spot as the previous two. Nevertheless, the great victory in the Battle of Gog of Magog would probably embolden Israel to either build the third Temple or, if the Temple has already been built, remove the Dome of the Rock in order to expand the Temple courts. Either would enrage Muslim countries and incite them to expend their last breath to protect the Dome of the Rock... a difficult situation in need of a brokered deal – perhaps, the Antichrist’s covenant?

## THE FALSE PROPHET

**Revelation 13:11-17:** <sup>11</sup>Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. <sup>12</sup>He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. <sup>13</sup>And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. <sup>14</sup>Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. <sup>15</sup>He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. <sup>16</sup>He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, <sup>17</sup>so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

### Attributes of the False Prophet

Attribute	Notes/Comment
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<sup>149</sup> Lambert Dolphin and Michael Kollen, “On The Location of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem,” *The Temple Mount in Jerusalem*, July 20, 1996. <<http://www.templemount.org/theories.html>> September 11, 2012.

Attributes of the False Prophet	
Attribute	Notes/Comment
13:11: Comes out of the land	(Adam) compare to Dragon and first beast from the sea; of a human nature and origin rather than satanic nature.
Has two horns like a lamb	Compare two to ten horns (kingdoms) under control of antichrist, less political authority; potential representative of two kingdom – possibly two major religions, e.g. Christianity and Islam. Probably an allusion to Jesus Christ and potentially a parallel with Christ's earthly ministry; possibly allusion to <i>Hadrat Isa</i> , the Muslim Jesus.
Speaks as a dragon	Compare the gospel of the "lamb" to the gospel of the dragon, Satan; speaks with the authority of Satan like Jesus Christ spoke with the authority of the heavenly Father; possible allusion to the sower and the seed parable.
13:12: Has all the authority of the first beast	Acts as the Antichrist's spokesman, priest, prophet; compare with the U.S. President's chief of staff.
makes the earth and inhabitants to worship the first beast	Directed focus not to himself but rather to the Antichrist similar to Jesus Christ's focused on the Father rather than Himself.
13:13: Performs great signs	Compare to Jesus' earthly ministry; Moses signs before Pharaoh; possibly the sages of Egypt.
Signs include bringing fire from heaven	Compare to Elijah (2 Kings 1:10) indicating that he is a major prophet; vindicates his, the beast's, and Satan's authority upon the earth.
13:14: Deceives people because of these signs	Possibly provides the "signs" desired by the wicked generation during Christ's earthly ministry (Mark 8:12, Matthew 12:38)
Causes to make an idol to the beast	Idols frequently made of gold and silver (Psalms 115:4, 135:15, Isaiah 2:20, 31:7, Hosea 8:4) possibly indicating a connection with the worship of money (1 Timothy 6:10) and possibly tied to the Mark of the beast.
13:15: Gives life to the idol and idol speaks causing people to worship the beast	See Psalm 135:15-17.
Kills those who refuse to worship the idol to be killed	
13:16: Makes all people to take a mark in right hand or forehead	
13:17: People can't buy/sell without the mark	
13:18: Mark = number of the beast = number of a man = 666	

## THE HARLOT

### INTRODUCTION

The identity of the Harlot within Revelation 17-18 is one of the most difficult passages within John's vision; yet, it is perhaps one of the most important because it consumes nearly one-tenth of the entire vision and we are specifically instructed to "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues." (NIV) Written in a highly encrypted figurative language, we must use careful discernment in acquiring a clear and accurate understanding.

At first glance, Jerusalem and Papal Rome appear to be the most likely candidates for John's harlot. Jerusalem because she is well known as a prostitute (Ezekiel 16:15-16, Isaiah 57:8, Jeremiah 2:20) and for killing the prophets of God (Matthew 23:37, Luke 13:34, Acts 26:10). Papal Rome because she sits geographically between seven hills (Revelation 17:9) and has a history of persecution of

Christians beginning with the reign of Nero Caesar. Certainly, 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Christians would have easily recognized Jerusalem as John’s harlot and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Christians would have also easily recognized Rome as John’s harlot. However, John’s Revelation is related to the last generation of Christians, not the first generations. We should ask ourselves, “Does either Jerusalem or Papal Rome exhibit those same qualities today?” After examining the harlot’s attributes, we find that neither Jerusalem nor Rome is a close match.

One of the greatest errors biblical scholars make in their interpretation of John’s prophecies is attempting to view the characters and events with 1<sup>st</sup> Century eyes. Certainly, if John saw a modern city, he would scarcely recognize what it was. Similarly, would John recognize a modern naval ship, a battle tank, a fighter jet, or even a soldier in battle dress? I seriously doubt it. Certainly, biblical scripture is a living, breathing document having relevance to each generation; however, only the generation physically experiencing a prophetic event can have a full appreciation of the true meaning of a passage. It is a significant error to believe that a prophet had a comprehensive understanding of the future events he saw. It is an error to limit our understanding to that of the person transcribing the vision. Rather, we must decrypt prophetic language using modern eyes and modern understanding of the world – we must examine the traits and characteristics and apply it as we would see the characters and events today.

Will our “vision” using a modern global view be accurate? Well, no, not if we ARE NOT living in the terminal generation. Well, yes, yes if we ARE in the terminal generation. It has been nearly two millennia since John’s vision and it may well be another two millennia before Christ returns for His saints and to establish His kingdom. If the Lord tarrys for several more centuries then our application today will not be reliable. If the Lord does not tarry, then we should recognize the Harlot of Revelation is we apply the characteristics and attributes provided by John to the modern world.

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## CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTRIBUTES

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Before assigning an arbitrary identity to the Harlot of Revelation, we must first identify the characteristics and attributes provided by John’s vision. These criteria can then be used to evaluate potential individual candidates, e.g. Is Israel a great city?

Criteria of the Harlot of Revelation	
Criteria	Notes/Comments
17:18: <i>Is</i> the great city	The woman metaphorically represents the great city. Although perhaps minor, there is a difference between a “symbol” and “metaphor.” In this case, the “great city” is assigned the characteristics of a woman, e.g. attractive, desirable, alluring, and influential. The use of the definitive article “the” ( <i>hē</i> ) indicates one, and only one city is indicated. The use of the term “great” ( <i>megalē</i> ) may not be so definitive but may rather simply indicate comparatively large, great, as respect to mass and weight. <sup>150</sup>
18:22-23: Harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, trade, millstone, light of a lamp,	While a “woman” may be symbolic of a religious systems and beliefs <sup>151</sup> and a “city” may be symbolic of religious governance, <sup>152</sup> Revelation 18:22-23 seems to heavily indicate that the Harlot is a real, physical city rather than a mere symbolic representation of a general belief system – portraying the daily activities of the city’s

<sup>150</sup> “megas,” 3173. Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/3173.htm>> September 23, 2012.

<sup>151</sup> “Matthew 13:33: Woman as Symbol of System of Beliefs,” from Forerunner Commentary, Bible Tools, ND. <<http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/3579/Woman-as-Symbol-System-Beliefs.htm#ixzz271vOPuKH>> September 23, 2012.

<sup>152</sup> John Class, “Footnote on Biblical Symbols,” Revelation Today, 2001. <<http://www.revelation-today.com/A1Bible%20Symbols.htm>> September 23, 2012.

Criteria of the Harlot of Revelation	
Criteria	Notes/Comments
and bridegroom and bride.	inhabitants.
17:1: Sits on many waters; 17:15, 18:23: The peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.	The term “waters” of 17:1 is defined in 17:15 and 18:23 as people, multitudes, nations, and languages indicating an all inclusive, global character as opposed to a more restrictive character such as restricted to one country, e.g. Arab, one religious system, e.g. Israel, or one language, e.g. English.
17:2, 18; 18:3, 9: Rules over the kings of the earth with whom they committed adultery  17:2, 18:3: Inhabitants of the earth intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.	rules: <i>basileian</i> : kingship, sovereignty, authority, rule, especially of God, both in the world, and in the hearts of men; hence: kingdom, in the concrete sense. <sup>153</sup> While some scholars assume the emergence of a “New World Order” or similar physical entity, the inclusion of “committed adultery” may indicate “in the hearts of men” rather than a purely legal authority such as the United Nations. Considering a fairly detailed description of her wealth (17:4) and the extensive nature her trade commodities (18:12-13), I’m inclined to believe that the relationship between the city and the kings/inhabitants relate to the influence of greed and wealth rather than physical or military control.  Some scholars allude to Babylon as the root of pagan religion, idolatry worship, and rejection of the one true God, e.g. Nimrod and the tower of Babel; however, such inclusion of wealth and commodity seems more indicative of an idolatry (veneration) of material wealth; thus, the adultery may relate to the love of money rather than any religious or spiritual system (1 Timothy 6:10).
17:3: Carried me away in the Spirit into a desert.	Desert: <i>erēmos</i> : generally interpreted as wilderness... as an adjective: deserted, desolate, waste; hence: the desert, to the east and south of Palestine; of a person: deserted, abandoned, desolate. <sup>154</sup> Prior to being shown the harlot, John’s spiritual perspective is specifically altered from assumingly a heavenly one to a wilderness. Why a change in perspective is required is not stated. As of now, I assume the desert represents spiritual wasteland and a physical separation between the harlot and the Church/Israel.
17:3: Sitting on a scarlet beast  17:16: The beast and ten horns hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire  17:17: For God has put it into their hearts [ten kings] to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God’s words are fulfilled.	sitting: <i>kathēmenēn</i> : I sit, am seated, enthroned; I dwell, reside. <sup>155</sup> Some scholars assert that the harlot and the beast share a symbiotic relationship – one depends upon the other, a union of sorts, and/or her power comes from this evil beast. <sup>156</sup> Some assert that this verse parallels Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem upon a donkey, and this may very well be the case as the harlot will enter Daniel’s 70 <sup>th</sup> week riding upon the Antichrist.  I doubt if the harlot and the beast (Antichrist) share in a symbiotic relationship especially considering 17:16. Rather, I tend to believe that the Antichrist will “use” the wealth and prestige of the harlot to enhance his own position and then dispose of her after he acquires what he needs.  If the three messages of Revelation 14:6-13 provide a timeline, and I believe it does, then persecution of Christian witnesses will come first, the destruction of Babylon follows, and then the Antichrist achieves absolute dominance.  The harlot, like the Antichrist and other prophetic actors, are pawns in God’s eternal plan for mankind.
17:4: Dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls.	Purple/Scarlet – colors of linen used within the temple; color of the robe place on Christ at His crucifixion; Purple – symbol of royalty and power; scarlet/crimson – color of linen used in the temple; symbolic of blood, covenant, atonement, sin. Gold, precious stones, and pearls are emblems of wealth and prosperity. Clearly, the woman possesses both great stature and wealth.

<sup>153</sup> “*basileia*,” 932, *Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordances*, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/932.htm>> September 23, 2012.

<sup>154</sup> “*erēmos*,” 2048, *Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordances*, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/2048.htm>> September 23, 2012.

<sup>155</sup> “*kathēmenēn*,” 2521, *Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordances*, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/2521.htm>> September 23, 2012.

<sup>156</sup> “*Revelation, Chapter 17*,” *Discover The Book of Revelation*, ND. <[http://www.discoverrevelation.com/Rev\\_17.html](http://www.discoverrevelation.com/Rev_17.html)> September 23, 2012.

Criteria of the Harlot of Revelation	
Criteria	Notes/Comments
17:4: Held a golden cup, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.	<p>Allusion to Jeremiah 51:7, "Babylon was a gold cup in the LORD's hand; she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad." A cup is symbolic of sharing; thus, those that share the same cup possess similar characteristics, trials, sufferings, and rewards (Matthew 20:23, Mark 9:41).</p> <p>Abominable things and filth include idolatry, arrogance, deception, sexual immorality, magic, divination, etc. – essentially anything that detracts one's focus from God to worldly things.</p>
17:5: Title on her forehead: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES, AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.	<p>Probably an allusion to Jeremiah 50-51, Isaiah 21, 47. Probably references, in combination of other text within Revelation 17 and 18, a physical city, nation, or kingdom rather than a belief system, organized religion, or an apostate church.</p> <p>Characteristics ascribed throughout the Bible to Babylon are applicable to the harlot. Who, in our current world, best represents and takes on the characteristics of ancient Babylon?</p>
17:9: This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills [mountains] on which the woman sits.	<p>Many scholars assert that the "great city" is Rome, at times using this passage as their focal scriptural evidence. Rome was known as the city of seven hills during John's time; however, Jerusalem was also built on seven hills as well as modern cities such as Albany, New York; Amman, Jordan; Athens, Greece; Brussels, Belgium; Istanbul, Turkey; Moscow, Russia; Tehran, Iran as well as numerous others. The prophet does not always understand the visions they are given and require explanation (Rev. 17:6-7, Daniel 8:15, Daniel 9:22). Prophecy describes future events; we need not restrict our interpretation to how the seer would interpret the vision.</p> <p>Elsewhere within scripture, mountains are used to symbolically represent kingdoms indicating that perhaps this verse should not be interpreted literally (Ezekiel 6:3, Ezekiel 36:1, Isaiah 2:1-5, Daniel 2:35, Daniel 11:45).</p> <p>Additionally, we should not forget that the term "sit" has been used previously (17:1 and 17:3) to describe other "attributes" that do not necessarily indicate a physical, geographical location.</p>
18:2: Home for demons, every evil spirit, every unclean and detestable bird.	<p>Perhaps an allusion to Isaiah 46, 47:12; Isaiah 21:9; Leviticus 11:10-12. Lawlessness, things contrary to the law (ways) of God. 1 Corinthians 10:20, "No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons." Deuteronomy 32:17.</p> <p>Leviticus 11:13-19, "These are the birds you are to detest and not eat because they are detestable: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, the red kite, any kind of black kite, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat." (NIV)</p> <p>Possible allusion to Matthew 24:28, "Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather." Luke 17:37, Ezekiel 39:17.</p> <p>Perhaps related to the Roman <i>aquila</i> (eagle) and American Eagle?</p>
18:7: Boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.'	<p>Isaiah 47:7, You said, 'I will continue forever--the eternal queen!' But you did not consider these things or reflect on what might happen. "Now then, listen, you wanton creature, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me. I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.'"</p>
18:3, 11-15, 23: Merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.  18:17-19: Ships on the	<p>Indicates vast natural and manufactured wealth (Rev. 18:11-15) to include associated global trade (ships). Such wealth has not only made the harlot wealthy, merchants and transportation magnates have become exceedingly wealthy by buying, shipping, and selling her trade goods. The lamentation by the kings, merchants, and sea captains indicates notable immense wealth.</p>

Criteria of the Harlot of Revelation	
Criteria	Notes/Comments
sea became rich through her wealth	
17:6, 18:20, 24: Drunk with the blood of prophets and saints, those who bore testimony to Jesus.  18:24: In her the blood of prophets and of all who have been killed on the earth.	Allusion to Daniel 7:25, Revelation 1:2, 1:9, 12:17, 16:6, 19:10.  May be literal – the latter day prophets and saints are martyred because of their unwelcome message (Matthew 24:9-14, Daniel 11:33, Proverbs 29:27).  May be figurative – those who impede the innocent from seeking and finding the kingdom of God are responsible for the death of all martyred prophets and saints, Matthew 23:35, e.g. Cain and Abel, Genesis 4:8 and Hebrews 11:4. Possibly a related to Sheep-Goat accountability – what is done or not done to one of the least is done to the Lord (Matt. 25:31-46).  An allusion to Jeremiah 51:49 potentially connecting the harlot of Revelation and Jeremiah 51.
18:4: Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins and any of her plagues.	Indicates forewarning. Once God’s people recognize the identity of the harlot, they are instructed to leave, perhaps as political or religious refugees. May indicate resistance to a movement, e.g. moving away from Godly ways to secular humanism; such a movement may be a sudden, recognizable shift or be gradual and virtually imperceptible.
18:10, 17, 19, 21: In one hour your doom has come	Indicates that the destruction will occur suddenly and decisively as if from a enormous climatic, natural, or nuclear catastrophe.  Isaiah 47:9, “Both of these will overtake you in a moment, on a single day: loss of children and widowhood. They will come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and all your potent spells.”
18:22-23: Never in you again	Indicates that the destruction is permanent, unlike Israel who was punished but then reconciled to God.

## JERUSALEM EVALUATED

Does the modern version of Jerusalem meet the criteria established in Revelation 17-18? After considering the scriptures, Jerusalem, at one point, seemed the most likely candidate for the Harlot of Revelation. Jesus, within the Gospels, likens Jerusalem to Revelation’s Babylon when He speaks of the prophets:

**Revelation 18:24:** In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints... (NIV)

**Matthew 23: 37:** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. (NIV)

Certainly, during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees had despoiled God’s covenant with Israel, killed its prophets such as John the Baptist, and its saints such as Stephen. Certainly, Jerusalem suffered the consequences of her adultery:

**Revelation 18:2:** Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. (NIV)

However, God's judgment fell on Jerusalem during that generation – Jerusalem was conquered and the Temple destroyed in 70 AD. Additionally, national Israel essential came to an end and the Jews dispersed among the nations following the Second Jewish Revolt in 135 AD.

Within Old Testament scripture, Jerusalem is frequently compared to a harlot, but she also always experiences restoration (Isaiah 1:21-26; Jeremiah 2:13-3:25; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 2). However, the destruction of Revelation's Babylon seems permanent:

**Revelation 18:21:** With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. (NIV)

Certainly, the Antichrist and his legions will once again siege and conquer Jerusalem; however, this seems more in line with fulfillment of God's judgment upon mankind rather than judgment upon the great city of Jerusalem. Although several scriptures point towards Jerusalem as the Harlot, the comparison is problematic and doesn't seem to fulfill John's description:

1. **The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages:** (17:15) In the ancient world, Jerusalem could rightly be called an international city but that doesn't seem to be the case today. While a holy city to three great world religions, Jerusalem does not exert an significant influence on global economic, political, and intellectual affairs:

According to a 2010 survey of top world cities by property consultancy Knight Frank and based on economic activity, political power, knowledge base, and quality of life, the following cities "rule the world": New York, London, Beijing, Paris, Singapore, Berlin, Tokyo, Toronto, Los Angeles, and Brussels.<sup>157</sup>

2. **The woman you saw is the great city<sup>a</sup> that rules<sup>b</sup> over the kings of the earth:** (17:18)

<sup>a</sup>While the phrase "great city" is used as a label for Jerusalem (Jeremiah 22:8; Revelation 11:8), it is also used to label other cities such as Nineveh, Jonah 1:2; Resen, Genesis 10:12; and Gibeon, Joshua 10:2. Additionally, the "great city" of Revelation 11:8 is referred to directly as figurative Sodom and Egypt, not Babylon. Use of the phrase "the great city" within Revelation 11:8 should give us pause and may be a casual link; however, it does not provide a definitive link.

<sup>b</sup>Does Jerusalem rule over the kings of the earth? No. Will Jerusalem likely to rule in the future? Not likely. Certainly, discord between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity concerning the holy sites within Jerusalem influences the leaders of many countries; however, such influence is relatively minor. Jerusalem will rule over the kings of the earth one day, but that will likely be after Armageddon.

**rules:** *932 basileia* (from *935 /basileús*, "king") – properly, kingdom; the realm in which a king sovereignly rules. A kingdom always requires a king – as the kingdom of God does with King Jesus! especially refers to the rule of Christ in believers' hearts – which is a rule that "one day will be universal on the physical earth in the Millennium" (G. Archer).

<sup>157</sup> Catriona Davies, "Revealed: Cities that rule the world -- and those on the rise," CNN, April 10, 2010. <<http://www.cnn.com/2010/BUSINESS/04/10/cities.dominante.world/index.html>> September 19, 2012.

[The kingdom (932/basileía) is constantly used in connection with the rule of Christ in the hearts of believers – which also extends in various stages.]<sup>158</sup>

3. **The merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries: (18:3)** As cited in #1 above, Jerusalem does not currently rank in the top tier of economically influential cities. While there are rumors that Israel may one day become a major exporter of natural gas and oil,<sup>159</sup> discord between the three great religions will likely prevent Jerusalem from becoming a major player within our lifetime.
4. **Where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth: (18:19)** Jerusalem is a land-locked city, not a sea port. Israel, as a nation, does not even possess a “large” or “very large” sea port.<sup>160</sup> Haifa, Israel’s busiest port, ranks 86<sup>th</sup> in container traffic and is not listed among the top 125 in total cargo volume.<sup>161</sup>

It is hard to envision Jerusalem, in its current form, fulfilling the prophecies related to the Harlot in John’s Revelation. May it at some point in the future? Possibly, and the reader should readily adjust their view as global events change.

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## PAPAL ROME EVALUATED

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Does the modern version of Papal Rome meet the criteria established in Revelation 17-18? Within evangelical literature, Papal Rome seems to be the most popular candidate:

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible:* In Revelation 17:18, it is expressly said that "this woman is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth" - that is, as I suppose, papal Rome; and the design here is to represent it as resembling an abandoned female - fit representative of an apostate, corrupt, unfaithful church.<sup>162</sup>

*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible:* ...is no other than Rome Papal; for that a city or state is meant is clear from Revelation 17:18 and it is usual for idolatrous or apostate cities to be called whores or harlots, see Isaiah 1:21 Ezekiel 23:2 and she is called a "great" one, because of the largeness of the Papal see; and because of the multitude of persons, the kings of the earth, and the inhabitants of it, with whom the Romish antichrist has committed spiritual fornication, or idolatry: her "judgment" signifies either her sin and wickedness...<sup>163</sup>

Additional reasoning in support of Papal Rome as a candidate for the harlot includes:

- **Babylon is a code name for Rome:** “She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings,” 1 Peter 1:13.
- **The Seven Hills are the seven hills in Rome:** “the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated,” Revelation 17:9.

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<sup>158</sup> "932 basileía," HELPS Word Studies, Helps Ministries, Inc., 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/932.htm>> September 20, 2012.

<sup>159</sup> WALTER RUSSELL MEAD, "Israel's Emergence As Energy Superpower Making Waves," *The American Interest*, July 2, 2012. <<http://blogs.the-american-interest.com/wrm/2012/07/02/israels-saudi-sized-energy-potential-makes-first-political-impact/>> September 20, 2012.

<sup>160</sup> "Israel: Satellite Map of Ports," *World Port Source*, 2012. <<http://www.worldportsource.com/ports/ISR.php>> September 20, 2012.

<sup>161</sup> "WORLD PORT RANKINGS – 2009" Agência Nacional de Transportes Aquaviários, 2009. <<http://aapa.files.cms-plus.com/PDFs/WORLD%20PORT%20RANKINGS%202009.pdf>> September 20, 2012.

<sup>162</sup> Albert Barnes, "Revelation 17:1," *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, 1834. <<http://barnes.biblecommenter.com/revelation/17.htm>> September 21, 2012.

<sup>163</sup> John Gill, "Revelation 17:1," *Exposition of the Entire Bible*, 1746-63. <<http://gill.biblecommenter.com/revelation/17.htm>> September 21, 2012.

- **Purple and Red are the colors of the Catholic clergy:** “The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet,” Revelation 17:4.
- **The harlot’s Wealth equals wealth of the Catholic Church:** “[She] was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls,” Revelation 17:4.

While the Roman Catholic Church might have met several of the criteria of Revelation 17-18 in the past, the modern Roman Catholic Church hardly possesses such power, prestige, and influence today. Is some of its practices pagan in origin? Certainly, the reverence given to relics serves as an example. Do they practice a form of idolatry? Certainly, statues of Mary and Joseph within their cathedrals serve as examples. However, as readily evident from my studies, virtually all Christian denominations hold to beliefs and practices that are extra-biblical. How does the Catholic Church, or Papal Rome, compare with the other basic criteria?

1. **The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages:** (17:15) Yes, the Roman Catholic Church has over 1 billion members spread out throughout the world.
2. **The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth:** (17:18) No. While the Catholic Church exercised some authority over the kings in medieval Europe, that authority essentially ended following the Reformation. Although some scholars believe that the sheer size of the Catholic Church exerts great influence upon politics, there is little evidence that the Church has, or is likely to have, significant power over the world’s ruling powers.
3. **The merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries:** (18:3) No. While it is probably impossible to calculate the net worth of all Roman Catholic Church assets, those assets pale in comparison to actual cities such as New York where the price tag for One World Trade Center alone is some \$3.8 billion. Additionally, the merchants of the earth are not becoming, and are not likely to become, rich from the assets (luxuries) of the Roman Catholic Church.
4. **Where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth:** (18:19) Vatican City, like Rome, is a land-locked city. The port city of Genoa, the largest port in Italy, ranks 78<sup>th</sup> in total cargo volume. The Vatican is not a known sea port nor is it likely to become one within our lifetime.

Many biblical scholars view the “Great Tribulation” as a joint venture between the harlot and the Antichrist... some see the Catholic Church as an avenue through which the Antichrist rises to power... some see apostate Catholic Church as the false prophet declaring the virtues of the Antichrist. Certainly, there is a relationship because the harlot sits on the back of the beast; however, we should not ignore the fact that the Antichrist and the ten kings hate the harlot and ultimately destroy her (Revelation 17:16). The Catholic Church, or Papal Rome, currently lacks the sufficient authority or stature to accomplish such a momentous task. The Antichrist would likely see the Catholic Church more of a hindrance than an advantage.

It is hard to envision either the Roman Catholic Church or the city of Rome, in their current form, fulfilling the prophecies related to the Harlot in John’s Revelation. Could these conditions change in the future? Certainly, and a prepared Christian would be observant of such changes.

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## THE APOSTATE CHURCH EVALUATED

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A third potential candidate for the role as the Harlot of Revelation is a universal, apostate church. Supporters primarily support this assertion by paralleling the “harlot” of Revelation 17-18 to the “pure” woman of Revelation 12 which represents Israel or, as some claim, the true Church of God. Additional support is provided by comparing scriptures referencing the true Christian Church as the faithful bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-27, 2 Corinthians 11:2-3). Certainly, an apostate church would spiritually fulfill many of the criteria established in Revelation 17-18, especially those related to adultery, abominations, filth, evil spirits, and demons. Certainly, an apostate Christians “sell” themselves when they sacrifice their beliefs for economic, sensual, personal, or political gain.

However, can an apostate church acquire sufficient political and economic capital to exert the influence described within Revelation 17-18? I doubt it, at least not in such a form as we would normally think of as a church... united around a central religious or spiritual belief. One need only look at the thousands of Christian denominations, the various factions within Islam, and the divisions within other religions to understand that religious and spiritual beliefs are divisive rather than unifying.

Rather, there may be a potential for an apostate religion to emerge centered around a different form of “religion.” Secular humanism, the belief system where human interest and values are predominate, has emerged as a central theme among many developed nations and may serve as a foundation for a false religion. Science, the system centered on learning the laws and principles that determines how the universe operates, has been gradually overtaking religious thought. In many ways, science has been building a second tower of Babel... man can become god if he acquires sufficient knowledge.

Of all the possible alternatives to a traditional apostate church, capitalism seems to have the greatest potential of meeting the criteria of Revelation 17-18. Certainly, the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Certainly, wealth, like a woman, is attractive, desirable, alluring, and influential. Certainly, the love of money, authority, and power has resulted in the death and misery of countless innocent lives. Certainly, greed is a universal trait. Certainly, the Antichrist would seek out financial and political support from those countries and leaders who possess great physical wealth. Yes, if the Harlot of Revelation is an apostate church, I believe that church’s religion would center on money.

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## CAPITALISM & NEW YORK CITY EVALUATED

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Last year after reading Revelation 17-18, I mentally concluded, “Hmmmmm... those two chapters are describing capitalism generally and New York City specifically.” Naturally, I set those thoughts to the side because they were not consistent with a classical interpretation of the Harlot of Revelation. Yet, after recognizing that neither Rome nor Jerusalem fulfilled the criteria established in Revelation 17-18, my thoughts returned to my original conclusion. Does capitalism and New York City fulfill the criteria established within John’s vision? While not a perfect fit, I believe that they perhaps are the best alternatives to classical interpretations.

1. **Is New York City a great city?** (17:18) Yes, according to the Global Cities Index that considers *Business Activity, Human Capital, Information Exchange, Cultural Experience* and *Political Engagement*, New York City consistently leads in ranking of all major cities.<sup>164</sup>
2. **Is New York City a real physical city that possesses significant human culture?** (18:22-23) Yes, New York City is considered by many as the cultural capital of the world:

*Weissman Center for International Business, 2011:* New York City (NYC) is the cultural center of the world. Visitors from around the country and all over the world come here either primarily to enjoy the cultural amenities or to do so secondarily as an adjunct to their primary purpose...

NYC's indisputable status as the cultural capital of the world is based, in part, on the wealth of museums and art galleries that afford every visitor the opportunity to revel in a wide array of works from all over the world. Within the five boroughs of NYC, there are over 170 museums including zoos and specialized public libraries, and over 1,000 art galleries.

NYC is a center of the performing arts with three theatrical categories, including Broadway, Off-Broadway and Off-Off Broadway productions. There are 40 theaters classified as "Broadway," 109 Off-Broadway and more than 400 Off-Off Broadway.<sup>165</sup>

3. **Can New York City be considered an international city?** (17:1: 17:15, 18:23) Yes, while perhaps not one of the most diverse cities in the world, there is little doubt that New York City meets the criteria of a major international city:

*CNBC, 2012:* New York City, one of the original entry points for many European immigrants, is one of the biggest melting pots in the world, with more than 800 languages spoken here. More than one third of the city's residents were born outside the U.S... New York is home to the United Nations and some of the best food from all over the world, including Italian, Greek and Egyptian. On any given weekend in the spring, summer and fall, you'll find a different cultural festival or street fair, including the Puerto Rican Day Parade, the West Indian Day Parade, the Feast of San Gennaro and the Brazilian Day festival.<sup>166</sup>

4. **Does New York City rule over the kings of the world?** (17:2, 18; 18:3, 9) Potentially, yes. While no single government structure possesses authority over individual sovereign states, the influence global governance agencies, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the G20, and the World Trade Organization, demonstrate the structure and potential for global governance. New York City is known as the diplomatic center of the world, and it is not difficult to envision a New York playing a major role in global governance.

More importantly, New York City is among the most influential economic centers of the world:

<sup>164</sup> "Global Cities Index," Centre for Global Talent Strategy, June 4, 2012. <<http://globalltalentstrategy.com/en/article/2012-global-cities-index-169>> September 24, 2012.

<sup>165</sup> "Introduction to New York City Culture," The Weissman Center for International Business, Baruch College/CUNY, 2011. <<http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/nycdata/culture/intro.htm>> September 23, 2012.

<sup>166</sup> "The Top 10 Most Diverse Cities in America," CNBC, 2012. <[http://www.cnbc.com/id/43066296/The\\_Top\\_10\\_Most\\_Diverse\\_Cities\\_in\\_America?slide=10](http://www.cnbc.com/id/43066296/The_Top_10_Most_Diverse_Cities_in_America?slide=10)> September 23, 2012.

*Most Economically Powerful Cities:* In May 2012, The Atlantic and its senior-editor Richard Florida selected their list of the most economically powerful cities in the world based on a surveys on global metro powerhouses:<sup>167</sup>

1.  New York 2.  London 3.  Tokyo 4.  Hong Kong 5.  Paris

*International Financial Centres Development Index:* In 2011, the Xinhua News Agency of China, partnering with the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and Dow Jones & Company of the United States, released the Xinhua-Dow Jones International Financial Centers Development Index. In 2012, the index was updated. According to this index, the top ten financial centers in the world are:<sup>168</sup>

1.  New York 2.  London 3.  Tokyo 4.  Hong Kong 5.  Paris

5. **Are the inhabitants of the earth intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries?** (17:2, 18:3) (18:2: Home for demons, every evil spirit, every unclean and detestable bird.) New York City is well known as a center for liberalization. For example, in September, 2012, schools in New York City began making the morning after pill (abortion pill) available to it students without the permission of their parents.<sup>169</sup>

Perhaps more importantly, as a major financial center for Western Civilization, New York City is the symbol of American greed, exploitation, and immorality....

**1 Timothy 6:10:** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (NIV)

## SPECULATIVE NARRATIVE

**SPECIAL NOTATION:** Although drawn from information provided on the preceding pages, the following narrative should be considered speculative and should not serve as a foundation for belief. It provides an illustration of what might be the case, not necessarily what will be the case.

Many Protestant scholars assert that the Harlot is the Roman Catholic Church and the Antichrist is the Pope. Many scholars also assert that the ten-nation confederacy of the Antichrist is a revived Roman Empire. While these comparisons were perhaps appropriate in the historical past, the connections are less conspicuous today. The post-Cold War world looks vastly different than that of the past centuries. During the Protestant Reformation, European colonization subdued more “primitive” cultures with Western technology, thought, and culture. During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, “undeveloped” nations were dominated militarily and economically by the Superpowers. Today, no single empire rules the world and smaller nations enjoy more autonomy and exert more global influence than perhaps at any time since the rise of empires during the Bronze Age.

<sup>167</sup> “The Top 10 most powerful cities in the world”. Yahoo! Finance. May 11, 2012. <<http://in.finance.yahoo.com/photos/the-top-10-most-powerful-cities-in-the-world-slideshow/a-photo-1336730318.html>> September 24, 2012.

<sup>168</sup> “Xinhua-Dow Jones International Financial Centers Development Index 2012”. Xinhua and Dow Jones. September 2012. <[http://www.djindexes.com/mdsidx/downloads/meth\\_info/Xinhua\\_Overview.pdf](http://www.djindexes.com/mdsidx/downloads/meth_info/Xinhua_Overview.pdf)> September 23, 2012.

<sup>169</sup> KJ DELL'ANTONIA, “New York City Schools Provide Morning-After Pills,” New York Times, September 25, 2012. <<http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/25/new-york-city-schools-provide-morning-after-pills/>> September 23, 2012.

**What will the global socio-political-economic picture look like when the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal on the scroll with seven is broken?** We simply do not know. A relatively small, limited, regional nuclear conflict could alter the global picture in a matter of months. Natural disasters such as global warming, volcanic eruptions, solar flares, or asteroid impacts could dramatically alter our climate causing significant shifts in economic resources, political power, and population centers. The world may look very different just ten years from now, and our view of prophetic events must constantly adjust to these changes.

I believe that if the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal on the scroll with seven seals were broken today, the traditional major powers (America, Europe, China, and Russia) would play a limited role on the main events occurring within the Middle East. This need not be because they were somehow disabled but simply because each would restrict the other's ability to become embroiled in Middle Eastern affairs. Certainly, each would play a supporting role such as providing weapons, equipment, technology, and material but fear of a global cataclysm would preclude direct involvement. Naturally, the spill-over would wreak havoc well outside the Middle-eastern region.

- **BREAKING OF THE 1ST SEAL: CONQUEST:** (Revelations 6:1-2)

Threatened with potential annihilation and the global ineptness in dealing with the rogue Ahmadinejad's regime, Israel conducts limited and targeted air strikes against possible Iranian nuclear weapons sites.<sup>170</sup> Although resulting in minor physical damage, minimal civilian casualties, and the questionable effectiveness, the strikes cause earth shattering consequences. Arab nations, who silently support an end to the weapons program, view the action as an affront to Islam and a direct attack on their collective dignity and sovereignty. Arab blustering and solidarity renders Israeli allies silent and unwilling to respond to Iranian retaliation especially the closing of the Strait of Hormuz. Instability in global oil supplies causes financial markets to shudder, global money supplies to tighten, international trade to constrict, and national economies to contract. What are the results? Joblessness, homelessness, shortages, hunger, and political chaos...

An examination of post-WWI Germany might provide a glimpse into global economic troubles, social upheavals, political turmoil, and philosophical extremism following the breaking of the 1st Seal on the scroll with seven seals. The Antichrist is not yet a major factor or influence. Rather, numerous messiahs arise in various locations. Each offering answers, promises, and solutions in an increasingly desperate world. Mainstream Christianity and their beliefs are increasingly considered radical, archaic, and socially unacceptable. Self interest and self preservation reign supreme, especially in the absence of a Judeo-Christian code of ethics. Hope slowly and gradually dims.

- **BREAKING OF THE 2ND SEAL: WAR:** (Revelations 6:3-4)

Spying a weakening international commitment by global powers, regional strong men move to even old scores. A loose coalition of Arab nations move on Israel, Pakistan attempts to capture the Kashmir region, North Korea invades the south encircling Seoul and holding it hostage, and China takes control of the disputed islands in the East China Sea. Growing domestic concerns keeps major world powers essentially sidelined. Israel stands alone but remains intact under divine protection. A few rogue nations lob weapons of mass destruction at their adversaries. Trade sanctions and embargoes are employed, shipping lanes and ports become hazardous, and global trade comes to a

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<sup>170</sup> Israel need not actually conduct a strike. With sufficient blustering on Israel's part, the Iranian President might make just such an attack on his own facilities planting incriminating evidence pointing to a stealth Israeli attack.

virtual standstill. Domestic shortages result in civil unrest, rioting and lawlessness. Civil authorities in some countries suspend civil rights and institute marshal law. Hope grows increasingly dim.

- **BREAKING OF THE 3RD SEAL: FAMINE:** (Revelations 6:5-6)

Regional military conflict, environmental degradation, crop failure, ruined infrastructure, domestic unrest, failed policy, and economic collapse results in extreme crippling inflation, severe scarcity, immense hunger, and mass starvation. Christians, with their modest and frugal lifestyles, fair relatively well leading many to conclude that they are stealing and hoarding commodities. Christian homes increasingly become targets for thieves wishing to feed their families. Civil unrest grows, rioting swells, and lawlessness prevails. Authorities resort to ever harsher means of civil control. Concentration camps for political and religious dissidents begin springing up on the edges of metropolitan areas.

Toppled by civil unrest, moderate political leaders are replaced by ideological and religious zealots. A Jewish Moshiah is hailed by the leading rabbi in Israel. The Madhi, the Twelve Imam, appears in Mecca between the corner of the Kaaba and the station of Abraham. The Maitreya Buddha is discovered meditating within the Jokhang Temple in Tibet. Kalki, the final Maha Avatar, manifests himself in the town of Sambhal, India. Numerous messianic claimants arise in various places throughout the world with each garnering immense popular affection, massive national political influence, and significant regional notoriety. Within the midst of utter gloom, small shimmers of hope twinkle on the horizon.

- **BREAKING OF THE 4TH SEAL: DEATH:** (Revelations 6:7-8)

Death and disease become rampant through war, malnourishment, disease, and repressive regimes (wild beasts). Infrastructure lies in ruins. Monetary systems have collapsed. Sound military strategy is replaced by religious fanaticism... humans are thrown into battle with little equipment, supplies, and ammunition. Marshall Law is declared throughout the world. Christians are blamed for shortages of food, medicine, and clothing; authorities assert that “radical Christian extremists” are promoting death and mayhem in order to hasten the return of their Hebrew Messiah. The prevailing attitude among the young is “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.” Rioting and vandalism become widespread. Dead bodies are collected and burned daily to suppress contagion.

Many messianic claimants begin to falter unable to feed the masses, stem the tides of death, or bring about regional peace and cooperation. Those that continue meet untimely and mysterious deaths. Quetzalcoatl is crushed while distributing sacks of rice in Mexico City. Pachacuti finds disgrace when minor girls are found inside his hut. The Islamic claimant is found stabbed inside his tent. The Maitreya Buddha is imprisoned by the Chinese military. From among these, a particularly charismatic young leader, raised as a Shi'a Muslim in Antakya, Turkey, and educated in the America, rises in stature and influence. He becomes known as a man of principle and peace.

**Why Antakya, Turkey?** Antakya is the modern name for the ancient city of Antioch. Antioch, founded in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC by Seleucus I Nicator, one of Alexander the Great's generals, became third in size and influence during the Roman era only to Alexandria and Rome. Antioch served as the capital of the Seleucid Empire, the seat of power to Antiochus Epiphanes a type of the Antichrist. Its geographical location is consistent with John's Revelation asserting that the Antichrist resembles a

leopard (Greece), has feet like a bear (Medo-Persia), and a mouth like a lion (Babylon). Antioch is also consistent with the territories of king of the North and South found within Daniel 11. From this location, the Antichrist can form a coalition of ten Islamic nations<sup>171</sup> as well as uproot three: Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon. It also places him within operational proximity for an invasion of Israel.

- **THE COVENANT WITH THE MANY: RISE OF ANTICHRIST:**

(Daniel 9:27) People, nations, and armies are exhausted. Miraculously, Israel has survived the onslaught and exists as a permanent military encampment. In the midst of conflict, they have built the third Jewish Temple; they intend to remove the Islamic Dome of the Rock to make way for the Temple's outer court. Surrounding Islamic nations are infuriated but their military forces lay in ruin. The Islamic Madhi gathers poorly equipped and untrained old men, teenagers, women, and small children to facilitate human wave attacks in a desperate attempt to wrestle the Temple Mount from the Jews. Up to one-half of the adult population in Israel and the Arab lands have already been slaughtered. Both sides are dedicated to giving their last measure while the world remains silent.

But the young charismatic leader from Antakya stands and promotes a seven year armistice between Israel and her Arab neighbors:

*Let us rest our armies and weapons for a season so that we might turn our energies to feeding and clothing our young. Let your heads lie on your own pillow and listen to the silence of night. Burn your sacrifices and incense to your God but let Kipat Hasela lay barren for a time. Let our women and children mourn their dead this night; and when the sun rises in the morning, we will talk of future things.*

An uneasy peace emerges, and the world is able to momentarily turn from war to rebuilding its infrastructure, its trade, and its monetary system. Domestic disruption continues but diminishes as the properties of "radical Christian extremist" are confiscated and redistributed to the masses.

- **PEACEFUL INTERLUDE: RULE OF THE ANTICHRIST:** (Revelations 13)

Through his charisma and the diplomacy of his religious adviser, the young leader guides the nations out of the darkness of war. An international bartering system replaces monetary systems and permits the trade regional resources necessary to rebuild civilization: grain, crop seed, medicine, labor, livestock, fertilizer, energy, textile, and other commodities. Nations tap into the system enabling rationing of supplies in exchange for products and labor... local farmer and goods markets are forbidden. The charismatic young leader is viewed as a Godsend by the masses.

Muslims view Jewish Temple service in such close to Kipat Hasela as profane and an affront to Islam; they hotly strain at their leash desiring end the atrocity. The charismatic young leader keeps the peace by quietly promising his Arab allies that they will strike when the time is right. He silently siphon the profits from the trading system exchanging food, clothing, and medicine for weapons of war.

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<sup>171</sup> Potentially Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen or a similar configuration. Jordan will likely remain neutral as it seems to be the location of ancient Edom, Moab, and Ammon and will not fall under the influence of the Antichrist (Daniel 11:41).

## THE GATHERING

**Matthew 24:30-31:** At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. (NIV)

## THE SOULS OF THE TRIBULATION: A SYNECDOCHE

### These Souls are the Church of Jesus Christ

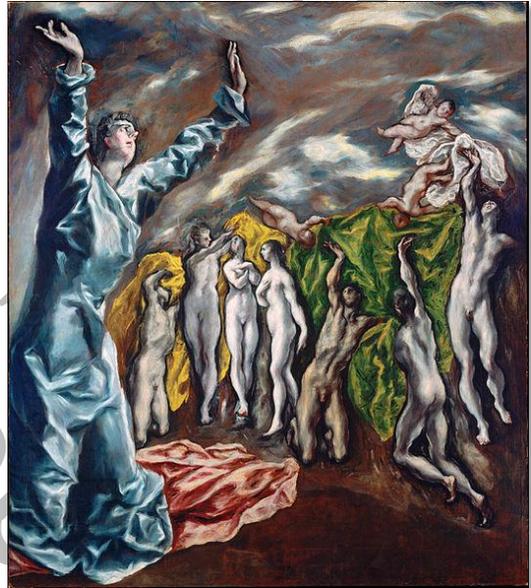
**Revelation 6:9-11:** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed. (NIV)

**Revelation 6:9-11:** The souls under the altar...

**Revelation 7:9-17:** The multitude before the throne...

**Revelation 19:1-8:** The celebration of Christ’s wedding...

**Revelation 20:4-6:** They will reign with Christ...



El Greco: *The Vision of Saint John, or The Opening of the Fifth Seal*, 1608-1614

**Who are these souls under the altar in Revelation 6:9?** As with most scenes within John’s vision, scholars disagree as to the identity of the souls under the altar. Some assert that they are purely symbolic as the “soul” is mortal and will not experience resurrection until the end of the Millennium. Others argue that they are the spirits of Christians killed by the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation. Still others claim they represent all souls from all generations slain for the Word of God, from Abel until the terminal generation.<sup>172</sup> And, still others assert that they represent all redeemed Christians who have died from Christ’s crucifixion to the rapture of the Church. Understanding their identity, I believe, is important in acquiring a comprehensive understanding of the entire book of Revelation.

**Revelation 6:9:** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been **slain because of the word of God** and the testimony they had maintained. (NIV) *[Emphasis added]*

**Revelation 7:14:** And he said, “These are they who have **come out of the great tribulation**; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (NIV) *[Emphasis added]*

**Revelation 17:6:** I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, **the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus**. (NIV) *[Emphasis added]*

<sup>172</sup> Terminal generation: those mortals on earth at the breaking of the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal on the scroll with seven seas; the generation living at the time of Jesus Christ’s Second Coming.

**Revelation 20:4:** ...And I saw the souls of those who had been *beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus* and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

At first glance, it seems that these souls represent only individuals martyred as witnesses under the persecution of the Antichrist and his legions. However, in reality, the Apostle John is utilizing a common figurative language device referred to as a *synecdoche* – using a part of a thing to represent the whole thing. Examples of synecdoche include:

- Using the term “England” to represent the entire United Kingdom.
- Using the phrase “White House” to represent the entire government of the United States.
- Using the label “ABCs” to represent the entire alphabet.
- Using the term “bread” to represent an entire meal.
- Using the phrase “hired hands” to represent workmen.

Within John’s revelation, phrases associated with tribulation and martyrdom represent the entire Church Age – the entire congregation of redeemed believers from the day of Pentecost until the Rapture. Some scholars would assert that this claim requires a significant departure from a plain, literal interpretation. I agree and, therefore, deem it appropriate to provide ample justification:

***The “great tribulation” labels the entire church age and “martyred saints” refers to all redeemed Christians.***

- **SATAN HAS BEEN AT WAR WITH THE SAINTS SINCE CHRIST’S RESURRECTION:** Revelation 12 provides an overview of the cosmic battle between the forces of evil, the dragon Satan, and the forces of good, Michael the archangel. Prior to Christ’s earthly ministry, Satan regularly appeared before the throne of God to accuse mankind of error and misdeed (Job 1:6, Job 2:1, Zechariah 3:1, Psalm 109:6, Revelation 12:10). However, Christ’s earthly ministry, obedient human life, suffering on the cross, sacrificial offering, and resurrection rendered Satan’s accusations irrelevant – Satan lost his place in heaven and was cast down to earth. *See the “Satan Evicted: The Foundation” section of this study.*

This loss of position enraged Satan causing an angry pursuit of Jews and Christians for two millennia:

**Revelation 12:17:** Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (NIV)

Such expulsion, anger, and vengeance results in significant tribulation for the saints:

**1 Peter 5:8:** Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (NIV)

**Revelation 2:10:** Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. (NIV)

Until Jesus Christ takes material possession of this world, the saints remain refugees within a foreign land ruled by Satan:

**2 Corinthians 4:4:** In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (KJV)

**2 Corinthians 11:13-14:** For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (KJV)

**Ephesians 2:2:** Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience... (KJV)

**Ephesians 6:12:** For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (KJV)

- **JOHN'S REVELATION REASSURES CHRISTIANS FACING TRIBULATION:** An original, primary purpose of the book of Revelation was to reassure the early Christian congregation that their tribulation was not in vain. William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, phrases this purpose eloquently:

In the main, the purpose of the book of Revelation is to comfort the militant Church in its struggle against the forces of evil. It is full of help and comfort for persecuted and suffering Christians. To them is given the assurance that God sees their tears (7: 17; 21: 4); their prayers are influential in world affairs (8: 3, 4) and their death is precious in His sight...<sup>173</sup>

Clearly, those who inflict tribulation upon the saints will be avenged:

**Revelation 1:7:** Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. (KJV)

Within the salutation, John clearly indicates that he shares in the congregations' sufferings:

**Revelation 1:9:** I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. (KJV)

Messages to four of the seven churches reflect tribulation within the congregations:

**Revelation 2:3-4:** I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. (KJV)

**Revelation 2:9-10:** I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of

<sup>173</sup> William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation*, Mobi edition: Baker Books, July 2007, np.

Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (KJV)

**Revelation 2:13:** I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. (KJV)

**Revelation 3:9:** Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. (KJV)

The need to remain steadfast against tribulation repeats in all seven messages:

**Revelation 2:7:** ...To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (KJV)

**Revelation 2:11:** ...He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. (KJV)

**Revelation 2:17:** ...To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. (KJV)

**Revelation 2:25-26:** ...he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. (KJV)

**Revelation 3:5:** He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. (KJV)

**Revelation 3:12:** Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. (KJV)

**Revelation 3:21:** To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. (KJV)

It is not be difficult to imagine these early Christians seeing themselves among the crowds described in Revelation 6:9, 7:14, 17:6, and 20:4. Christians throughout the age are comforted knowing their sufferings are not unique and, ultimately, Christ remains victorious.

• **TRIBULATION IS A NORMAL COMPONENT OF CHRISTIAN LIFE:** Although Christians in developed countries generally enjoy religious freedom, that is not the case for many living in non-Christian nations:

*The Christian Post*, 2012: Christian and Hindu minorities in the region are reported to have suffered forced conversions, as well as having their homes repeatedly ransacked. Other accusations have highlighted that young girls from Hindu and Christian backgrounds have allegedly been forced into marriage by radical Muslims.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>174</sup> Stoyan Zaimov, "Christians Among Minorities Facing Increased Persecution in Pakistan, Say Indian Politicians," *The Christian Post*, August 14, 2012. <<http://global.christianpost.com/news/>> August 22, 2012.

*The Catholic Standard and Times*, 2008: The secular West has been looking the other way for a very long time. Even the average church-going Christian is not likely to know that 45.5 million of the estimated 70 million Christians who have died for Christ did so in the last century.<sup>175</sup>

From Stephens martyrdom in Acts 6:8-15 until today, the Christians walk is not always smooth and free of turbulence, suffering, and distress; rather, tribulation should be considered a normal component of Christian life:

**Acts 14:22:** Confirming the souls of the disciples, [and] exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. (KJV)

**John 16:33:** These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (KJV)

**Romans 5:3:** And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope. (KJV)

Within the epistles, the promise of God to punishment those inflicting tribulation parallels that requested by the saints within Revelation 6:10:

**Revelation 6:10:** And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? (KJV)

**2 Thessalonians 1:5-6:** [Which is] a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing [it is] a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you. (KJV)

**2 Thessalonians 1:8:** In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

**Romans 12:19:** Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but [rather] give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance [is] mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (KJV)

- **THE CONTEXT WITHIN REVELATION 20:4-6 IMPLIES THE PRESENCE OF ALL CHRISTIAN SAINTS:** If the Rapture of the Church occurs prior to the Millennial Kingdom, and scripture indicates that it does, then the resurrected saints will be present throughout Christ's Millennial Kingdom:

**1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17:** For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. ***And so we will be with the Lord forever.*** (NIV) [Emphasis added]

<sup>175</sup> Susan Brinkmann, "The Greatest Story Never Told: Modern Christian Martyrdom," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, December 5, 2008. < <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/-religion/2143770/posts>> August 22, 2012.

Although not specifically stated, Christ's presence is directly implied within Revelation 20:4-6:

**Revelation 20:5-6:** ... This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. (NIV)

Specifically, the New Testament indicates that true Christians will reign with Christ:

**1 Corinthians 6:2:** Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? (NIV)

**Revelation 2:26:** To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations. (NIV)

**Romans 8:16-17:** The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Therefore, although not specifically stated, the tribulation saints include all true Christians:

**Revelation 20:4-5:** I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. (NIV)

In conclusion, while many scholars believe the martyred saints within the book of Revelation are those murdered by the Antichrist, a comprehensive examination of the New Testament reveals that contextually the martyred saints in Revelation represent all true Christians throughout the age. While it is important to preserve a plain meaning of a passage when possible, it is also important to recognize the use of figurative language within biblical scripture. In this case, the Apostle Paul deploys an extended synecdoche to enable the reader, especially those suffering from persecution, to personally identify with the prophetic visions and Christ's ultimate victory at His Second Coming.

## SEAL 5: THE PURPOSE OF TRIBULATION

The first four seals represent a logical progression of cause and effect: conquest leads to war, war leads to famine, and famine leads to pestilence and death. The 5<sup>th</sup> Seal represents a different and unique aspect of this time period: the persecution and martyrdom of redeemed Christian believers:

- **Altar:** The Hebrew name for Altar signifies: "It wipes away sin; it nourishes the higher man; it fosters love for God; and it atones for all guilt:" its four letters point to Forgiveness, Justification, Blessing, and Life.<sup>176</sup>
- **Soul:** *psuché*: breath, soul: (a) the vital breath, breath of life, (b) the human soul, (c) the soul as the seat of affections and will, (d) the self, (e) a human person, an individual.<sup>177</sup>
- **Testimony:** *martyrian*: witness, evidence, testimony, reputation.<sup>178</sup>

What is the purpose of the first four seals – conquest, war, famine, pestilence, wild beasts, and death? What purpose does the presence of Christian saints serve? Why can't this age simply end and the next

<sup>176</sup> "ALTAR," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906. <<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1320-altar>> August 22, 2012.

<sup>177</sup> "psuché," 5590, *Strong's Concordance: Bible Concordances*, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/5590.htm>> August 22, 2012.

<sup>178</sup> "martyrian," 3141, *Strong's Concordance: Bible Concordances*, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/3141.htm>> August 21, 2012.

begin? The simple answer: “A desire for a maximized harvest within the capacity of human potential – to redeem as many souls as possible.”

**2 Peter 3:9:** The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (NIV)

**1 Timothy 2:3-4:** This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (NIV)

For millennia, God has offered humanity redemption through a variety of presentations... in the garden, in the wilderness, in the Temple, and in the church. For millennia, humans remained a stiff-necked people and rejected these offerings. The seal judgments and the trumpet plagues present two last, almost desperate opportunities before the final outpouring of unforgiving God’s wrath upon mankind.

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## MARTYRDOM: WITNESSES FOR THE WORLD

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Some biblical scholars assert that the Christian Church is not found in Revelation 4-19.<sup>179</sup> Yet, there is ample evidence that they are represented; their role, however, changes. Christians within Revelation 4-19 are not viewed as multiple, unified congregations but rather as overcoming individuals suffering hatred, persecution, and martyrdom. The purpose for this change seems readily evident:

**Mark 13:9-13:** You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit... he who stands firm to the end will be saved. (NIV)

**Luke 21:12-15:** But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. (NIV)

During the great tribulation, the purpose of redeemed Christians is to serve as witnesses before kings and governors. If we look for such witnesses within Revelation 4-19, we readily see their presence:

**Revelation 6:9:** ...who had been slain because of the **word of God** and the **testimony** they had maintained. (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

**Revelation 12:11:** They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the **word of their testimony**... (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

**Revelation 12:17:** ...to make war against the rest of her offspring--those who obey God's commandments and **hold to the testimony of Jesus**. (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

**Revelation 17:6:** ...drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore **testimony to Jesus**... (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

**Revelation 19:10:** ...I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who **hold to the testimony of Jesus**... (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

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<sup>179</sup> Dr. Robert Gromacki, "Where is 'the Church' in Revelation 4-19?" Pre-Trib Research Center, ND. <<http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Gromacki-WhereistheChurchinRev.pdf>> September 1, 2012.

**Revelation 20:4:** ...who had been beheaded because of *their testimony for Jesus* and because of *the word of God...* (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

**Why is such severity necessary within the first four seals?** Humans are a stiff-necked people. They don't listen and they don't obey. Although Christianity, like Western culture, permeates virtually every culture on earth, the Church is not winning the greater battle:

- **Declining Moral Values:** Postmillennialists believe that we are currently living in Christ's Messianic Kingdom and that this kingdom exercises "a transformational socio-cultural influence in history."<sup>180</sup> They envision the gradual expansion of Christ's kingdom here on earth:

Postmillennialism confidently anticipates a time in earth history (continuous with the present) in which the very gospel already operating will win the victory throughout the earth, fulfilling the Great Commission... The overwhelming majority of men and nations will be Christianized, righteousness will abound, wars will cease, and prosperity and safety will flourish.<sup>181</sup>

Unfortunately, instead of moving towards realization of Christ's Messianic Kingdom, modern society seems to be moving in an opposing direction:

With Christian fundamentalists and Islamic extremists waging a holy war against modern democratic values, traditional religion has never had so many enemies. University professors are starting to openly attack it, and the hardworking masses are starting to question what it is worth.

Thanks to the uncensored freedom of speech only made possible by the Internet, there is a growing chorus of resentment towards religion, and scathing criticisms are starting to echo into the mass media. For the first time in more than 1500 years, it is finally becoming socially acceptable to be openly anti-Christian.<sup>182</sup>

- **Are modern humans building a second tower of Babel?** Modern humans are increasingly speaking "one language and a common speech" through science, medicine, political engineering, and economic globalization. Human progress, many believe, will end conflict, hunger, disease, poverty, and want... mankind no longer needs a god:

Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist....It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going. – *The Grand Design* (Hawking and Mlodinow 2010)<sup>183</sup>

- **Is societal politics slowly removing God from existence?** Groups antagonistic to our Judeo-Christian heritage have made steady progress in removing the emblems of faith: nativities from

<sup>180</sup> Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., "SUMMARY OF POSTMILLENNIALISM FEATURES," *Postmillennialism*, August 14, 2012. <<http://postmillennialism.com/2012/08/postmillennialism-features/>> August 21, 2012.

<sup>181</sup> Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., "SUMMARY OF POSTMILLENNIALISM FEATURES," *Postmillennialism*, August 14, 2012. <<http://postmillennialism.com/2012/08/postmillennialism-features/>> August 21, 2012.

<sup>182</sup> Robert Charles Stewart, "Smashing the Sacred Myths," *Antichrist Atheist Network*, 2005. <[http://www.antichrist.net/rise\\_fall.html#tdoc](http://www.antichrist.net/rise_fall.html#tdoc)> September 1, 2012.

<sup>183</sup> quoted in Aaron Saenz, "Stephen Hawking Says God is Unnecessary – New Book," *Singularity Hub*, September 7, 2010. <<http://singularityhub.com/2010/09/07/stephen-hawking-says-god-is-unnecessary-new-book-and-video/>> August 21, 2012.

courthouse lawns, Ten Commandment from classroom walls, crosses from city logos, and prayer from public meetings. Multiculturalism, political correctness, and religious tolerance have become euphemisms for thought control... Principles of ethics such as the traditional marriage, abstinence, and personal responsibility have become casualties of moral relativism.

*The Washington Times*, 2012: The last generation has seen a continual increase – sometimes faster, sometimes slower – of a vocal, intolerant, and openly belligerent attitudes towards traditional moral values.

With complicit news media, entertainment industry, and public school systems, a generation has been indoctrinated into self centeredness, hedonism, victimhood, an entitlement mentality, and an “anything goes” attitude. The result: a culture war that mirrors the spiritual battle between those aligned with Biblical truths and those who denigrate them.<sup>184</sup>

The theme of “Declining Moral Values” is not new. For generations, the elders have claimed that the young have become repulsively immoral. Yet, perhaps, at least in America, we have truly reached the breaking point:

*The Hartland Institute*, 2012: Indeed, those who still held strongly to Christian morality were branded as narrow-minded, void of love, and exercising bigotry. Instead of rejecting immoral practices and behaviors, society began to consider them alternative lifestyles. If this had been limited to those who practice these sins in the secular world, it might be understandable. But society has greatly influenced many people in the Christian world, who now believe that God desires us to accept such sinful behavior.<sup>185</sup>

- **Is this a sign that we are in the last days?** Perhaps, but I believe that things will steadily grow worse. Conservative politicians continue to espouse their belief in God, and they continue to win elections, especially in the South. This too will change one day. But, perhaps, we are close:

**2 Timothy 3:1-5:** ...There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power... (NIV)

- **When the “restrainer” is taken out of the way, then we will experience immorality of Titanic proportions:**

**2 Thessalonians 2:7:** For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. (NIV)

Rampant immorality will not be limited to the secular world; unfortunately, the great tribulation will also experience a falling away of the faithful:

<sup>184</sup> “Chick-fil-A and the silent voting majority,” *The Washington Times*, August 25, 2012. <<http://communities.washingtontimes.com/neighborhood/biblical-politics/2012/08/25/chick-fil-a-and-silent-voting-majority/>> September 1, 2012.

<sup>185</sup> Colin Standish, “Declining Moral Values,” *The Hartland Institute of Health and Education*, April 20, 2012. <<http://hartland.edu/institute/428/declining-moral-values/>> September 1, 2012.

**1 Timothy 4:1:** The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. (NIV)

**2 Timothy 4:3-4:** For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (NIV)

- **In the latter days, our verbal witness and moral example will be ineffectual:** Within the current age, we assume that our words and behaviors serve as a witness for Christ. Yet, in the latter days, those two actions will serve as a source of antagonism – a reminder that the wicked are living wickedly. Instead of encouraging a nonbeliever to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord, they will incite hatred, anger, and vengeance. They will be ineffective as witnesses for Jesus Christ.

What then should we do, surrender? No, absolutely not. The Lord patiently endures humanity. Despite suffering the the humility of an immoral, rebellious, and disobedient race, God permitted His Son to walk among them, endure verbal abuse, physical suffering, spiritual separation, and eventual physical death in order to redeem their souls from their own wickedness. Since God gives His last full measure, we also should be so willing:

***Martyrdom is that last full human measure  
and the most effective Witness of Jesus Christ.***

**witness:** *martyres: martus:* a witness; an eye- or ear-witness<sup>186</sup>

**1 John 3:16:** This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. (NIV)

Although we are beheaded and crucified, and exposed to wild beasts and chains and flames, and every other means of torture, it is evident that we will not retract our profession of faith; the more we are persecuted, the more do others in ever-increasing numbers embrace the faith and become worshippers of God through the name of Jesus. – Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* c. 132 AD<sup>187</sup>

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## WINNOWING: THE GREAT APOSTASY

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Proponents of a pretribulational Rapture assert that the Church was “purified solely by the completed work of Christ on the Cross.”<sup>188</sup> Unfortunately, that claim isn’t entirely true. Today, there are some 41,000 Christian denominations and 3.18 billion Christians throughout the world.<sup>189</sup> Does each of denomination teach the true Gospel of Jesus Christ? How many of these promote “strange teachings?” (Hebrews 13:9) How many have been led astray by the deception of Satan? Has each self-proclaimed Christian truly accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior and Lord? How many

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<sup>186</sup> “martyrian,” 3141, Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/3141.htm>> September 1, 2012.

<sup>187</sup> quoted in Kevin P. Edgecomb, “Dialogue with Trypho,” bombaxo.com, ND. <<http://www.bombaxo.com/trypho.htm>> August 21, 2012.

<sup>188</sup> Grant R. Jeffrey, “from TRIUMPHANT RETURN: Why Do Some Teach that the Church will Endure the Tribulation?” Grant R. Jeffrey Ministries: Prophecies Online, ND. <[http://www.grantjeffrey.com/article/why\\_some\\_reject.htm](http://www.grantjeffrey.com/article/why_some_reject.htm)> August 21, 2012.

<sup>189</sup> Mary Fairchild, “Christianity Today - General Statistics and Facts of Christianity,” About.com Guide. ND. <<http://christianity.about.com/od/denominations/p/christiantoday.htm>> August 21, 2012.

have confessed Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Messiah? How many are merely social or cultural Christians?

The “Church” is not a single, coherent body that strictly adheres to the gospels and the epistles. The Church is filled with strife, conflict, and disagreement. In fact, in times past, the Church was one of the greatest perpetrators of hate, terror, oppression, persecution, and bloodshed. Within the modern world, “good” Christians have sexually abused children, scammed money from the elderly, perpetuated hoaxes in the name of God, and espoused venomous hatred and intolerance. The claim that the Church lacks a need for purification ignores reality.

- **ETERNAL SECURITY V. ETERNAL ASSURANCE**

Eternal Security is the belief that once an unbeliever accepts Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, loss of salvation becomes impossible – once saved, always saved. Proponents of this belief often cite Romans 8:38-39 in partial support:

**Romans 8:38-39:** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV)

This reassuring passage provides strength and comfort to those enduring suffering and tribulation. Paul is confident<sup>190</sup> that nothing can come between us and the love of God... There are many such reassuring passages. Certainly, we can be fully confident that once we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior that He will not forsake or abandon us. However, just as a coin has two sides, ***we should never ignore*** those scriptures that illustrate a flip side to these assurances:

What if we later — BELIEVE NOT? Our salvation is so secure — even if we BELIEVE NOT after we're saved, because we become part of Him (the body of Christ), ". . .yet he abideth faithful: HE CANNOT DENY HIMSELF."

"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: HE CANNOT DENY HIMSELF." 2 Timothy 2:13<sup>191</sup>

Within the argument provided above, the author ignores the preceding verse that demonstrates that we, as individuals, are fully capable of abandoning the faith, surrendering our redemption:

**2 Timothy 2:12:** ... if we endure, we will also reign with him. ***If we disown him, he will also disown us...*** (NIV) [*Emphasis added. See also Matthew 10:33, Luke 12:9*]

Certainly, the Lord will not abandon us. Certainly, the Lord will never place more upon us than we can withstand. Certainly, the Lord will provide an avenue of escape when necessary:

**1 Corinthians 10:13:** No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (NIV)

<sup>190</sup> "pepeismai," 3982. Strong's Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/3982.htm>> September, 2, 2012.

<sup>191</sup> Terry Watkins, "Can a born again Christian ever lose his salvation?" Dial-the-Truth Ministries. ND. <<http://www.av1611.org/etern.html>> September 2, 2012.

However, we do not surrender free will upon accepting salvation; we retain the power and authority of choice. Clearly, it is easy to remain in the faith when times are easy, but the days will come, and perhaps has already arrived, when humans will surrender their faith in order to follow a different path:

**1 Timothy 4:1:** The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. (NIV) [See also 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 1 John 2:18, Luke 21:19, Matthew 10:22, Mark 13:13]

Some proponents of Eternal Security might assert, "Yes, but these are the ones that were never truly saved." However, the following verses render that claim doubtful. Clearly, the following verses describe those who have experienced the fullness and richness of salvation. Certainly, they described those who freely, willingly, and forcefully abandon the faith:

**Hebrews 6:4-6:** It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. (NIV)

**2 Peter 2:20-21:** If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. (NIV)

[See also Hebrews 10:26; Revelation 2:5, 2:16, 3:15-16; Matthew 24:13]

Certainly, not all who believe that they are saved are truly saved. Many Christians are taught and believe that simple belief is sufficient. Such simplicity, while eloquent, is faulty:

*How do we know we are saved? We know that we are saved because we confess the Lord and believe that we are saved. But the Bible says that "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven." Well, those are individuals who were never truly saved. How then do we know that we are saved? We know that we are saved because we confess the Lord and believe that we are saved...*

**Matthew 7:21:** Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (NIV)

**James 2:19:** You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. (NIV) [See also Luke 6:43-49, James 1:22, Romans 2:13]

Certainly, salvation is a gift that is freely given. It may not be earned, bought, or deserved:

**Romans 6:23:** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV)

**Ephesians 2:8-9:** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast. (NIV)

While works cannot purchase or preserve redemption, the **true faith produce works – fruit**:

**James 2:14-17**: What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. (NASB) [See also James 2:20,26, Matthew 7:15-20]

Those who hold to the doctrine of Eternal Security would be wise to review the scriptures listed here and consider the possibility that there is a difference between eternal security and eternal assurance. While we are young, immature Christians, simplicity permits a glimpse into the complexities of God’s Word. However, when we mature, we should be capable and willing to accept the more difficult points of scripture:

**Matthew 12:31**: Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. (NASB) [See Mark 3:28, Luke 12:10]

- **THE APOSTASY: THE FALLING AWAY**

Ultimately, for the purpose of this study, the doctrine of Eternal Security is potentially dangerous. Multiple passages indicate that not all who receive the Gospel will endure the hardship, distress, persecution, and martyrdom that will be prevalent during the latter days.

**Revelation 13:7**: He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. (NIV)

**2 Thessalonians 2:3**: Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for [that day will not come] until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. (NIV)

**the rebellion**: *apostasia*: defection, revolt.<sup>192</sup>

**1 Timothy 4:1-2**: The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. (NIV)

**will abandon**: *aphistémi*: to lead away, to depart from<sup>193</sup>

**Matthew 24:10-12**: At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. (NIV)

**turn away**: *skandalizó*: to put a snare (in the way), hence to cause to stumble, to give offense.<sup>194</sup>

Many scholars attempt to rationalize these scriptures... a different denomination perhaps, one that doesn’t adhere to biblical principles... social Christians perhaps, ones who have never truly

<sup>192</sup> “apostasia,” 646, Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/646.htm>> August 21, 2012.

<sup>193</sup> “aphistémi,” 868, Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/868.htm>> August 21, 2012.

<sup>194</sup> “skandalizó,” 4624, Strong’s Concordance: Bible Concordances, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/4624.htm>> August 21, 2012.

accepted the Lord as their Lord and Savior... individuals who started the process but never genuinely received Christ as Savior (the Parable of the Sower)...

Once again, we must be very careful about circular reasoning:

*How do we know we are saved? We know that we are saved because we confess the Lord and believe that we are saved. But the Bible says that "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven." Well, those are individuals who were never truly saved. How then do we know that we are saved? We know that we are saved because we confess the Lord and believe that we are saved...*

Ultimately, death comes to us all and the one who stands firm until the end will be saved:

**Matthew 10:22:** All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. (NIV) [See also Matthew 24:13, Mark 13:13, Luke 21:19, Hebrews 3:6]

- **THE WINNOWING IN THE LATTER DAYS**

Irrespective on your personal stance on eternal security, there will be a noticeable and substantial winnowing process during the latter days:

**Matthew 3:12:** His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire. (NIV)

**WINNOWING:** A step in the processing of grain whereby the grain is separated from the inedible parts. The stalks are thrown into the air, and the wind blows away the chaff and the straw, letting the heavier pure grain fall back to the ground (Isaiah 30:24).<sup>195</sup>

**CHAFF:** Refuse; worthless matter; especially that which is light, and apt to be driven by the wind. In scripture, false doctrines, fruitless designs, hypocrites and ungodly men are compared to chaff.<sup>196</sup>

True Christians will face the winnowing. In fact, Peter, the cornerstone of the Church, faced just a sifting by none other than Satan:

**Luke 22:31:** Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. (NIV)

The personal pronoun "you" in this passage is plural and indicates Peter will not be alone in the sifting. What is sifting?

To "sift you as wheat" is a metaphor for a trial of faith. When wheat is sifted, the chaff and impurities fall to the ground while the desired end product – i.e. good wheat – remains in the sieve. We believers are wheat not chaff. When God sifts us through our post-salvation trials we become like the good wheat: cleaner, more valuable, and ready for use.<sup>197</sup>

<sup>195</sup> "WINNOWING," Holman Bible Dictionary, 1991. <<http://www.studydrive.org/dic/hbd/view.cgi?number=T6463>> August 21, 2012.

<sup>196</sup> "Chaff," KJV Dictionary Definition: Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828, 2012. <<http://av1611.com/kjbp/kjv-dictionary/chaff.html>> August 21, 2012.

<sup>197</sup> Patrick Layhee "The Believer's Sifting," God's Career Guide, ND. <<http://godscareerguide.com/the-believers-sifting/>> August 21, 2012.

How are we sifted? We are sifted through trials and tribulation... difficult times that test our faith... temptations that draw our eyes away from God. Like muscle building, exercise breaks down muscle so that the new muscle rebuilds itself stronger, tougher, and more resilient.

**1 Peter 1:6-7:** In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (NIV)

Faithful and faithless – passionate and lukewarm – devoted and social – fundamental and reformed – Roman, Eastern, and Protestant – orthodox and liberal – devout and backslidden – fruitful and fruitless Christians will be winnowed... the great tribulation will separate the chaff from the wheat. The chaff, those who disown Jesus Christ, will fall away; the wheat, those who continually confess Jesus Christ, will remain steadfast. There will be hatred, hardship, imprisonment, torture, persecution, and martyrdom. But he who stands firm...

**Matthew 10:22:** All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. (NIV)

## SEAL 6: THE GATHERING

### THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

The Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, serves as a foundation for New Testament prophecies associated with the transition from the current age to the next. Within this discourse, the Lord Jesus Christ describes many events occurring prior to His return in the clouds. A plain reading of reveals that ordinary Christians, those belonging to the Church Age, will endure turbulent times and will not be removed (Raptured) after the Abomination of Desolation occurs.

However, the timeline established within the Olivet Discourse does not fit the one created by proponents of a pretribulation Rapture. They believe that the Christian Church will be removed from this world (Raptured) prior to the start of the events the Olivet Discourse describes. Because this difficulty, pretribulationists assert that the “gathered saints” within the discourse are individuals other than ordinary, current age Christians:

1. In the process of that return, apparently as our Lord descends, He will then send out His angelic company to gather in the Jewish, believing remnant that He will rescue from the danger of all the world's armies who have gathered by the anti-Christ in an attack upon Israel and Jerusalem.<sup>198</sup>
2. His elect have to be gathered up from all over heaven to come back with Him. In order to be scattered all over the place they have to have arrived some amount of time before the Lord's return in Power and Great Glory.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>198</sup> Thomas Ice, “An Interpretation of Matthew 24—25: Part XXVIII,” *Rapture Ready*, ND. <[http://www.raptureready.com/featured/ice/AnInterpretationofMatthew24\\_25\\_28.html](http://www.raptureready.com/featured/ice/AnInterpretationofMatthew24_25_28.html)> September 3, 2012.

<sup>199</sup> “The Rapture In Matthew 24?” *Grace Thru Faith: Ask a Bible Teacher*, April 21, 2006. <<http://gracethrufaith.com/ask-a-bible-teacher/the-rapture-in-matthew-24/>> September 3, 2012.

3. Matthew 24 is a reference to the Jewish remnant who will come to faith in the Messiahship of Jesus during the tribulation period... The contextual usage of Matthew supports the elect as a reference to Israel because of the Jewish orientation of the passage.<sup>200</sup>
4. The elect here are those new believers (left behind after the rapture) alive on earth who survived the tribulation period, still in their natural physical bodies. If the elect are raptured at this time (Second Coming) then no one would be left to populate the earth during the new millennium...<sup>201</sup>

These claims are in error and ignore a plain reading of the text. We should always accept a plain reading unless there is substantial, scriptural evidence to indicate otherwise. The following arguments address those pretribulation premises used in support of the claims above. Other unrelated pretribulation arguments are addressed within the Appendix of this study.

1. **PREMISE: The Olivet Discourse was directed to Jews and understood as a Jews. The gathering of the elect, therefore, refers to the gathering of remnant Israel returning them to Jerusalem.**

The Olivet Discourse was directed to Christ's Disciples who had a limited understanding of Christ's overall mission and would have, at the time the words were spoken, understood the message as Jews. However, the speaker, Jesus Christ, would have understood His own words and would have understood how they would be applied in the future. While we should always consider the audience, we should also understand that Christ's words were not always understood by the audience during His earthly ministry; rather many messages targeted a different audience – the Christian congregation during the current age:

**John 10:6:** This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them. (NASB)

The Gospels were not written until after Pentecost... after the mystery of the Church had been revealed. While many New Testament passages have a Jewish angle, they were transcribed by Christians for Christians.

I certainly agree that the angels in this discourse are gathering remnant Israel in order to be sealed (Revelation 7:1-8); however, ordinary Christians, those belonging to the current age, are also being resurrected at this time (Revelation 7:9-17). Therefore, the "elect" within this discourse refer to both the remnant of Israel and the Christian Church.

2. **PREMISE: Matthew 24 includes a number of Old Testament references indicating that the "elect" are the remnant of Israel.**

It is true that the Olivet Discourse contains a number of Old Testament allusions: Deuteronomy 30:4-5, Isaiah 11:11-12, and Isaiah 27:12-13. This argument is also consistent with Revelation, Chapter 7, where the angels at the four corners of the earth hold back the four winds until the seal of the living God has been placed on the foreheads of 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe. Therefore, I agree that a portion of the "elect" are remnants of Israel.

<sup>200</sup> Thomas Ice, "MATTHEW 24:31: RAPTURE OR SECOND COMING?" Pre-Trib Research Center: Tom's Perspectives, ND. <<http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ice-Matthew2431RaptureOrS.pdf>> September 3, 2012.

<sup>201</sup> Tim Osterholm, "THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE: A SELF-EVIDENT PROMISE," SoundChristian.com, ND. <<http://www.soundchristian.com/prophecy/>> September 3, 2012.

However, the passage is also consistent with the resurrection of current age Christians. In Revelation 6:9-11, John's vision describes the "souls" of those martyred because of their testimony, and they are told to wait a "little longer." In Revelation 7:9-17, John describes a multitude from every nation, tribe, and people... similar to Revelation 6:9-11 except these are no longer described as "souls."

What is between the "souls" under the altar and the multitude before the throne?

Matthew 24:29-30	Revelation 6:12-18, 7:1
immediately after the distress of those days	(follows the turmoil of the first four seals)
	a great earthquake
the sun will be darkened	sun turned black like sackcloth
the moon will not give its light	the whole moon turned blood red
the stars will fall from the sky	the stars in the sky fell to earth
the heavenly bodies will be shaken	the sky receded like a scroll
	every mountain and island was moved
the sign of the son of man will appear in the sky	"Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the lamb!"
all the nations of the earth will mourn.	the kings of the earth, the princes... hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains
Angels with a loud trump... gather his elect from the four winds four	angels standing at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth

While not an exact match, they are sufficiently parallel that the relationship should not be ignored. The parallelism, in my mind, is clear. The Rapture of the Church and the gathering of remnant Israel occur at the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal. Both the sealed Jew and the raptured Christian comprise the "elect" within the Olivet Discourse.

3. **PREMISE: the differences between Paul's Thessalonians statements and Matthew 24:30-31 far outweigh any alleged similarities.**

Where does Paul mention the darkening of the sun (Matt. 24:29), the moon not giving its light (Matt. 24:29), the stars falling from the sky (Matt. 24:29), the powers of the heavens being shaken (Matt. 24:29), all the tribes of the earth mourning (Matt. 24:30), all the world seeing the coming of the Son of Man (Matt. 24:30), or God sending forth angels (Matt. 24:31)<sup>202</sup>

If each biblical passage contained every possible minute detail relevant to that passage, the Bible would be too large for a normal human to carry. Rather, each biblical passage contains limited detail... Two or more passages are frequently used in combination in order to acquire a more complete picture. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 both describe the Rapture and, in combination, provide a more complete picture than either would in isolation.

Therefore, the question should not involve what additional information a second passage contains but rather does anything within the two passage conflict:

<sup>202</sup> John A. Sproule, quoted in Thomas Ice, "Matthew 24:31: Rapture Or Second Coming?" Pre-Trib Research Center, ND. <<http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/lce-Matthew2431RaptureOrS.pdf>> Nov. 9, 2011.

(a) In Matthew the Son of Man comes on the clouds, while in 1 Thessalonians 4 the ascending believers are in them. (b) In Matthew the angels gather the elect; in 1 Thessalonians the Lord Himself (note the emphasis) gathers the believers. Thessalonians only speaks of the voice of the archangel. (c) In the Olivet Discourse nothing is said about a resurrection, while in the latter text it is the central point. (d) In the two passages the differences in what will take place prior to the appearance of Christ is striking. (e) Moreover, the order of ascent is absent from Matthew in spite of the fact that it is the central part of the epistle.<sup>203</sup>

At first glance, there seems to be little substance in the above argument; however, I'll offer the following as a response:

- (a) If the resurrected saints are going to meet Christ in the air, then we would expect Christ to be in the clouds to meet them.
- (b) 1 Thessalonians 4 states that Christ himself will descend from heaven; it does not claim that Christ will personally gather the believers. Even if Christ gathers the elect, angels, as agents of Christ, could be responsible for the physical task. Nevertheless, I believe the angels are gathering the remnant of Israel at the same time Christians are being translated into immortal bodies. There doesn't seem to be a material conflict.
- (c) The "from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens" (Mark 13:27) seems to imply a universal gathering including the grave. But perhaps, the passage wasn't clear and the Apostle Paul chose to clarify the process in both Corinthians and Thessalonians. The absence of a particular detail in one passage does not indicate that two separate passages are not speaking of the same event.
- (d) Neither Thessalonians nor Corinthians provide details of what will take place prior to the Christ's coming. We could assume that such details were unnecessary because they were provided within the Olivet Discourse. The primary focus in both Thessalonians and Corinthians is the resurrection; neither is intended to teach the details surrounding Christ's coming or the end of the age.
- (e) The order of ascent is emphasized in Thessalonians to quell a dispute among the congregation; some members apparently were concerned that the dead would not be resurrected during the first resurrection but later during the general resurrection at the end of the Millennial Kingdom.

4. **PREMISE: Paul said we shall be changed in a moment leaving no time for a sign to be given.**

This argument and similar arguments assert that the entire Rapture process will be an extremely short duration – in a twinkling of an eye. However, this is not what the passage states:

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52:** Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

The Rapture is a multi-step process: (1) Christ descends, (2) the command is given, (3) the dead rise-change, (4) the living rise-change, (5) we meet Him in the air, and (6) we return to heaven. 1

<sup>203</sup> Paul D. Feinberg quoted in Thomas Ice, "MATTHEW 24:31: RAPTURE OR SECOND COMING?" Tom's Perspectives, Pre-Trib Research Center, ND. <<http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ice-Matthew2431RaptureOrS.pdf>> Nov. 9, 2011.

Corinthians 15:51-52 only speaks to one element – the change. The change from “corruptible” bodies to “incorruptible” bodies only takes a moment – in the twinkling of an eye.

Starting with verse 35, the passage discusses the two types of bodies – fleshly bodies and celestial bodies. The passage does not discuss all steps involved in the Rapture – only one, the change from the fleshly body to the celestial body. Attempting to link this passage to the timing of any other steps in the Rapture process is an error.

5. **PREMISE: The sign is not Jesus in the sky, but rather a sign that Jesus is in heaven.**

The Son of man being in Heaven means He is on the throne. And there would be a sign to indicate that! This is what the verse is saying... The Son of man came in clouds TO THE THRONE... not to the earth. And He went and took dominion. This is precisely what we read in Revelation.<sup>204</sup>

This argument refers to Daniel 7:13. Reverend Blume asserts that Christ will not descend to earth in Matthew 24:30 but the tribes of the earth will mourn because they see Jesus Christ sitting on His heavenly throne and assuming dominion over the earth from there.

First, the “sign in the heavens” is specifically defined by Mark’s parallel passage as coming (*erchomai*: to come, go) in the clouds (*nephelé*: a cloud). The sign is not Christ sitting on the heavenly throne but rather Christ’s physically appearing in the sky:

**Mark 13:26:** And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

Second, Daniel 7:13-14 does not parallel Matthew 24:30 but rather is a foreshadowing of Revelation, Chapter 5, the handing of the scroll with seven seals to Jesus Christ. By handing this scroll, the title deed to planet earth, to Jesus Christ, the Father is giving Christ authority to take material possession of the planet and establish His Millennial Kingdom.

**Daniel 7:13-14:** I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

Matthew 24:30 does allude to Daniel 7:13-14 and indicates humanity will understand that Christ’s physical appearance within the clouds marks the beginning of the reclamation process.

Third, the use of the phrase “coming in the clouds” appears to be a double entente – a figure of speech where the term has double meaning.

The first meaning indicates that Jesus Christ possesses the glory of the Father as well as power and dominion over earth. The phrase “coming in the clouds” parallels Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27, and Revelation 1:7, and it also appears in Matthew 26:64 and Mark 16:62 in response to the

<sup>204</sup> Rev. Mike Blume, “Is There A Resurrection Foretold In Matthew 24?” [mikeblume.com](http://mikeblume.com). October 2002. <<http://mikeblume.com/mat24res.htm>> Nov. 9, 2011.

High Priest asking Jesus if he was the Christ. Revelation 14:14 describes Jesus Christ sitting on a cloud supervising the reaping the wicked of the earth:

*from Cloud*  
International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

The metaphoric and symbolic uses of clouds are many, and furnish some of the most powerful figures of Scripture. In the Old Testament, Yahweh's presence is made manifest and His glory shown forth in a cloud. The cloud is usually spoken of as bright and shining, and it could not be fathomed by man: "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, so that no prayer can pass through" (Lam 3:44). Yahweh Himself was present in the cloud (Ex 19:9; 24:16; 34:5) and His glory filled the places where the cloud was (Ex 16:10; 40:38; Nu 10:34); "The cloud filled the house of Yahweh" (1 Ki 8:10).<sup>205</sup>

The second meaning of the double entente indicates that Christ will physically arrive in the clouds to gather his elect:

**Acts 1:9-11:** And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17:** For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Is the allusion of Jesus Christ coming with the clouds within Daniel 7:13 tied exclusively to Matthew 24:30, or can the allusion be applied generally as a characteristic of Christ? I tend to believe that it is a general characteristic reflecting that Jesus Christ shares the glory of God:

**Matthew 17:5:** While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

**Luke 9:34-35:** While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear him."

6. **CONCLUSION: The Olivet Discourse describes the *Parousia*, the Rapture.**

Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 do not describe the Second Advent of Jesus Christ – His physical return to earth with his heavenly host to redeem the earth from the clutches of Satan. It does describe the signs occurring immediately before His coming in the clouds to gather the Christian believer and remnant Israel from the four corners of the earth:

- The prophecies were directed Christ's disciples. Many of these disciples had already recognized Jesus as the promised messiah (Matthew 16:13-20), received instruction

<sup>205</sup> "Cloud," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: Bible History Online, ND. <<http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/C/CLOUD/>> Nov. 9, 2011.

concerning Jesus Christ's final days on earth (Matthew 16:21-28), and viewed Christ's transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13). Christ's disciples were Jews but by Matthew, Chapter 24, they were spiritually more Christian than orthodox Jew. Nevertheless, the words were spoken by Jesus Christ and transcribed after Pentecost... There is no justifiable cause to restrict their application to the Jews.

- The allusion to the Old Testament passages of Deuteronomy 30:4-5, Isaiah 11:11-12, and Isaiah 27:12-13 does not restrict the Olivet Discourse to a Jewish understanding. The Olivet Discourse serves three primary purposes: (1) forewarn 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews of the impending disasters occurring in 70 AD, (2) describe the closing events of the current age preceding the removal of the Christian congregation, and (3) describe the events that will initiate to coming age and the regathering of the Israeli remnant. The latter two purposes are reflected within Revelation, Chapter 7.
- Matthew 24:31 contains a trumpet call similar to those in Thessalonians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:52. Though trumpet calls are not uncommon within biblical passages, the mention of one in all three text provides additional cohesion to my assertion.
- Within the New Testament, the followers of Jesus Christ are often referred to as the "elect" (Romans 11:7, Colossians 3:12, 2 Peter 1:10). Since the Gospels were transcribed after Pentecost, referring to the "elect" as Christians within the discourse remains consistent.
- The gathering of the Christian elect in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14 is consistent with the resurrection of the Christian congregation in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 as both follow the revealing of the Abomination of Desolation.
- The Olivet Discourse responses to the disciple's question, "What shall be the signs of your coming (*parousia*)?" The same word used in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1.
- The natural calamities described within the Olivet Discourse closely correlate with the natural calamities within Revelation 6:12-14 and is immediately followed by the sealing remnant Israel and the appearance of the great multitude before the throne of God.

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## COSMIC DISTURBANCES: THE DAY OF THE LORD

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Just as most of John's Revelation, scholars offer various interpretations for the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal including violent volcanic eruptions, solar eclipses, and shifts in the earth's magnetic poles. Some interpretations remain strictly literal while other purely symbolic. Few recognize the full implications related to this event:

**Revelation 6:12-16:** <sup>12</sup>I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, <sup>13</sup>and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. <sup>14</sup>The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

<sup>15</sup>Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. <sup>16</sup>They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup>For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

- **THE 6<sup>TH</sup> SEAL REPRESENTS THE INITIATION OF THE “DAY OF THE LORD”**

First, the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal (v.12-14) parallels the events described within the Olivet Discourse immediately before the return of Jesus Christ in the clouds. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal also describes the events prior to the same return:

**Matthew 24:29:** Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." (NIV)

**Mark 13:24:** But in those days, following that distress, "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light;" (NIV)

**Luke 21:25:** There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. (NIV)

Verses 15-17 also parallel Matthew and Luke’s description of the shock, horror, and anguish mankind will experience once they realize the “Day of the Lord” is upon them:

**Matthew 24:30:** At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. (NIV)

**Luke 21:25-27:** There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (NIV)

Second, the 6<sup>th</sup> Seals also parallels Joel’s description of the cosmic disturbances occurring immediately prior to the “Day of the Lord”:

**Joel 2:30-31:** I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. (NIV)

Third, Jesus Christ also referred to these events during His crucifixion:

**Luke 23:28-31:** Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then “they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!””<sup>206</sup> For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?” (NIV)

- **WHAT IS THE DAY OF THE LORD?**

The term “day of the Lord” is used in both the Old and New Testament as a period where the faithful are rewarded and the wicked are punished. The term “day” probably should not be interpreted as a literal twenty-four hour day but rather an epoch – a time marked by an event that begins a new period or era. Although the reference also describes other epochs such as the

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<sup>206</sup> Hosea 10:8

destruction of Babylon (Isaiah 13:10), the pinnacle “day of the Lord” seems centered on the transition from the current Church Age to the next Millennial Age.

A scan of related biblical passages uncovers multiple aspects concerning this day:

1. **A Dreadful Day of Judgment for Individuals:** *Isaiah 2:10-11:* Go up into the rocky cliffs, hide in the ground. Get away from the dreadful judgment of the Lord, from his royal splendor! Proud men will be brought low, arrogant men will be humiliated; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. (NET) *See also 2 Peter 3:10, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5.*
2. **A Dreadful Day of Judgment for Nations:** *Ezekiel 30:3:* For the day is near, the day of the Lord is near; it will be a day of storm clouds, it will be a time of judgment for the nations. (NET) *See also Joel 3:15 and Isaiah 34:4.*
3. **A Dreadful Day of Revenge:** *Jeremiah 46:10:* But that day belongs to the Lord God who rules over all. It is the day when he will pay back his enemies. His sword will devour them until its appetite is satisfied! It will drink their blood until it is full! For the Lord God who rules over all will offer them up as a sacrifice in the land of the north by the Euphrates River. (NET) *See also 2 Peter 3:10.*
4. **A Dreadful Day that Comes Suddenly Upon Mankind:** *1 Thessalonians 5:2-3:* For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come in the same way as a thief in the night. Now when they are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction comes on them, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will surely not escape. (NET) *See also 2 Peter 3:10.*
5. **A Wonderful Day of Reward for the Faithful:** *2 Thessalonians 2:1-2:* Now regarding the arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to be with him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to be easily shaken from your composure or disturbed by any kind of spirit or message or letter allegedly from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here. (NET) *See also 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 and 1 Corinthians 1:8.*

The Olivet Discourse describes many events occurring prior to Jesus Christ’s return in the clouds; however, it provides little detail concerning the events that will follow. For those details, we must turn to Revelation 8-19.

- **THE TRANSITION FROM THE CURRENT AGE TO THE NEXT**

The cosmic disturbances described within the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal are not unique to this specific time period. The apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost, specifically referenced Joel 2:28-32 in order to explain the outpouring of the Holy Spirit:

**Acts 2:19-23:** I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (NIV)

Did these “signs” physically occur on the day of Pentecost? No, not likely. However, the audience, Jews, understood the allusion to the Day of the Lord. They understood that this epoch would result in the transition between one age and the next. Within the book of Acts, Pentecost

served as the pivotal point between the Mosaic Age and the Church Age. It represented a time of spiritual and political upheavals – movement away from Temple worship to spiritual worship and from national Israel to the Christian Church. The breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal represents a similar movement.

- **THE SYMBOLISM WITHIN THE COSMIC DISTURBANCES**

Will the “cosmic disturbances” physically occur at the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal? No, not likely. Certainly, the inhabitants of the earth will see Jesus Christ coming in the clouds and that event will entail certain physical manifestations such as a silencing of the winds (Revelation 7:1). However, the “cosmic disturbances” are likely symbolic of spiritual and political upheavals:

**NOTE:** *The following employs an allegorical interpretation of biblical passages and is not intended to serve as a foundation for Christian belief.*

1. **Great Earthquake:** revolution; a shaking of the social, religious, and political order; the social, religious, and political rules change. For example, the French Revolution of 1789 ended domination of French society by the monarchy, aristocracy, and Catholic Church.

The turbulence associated with the breaking of the first four seals will place civilization on the brink of chaos. Only the charismatic leadership of the Antichrist will prevent a total breakdown of society and the rule of law. However, with the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal, the Antichrist’s fragile coalition will probably collapse resulting in overwhelming rioting, looting, and chaos. Consequentially, central governments will probably be replaced by regional strong men (warlords) and excessively repressive military totalitarianism.

2. **The Sun, Moon, and Stars:** The sun, moon, and stars were created in order to separate the day from the night and to serve as signs of the seasons days, and years (Genesis 1:14-18). Symbolically, they represent truth, knowledge, and awareness. Without light, man is incapable of functioning. For millennia, the stars were used for navigational aids; without the stars, mankind stumbles about in the darkness.

Human science, logic, and reasoning (the guiding light of secular humanism) utterly fails. Having long ago pronounced religion the mythology of the ignorant masses, humans are unable to fathom the events unfolding before their eyes... How can this be? Why did our science not forewarn us? There must be an alternative explanation? Yet, they instinctively know what is occurring and what will soon occur:

**Romans 1:20:** For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. (NIV)

Compounding the problem, those who are capable of providing testimony concerning God’s eternal purpose are no longer present. The Christian congregation, upon the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal, is Raptured and taken away to heaven. Remnant Israel is sealed with the seal of the Living God and hidden away in the wilderness. The remaining humans may enter churches and synagogues looking for answers, but they will find those buildings empty.

God will provide two witnesses in Jerusalem (Revelation 11). But, those witnesses will prophesy clothed in sackcloth – symbols of mourning, destitution, and repentance. Their message is unlikely to offer hope, promise, or comfort but rather condemnation, judgment, and punishment.

3. **Sky Recedes like a Scroll:** The sky is a veil that shields our wickedness, malicious thoughts, and evil plots from the presence of God. The revealing of Jesus Christ in the clouds will rip away that veil and the true nature of mankind will be uncovered:

**2 Peter 3:10:** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. (NIV)

4. **Mountains and Islands Moved:** Mountains are often seen as places of stability, shelter, and sanctuary. A mountain may be symbolic of a mighty kingdom, and, consequentially, perhaps, an island a fiefdom or colony. Mountains may be symbolic of altars and houses of worship. Abraham offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice upon Mount Moriah where Solomon later built the first Temple.

Within the context of this passage, long-term, normally stable, and influential institutions are visibly shaken. Religious and charitable organizations, both great and small, once provided refuge from a chaotic world but now will be incapable of providing any form of safety and security. Political institutions, such as the U.S. Constitution and democracy, will lose their ability to provide refuge from totalitarian and abusive regimes. Social and economic institutions, such as marriage and family, will suffer similar plights. Everything that once provided refuge and security will have been visibly shaken.

The cosmic disturbances described within Revelation 6:12-16 visibly alters the social, political, and personal framework that has, until now, provided stability for human existence – civilization. With the revealing of Jesus Christ in the clouds, that framework collapses. In the absence of the Church or remnant Israel, human beings now face isolation, confusion, intellectual darkness, and dread for what is about to come.

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## THE RAPTURE DEFINED

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The term “Rapture” does not appear within biblical scripture but rather is a human label used to describe the return of Jesus Christ in the clouds to gather His elect – the Christian congregation. This incident involves both living and dead Christians and is separate and distinct from the general resurrection that will occur at the end of the millennial age. Four key New Testament passages provide the basic foundation for understanding this event:

**Acts 1:9-11:** After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (NIV)

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52:** Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. (NIV)

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17:** For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (NIV)

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-3:** Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for [that day will not come] until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. (NIV)

In simple terms, Jesus Christ physically descends from heaven into the earth's atmosphere, a trumpet command announces His arrival, faithful Christians, both living and dead, are transformed from mortal to immortal bodies, and then all are translated to the third heaven – the place where God and the heavenly host abide.

#### PLACEMENT WITHIN JOHN'S NARRATIVE

Few biblical scholars associate the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal with the Rapture of the Christian congregation; rather, they place the event before the beginning of the tribulation, simultaneously with Christ's return to establish His kingdom, or at the end of the millennium just prior to the final judgment. The following identifies the reasons why the Rapture should be placed with the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal:

1. The breaking of the 5<sup>th</sup> Seal portrays the conditions of Christian saints immediately prior the Rapture; they are disembodied souls who have not yet received their imperishable bodies. They are situated under the altar and are calling out vengeance.
2. This portrait changes by Revelation 7:9-17; here the multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language are standing before the throne shouting praises for salvation. They are no longer described to as souls but rather seem to be fully functional embodied saints.
3. The events described in the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal closely parallels the events within the Olivet Discourse that immediately precede Christ's return for His elect. Thus, it is reasonable place that gathering – the Rapture – between the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal and the multitude before the throne in Revelation 7. See *"The Gathering: The Olivet Discourse"* section of this study for complete argumentation.
4. Although both Revelation 6 and 7 specifically refer to "tribulation" saints, it is reasonable to assume that they represent all saints from the Church Age. See *"The Gathering: The Souls of the Tribulation: A Synecdoche"* section of this study for complete argumentation.

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### THE SEALING OF THE 144,000 OF ISRAEL

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Will the Old Testament saints be included in the Rapture? No. The Jewish people, Israel, are the select chosen people of God and share a unique, separate future than that of the Christian believer.

Throughout the ages there have been many individuals who were judged “righteous” and “beloved” by the Creator. Enoch and Elijah were translated into heaven without suffering death. Noah was judged “righteous” and was rescued from the great flood. Moses found special favor and was seen by the disciples during Christ’s transfiguration upon a high mountain. The mouths of lions were shut by God’s love for Daniel. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego remained untouched within the fiery furnace. The seed of Israel’s savior would come through the beloved King David. And, Israel was the chosen people of God. However, those Old Testament saints differ significantly from those of the New Testament.

Some scholars assert that Israel and the Church essentially merged under the New Testament covenant. This is an error and reflects a misunderstanding of the mystery of the Church and its place within God’s eternal plan. Other scholars see the Church as a replacement for corporeal Israel and they, consequentially, model several of their worship practices after Temple services. This too is an error and reflects a misunderstanding of the identity of the Christian congregation. Israel continues to exist as a separate entity although in a diminished capacity (Romans 11:7-10); essentially, God’s relationship with Israel remains in a state of suspended animation until the Church Age ends (Romans 11:25).

Between the resurrection of Jesus Christ c. 32-33 AD and end of the Second Jewish Revolt c.135 AD, the Jewish people were scattered throughout the nations (Luke 21:24). However, a remnant, a small quantity, of faithful and righteous Jews remains hidden among humanity:

**Romans 11:1-5:** Did God reject his people? By no means!... God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew... And what was God’s answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. (NIV) [See also Romans 9:27, Isaiah 10:22.]

Thus, Israel has been preserved for the past two millennia (Revelation 12:6). Although the regathering of national Israel in Palestine in 1948 and the recapture of Jerusalem in 1967 are secular (worldly) events, these events demonstrate, perhaps, that the end of the “time of the Gentiles” is growing to a close:

**Luke 21:24:** They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the **times of the Gentiles** are fulfilled. (NIV) [Emphasis added]

**Romans 11:25-26:** I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the **full number of the Gentiles has come in**. And so all Israel will be saved... (NIV) [Emphasis added]

When “full number of the Gentiles has come in,” the Christian congregation will be removed, raptured, and the Jewish remnant will be gathered, sealed, and protected during the Day of the Lord:

**Matthew 24:31:** And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. (NIV)

**Revelation 7:2-4:** He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal

on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. (NIV)

Revelation 12 describes two separate episodes where the woman, Israel, hides in the wilderness. During the first episode, she flees into the desert for 1,260 days immediately following the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:6). In the second episode, she is given two wings and flies into the desert for three and one-half years after the Dragon pursues her (Revelation 12:14). Many scholars view these two descriptions as a single incident viewed from two different perspectives. This, I believe is an error:

**Revelation 12:6:** The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days. (NIV)

**Revelation 12:14:** The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach. (NIV)

The first episode refers to the preservation of a remnant population within the nations. Throughout the past two millennia, there seems to have been a concerted effort to eliminate any trace of ethnic Jews including Roman conquest during the first and second Jewish revolts, the religious persecution during the Middle Ages, the Holocaust by Nazi Germany, anti-Zionism under the Soviet Union, to the threat of annihilation by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Certainly, their survival and regathering in 1948 illustrates divine intervention.

The second episode refers to the preservation of a remnant population during the Day of the Lord, the latter portion of the transition from the current age to the kingdom age. The Antichrist breaks the covenant with the many, sieges Jerusalem, and sets himself up as God in the Jewish Temple:

**Luke 21:20-21:** When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. (NIV)

**Matthew 24:16-19:** then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! (NIV)

Will this remnant be restricted to the 144,000 who are sealed with the seal of the Living God? I don’t believe so. Revelation 14:4 indicates that the sealed are males, “who did not defile themselves with women.” Therefore, I assume that each will have a wife (or a betrothed bride if we read the verse literally) and possibly children; the total could be between 300,000 and 400,000. Where would God hide so many? Daniel’s prophecy associated with the King of the North provides a possible clue:



**Daniel 11:41:** He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. (NIV)

Nevertheless, they could also hide in the Sinai Desert much like when Israel wandered after the exodus from Egypt. The actual location is of little significance since they will be divinely protected regardless of the geographical location.

What then is the purpose of this remnant? This 144,000 will serve to reseed the rebirth of Zion within the Millennial Kingdom, to reestablish a new spiritual Israel, to repopulate an obedient Israel:

**Revelation 14:1-4:** Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on **Mount Zion**, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads... They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

Some scholars believe that these 144,000 is a symbolic representation of all Christians – the Israel of faith.<sup>207</sup> Others believe that they are orthodox Jews who convert to Christianity and serve as evangelical witnesses during the great tribulation. Still others assume they are martyrs representing the universal nature of God's people.<sup>208</sup> These beliefs tend to project the current Church Age onto the next age; a significant error and barrier to understanding the nature of the Millennial Kingdom.

The Millennial Kingdom will not be a "Christian" kingdom but rather an Israeli kingdom in culture, tradition, religion, and politics... not like the ancient, rebellious kingdom but rather a modern, obedient Israeli kingdom. During this kingdom, Christians, the body of Christ, will reign with Christ acting as servants, ministers, counselors, judges, priest, and administrators:

**Matthew 19:28:** Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (NIV)

**1 Corinthians 6:2:** Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? (NIV)

**Revelation 20:4:** I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge... They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (NIV)

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## JERUSALEM: THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

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Revelation 19:6-8 describes a rejoicing because "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready," and Revelation 19:9 calls the invited guests "blessed." This celebration occurs

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<sup>207</sup> "The 144,000 and the Twelve Tribes – Revelation 7," *Focus on Bible Prophecy*, ND. <<http://prophecy.reslight.net/archives/60.html>> September 6, 2012.

<sup>208</sup> "Who Are the 144,000?" *Grace Communion International*, 2000. <<http://www.gci.org/bible/rev/144000>> September 6, 2012.

just prior to Christ's return as a conquering King to establish His Millennial Kingdom. Who is the bride of Jesus Christ, and who are His wedding guests?

- **SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO THE WEDDING GUESTS**

Before starting this study, I assumed the spiritual Christian Church was the bride of Christ... that is what I had been taught and numerous passages seemed to verify the belief. However, on closer examination, passages used to support of this belief are few and several of those cited provide no support. The parable of the ten virgins, Matthew 25:1-13, is just such an example:

**Matthew 25:10:** And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready **went in with him to the wedding feast**; and the door was shut. (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

What often goes unnoticed is that the five wise virgins go into the wedding feast... not the wedding ceremony or the *yihud* (seclusion) room. They are **guests** of the wedding feast, **not the brides!** Similarly, John the Baptist considered himself to be an attendant, not the bride:

**John 3:29:** The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The **friend who attends the bridegroom** waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. **That joy is mine**, and it is now complete. (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

These instances are not a unique; Jesus Christ also referred to His disciples as guests, not brides:

**Matthew 9:15:** Jesus answered, "How can the **guests of the bridegroom** mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.(NIV) [*Emphasis added. See also Mark 2:19-20 and Luke 5:34-35.*]

The wedding guests are not brides; they are different, distinct, and unique. Their identity is relevant in our study especially in Revelation 19:9:

**Revelation 19:9:** Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God." (NIV)

- **JERUSALEM THE BRIDE OF CHRIST**

Biblical analogies help us understand unfamiliar things by comparing them to more familiar things; however, we must be cautious not to assume the literal when the figurative is intended. For example, Romans 7:1-6 compares a believer's relationship to the Law of Moses to the legal restraints of a marriage. This analogy explains that through our baptism in Christ, our spiritual death and resurrection, we are no longer "married" to the Law because it becomes dead to us. We may now "marry" the Lord Jesus Christ:

**Romans 7:4:** So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. (NIV)

Although this passage alludes to the Church being the Bride of Christ, its focus is on Mosaic Law not on the relationship between the Christian Church and Jesus Christ. This passage does not validate the claim that the Church is the bride.

Revelation 21:9-10 is the only Bible passage that is specifically identifies of the bride:

**Revelation 21:9-10:** One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. (NIV)

A city? Yes, the Holy city of Jerusalem! Not in its current form – Ishmael; but rather its future form – Isaac. Not in its physical sense of material walls, streets, and buildings; but rather its spiritual sense of a lineage, ideology, and faith. Not in the sense of Mosaic or New Testament covenants; but rather in the sense of a mother filled with the essence of life, of the Creator:

**Galatians 4:25-26:** Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem [Sarah] that is above is free, and she is our mother. (NIV) *See also Isaiah 60:14, Zech. 8:1-3.*

It is with this vision of Jerusalem as His bride, Jesus mourned her condition prior to the Passion:

**Luke 13:34:** "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! (NIV)

Jerusalem, not the Christian Church, is Christ's bride, and Jesus Christ returns in Revelation 19 not only to redeem the planet earth but also to claim His bride:

**Revelation 19:7-8:** Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) (NIV)

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## THE CHURCH: THE BODY OF CHRIST

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Amillennialist see the new covenant as the apex of God's dealings with humankind, past, present, and future... they see the current age as a continuation of the past age, albeit with a significant better covenant. Most Premillennialist view being "saved" as the only avenue to God both present and future – Jews, they believe, will accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior thus becoming Messianic Christians. They see the next age as a continuation of the present age, albeit under significant improved conditions. Unfortunately, both suffer a form of linear tunnel vision... This age, the Church Age, is distinctly different and separate from previous and future ages.

What is this special relationship between Christ and His Church? It is impossible to describe the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Christian congregation in human terms because no such relationship occurs within human culture. In some aspects, it resembles a unified body, a bride and

groom, children of a Heavenly Father, brothers and fellow heirs, citizens of New Jerusalem, and soldiers in Christ's heavenly army:

1. **Body of Christ:** *Ephesians 1:22-23:* And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (NIV) *See also 1 Corinthians 6:15, Romans 12:5.*
2. **Bride of Christ:** *Ephesians 5:31:* "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. (NIV) *See also 2 Corinthians 11:2, Romans 7:4.*
3. **Children of God:** *1 John 3:1:* How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (NIV) *See also Galatians 3:26, Phil. 2:15, John 1:12.*
4. **Brothers and Fellow Heirs:** *Romans 8:17:* Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (NIV) *See also Galatians 3:29, 4:7.*
5. **Citizens of New Jerusalem:** *Hebrews 12:22-23:* But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. (NIV) *See also Ephesians 2:19-22.*
6. **Spotless Garments for the Bride:** *Revelation 19:8:* Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) *See also Ephesians 5:25-27, 1 Timothy 6:13-15.*
7. **Elements in His Armies of Heaven:** *Revelation 17:14:* They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers. *See also Revelation 19:14, Jude 14, Zechariah 14:5.*
8. **Judges within the Millennial Kingdom:** *1 Corinthians 6:2:* Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? *See also Matthew 19:28, Revelation 20:4.*

A key element differentiating Old and New Testament saints rests with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a spiritual element enabling a rich, spiritual rebirth:

**Matthew 3:11:** I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. (NIV)

**Acts 19:2-6:** "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of

the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. (NIV)

The congregation of Christians is distinct and separate from the “righteous” of the Old Testament, the chosen of Israel, and those who live during the Millennial Kingdom. The character of current era was a mystery prior to Pentecost... And, in many ways, the exact nature of the Christian congregation remains a mystery to many today:

**1 John 3:2:** Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (NIV)

## \*THE MILLENNIAL REIGN

**THIS SECTION IS ONLY IN ITS INFANCY STAGE... IT IS PLACED HERE FOR STORAGE PURPOSES ONLY.**

### \*INTRODUCTION

It has been interesting reading the various descriptions and interpretations pertaining to the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ (Revelation 20:1-10).<sup>209</sup> Some, such as amillennialism, assert that this kingdom is a spiritual realm occurring within the current age with Jesus Christ sitting on King David’s throne in heaven. Others, such as premillennialism, assert that this kingdom is a physical realm occurring after the Great Tribulation with Jesus Christ sitting on King David’s throne in Jerusalem. Frequently, these interpretations reflect preconceived theological doctrine rather than an independent analysis of the implications of the actual passage.

This section does not attempt to prove that there will be a future, literal, physical, earthly reign of Jesus Christ. A plain reading of the passages requires that we accept just such an interpretation unless there is substantial, credible evidence otherwise. Many amillennialist arguments contradicting such a reign are discussed in other sections within this study:

1. David’s Throne and Christ’s Reign: Is Jesus Currently Reigning from David’s Throne?
2. The First Resurrection: First Resurrection: Physical vs. Spiritual
3. Israel & the Church
4. Millennialism: Symbolic or Literal
5. Progressive Parallelism
6. Is Satan Bound?
7. Scripture to Interpret Scripture

I also reject the notion that the “kingdom of God” was first offered to the Jews but ultimately delayed because they rejected Jesus as their messiah. Instead, I believe that the kingdom of God was always available to those who sought the will of God. The message of the Gospel focuses not on some future

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<sup>209</sup> For a brief summary of the four major millennial views see “Four Views on the Millennium,” The Blue Letter Bible, ND. <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/mill.cfm>> July 23, 2012.

millennial kingdom but rather on the condition of an individual's mind, heart, and spirit. This focus does not change during the Church age nor will it change during the Millennial Kingdom.

Revelation 20:1-10 is a relatively brief passage that provides a framework for our understanding of the Millennial Kingdom:

**Revelation 20:1-10:** And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (NIV)

The passage's brevity at first glance seems problematic as it lacks sufficient detail to paint an accurate, comprehensive portrait. While this brevity may contribute to diversity of interpretation, it does not construct an insurmountable barrier – there are sufficient scriptural references elsewhere in the Bible to develop the portrait that the Lord wishes to show us. We must carefully examine the scriptures to see where they fit within this overall picture.

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## THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM AS UTOPIA

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Believers of the future, earthly millennial kingdom tend to paint this period as a perfect utopian society – an ideally perfect place, especially in its social, political, and moral aspects.<sup>210</sup>

*From "Summary of the Millennial Kingdom"<sup>211</sup>*

Imagine a world dominated by righteousness and goodness, a world where there is no injustice, where no court ever renders an unjust verdict, and where everyone is treated fairly. Imagine a world where what is true, right, and noble marks every aspect of life, including interpersonal relations, commerce, education, and government. Imagine a world where there

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<sup>210</sup> "Utopia," *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Houghton Mifflin, 2009. <<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/utopia>> July 11, 2012.

<sup>211</sup> "11.4. Summary of the Millennial Kingdom," *Bible Study Tools*, 2012. <<http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/related-topics/summary-of-the-millennial-kingdom.html#99475E>> July 11, 2012.

is complete, total, enforced, and permanent peace, where joy abounds and good health prevails, so much so that people live for hundreds of years. Imagine a world where the curse is removed, where the environment is restored to the pristine purity of the Garden of Eden, where peace reigns even in the animal kingdom, so that “the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them” (Isa. 11:6). Imagine a world ruled by a perfect, glorious Ruler, who instantly and firmly deals with sin. Humanly speaking, that description may seem far-fetched, a utopian fantasy that could never be reality. Yet it accurately describes conditions during the future earthly kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

While these descriptions are generally scripturally sound, they, unfortunately, tend to be misleading. Although not the primary focus of millennial related passages, there will be ignorance, sin, disharmony, disobedience, death, and rebellion.

**There will be ignorance:** If there is a need to be taught, then not all will automatically understand the precepts of the Lord at his coming:

**Isaiah 2:3:** Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (NIV)

**There will be sin:** If there is a need for a judge who rules with a rod and slays the wicked, there will be sinners in need of judgment:

**Isaiah 11:3-4:** ...He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. (NIV)

**There will be disharmony:** If there is a need to settle disputes, then there will be disharmony:

**Isaiah 2:4:** He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (NIV)

**There will be disobedience:** If there is a designated punishment, then it is anticipated that some will disobey the command:

**Zechariah 14:16-18:** Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, they will have no rain. If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The Lord will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. (NIV)

**There will be death:** Although substantially better than the current era, there will be accidents, illness, and infirmity – the causes of death:

**Isaiah 65:20:** “Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. (NIV)

**There will be rebellion:** If Satan is able to gather an army against the Lord, there will be a faction who is dissatisfied with the rule of the Lord:

**Psalms 2:1-3:** Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. “Let us break their chains,” they say, “and throw off their fetters.” (NIV)

**Revelation 20:7-9:** When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. (NIV)

The scriptures tend to emphasize that the Millennial Kingdom is a *near* utopian world; however, it will not be heaven on earth nor will all mankind be obedient to the Word of God.

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## CHARACTERISTICS

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If there is a material Millennial Reign of Christ, then what form will it take? The scriptures provide us with some clues:

1. **We do know that it will not be the kingdom of God:**

*Romans 14:17: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

2. **We do know that it will not be Paradise:**

*Luke 23: 43: And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”*

3. **We do know that the God’s Law will still be in effect:**

*Luke 16:16-17: The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.*

4. **We do know that the devil will have no influence over the earth:**

*Revelation 20:1-3: And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled...*

5. **We do know that the martyrs of the Great Tribulation will reign with Christ:**

Revelation 20:4: I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

6. **We do know that those who have not participated in the first resurrection will remain in the grave:**

Revelation 20: 5: But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

7. **We do know that sin and disobedience will not have been conquered:**

Revelation 20:7-8: And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

8. **We do know that the White Throne judgment takes place afterwards:**

Revelation 11-12: And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Category ⇔ ↓ Characteristic ↓	Kingdom of God	Great Tribulation	Millennial Reign	New Heaven/Earth
1. Sin/Disobedience	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
2. Paradise	No	No	No	Yes
3. Law in Effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	~
4. Devil Influences Others	Yes	Yes	No – Yes ⇔	No
5. Glorified Saints Present	No	No – Yes ⇔	Yes	Yes
6. Others Resurrected	No	No	No	⇔ Yes
7. White Throne Judgment	No	No	No	⇔ Yes
8. Tribulation	Yes	Yes	~	No
9. Glorified City	No	No	~	Yes
10. Earthly Temple	No	~	Yes	No
11. Earthly Judgment	No	Yes	Yes	~
12. Christ Earthly Reign	No	No – Yes ⇔	Yes	~
13. Salvation in Christ	Yes	Yes – No	No	~
14. Wrath of God	No	No – Yes ⇔	No – Yes ⇔	~

Sample Characteristics Chart

## SATAN BOUND & HUMAN NATURE

The notion of Satan’s role as “god” of this world and his eventual eviction serves as the foundation of this study and is explored in depth within the “Satan Evicted: The Foundation” section of this study.

Interestingly, of the ten scriptures in the book of Revelation that frame the Millennial Reign, seven are dedicated to Satan:

**Revelation 20:1-3:** And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

**Revelation 20:7-10:** When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Amillennialists assert that this section parallels earlier section within Revelation and that Satan was bound at Christ’s crucifixion. They assert that the “binding” (v. 3) is symbolic of God’s grace being extended to the Gentiles (nations) in that Satan may no longer keep God’s message from them. Unfortunately, Satan is not bound<sup>212</sup> and is alive and well in the current age. In fact, he is more active on the earth than at any previous time.<sup>213</sup>

Flip Wilson, a famous comedian of the late 60’s and 70’s, coined the phrase, “The devil made me do it!” While the phrase was intended for a purely comical effect, it should make us wonder just how much influence Satan has on an individual’s life. Is he simply a tempter as depicted as the devil whispering sitting on our shoulder and whispering in our ear? Does he have a more direct influence such as demon possession? How much of established Church doctrine been swayed by his words? Is Satan a real entity or is he simply a metaphor for wickedness?

While a full exploration of Satan’s purpose is beyond the scope of this section, it’s worth the effort to list a few of the attributes provided within the New Testament:

1. **Clever Schemer:** *Ephesians 6:11:* Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (NET)
2. **Disguised as a Disciple of God:** *2 Corinthians 11:13-14:* For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (NET)
3. **Enemy of Christians:** *1 Peter 5:8:* Be sober and alert. Your enemy the devil, like a roaring lion, is on the prowl looking for someone to devour. (NET)
4. **God of This World and Blinder of the Unbelieving:** *2 Corinthians 4:4:* among whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe so they would not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. (NET)

<sup>212</sup> See the “Is Satan Bound?” section of this study.

<sup>213</sup> See the “Revelation 12: The Battle between Satan and Michael” section of this study.

5. **Great Deceiver:** *Revelation 12:9*: So that huge dragon – the ancient serpent, the one called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world – was thrown down to the earth, and his angels along with him. (NET)
6. **Great Tempter:** *Matthew 4:1*: Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (NET)
7. **Metaphor for Disbelief:** *Mark 8:33*: But after turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan. You are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but on man’s.” (NET)
8. **Murderer and Father of Lies:** *John 8:44*: You people are from your father the devil, and you want to do what your father desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not uphold the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies. (NET)
9. **Power of Death:** *Hebrews 2:14*: Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he likewise shared in their humanity, so that through death he could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil)... (NET)
10. **Roadblock for Christian Efforts:** *1 Thessalonians 2:18*: For we wanted to come to you (I, Paul, in fact tried again and again) but Satan thwarted us. (NET)
11. **Root of Some Afflictions:** *Luke 13:16*: Then shouldn’t this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be released from this imprisonment on the Sabbath day?” (NET)
12. **Ruler of Demons:** *Matthew 9:34*: But the Pharisees said, “By the ruler of demons he casts out demons.” (NET)
13. **Sinner:** *1 John 3:8*: The one who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was revealed: to destroy the works of the devil. (NET)
14. **Tool Used to Accomplish God’s Will:** *Luke 22: 3-4*: Then Satan entered Judas, the one called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve. He went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers of the temple guard how he might betray Jesus, handing him over to them. (NET)

Today, science and reasoning reject the influence of satanic forces on human behavior attributing “evil” to mental illness, negative social influences, traumatic experiences, or socio-economic difficulties. Those that believe in Satan and his influence may be viewed as fundamentalist nutcases – “demons and Satan remain the stuff of unstable or degenerate minds.”<sup>214</sup> These views, I feel, are unfortunate. While not all social ills or physical infirmities can be attributed to satanic forces, denial of Satan and his influences negatively impacts our society. This denial also blazes the path for the Antichrist and the greatest deception of all time.

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<sup>214</sup> “NO! Demons and Satan are NOT REAL!” BRANE SPACE, January 14, 2011. <<http://brane-space.blogspot.com/2011/01/no-demons-and-satan-are-not-real.html>> July 21, 2012.

More importantly, the Millennial Kingdom does not focus on Satan or his legions – it focuses on his absence. At the beginning of the Kingdom, Satan is bound and cast into the Abyss; he will have no influence on the people living during this time period – mankind cannot claim, “The devil made me do it.”

### **Is human’s disobedience a result of Satan’s influence or inherent within human nature?**

Some may ask, “With such near perfection, how can this be? How can mankind continue in rebellion?” It really shouldn’t shock us at man’s rebellious nature. We’ve seen it before as Israel came out of Egypt:

**1 Corinthians 10:1-5:** For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. (NIV)

Ultimately, the absence of Satan and his dominions will not lead to mankind’s redemption:

**Revelation 20:7-9:** When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves... (NIV)

Please note the verse does not indicate that just a few humans will rebel, but the number will be virtually incalculable – “like the sand on the seashore.” Yes, Satan is the leader of this rebellion; however, the humans who participate in this rebellion cannot claim ignorance or blindness to God or God’s will... the blame will rest squarely on their individual shoulders.

What then are the implications?

1. Satan, although a contributing factor, does not bear complete blame for man’s disobedient nature. The devil doesn’t make him do it... Man makes the choice of his own free will.
2. Material conditions – economical, social, political, or physical – are not the root cause for man’s disobedient nature. Need doesn’t make him do it... Man makes the choice of his own free will.
3. Jesus Christ will rule from David’s throne in Jerusalem; the absence of God’s presence does not contribute to man’s disobedient nature. Ignorance doesn’t make him do it... Man makes the choice of his own free will.

The age of the Garden ended in rebellion, the age prior to the Great Flood ended in rebellion, the age of national Israel ended in rebellion, the age of the Christian Church will end in rebellion, and, finally, the age of the Millennial Reign will end in rebellion. For millennia, God has been patient with the “stiff-necked” human race. Surely this patience must reflect the love and longsuffering the Father has for his children.

## **\*ISRAEL WITHIN THE KINGDOM**

As Christians we tend to think in terms of the New Covenant as the pinnacle in God’s dealing with mankind:

**Hebrews 8:6:** But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. (NIV)

**Hebrews 8:13:** By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear. (NIV)

**Hebrews 9:15:** For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (NIV)

With scriptures such as these, it is nearly impossible to imagine that God will retain a remnant under the old, inferior, obsolete covenant. Some assert that with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the old covenant essentially passed away and now both Jew and Gentile are blended together into the new covenant. Unfortunately, this is not an accurate portrayal of New Testament scripture (see the “Israel & the Church” section of this study).

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### **\*THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL**

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I want to be clear, those of Jewish heritage who accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior become members of the body of Christ. Within this body, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile:

**Galatians 6:15:** Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. (NIV)

**2 Corinthians 5:17:** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (NIV)

However, there remains a faithful remnant of Israel who has not accepted the message of the New Testament, this remnant retains their Jewish heritage and theology, and this remnant will serve as the foundation for the future regathering of Israel in Palestine.

Romans, chapters 9-11, can be difficult to digest. We see the determined forward movement of God’s eternal plan where chess pieces are created, used, moved, and discarded according to God’s eternal purpose. We see inheritance, disinheritance, and adoption, not according of man’s efforts or desires, but according to God’s eternal purpose. We see an apparent rejection of God’s chosen people because unbelief, but we learn that this “hardening” resulted in order for the Gentiles to share in God’s goodness. We also learn that Israel was not actually rejected and in the end will be saved. God’s eternal plan is played out in the order and manner determined by God... it will not be influenced by our will or beliefs.

As Christians, we see salvation as a very personal, individual matter. However, that is not necessarily the case with Israel:

**Romans 11:2-5:** God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don’t you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: “Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me”? And what was God’s answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. (NIV)

Perhaps like Elijah, we view Israel as having been rejected because of their disbelief. Perhaps we see an old covenant that is obsolete and irrelevant.<sup>215</sup> Perhaps, as Christians, we see the glorious promise given to the Church and cannot envision other possible alternatives. Yet, the scriptures are clear: “So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.” Israel will eventually accept Jesus Christ as the messiah, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; however, the manner and timing will differ greatly than that for Christians within the current age.

Now, some view the term “grace” in Romans 11:5 as new covenant grace and believe that the remnant of Israel was saved through conversion to Christianity between the Day of Pentecost and the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. This simply is not the case. The remnant in Romans, chapter 11, will remain Jewish in nature and theology until the end of the current Church age. **Only after** the full number of Gentiles has been converted to Christ will God lift Israel’s partial stupor, blindness, hardening. **Then** they will be saved:

**Romans 11:25:** For I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, of this secret – that ye may not be wise in your own conceits – that hardness in part to Israel hath happened till the fulness of the nations may come in; (YLT)

**Acts 15:13-16:** ...James answered, saying, 'Men, brethren, hearken to me; Simeon did declare how at first God did look after to take out of the nations a people for His name, and to this agree the words of the prophets, as it hath been written: “After these things I will turn back, and I will build again the tabernacle of David, that is fallen down, and its ruins I will build again, and will set it upright..” (YLT)

Where has the remnant of Israel been hidden all these years? They have been scattered among the nations:

**Deuteronomy 4:27:** The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you. (NIV)

**Hosea 3:4:** For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. (NIV)

From “MOSHIACH 101: Why Exile?”<sup>216</sup>

On a deeper level, the tragedy of galut [exile] isn't limited to physical displacement, and is not necessarily defined by persecution and suffering. Galut is a time when G-d's presence is concealed, when nearly all perceptible traces of the relationship we share with Him have vanished. We don't feel or see G-d's love for us, and we don't really feel like His children. We may study His Torah and follow His commandments – and we are told that by doing so we connect with Him – but we don't feel it.

But, God also promises to regather Israel not just from Assyria and Babylon but also from among all nations:

**Jeremiah 16:14-15:** 1“However, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when men will no longer say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ but they will

<sup>215</sup> Hebrews 8:13

<sup>216</sup> “MOSHIACH 101: Why Exile?” Chabad-Lubavitch Media Cente, 2012.

<[http://www.chabad.org/library/moshiach/article\\_cdo/aid/1157488/jewish/The-Basics.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/moshiach/article_cdo/aid/1157488/jewish/The-Basics.htm)> July 27, 2012.

say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers. (NIV)

**Jeremiah 23:3:** "I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. (NIV)

When? When will God regather the remnant of Israel? Does the establishment of national Israel in 1948 mark the beginning of this process?

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## **\*TIME OF THE GENTILES**

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There has been much speculation as to the "season" of the end times. Many preachers compare the signs in the Olivet Discourse with current events and resulting proclamations that the end is near. Examination of premillennial literature from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century illustrates that this type of speculation is not unique. Others scholars consider the regathering of national Israel in the 1940's and declare, "Surely within this generation Christ will return." Such speculation, while interesting, may be counterproductive and add to confusion among the congregation. In fact, the apostle Paul fought such speculation in the early church and found it necessary to emphasize two specific events – the apostasy and revelation of the son of perdition – that must occur prior to Christ's return for His Church:

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:** Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for [that day will not come] until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. [the son of perdition, KJV]. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. (NIV)

**Romans 11:25:** For I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, of this secret – that ye may not be wise in your own conceits – that hardness in part to Israel hath happened till the fulness of the nations may come in; (YLT)

[http://www.therefinersfire.org/azazel\\_goat.htm](http://www.therefinersfire.org/azazel_goat.htm)

Time of the Gentiles – judgment on Israel

Fullness of the nations come in – full number of Christians saved...

...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. [1 Timothy 4:2-4]

**Luke 21:24:** They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

**Revelation 11:2:** But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.

**Gentiles:** *ethnos*: a race, a nation, pl. the nations (as distinct from Isr.)

“ethnos,” 1484, Strong’s Concordance, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/1484.htm>> July 27, 2012.

**Hosea 6:2:** After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. (NIV)

**Matthew 24:14:** And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (NIV)

Jewish messiah

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/messiah.html>

[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0014\\_0\\_13744.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0014_0_13744.html)

## \*THE BODY OF CHRIST

Prior to the Day of Pentecost, the Church Age was a “mystery” to Israel (Colossians 1:24-27; Ephesians 3:2-6).

**Church:** *ekklēsia*: an assembly, a (religious) congregation.<sup>217</sup> From *ek*, “out from and to” and *kaléo*, “to call” – properly, people called out from the world and to God.<sup>218</sup>

Within the New Testament, the term church may denote one or more local assemblies of Christian believers similar in form and substance to what we consider “a” church today; or, the term may denote the whole, singular body of Christian believers, metaphorically representing the “bride” of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2), and this section focuses on the latter sense.

1. **Newly Created:** *Matthew 16:18-19:* And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (NIV)
2. **Evangelical in Nature:** *Acts 8:1-4:* On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. (NIV)
3. **A Singular, Unified Body:** *Acts 20:28:* Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. (NIV)

<sup>217</sup> “*ekklēsia*,” 1577, Strong’s Concordance, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/1577.htm>> July 17, 2012.

<sup>218</sup> “1577 *ekklēsia*,” *Helps Ministries: HELPSWord-studies*, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/1577.htm>> July 17, 2012.

4. **Bride and Body of Christ:** *Ephesians 5:23, 31-32*: For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior... “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. (*Colossians 1:18*) (NIV)

This vagueness seems problematic with many biblical scholars and contributes to “interpretations” that vary greatly in length and breadth. Within my explorations, unfortunately, many “interpretations” attempted to “explain away” the passage in preference for their preset, dogmatic views. The vagueness, however, should not be problematic especially if we view the passage as a simple outline for complex concepts that should already be understood by the reader – the passage brings together numerous concepts previously explored within biblical scripture. The following lists the five basic notions outlined within this passage and the points of exploration within this section:

1. **The Binding of Satan:** From the trickery of Eve, to the temptation of Jesus, to the great deception during the Great Tribulation, Satan has served as an antagonist for God’s plan for humankind. What would human life be like had Satan never been? This answer, I believe, will be answered during the Millennial Kingdom as Satan will be unable to deceive the nations.
2. **Deceiving the Nations:** Who are the nations that can no longer be deceived? Are they members of the Church? Are they the regathered tribes of Israel? Are they newly redeemed Christians? Or, are they unregenerate humans that somehow escaped the calamity of the Great Tribulation? What will be the nature of their redemption and the basis for their judgment? (See also the “Is Satan Bound” section of this study.)
3. **The Thrones and Judging:** The term “thrones” is plural and indicates more than one individual. Who are these individuals? By what authority do they have thrones and authority to judge? Who will they judge? What are they judging?
4. **The Resurrection of the Martyrs:** Who are these martyrs? When were they resurrected? In what manner will they reign with Christ? In what manner will they be priests of God and Christ? Is this first resurrection the Rapture? Why aren’t those Christians who lived and died before the Great Tribulation mentioned? (See also the “First Resurrection: Physical vs. Spiritual” section of this study.)
5. **The Second Death:** What is the second death? Will everyone from all times who have not been redeemed by the blood of Christ experience the second death? What is the nature of “Hell” and is it everlasting?

## \*THE NATIONS OF THE MILLENNIUM

<http://www.rapturesolution.com/beeckick/Book/Mill.htm>

[http://www.seasonsofnoah.com/prophetic\\_update.php?id=52&type=3](http://www.seasonsofnoah.com/prophetic_update.php?id=52&type=3)

It has been interesting to read the various opinions on who will inhabit the earth during the Millennial Kingdom. A prevalent opinion among premillennialists seems to indicate that those who enter the millennium will be saved Christians; individuals who missed the Rapture but came know Christ during the Great Tribulation. These Christians will retain their human form and bear children. Some of these children

will not accept Christ and will participate in the final rebellion. While seemingly compassionate, there is little sound scriptural evidence to support this view.

The “mystery” of the Millennial Kingdom may prove to be just as mysterious to us as the Church was to the Jews prior to Pentecost. However, if we are careful, we may be able to get a glimmer into this next age.

The survivors of the Tribulation who did not take the mark of the beast or accept Christ will not be instantaneously disciplined. It will take time to convert people individually, disciple them, and lead them into deep worship and adoration of the King of kings. Notice this Scripture, which is in the context of the Millennial Kingdom:

“For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming

to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see

My glory [the nations will come to see Jesus’ glory in Jerusalem]. I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them [the survivors of Israel] to the nations: Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Rosh, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations. Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to the LORD, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem,” says the LORD, “just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. I will also take some of them for priests and for Levites,” says the LORD (Isa. 66:18-21).

[http://thectp.org/Notes/EndTimes/EndTimes\\_7.pdf](http://thectp.org/Notes/EndTimes/EndTimes_7.pdf)

Israel believed that the messiah would establish a physical, earthly kingdom.

The Millennial Reign is a time of Restoration:

1. Jesus Christ has evicted Satan and his minions and reclaimed the title deed to planet Earth.
2. Satan and his minions are bound and no longer assert an influence upon mankind.
3. The biological effects resulting from generations of sin are reversed.
4. The ecological damages caused by man’s abusive nature are reversed.

However, despite a near “utopian” environment, some humans will choose disobedience:

One of the purposes of the Millennial Kingdom is to demonstrate what life on the earth would have been had man not rebelled in the Garden of Eden, but instead had exercised his God-given dominion in righteousness. The restoration (Mat. 19:28; Acts 3:21) of the earth in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom will roll back conditions to be much like they were prior to the flood.

1. Before Adam
  - The Garden
2. Adam to Noah
  - The Flood - Transition
3. Noah to Abraham
  - Tower of Babel - Transition
4. Abraham to Moses
  - Slavery in Egypt - Transition

5. Moses to David
  - Saul's Reign - Transition
6. David to Captivity
  - Babylonian Captivity - Transition
7. Captivity to Christ
  - Christ to 70 AD - Transition
8. 70 AD to Tribulation
  - Tribulation to 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming – Transition
9. Millennial Reign
  - Armageddon
10. New Heaven and Earth

## \*PEOPLE WHO INHABIT THE MILLENNIUM:

**Not saved Christians:** people of the millennium will die, Christians will not face a second death

## APOLOGETICS

### \*CHRIST'S HUMANITY

#### INTRODUCTION

For the past several months, a couple of questions have been puzzling my mind:

*Was Jesus Christ fully human, and, if He was, didn't he lose His divinity in the process? If He didn't lose His divinity, how then could He have fully understood the plight of mankind?*

Are the answers to these questions important? I think so... Without a comprehensive understanding the nature of Jesus Christ the Son and His earthly ministry, we fail to understand our own nature and the fullness of God's eternal plan. Perhaps more importantly, this ignorance permits a distortion of biblical passages possibly leading to radically distorted theological beliefs.

For example, Muslims believe Jesus was born without human agency but He was not the son of God. They also assert that Jesus was not crucified but rather ascended bodily to heaven after being miraculously saved by God.<sup>219</sup> Muslims may utilize New Testament scripture to illustrate their beliefs:<sup>220</sup>

from "Top Ten Reasons to Reject Jesus' Divinity!"

1. Mark 12:29 Jesus said "Here, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." [This confirms that Jesus preached to worship One and Only God, not trinity.]
2. John 20:17 Jesus said I ascend to my God and your God. [Jesus has a God according to him; we know that God can't have a God?]
3. John 8:28 Jesus said, "I do nothing of myself" [Can a God be this dependant?]

<sup>219</sup> "Jesus," *Al Islam: Ahmadiyya Muslim Community*, 2012. <<http://www.alislam.org/library/jesus/>> August 5, 2012.

<sup>220</sup> Shahid Bin Waheed, "Top Ten Reasons to Reject Jesus' Divinity!" October 24, 2004. <<http://www.islam-is-the-only-solution.com/top-ten.htm>> August 4, 2012.

4. John 14:28 Jesus said, "My Father (GOD) is greater than I am" [So, how can Jesus himself be a God?]
5. Luke 23:46 Jesus said "Father (GOD), into thy hands I commend my spirit" [God does not have spirit like Jesus did.]
6. Matthew 24:36 Jesus told his followers that no one (including Jesus) knows when the judgment day will come, only GOD knows. [Or Jesus was lying to his followers, if he was God?]
7. John 5:30 Jesus told his followers that he couldn't do a single thing of his own. [When a God became this helpless?]
8. John 5:32 Jesus told his followers that they have never seen GOD at anytime nor ever heard his voice. [Or Jesus was lying again here, if he was God?]
9. Luke 5:16 Jesus prays to God. [Funny, if Jesus was God, then why he is praying to God? Since when and how a God has a God?]
10. Matthew 26:39 Jesus fell on his face and prayed to his GOD like Muslims do. [How would you explain this from the very Bible?]

How does a Christian counter such claims? Some Christian may argue that such claims are simply a "distortion of the truth." Others may utilize other passages to counter such claims. Unfortunately, without a comprehensive understanding of the nature of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, such efforts are feeble and unlikely to sway the argument.

Within the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, two passages cause some biblical scholars concern:

**Matthew 24:36:** "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (NIV)

**Mark 13:32:** "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (NIV)

How can it be that Jesus Christ the Son of God did not know the day or hour of His own second coming? Surely if Jesus is the Son and the Son and the Father are one, then Jesus knew the day and hour? Surely if Jesus Christ is God, there is nothing beyond His realm – that He is both omnipotent and omniscient?

In order to "clarify" this apparent contradiction, some biblical scholars attempt to rewrite the verses to illustrate the "true meaning" intended by God: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor would the Son except through the Father." Such amplifications, I'm afraid, are not supported by the scriptures. Other biblical scholars assert that the verses refer to the "son of man" instead of the "Son of God." Such interpretation, I'm afraid, implies that Jesus had two distinct natures – one human and one divine... such argument seems itself contradictory. Still other biblical scholars assert that Jesus is speaking figuratively because it was not His mission to reveal the timing of His second coming. Such viewpoint, I'm afraid, seems more like rationalization than clarification.

Such confusion among biblical scholars permit, and possibly promote, unorthodox doctrine among the religious community. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses utilize a variety of scripture to "prove" that Jesus

is a created being<sup>221</sup> and, outside His earthly ministry, the archangel Michael.<sup>222</sup> Mormons assert that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are separate and distinct personages – individual, separate beings.<sup>223</sup> Mormon doctrine also asserts that Jesus Christ and Lucifer are spiritual brothers.<sup>224</sup> These types of beliefs may seem biblical to the unformed and possibly even innocuous; however, it is through delusions such as these, I believe, that Satan hopes to wrestle control of the earth and mankind from God’s redemption:

**2 Thessalonians 2:9-11:** The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. (NIV)

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## GOD’S HUMANITY

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Any claim that God possesses human qualities may seem blasphemous as we often view God as a monolithic, omnipotent, omniscient, holy being sitting on a great throne surrounded by peals of thunder and bolts of lightning. While this view deserves merit, it seems more mythical than the God frequently described in the Bible. Certainly, God is perfectly holy and mankind is perfectly corrupt outside of God’s grace; however, God displays emotional qualities that we frequently view as weaknesses:

Genesis 6:7: ...for I have repented that I have made them. (YLT)

Exodus 4:14: ...the anger of Jehovah burneth against Moses... (YLT)

Numbers 14:12: I smite it [Israel] with pestilence, and dispossess it, and make thee become a nation greater and mightier than it. (YLT)

1 Samuel 15:35: ...Jehovah repented that He had caused Saul to reign over Israel. (YLT)

During Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry, He also demonstrate emotional passion:

Mark 3:5: ... having looked round upon them with anger ... (YLT)

Luke 10:21: In that hour was Jesus glad in the Spirit... (YLT)

Matthew 9:36: ... he was moved with compassion for them... (YLT)

Matthew 26:38: ...Exceedingly sorrowful is my soul – unto death... (YLT)

Are these emotions symptoms of weakness, imperfection, or sin? Absolutely not! God is perfect and holy in every aspect, but He also is also charged with an emotional passion. Contrary to many views, God does not sit on His throne in heaven dispassionately observing His eternal plan unfold; rather, our God actively and passionately engages in human activity:

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<sup>221</sup> “Who Is Jesus Christ?” Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 2005. <[http://www.watchtower.org/e/bh/article\\_04.htm](http://www.watchtower.org/e/bh/article_04.htm)> August 4, 2012.

<sup>222</sup> “Who Is Michael the Archangel?” Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 2009. <[http://www.watchtower.org/e/bh/appendix\\_11.htm#fnt1](http://www.watchtower.org/e/bh/appendix_11.htm#fnt1)> Nov. 25, 2011.

<sup>223</sup> Robert L. Millet, “What Mormons Believe About Jesus Christ,” Newsroom: The Church of JESUS CHRIST of LATTER-DAY SAINTS, 2001. <<http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/what-mormons-believe-about-jesus-christ>> August 4, 2012.

<sup>224</sup> Jess L. Christensen, “How can Jesus and Lucifer be spirit brothers when their characters and purposes are so utterly opposed?” I Have a Question: The Church of JESUS CHRIST of LATTER-DAY SAINTS, June 1986. <<http://www.lds.org/ensign/1986/06/i-have-a-question>> August 4, 2012.

Matthew 10:29-31: Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (NIV)

Should not forget that we were create in God's image.

from "Celebrate Our Savior: A Study of the Incarnation"<sup>225</sup>

Jesus began life as a fetus, helpless. He lived as a baby, crying when hungry, fussing when he was uncomfortable. As a child, he had to learn to crawl, and then to walk and run. He learned to talk just as other children do. He had to learn words and grammar of Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek. He had to learn about the physical world around him, farming, weather and the history of his own people. He was human physically, intellectually and emotionally.

In the process of learning, Jesus would have made mistakes. He would fall down when learning to walk, make grammatical errors when learning to talk, make measurement mistakes when learning to be a carpenter. Making mistakes with facts such as these is not a sin, and we have no biblical or theological reason to think that Jesus never made such mistakes. This is part of life in the flesh.

John 10:30: I and the Father are one. (NIV)

We must be very, very cautious in selecting isolated scriptures to draw specific, unwarranted conclusions... we could, in theory, prove just about anything if we chose to do so. Certainly, God the Father displays apparent human weaknesses from time to time:

Certainly, Jesus Christ the Son also displayed apparent human weaknesses during his earthly ministry:

Luke 4:1: ...he afterward hungered. (YLT)

John 4:6: ...Jesus therefore having been weary... (YLT)

John 19:28: ...Jesus... saith, "I thirst." (YLT)

Luke 2:52: ...Jesus was advancing in wisdom... (YLT)

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Hebrews 5:8: through being a Son, did learn by the things which he suffered -- the obedience (YLT)

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Philippians 2:6-8: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!

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<sup>225</sup> Michael Morrison, "Celebrate Our Savior: A Study of the Incarnation," Grace Communion International, 1998. <<http://www.gci.org/jesus/celebrate>> August 5, 2012.

Hebrews 4:15: For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. (NIV)

<http://unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/print/What%20is%20Arianismprt.htm>

<http://ho-logos.blogspot.com/2009/03/jesus-said-i-and-father-are-one.html>

<http://mc-corporischristi.org/Jesus%20and%20Emotions.pdf>

<http://frontlineapologetics.com/2012/03/23/nor-the-son-does-matthew-2436-undermine-the-deity-of-christ/>

## DAVID'S THRONE: IS JESUS CURRENTLY REIGNING FROM?

Is Jesus Christ currently reigning on King David's throne in heaven? No, although Jesus Christ has been anointed to David's throne (de jure – by right according to the law), he has not yet physically assumed David's throne (de facto – in fact, whether with a legal right or not).

Amillennialist and Progressive Dispensationalists believe that Christ is currently sitting on David's throne in heaven. Although their argumentation is persuasive and rooted in elements of truth, they tend to overlook the delay between the anointing and the assumption.

### DELAY BETWEEN ANOINTING AND ASSUMPTION

There was a significant delay between King David's anointing and his assumption of the throne. David was anointed king in private as a youth in Bethlehem; Christ was similarly anointed following his baptism by John:

**1 Samuel 16:13:** So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. (NIV)

**Acts 10:37-38:** You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. (NIV)

However, David did not immediately assume the throne but faced years of testing and turmoil. After King Saul's death, David was anointed king of Judah; similarly, Christ was anointed following his death and resurrection:

**2 Samuel 2:4:** Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah... (NIV)

**Acts 13:32-34:** ...What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: "You are my Son; today I have become

your Father.” The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words: “I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.” (NIV)

After David was anointed king of Judah, it would be another seven and one-half years before David was finally anointed king of all Israel – it took time for all of Israel to recognize their rightful king. Metaphorically, Jesus Christ is king of those who are loyal and obedient to his Word but has yet to assert his Lordship over the entire kingdom:

**2 Samuel 5:1-2:** All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, ‘You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.’” (NIV)

**2 Samuel 5:3:** When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a compact with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel. (NIV)

If David’s story foreshadows Christ’s, and I believe it does, then we should see no problem with a delay between the initial anointing Jesus Christ, his baptism by John, and his final assumption to David’s throne, the Second Advent.

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## THE PARABLE OF THE TEN MINAS

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The Parable of the Ten Minas illustrates the delay between Christ’s anointing and his assuming the throne. This parable was delivered immediately prior to Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem and, along with verse 11, addresses the misconception that Christ was going to assume David’s throne during his earthly ministry:

**Luke 19:11-12:** While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.” (NIV)

Does this parable indicate that the nobleman became king and then ruled from the distant country? No, there is no mention of messengers, representatives, or soldiers coming to enforce the nobleman’s rule. The servants were free to go about their business without additional instructions. It was not until the nobleman returned as king that he began to enforce his rule.

Similarly, Christ has gone away to a distant land, heaven; there he will be appointed king; when God hands him the two sided scroll, he will then assert his authority upon his return, the Second Advent. Although Jesus Christ possesses all power and authority in heaven and earth, he has not yet begun to exercise that authority.

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## PHYSICAL REIGN OVER ISRAEL

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Old Testament prophecy indicates that Jesus Christ will assume a physical reign over Israel from Jerusalem. Israel is currently without a king, without sacrifices, without priests, and without idols.

They await a physical restoration. At that time, they will reside in the lands given to Jacob and Jesus Christ, the root of Jesse, will reside as their king:

**Hosea 3:4:** This shows that Israel will go a long time without a king or prince, and without sacrifices, sacred pillars, priests, or even idols! But afterward the people will return and devote themselves to the LORD their God and to David's descendant, their king. In the last days, they will tremble in awe of the LORD and of his goodness. (NIV)

**Ezekiel 37:24-25:** My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. (NIV)

**Jeremiah 23:5-6:** "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness. (NIV)

Jesus Christ will specifically rule from Jerusalem:

**Psalms 110:2:** The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. (NIV)

**Isaiah 2:3:** ... For the LORD's teaching will go out from Zion; his word will go out from Jerusalem. (NIV)

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## PHYSICAL REIGN OVER ALL NATIONS

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Jesus Christ will assume a physical reign over all nations of this world. There is a difference between possessing the authority to rule and exercising that authority. The current situation on earth does not reflect the characteristics that prophecy attributes to Christ's reign:

**Micah 4:3:** The LORD will mediate between peoples and will settle disputes between strong nations far away. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore. (NIV)

**Isaiah 2:3-4:** People from many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of Jacob's God. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." For the LORD's teaching will go out from Zion; his word will go out from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more. (NIV)

Has this earthly reign already begun? No, Satan is now the god of this world:

**2 Corinthians 4:4:** Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. (NIV)

This earthly reign will begin when Jesus Christ returns in his glory:

**Matthew 25:31-32:** But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (NIV)

**Daniel 7:13-14:** In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (NIV)

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## THE FATHER CONTROLS THE TIMING

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The Father controls the timing of when Christ will physically assume David's throne. Those who believe that Jesus Christ currently resides in heaven on David's throne fail to recognize that our timing does not match God's timing. Since John the Baptist started preaching the "kingdom of God," humans have mistakenly believed that the physical kingdom was imminent:

**Luke 19:11:** While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. (NIV)

**Acts 1:6:** So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (NIV)

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-2:** Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. (NIV)

The claim that Jesus Christ currently reigns in heaven on David's throne seems to be a continuation of mistaken belief. Although all the prerequisites might have been fulfilled and the conditions may be right, God the Father retains the authority to set dates and times:

**Matthew 24:36:** No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

**Acts 1:7:** He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know."

Jesus Christ is currently in heaven serving as the high priest in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:10). During this time period, Christ is awaiting the Father to place his enemies under his feet:

**Psalms 110:1-2:** The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies." (NIV)

**Hebrews 10:12-13:** But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. (NIV)

Once the appointed time arrives, God the Father will hand Jesus Christ the Son the two sided scroll with the seven seals (Revelation 5:1). At that time, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David (Revelation 5:5) will assume his role of conquering king, physically reclaim the planet earth, and rule the nations with an iron rod:

**Romans 15:12:** And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him." (NIV)

**Revelation 19:14-15:** The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron sceptre." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. (NIV)



Jesus Christ is fully justified in assuming the throne of King David – he is the only begotten Son of God the Father; his is genetically of King David’s lineage; he, as a human, successfully thwarted Satan’s temptation; he lived a perfectly obedient life during his earthly ministry; he suffered the indignities and physical suffering in payment for mankind’s disobedience; he paid the price for human in through spiritual death on the cross, separated from God; he ultimately sacrificed his life for the redemption of mankind; and he demonstrated victory over death through his resurrection and ascension. However, despite having been anointed to David’s throne, de jure; Jesus Christ has not yet physically assumed that throne, de facto.

When the Father hands his Son the scroll with the seven seals and the Lamb breaks that 1st Seal then Jesus Christ will initiate those steps necessary to assume David’s throne. Until that day, David’s kingdom will not be fully realized.

## DUAL PURPOSE LITERARY DEVICES

The Bible can be a difficult piece of literature. It employs not only a number of literary devices, but it also utilizes dual purpose literary devices such as biblical types, dual purpose passages, and dual occurrence prophecies. These devices add to the human ability to understand complex issues, concepts, and events – they provide examples and models that help us see and comprehend.

Unfortunately, these devices can easily result in confusion and conflict among biblical scholars especially in the study of prophetic events. It is difficult to differentiate between those events that have already been fulfilled, those that have been partially fulfilled, and those that will be fulfilled in the future.

## ESCHATOLOGICAL VIEWS

The difficulty in determining when, how, and by whom biblical prophecies are fulfilled has resulted in three primary eschatological views:<sup>226</sup>

1. **PRETERISM:** Preterism is a Christian eschatological view that interprets prophecies of the Bible, especially Daniel and Revelation, as events which have already happened in the first

<sup>226</sup> *The concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of humankind.*

century A.D. Preterism holds that Ancient Israel finds its continuation or fulfillment in the Christian church at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.<sup>227</sup>

2. **IDEALISM:** Idealism (also called the spiritual approach, the allegorical approach, the nonliteral approach, and many other names) in Christian eschatology is an interpretation of the Book of Revelation that sees all of the imagery of the book as non-literal symbols.<sup>228</sup>
3. **HISTORICISM:** Historicism is a method of interpretation, in Christian eschatology, by associating biblical prophecies with actual historical events as well as identifying symbolic beings with historical persons or societies.<sup>229</sup>
4. **FUTURISM:** Futurism is a Christian eschatological view that interprets the Book of Revelation, the Book of Daniel, the Olivet discourse and the parable of the Sheep and the Goats as future events in a literal, physical, apocalyptic, and global context. Futurism interprets these passages as prophecies that will be fulfilled in the future as literal, physical events.<sup>230</sup>

The conflict between these groups can become hostile and bitter. This conflict is unnecessarily divisive because a broad examination of the scriptures reveals that each view has merit. Many of the “end time” prophecies were fulfilled in 70AD, many have allegorical characteristics, many are reflected in historical events, and many will occur at some point in the future.

Unfortunately, far too many scholars fail to recognize God’s omnipotence and omniscience – they assign God human limitations. This is an error. Biblical scripture was not authored by humans but by the hand of God. They are fluid, they breathe, and they are alive... Unchanging yet adaptive...

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## TYPES & EXAMPLES OF DEVICES

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Dual purpose literary devices, such as allegories,<sup>6</sup> serve as models and examples to help the reader understand abstract, complex, or unusual concepts much like other literary devices such as metaphors, symbols, and similes. They can come in positive or negative forms. Positive forms consist of characteristics that are similar to the item under discussion; negative forms consist of characteristics that are dissimilar. For example, the Noachic flood is a positive example of Christ’s second coming – both will come quickly and unexpectedly upon the wicked. The Antichrist is a negative example of Jesus Christ – the Antichrist is wicked while Jesus Christ is holy.

When examining dual purpose literary devices, like any form of figurative language, the reader must be careful not to read too much into the comparison. Although the two items may share similar traits, the comparison is never exact – there are differences that should be considered.

- **BIBLICAL TYPES:** a person or event that serves as an example or model for a separate situation.

The good example of a biblical type can be found in the design of the Jewish temple. God provided detailed plans concerning the size, shape, construction, and composition of the building and contents of the earthly temple... as the earthly temple was a type of the heavenly

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<sup>227</sup> “Preterism,” Wikipedia, Oct. 2, 2011. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preterism>> Nov. 10, 2011.

<sup>228</sup> “Idealism,” Wikipedia, May 26, 2011. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism\\_\(Christian\\_eschatology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_(Christian_eschatology))> Nov. 10, 2011.

<sup>229</sup> “Historicism,” Wikipedia, Nov. 7, 2011 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism\\_\(Christianity\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_(Christianity))> Nov. 10, 2011.

<sup>230</sup> “Futurism,” Wikipedia, Nov. 5, 2011 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism\\_\(Christianity\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_(Christianity))> Nov. 10, 2011.

temple. If we want to know what the abode of God looks like, we need only study the plans for the Jewish temple. Naturally, the earthly temple is not an exact replica, but its plans do give us an approximation.

Another good example of a biblical type can be found in the Jewish sacrifices of the Old Testament. They typified the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ to atone for man's sin. This is why Jesus Christ is referred to as the Lamb of God within the book of revelation.

- **DUAL ROLE:** a passage that contains two or more messages, meanings, or prophecies.

An easily recognizable example of dual role passages can be found in John's messages to the seven churches within the book of Revelation. Although the messages are directed to a specific congregation and address specific positive attributes, shortcomings, blessings, and admonishments for each church, they also describe the different types of Christians that exist today. The messages serve two roles: one for the first century church congregation and one for the twenty-first century Christian. The passages are more than mere history; they are just as applicable today as they were nearly two-thousand years ago.

A major controversy within biblical circles is over the meaning of Matthew 24:34, "Verily I say unto you, 'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled'" (Mark 13:1-37, and Luke 21:5-33). Preterism insist that all of the prophecies within Matthew 24 were fulfilled within forty years of its deliver, 70 AD – a literal forty year generation. Others argue that the Greek term genea can also refer to "family" or "race" and indicate that this passage should be interpreted as the Jewish race will not pass away before all these things are fulfilled. Still others argue that "this generation" is not speaking of Jesus Christ's earthly contemporaries – the people born about the same time as he – but rather the generation that is alive during the time when the signs occur.

Naturally, the problem lies with the limitation of human imagination, not the passage or its fulfillment. The Preterism view is at least partially correct in that Jesus was targeting his contemporaries, especially the Sadducees and Pharisees, because their self-centeredness missed recognizing the Messiah. This view is validated by the previous chapter in Matthew. However, the other two viewpoints may be equally correct as we would have to really "spiritualize" several of the events to conclude that they were fulfilled during the first century. We should recognize that God's Word is infinite and applied to both those living during Christ's earthly ministry and those who will be living at the time of Christ's Second Advent. The passage serves dual roles – for both generations.

- **DUAL OCCURENCE:** a single prophecy that will be fulfilled at two or more times or manners.

The best known example of dual occurrence prophecy can be found within the Olivet Discourse in reference to the "abomination of desolation." The Jewish tradition indicates that Daniel's original prophecy occurred in 167 BC by Antiochus Epiphanes when he set up an altar to Zeus in the Second Temple and sacrificed a pig on the altar. Jesus Christ, speaking 200 years after Antiochus, indicated that the abomination would occur at some point in the future.

The Preterism view claims that this prophecy was fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the second temple; the futurism view claims the Romans may have destroyed the temple but

there are no historical records to indicate that they setup an idol within the holy place. The dispute between Preterism and futurism illustrates the “childishness” of some scholarly debates. If the “abomination of desolation” prophecy could occur twice, it certainly can be occur three times. Once again, the problem lies not in the biblical scripture but within the human mindset.

Does this mean that any prophecy can be occur at two or more times or manners? No. Were all the Olivet Discourse prophecies fulfilled during the first century? No. For example, Matthew 24:21 states, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” While the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD might have been horrendous, it paled in comparison to the atrocities of the Holocaust where millions of Jews were exterminated. The siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple were “types” of the tribulation to come – they possessed many of the characteristics of the great tribulation, but not all. As with any biblical passage, we be cautious of overstep – making connections where connections were never intended.

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## FULL OR PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

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Many biblical scholars claim that a prophecy can only be fulfilled once – once it occurs, that’s it... it’s finished. On one level I tend to agree. Once the entire Olivet Discourse prophecy is fulfilled, it’s unlikely that it will be repeated. However, that doesn’t mean that individual elements cannot occur multiple times or that a prophecy cannot be “partially fulfilled.”

The good example of partial occurrence (fulfillment) can be found in the book of Acts:

**Acts 2:14-21:** Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that. No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy. And I will cause wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below— blood and fire and clouds of smoke. The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and glorious day of the LORD arrives. But everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.’” (NLT)

Since this is a portion of the Bible, we understand that the words spoken by Peter are the inspired Words of God and Peter was not in error in comparing to the events of Pentecost to the prophetic vision within the book of Joel. Yet, Peter seems to be claiming the following:

1. These are the last days.
2. Sons and daughters will prophesy.
3. Men will see visions and dreams.
4. Men and women will prophesy.
5. There were wonders in heaven above.
6. There were signs on the earth below.

7. The sun became dark.
8. The moon turned blood red.

Did he literally mean all of those things? Probably not. Was there a miraculous demonstration of the powers of the Holy Spirit? Absolutely. However, we understand that the Day of the Lord has yet to arrive so labeling the Day of Pentecost as the “last days” was probably be a stretch. And, it is unlikely that the physical signs in the heaven and earth physically occurred.

Some biblical scholars claim that the Day of Pentecost fulfilled Joel’s prophecy and that it will not be repeated. I think this is error. Some of the individual elements were fulfilled at Pentecost and Peter was correct in applying Joel’s prophecy to that situation. However, it was only a partial occurrence – a partial fulfillment. The Joel’s prophetic vision will likely be fully realized at some future point.

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## **DIVIDING THE ELEMENTS WITHIN A PROPHETIC VISION**

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Some scholars assert that individual elements of a prophetic vision can be fulfilled on different occasions. For example, some claim that portions of the Olivet Discourse were specific to 70 AD siege of Jerusalem and will not be repeated while other portions of the same discourse are reserved for the “end times.” We see a similar pattern when John’s prophetic visions in Revelation are spread over a period of two-thousand years.

There are examples of where two different elements of a prophecy are fulfilled on two separate occasions such as the resurrection of the saints and the resurrection of the wicked. There are also prophetic visions that are fulfilled over an extended period of time such as Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of the great statue. However, we must be very, very careful in dividing single prophetic visions into individual parts, and there must be ample justification for such divisions. In the case of the great statue, Daniel’s interpretation provides clear and sufficient evidence. In the case of two separate resurrections, the division is less clear and requires far more than a cursory glance – it requires a careful comparison and detailed analysis of related scripture.

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## **CONCLUSION**

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We should understand that God’s Word is not limited to human capabilities but is alive, it breaths, and it is fluid. We should also be very cautious in applying such devices to our understanding because they are a source of confusion and conflict among biblical scholars. However, dual purpose literary devices within biblical scripture greatly enhance the human capability to envision God’s eternal plan as they provide examples and models that help us see and comprehend highly complex ideas and issues.

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## **FIRST RESURRECTION: PHYSICAL VS. SPIRITUAL**

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Amillennialism contends there is only one physical resurrection of the dead and that resurrection will occur immediately before the White Throne judgment. They also assert that the first resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20:5 refers to a spiritual awakening that occurs within a Christian’s life here on earth. If one holds an amillennial viewpoint, there are ample biblical scriptures to support this view.

A pretribulation view asserts the first resurrection refers to the Rapture that occurs prior to the great tribulation and subsequent resurrections of those left behind during the tribulation period; the first resurrection refers, therefore, not to just one incident but two, perhaps three, stages where Christians are physically transformed and taken to heaven. Pretribulation supporters also allude to a number of biblical scriptures to support their view.

There are also a number of other first resurrection viewpoints such as mid-tribulation, pre-wrath, and post-tribulation. Each contending that their position best illustrates biblical truth.

Additionally, if Christ reigns physically on Earth for a thousand years, those who die during that thousand years must also experience an accounting.

A review of the literature was a bit confusing as authors tend to emphasize those scriptures that support their position and “explain away” those that seem contradictory. In more than one occasion, I found allusions to scriptures that provided little support for the argument being discussed, and in some cases the authors twisted the meaning of passages to fit their particular need.

What I chose, under these circumstances, to scrap all viewpoints, pull relevant scriptural passages into a single document, examine each passage, and draw my own conclusions based upon my findings. Once this task was complete, I then compared my findings with the amillennialism and pretribulation viewpoints to “test” my findings. The primary questions I sought to answer consisted of the following:

1. Is the first resurrection mentioned in the Book of Revelation spiritual or physical?
2. Does the first resurrection take place when we accept Christ or at the end of this age?
3. How many more times will Christ return?
4. Will the final judgment occur immediately after Christ’s coming?

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## INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION

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- **ARE THERE SCRIPTURES THAT SEEM TO INDICATE A SINGLE RESURRECTION?**

Yes. The first one is from the Old Testament and their vision of the resurrection was vaguer than after Christ’s resurrection. The second one seems to indicate only one; however, the inclusion of the word “but” may provide a little wiggle room for separate events.

**Daniel 12:2:** And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

**Acts 24: 14-15:** But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

- **ARE THERE TWO RESURRECTIONS?**

Yes, if there is a first resurrection, then there must be a second. The elect will be resurrected, both living and dead, at the first resurrection; the remainder shall be resurrected at the end of time.

**Revelation 20: 4-6:** and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This [is] the first resurrection. Blessed and holy [is] he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

**John 5:28:** Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

- **IS THE RESURRECTION OF THE ELECT A SEPARATE EVENT THAT THE RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED?**

Yes, the elect will be resurrected at his coming in the clouds, then they will return with him at the battle occurring at the end of Revelation, Chapter 19.

**1 Corinthians 15:20-26:** But now is Christ risen from the dead, [and] become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man [came] death, by man [came] also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then [cometh] the end...

**1 Thessalonians 3:13:** So that he may establish your hearts blameless holiness before our God and Father, at the coming [parousia] of the Lord Jesus with all his saints.

- **IS THE FIRST RESURRECTION IS A PHYSICAL ONE?**

Yes. (1) If the dead are resurrected then we must consider this resurrection to be more than a spiritual one. (2) If all the people of the earth see and hear Christ coming for the elect, it is more than a simple spiritual event.

**1 Thessalonians Chapter 4: 16-17:** For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

**Matthew 24:30-31:** And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

- **WILL THIS PHYSICAL RESURRECTION BE SILENT OR SECRET?**

No. The model of the first resurrection was provided in Acts 1:9-11, and that model seems to be validated by 2 Timothy's reference to Christ's appearing:

**Acts 1: 9-11:** And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

**2 Timothy 4:1, 8:** I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; ... Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

- **WILL THOSE WHO REMAIN ON EARTH AFTER THE RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS KNOW WHAT HAS OCCURRED?**

Yes. The Synoptic Gospels seem to be relatively clear that there will be great mourning when Christ appears in a cloud to gather his elect.

**Matthew 24:30:** And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

**2 Thessalonians 2:7-8:** For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

- **ARE THERE INDIVIDUALS WHO CONFUSE THE RESURRECTION OF THE ELECT AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED?**

Yes. The resurrection of Lazarus can serve as an example that the elect will be resurrected separately than the unbeliever. In this example, Martha acknowledges that the dead will be resurrected just prior to the great judgment; however, Jesus' response seems to rebuke her answer because she does not comprehend his ministry has resulted in a new revelation.

**John 11:23-26:** Jesus saith unto her, "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha saith unto him, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said unto her, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

- **IS THE RESURRECTION OF THE ELECT A SEPARATE EVENT THAN THAT OF THE WICKED?**

Yes. The resurrection for the just is mentioned separately than the resurrection of the wicked.

**Luke 14: 13-14:** But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

**John 5:28:** Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

- **IS THERE ALSO A TYPE OF RESURRECTION THAT IS NOT PHYSICAL?**

Yes. When we accept Christ, we are “born again” and walk in a new life... Christ’s resurrection is a “type” of this new life.

**Romans 6:4:** Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also [in the likeness] of [his] resurrection.

- **WE THERE WILL BE A GREAT JUDGMENT?**

Yes, at the very end of the earth as we know it. The true believer is not judged according to their works but upon the Grace of God which is a free gift. Nonbelievers, however, will be judged according to their works.

**Revelation 20:12:** And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

**Hebrews 6:1-2:** Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

## CONCLUSION

There are two resurrections along with two judgments. The first resurrection takes place at the Lord’s coming in the clouds; at that time, the dead and the living in Christ will be resurrected and judged according to Christ’s redemption. The second resurrection takes place at the end of the millennial age and those individuals will be judged according to their works (some good; some bad).

My thoughts continually return to the inability of the Pharisees and Sadducees to visualize the Messiah’s first coming as a humble teacher instead of a conquering king. And, I wonder if today’s theologians may be suffering a similar tunnel vision... they have a strong desire for this age to be the climax of God’s plan for mankind. Since that is what they want to see, that is what they see within the scriptures. I, however, get a sneaky suspicion that there is something more... a separate age where God’s renews his original covenant – the one made with Adam.

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is not to prove that the amillennial viewpoint concerning the resurrection of the living and dead is in error. After an examination of their arguments and related scriptures, proponents of a single physical resurrection have a strong case.

However, I personally believe that the amillennial viewpoint is flawed. Many scriptures can be interpreted in more than one way, and my goal, in this section, is to determine if there is sufficient latitude in amillennialism argumentation to permit an alternative view.

### THE PASSAGE DOESN'T SPECIFICALLY MENTION...

It is impractical to provide the entire narrative of God's plan into each and every biblical passage; that is why there are over 31,000 individual verses in the Bible – each providing a individual, specific piece of the overall portrait. Many biblical scholars fall into the trap of expecting each scripture to discuss all aspects of a given topic, "The passage doesn't specifically mention..." This expectation is unreasonable. The course of human instruction requires the teacher to focus on one topic at a time. Instruction that provides too many details confuses the listener and frequently produces more confusion than understanding.

As an example, let's examine the amillennialism argument, "2 Pet 3:10 warns us that on the day of the Lord 'The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.' Hardly time for a millennium here."<sup>231</sup>

**2 Peter 3:10:** But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (NLT)

For a proper understanding of this scripture, we need to understand the purpose of the entire discussion. In this case, the author of 2 Peter is comparing and contrasting the life of the wicked with the life a believer ought to live:

**2 Peter 3:5-7:** They deliberately forget that God made the heavens by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed. (NLT)

**2 Peter 3:11:** Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live... (NLT)

This passage is nothing more than good old-fashion hell, fire, and brimstone preaching: "You'd better get your life right or you're going to suffer the fiery wrath of God... you're going to burn in hell along

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<sup>231</sup> Ross A. Taylor, "Amillennialist Interpretation," *Revelation: Apocalipsis.org*. NDA. <<http://www.apocalipsis.org/t20-amillennialist.htm>> Oct. 2, 2011.

with all of the other wickedness of this earth.” The author employs a hyperbole – an extreme exaggeration – to drive home the point that God is storing up his fiery, burning wrath.

Additionally, in the verses just prior to 2 Peter 3:10, we find the author discussing the Lord’s longsuffering so the reader will see a contrast between God’s patience and God’s wrath:

**2 Peter 3:8-9:** But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. (NLT)

Placing one extreme characteristic (longsuffering patience) next to another extreme characteristic (fiery wrath) in order to make a sharp comparison is a literary device called juxtaposition – “The arrangement of two or more ideas, characters, actions, settings, phrases, or words side-by-side or in similar narrative moments for the purpose of comparison, contrast, rhetorical effect, suspense, or character development.”<sup>232</sup>

The purpose of this passage is not to provide instruction as to the details related to the second coming of Christ. The purpose of this passage is to encourage the listener (reader) to examine their individual lives and determine if those lives are “holy and godly.” The passage utilizes both hyperbole and juxtaposition to press the importance of that personal examination.

Since the passage does not intend to provide details on Christ’s second coming, it is only natural that some details related to that event be left out. At minimum, we understand that between the second coming (coming as a thief in the night) and the New Earth (the elements shall melt with fervent heat) that there is the White Throne judgment; however, this passage does not mention that judgment... We also understand that there will be a final battle; however, this passage does not mention that battle... Should we therefore conclude that these two events will not occur? I think not.

Not every passage that relates Christ’s second coming will include every specific detail describing what occurs prior to, during, or immediately after. The absence of an event within any given passage is not indicative that that event will not take place. We must piece together multiple passages in order to view the whole portrait.

- **THE SECOND COMING IS THE TERMINATION OF HISTORY**

For the next several sections, I will examine amillennialism arguments obtained from “Amillennialist Interpretation,” by Ross A. Taylor.<sup>233</sup> I selected these arguments because they were relatively concrete and seemed representative of the other amillennialism arguments.

The Second Coming is the termination of history, not the beginning of a whole new phase. This is clear from 1 Cor.15: 23-28.

**1 Corinthians 15:23-28:** But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

<sup>232</sup> Dr. L. Kip Wheeler, “Juxtaposition,” *Literary Terms and Definitions*, Carson-Newman College, Sep. 26, 2011. <[http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit\\_terms\\_J.htm](http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_J.htm)> Oct. 2, 2011.

<sup>233</sup> Ross A. Taylor, “Amillennialist Interpretation,” *Revelation: Apocalipsis.org*. NDA. <<http://www.apocalipsis.org/120-amillennialist.htm>> Oct. 2, 2011.

After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power. For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. And the last enemy to be destroyed is death. For the Scriptures say, “God has put all things under his authority.” (Of course, when it says “all things are under his authority,” that does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.) Then, when all things are under his authority, the Son will put himself under God’s authority, so that God, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere. (NLT)

First, considering the timetable presented, Taylor’s is flawed at first glance:

1. Christ was raised as the first fruit – around 32-33 AD.
2. Then the Christians when he returns – after 2011 AD.
3. After that then comes the end – after 3011 AD.

Naturally, it would be erroneous to calculate the timing of the New Heaven and New Earth using these figures just as it would be erroneous to conclude from that nothing occurs between Christ’s second coming and the end.

Second, the context of the passage indicates that the purpose of this passage is to correct the flawed belief that the dead will not be resurrected:

**1 Corinthians 15:12:** Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Since the author is addressing Christians, there would be little need to clarify this point by discussing the resurrection and judgment of the wicked – that topic is beyond the purpose of this passage. Additionally, we see several other events left out such as the final battle and the final judgment; the author of this passage is making no attempt to be all inclusive.

Third, the author of this passage refers to those events following the resurrection of the believers simply as “the end” with very little details about how Christ will destroy every ruler and humbled his enemies. The premillennialist would argue that the great tribulation and the earthly millennial reign are the methods Christ uses to accomplish those tasks.

Additionally, I find the first clause interesting, “But every man in his own order.” (KJV) That clause seems to indicate that not all men will be resurrected at the exact same time. It appears that Christ might resurrect the believer before he forces the wicked into submission.

- **THE SECOND COMING, RESURRECTION, AND FINAL JUDGMENT IN CLOSE ORDER**

Scripture is clear that the Second Coming, the resurrection of the dead, the rapture and the final judgement occur closely together. Mat 13:40-42, 16:27, 25:31-33, John 5:28,29, Acts 17:31, 1 Cor 15:23-26, 1 Th 4:16-17.

**Matthew 13:40-42:** As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

I have looked at this passage several times and wondered why the “wheat” is not mentioned in the gathering... the passage specifically mentions the gathering of the tares, not the wheat. Verse 43 simply asserts that the righteous shall shine forth. One might assume that the two are gathered at the same time, but that is not what this passage states.

I assume that since the passage is speaking of the kingdom of Heaven – a spiritual kingdom – that the believers need not be gathered because they are already present within the kingdom of God.

This passage seems to parallel Revelation 14:14-20 and may simply reflect the removal of the "wicked" at the end of this age with the "good" being permitted to transition into the Millennial Age.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17:** For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

This passage specifically identifies the “dead in Christ.” It also “we which are alive” which I assume to refer to believers since this epistle was sent to an active, believing congregation. The passage does not mention the resurrection of the unbeliever nor does it mention judgment.

**Acts 17:31:** Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by [that] man whom he hath ordained; [whereof] he hath given assurance unto all [men], in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Unlike the previous passage, Paul is preaching to unbelievers in Athens and he specifically mentions their shrines and idols in previous passages. This passage discusses the judgment of the wicked and does not target those that already believe. Notice that the passage says that he will judge in righteousness; it does not say that he will judge the righteous. Also please notice that it mentions Christ’s resurrection mentioning not the resurrection of the believing nor unbelieving.

**John 5:28-29:** Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

This is an interesting verse because it can easily be interpreted three ways:

1. The verse may indicate that there is one resurrection for the good and the evil, but the one resurrection will have two different results – life for one, damnation for the other.
2. The verse may indicate that there are two separate resurrections – a first resurrection for the good resulting in eternal life and then a second resurrection for the evil resulting in eternal damnation.
3. The verse may include the resurrection of the "good" people who died during the Millennial Age and the "evil" from all ages not bothering to mention the first resurrection.

The purpose of this passage is not to provide a detailed explanation of the resurrections and judgments but rather to illustrate that an individual has a choice between good and evil and that choice will have an effect on where they serve eternity. It is impossible from this passage to determine if the two resurrections take place at the same time or if there is a gap between them.

**Matthew 16:27:** For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

The context of the passage illustrates that Jesus Christ is informing his disciples about the suffering and death he will soon experience. This is the renowned passage where Jesus rebukes Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Peter does not yet understand the redemptive portion of Christ's ministry. Thus, the focus on the passage is on Christ's suffering and accepting God's will. The purpose, in my view, is to illustrate that despite trials and suffering, Christ will ultimately be victorious. This passage does not appear to be focused on teaching the specifics of the resurrection(s) or judgment(s).

Additionally, since the passage does not specifically mention the judgment, a premillennialist might argue that the believer will be rewarded by being Raptured and the unbeliever will be rewarded by being forced to endure God's wrath during the tribulation. This passage ultimately does not seem to support a single resurrection and single judgment.

**Matthew 25:31-33:** When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth [his] sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

A nice verse that seems to support an amillennial viewpoint. Since it follows Matthew, Chapter 24, it seems to parallel the parables of the fig tree, wise slave, ten virgins, and the talents that instruct mankind to be on the alert and be wise and faithful servants. The focus, then, is receiving our just rewards.

There is, however, a potential problem. The potential problem is that this judgment is based upon the works... the person who performs good works is rewarded with eternal life; the person who did not perform good works is rewarded with eternal punishment. The message of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross is missing in this passage... so we must be careful what meaning we draw from this parable:

1. This sounds like a parable of the kingdom of God which, as we have previously explored, is distinct from the millennial reign of Christ or the New Heaven and New Earth. Thus, once again we are reminded that looking inwardly at our own needs and desires will leave us outside the kingdom of heaven.
2. Some scholars note that this is Christ's judgment seat and parallels the thrones and judgments in Revelation 20:4. They assert that this judgment relates to the geo-political nations that will be judged based on their support of the nation of Israel and humanity as a

whole. The evil nations will be dissolved and the good nations will continue during the millennial reign.

3. Still others argue that this is the great White Throne Judgment; however, they contend that those being judged are not Christians as believers will be judged at the first resurrection when Christ first comes for them. They assert that this judgment involves those mortal who lived on earth during the millennial reign of Christ.
4. I tend to believe that this passage may reflect the judgment in Revelation 20:4. Those unredeemed individuals who survive the Great Tribulation and the Wrath of God will be judged and the "good" people will enter the millennial kingdom while the "wicked" ones will be cast into the fire along with the Anti-christ and his hoards.

I'm hesitant to draw any formal conclusion regarding this passage. I tend to think that this is a kingdom of God parable and focuses on one's state of mind rather which will eventually lead to either eternal life or eternal damnation. Because God's redemptive Grace seems to be missing, I'm very hesitant to label this as the White Throne judgment.

- **THE UNGODLY ARE TO BE JUDGED AT THE SECOND COMING**

The ungodly are to be judged at the Second Coming 2 Thess.1:7-9, 2 Pet.3:9-10, Jude 14-15, Rev.1:7.

**2 Thessalonians 1:7-10:** And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Interesting, I've never noticed this verse before in my studies of the Apocalypse... First, the elect is not included among the focus group; in fact, this passage focuses on encouraging Christians who face tribulation. Second, this passage speaks of a "revealing" that seems consistent with a visible Rapture that is followed by the seven trumpets and seven bowls of wrath – God taking vengeance on those who are left behind. Third, the punishment seems to be related to be separation from God's presence and glory... again, possibly a very descriptive vision of the last half of the great tribulation. Fourth, the glorified saints may match those seen after the breaking of the 5<sup>th</sup> Seal in John's visions. At this point, I'm not prepared to claim that this passage parallels the great tribulation but it does seem to have a relationship.

**2 Peter 3:7-10:** But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day [is] with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

First, I've included verses 7-8 because they are often used, and possibly abused, by Dispensationalists in their attempt to map out God's seven day – seven millennial – plan. Personally, I feel that these verses simply help illustrate that God's proportion of time does not match our. It can be applied virtually anywhere to help us understand that what we might think of as instantaneous, God might view as a very long time. What we might of as a very long time, God might view as instantaneous.

Second, verses 9-10 seems to be instructing us to be patient... that his plan will be fulfilled... that those who reject his grace will be swept away along with the imperfect earth. This passage does not seem to support or reject either a premillennial or millennial view.

**Jude 13-16:** Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard [speeches] which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling [words], having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

This passage is definitely talking about the ungodly. I find it interesting that Enoch claims that describes Christ's return with "ten thousands of his saints." Premillennialists could easily envision this as a depiction of Christ returning as the conquering king at the end of the great tribulation with his Church in tow. This passage does not necessarily refer to the White Throne judgment.

**Revelation 1:7:** Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they [also] which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

This verse seems to reflect the perfect image of the Rapture – which is neither silent nor secret. Unlike many pretribulationists, I believe that the entire world will see Christ's return in a cloud to gather the elect from the four corners of the earth, that the entire world will know that they have missed the boat, and, unfortunately, those that remain will suffer the trumpets and bowls of wrath before Christ returns as a conquering king. Therefore, this passage tends to directly support my framework.

- **THE JUDGMENT IS AT THE END OF THE AGE**

The judgment is at the end of the age Mat 13:40-41, 49.

Matthew 13:40-42: See previous note within this section.

**Matthew 13:49-50:** So shall it be at the end of the world (age): the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This passage may parallel Revelation 14:14-20 and may simply reflect the removal of the "wicked" at the end of this age with the "good" being permitted to transition into the Millennial Age.

- **BELIEVERS RESURRECTED AND REIGN WITH CHRIST NOW**

The amillennialist interpretation takes note of the NT theology in which we have been raised with Christ now and reign with Him now. Note in the Eph 2:1-6 passage.

**Ephesians 2:1-6:** And you [hath he quickened], who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised [us] up together, and made [us] sit together in heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus:

Personally, I would agree with the amillennialist on this point and believe that a person must be spiritually "born again" before realizing eternal life. However, to equate this quickening to the first resurrection seems to be a stretch.

- **CONCLUSION**

Once again I want to emphasize that my purpose was not to prove amillennialism viewpoint wrong but rather to "test" my framework for potential flaws. At this point, I find the arguments of amillennialism less than convincing and not cause for rejecting my original framework.

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## **THE SIXTH SEAL RAPTURE: ANALYSIS**

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According to my framework, the first resurrection (Rapture) occurs at the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal somewhere near the mid-point of the great tribulation. I contend that the Rapture is neither silent nor secret and that those left behind will immediately recognize their error.

- **THE RAPTURE WILL NOT BE SILENT:**

**Matthew 24:31:** And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet blast, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

**1 Corinthians 15:52:** in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16:** For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

- **THE RAPTURE WILL NOT BE HIDDEN:**

**Matthew 24:30:** Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man arriving on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

**Mark 13:26:** Then everyone will see the Son of Man arriving in the clouds with great power and glory.

**Luke 21:27:** Then they will see the Son of Man arriving in a cloud with power and great glory.

- **THE RAPTURE WILL NOT BE IMMINENT:**

**Mark 21:20:** But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.

**Matthew 24:15:** So when you see the abomination of desolation – spoken about by Daniel the prophet – standing in the holy place

**Mark 13:14:** But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains.

- **THE RAPTURE WILL OCCUR WITH FOREWARNING:**

**Mark 13:32, 35:** But as for that day or hour no one knows it – neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son – except the Father... Stay alert, then, because you do not know when the owner of the house will return – whether during evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or at dawn.

**Mark 13:8 & 28-29:** These are but the beginning of birth pains. “Learn this parable from the fig tree: Whenever its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also you, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, right at the door. (see also Matthew 24:8 & 32-33)

**1 Thessalonians 5:1, 4:** Now on the topic of times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you... But you, brothers and sisters, are not in the darkness for the day to overtake you like a thief would.

- **THE RAPTURE WILL NOT PREVENT CHRISTIANS FROM SUFFERING TRIBULATION:**

**Mark 13:9:** “You must watch out for yourselves. You will be handed over to councils and beaten in the synagogues. You will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a witness to them.

**Matthew 24:9:** “Then they will hand you over to be persecuted and will kill you. You will be hated by all the nations because of my name.

**Luke 21:16-17:** You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will have some of you put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of my name.

- **2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12: ANALYSIS**

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-12:** Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. <sup>7</sup>For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

**Does this passage refer to the gathering of the elect?** Yes, the first verse specifically states the coming of Jesus Christ and “our gathering together unto him.”

**What does the phrase “falling away first” indicate?** The term “falling away” is an English translation for the word “apostasia” which means defection, apostasy, revolt. HELPS™ Word-studies elaborates on the term:

*apostasía* (from 868 /aphístēmi, "leave, depart," which is derived from 575 /apó, "away from" and 2476 /histēmi, "stand") – properly, departure (implying desertion); apostasy – literally, "a leaving, from a previous standing."<sup>234</sup>

From this elaboration, some scholars substitute the term “departure” for the phrase “falling away” in an attempt to claim that the Rapture (departure) occurs before the revealing of the man of sin (the Antichrist). However, had the authors desired to use the term “departure” they could have easily inserted the word “aphístēmi” instead of the word “apostasia.” Since they did not, then we should assume that a proper interpretation leaves us with a defection, apostasy, or revolt.

The term apostasy indicates prior to the coming of Jesus Christ for his elect that some Christians will revolt, defect, or desert their faith in Jesus Christ. While the phrase is vague and we want to be careful not to attach too much meaning to it, it does tend to support other scripture that indicates that some Christians will succumb to the lure of the Antichrist:

**Revelation 13:7:** And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

<sup>234</sup> “646 apostasia,” HELPS™ Word-studies: Helps Ministries, Inc., 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/646.htm>> Oct. 26, 2011.

**Daniel 7:25:** And he shall speak [great] words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

There is a great deal of controversy concerning the Antichrist's ability to overcome a redeemed Christian, but we will leave that controversy for the time being.

**What does the phrase "man of sin" mean?** The epistle's authors spend considerable time describing the man of sin – the Antichrist:

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 9-12:** ...[He] is the one who brings destruction. He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call god and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God... This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them. So God will cause them to be greatly deceived, and they will believe these lies. Then they will be condemned for enjoying evil rather than believing the truth. (NLT)

The term "revealed" is an English translation of the Greek term "*apokaluptó*" which means to uncover, bring to light, reveal.<sup>235</sup> So while the general population will be deceived as to the identity of the Antichrist, those who have listened to God's Word will see through the deception. And, yes, this revealing is also mentioned within Jesus Christ's Gospel prophecies:

**Matthew 24:15:** When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place...

**Luke 21: 20:** And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

**Mark 13:14:** But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not...

**Why does the passage spend so much time on the Antichrist?** This passage addresses a concern of the Thessalonians, probably related to their suffering and persecutions, that perhaps they had already missed the Rapture:

**2 Thessalonians 2:2:** That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

The authors want to make it clear that they have not missed the Rapture, that the Rapture will not occur until the "man of sin" is revealed, and that the nature and character of the "man of sin" will be unmistakable. The time spent describing the Antichrist further validates the belief that the Church will be present during the first four seals – they will need to be able to identify the Antichrist.

<sup>235</sup> "apokaluptó," Strong's Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/601.htm>> Oct. 26.2011.

**What are the withholding and the letting?** Some scholars point to this text to illustrate their belief that the Holy Spirit and the Church will be taken out of the way – Raptured – before the Antichrist is revealed. I believe that this interpretation is in error. While the Holy Spirit, God’s agent on earth, is likely the force restraining the evil legions of this world, it is God the Father who is holding back on releasing those legions – he holds the sealed scroll (Rev. 5:1), he knows the day and hour (Mat. 24:36), and it is he who fixes the times and the seasons (Acts 1:7).

When the harvest of saints is full (2 Pet. 3:9), it is the Father who will ask the Holy Spirit to step aside and allow Satan forces loose upon this world. Neither the Holy Spirit nor the Church need be removed from the earth for this to occur; they need only step to the side. In Revelation 7:9-12, we see the martyred Christians who come out of the Great tribulation; if the Holy Spirit was taken out of the earth, salvation would be impossible:

**John 16:7-8:** Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment...

**1 Corinthians 12:3:** Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

- **1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-17: ANALYSIS**

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-17:** But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

**Does this passage refer to the gathering of the elect?** Yes, the sixteenth and seventeenth verses specifically deal with the gathering of the elect at Christ’s coming.

**What is the focus of this passage?** The thirteenth verse indicates that the Thessalonians were concerned about the Christians who died prior to Jesus Christ’s coming... perhaps they would not be included in the gathering of the elect. The authors, in the fourteenth and fifteenth verse, provides reassurance that since Jesus Christ rose from the grave, then those who have died in Christ will also rise from the grave at Christ’s coming.

**Why doesn’t this passage mention the tribulation or the Antichrist?** The purpose of this passage is to correct a misunderstanding concerning the ultimate disposition of those Christians who died before Christ’s coming; apparently some of the congregation believed the dead would remain in the grave. This passage is not intended to provide instruction on the events just prior

to Christ's coming but specifically on the status of those who have already died. Extraneous information would not be helpful in correcting any misunderstanding.

**Does this passage parallel Jesus Christ's Gospel prophecies?** Yes, the passage specifically states that those resurrected will meet him in the air; all three Gospel accounts include seeing Christ in the clouds. Additionally, Matthew and Mark's account includes the elect being gathered by angels which seems to parallel the voice of the archangel.

**Does this passage provide any information not found within the Gospel accounts?** Yes, it specifically mentions that the dead shall rise before those who are still alive and the sound of a trumpet of God; neither new detail seems inconsistent with the Gospel accounts.

- **1 CORINTHIANS 15:12, 20-24: ANALYSIS**

**1 Corinthians 15:12, 20-24:** Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

**Does this passage refer to the gathering of the elect?** Yes, the entire passage discusses the resurrection of the dead and the twenty-third verses deals directly with the elect.

**What is the focus of this passage?** Apparently, some among the Corinthian congregation claimed that the dead in Christ would not be resurrected. Paul focuses most of the fifteenth chapter on paralleling Christ's death and resurrection with that of the elect.

**Why doesn't this passage mention the tribulation or the Antichrist?** As discussed in the previous section, extraneous information related to the Antichrist and the events leading up to Christ's coming would not add clarity to the misunderstanding and would probably just add to the confusion.

**Doesn't "Then cometh the end" refer to the Great Tribulation?** No, the passage does not mention the "end times" but the "the end." Paul specific defines "the end" as that point when Christ has quelled all rebellion; that will not happen until after the final battle of Gog and Magog which occurs after the Millennial Reign of Christ (Rev. 20:8). There is a huge amount of information missing, e.g. the seven trumpets, the seven bowls of wrath, Christ's return as a conqueror, the binding of Satan for a thousand years, and the thousand year earthly reign of Christ.

**Does this passage parallel Jesus Christ's Gospel prophecies?** Yes, but the focus is on the resurrection of the dead in Christ and there is little for comparison.

**Does this passage provide any information not found within the Gospel accounts?** Yes, the mention of Christ as the first fruits is new. However, it is used as a teaching analogy and we find

the term elsewhere in the New Testament used to refer to Christians and to the remnant of Israel (James 1:18, Revelation 14:4).

- **JOHN 14:2-3: ANALYSIS**

**John 14:2-3:** In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

**Does this passage refer to the gathering of the elect?** Yes, the third verse specifically talks about Jesus Christ returning and gathering the elect.

**What does he mean by preparing a place and then returning?** This passage is an analogy to Jewish marriage customs at the time of Christ. Between the betrothal and the wedding, the bridegroom would go to his father's house and prepare a place for the couple to live. Once that task was accomplished, he would return to claim the bride and then return home for the wedding. This passage is a simple promise that despite the necessity to leave, Jesus Christ will return and gather his elect.

*See the "COME UP HITHER" section below for a detailed analysis on the pretribulation wedding custom construct.*

- **MATTHEW 26:29: ANALYSIS**

**Matthew 26:29:** But I say unto you, I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

**Does this passage refer to the gathering of the elect?** No, the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom (Romans 14:17, John 3:5-8, Luke 17:20-21); the Rapture is a physical event where the dead are resurrected and the living transformed. I've included the passage here because some believe it is related to the Rapture.

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## **THE PRETRIBULATION RAPTURE: REBUTTAL**

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- **INTRODUCTION**

Pretribulation advocates claim that the first resurrection occurs in stages:

1. The Rapture occurs before the breaking of the 1st Seal in Revelation and is the secret gathering of believers in the air with the Jesus Christ. This gathering in the air does not constitute Christ's second coming.
2. The second stage of the first resurrection occurs at some point during the great tribulation for those individuals who were left behind during the rapture but come to accept him as the Christ before his second coming.
3. Some advocates support a third stage where the 144,000 Jews are converted to Christianity and resurrected towards the end of the great tribulation.

Most pretribulation advocates are also premillennialist believing that the great tribulation occurs just before the second coming of Christ who is accompanied by his raptured believers. They also contend that Christ, along with the saints, will reign on earth for a thousand years.

Once again, I want to emphasize that it is not my intent to prove pretribulation arguments wrong but to examine if there is room for an alternative view.

- **THE SEVEN CHURCHES: PHILADELPHIA IS PROMISED AN ESCAPE THROUGH THE "OPEN DOOR" FROM THE GREAT TRIBULATION**

This, in my opinion, is the strongest argument for a pretribulation rapture. However, it does not specifically state that congregational members will Raptured out of the great tribulation:

**Revelation 3:8,10:** I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name... Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Supporters of this argument link the “open door” to the “open door” that John goes through in Revelation 4:1. Logically the comparison seems to be a stretch. The phrase “open door” elsewhere in the New Testament frequently indicates an opportunity:

**Colossians 4:3:** Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.

**1 Corinthians 16:9:** For a great and effective door is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

**2 Corinthians 2:12:** Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord.

**Acts 14:27:** And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

Revelation 3:10 seems to refer to the time of testing during great tribulation. Unfortunately, the passage may simply refer to divine protection here on earth during this period. There are several examples in the Bible where God supernaturally intervened: the remnant of the nation of Israel during the great tribulation (Revelation 12); Noah, his family, and the animals on the Ark (Genesis 6); the Hebrews in the blazing furnace (Daniel 3); Elijah fed by ravens (Kings 17); and Israel fed in the wilderness (Exodus 16).

In isolation, this argument is insufficient to reject the principles established by Jesus Christ in his Gospel prophecies; a second, preferably third, witness is required.

- **IMMINENCE: THE BELIEF THAT THE CHURCH MUST BE READY BECAUSE CHRIST COULD RETURN AT ANY MOMENT**

There is little doubt that the New Testament instructs the believer to always be prepared for the Rapture, and even early Christians believed that Jesus Christ could return within their lifetime:

Acts 1:6: When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-12:** Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

**Revelation 22:12:** And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward [is] with me, to give every man according as his work shall be .

There is also little doubt that it was not intended for us to know the day or hour of Jesus Christ's coming:

**Mark 24:36:** But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

**Matthew 25:13:** Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

**Luke 12:46:** The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for [him], and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

However, we are given specific instructions to watch for the signs so that we will be aware of the season of his coming:

**Matthew 24:32:** Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

**Mark 13:28-29:** Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

**Luke 21:29-31:** And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

Jesus Christ will come as a thief in the night for the unbeliever; but to the believer will not be surprised on that day:

**1 Thessalonians 5:1-5:** But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a

thief in the night... But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Supporters of the imminence theory point to several parables attempting to support their belief:

1. **Noah and the Flood:** (Matthew 24, Luke 17) This parable does teach that the unbeliever will be caught off guard and swept away by the flood of God's wrath. However, Noah, the believer, was given seven days warning before it started to rain (Genesis 7:4). If a Christian has an understanding of the Bible, the revealing of the Antichrist will also provide an advanced warning.
2. **Lot and Sodom & Gomorrah:** (Luke 17) This parable also teaches that the unbeliever will be caught off guard and swept away by the wrath of God. However, just like Noah, Lot was warned the night before by two angels that the city was to be destroyed. It was the unbelievers who were caught unaware.
3. **The Parable of the Wise Servant:** (Matthew 24) The good servant, the believer, always performs his duties with due diligence and has no concern about when his master returns. However, the wicked servant, the unbeliever, attempts to take advantage of his master's absence; it is the wicked servant who is surprised by his master's sudden return. The focus of this parable is due diligence, not imminence. The day and hour specifically targets the wicked servant:

**Luke 12:45-46:** But and if that servant say in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming;" and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware...

1. **The Parable of the Talents:** (Matthew 25, Luke 19) This parable does discuss the master being absent for an extended period, and the servants do not know when he will return. However, if we examine the moral of the parable (25:28-30), we can see that the parable is focused on diligence, not imminence. The parable instructs us to make good use of our time while we wait for Christ's coming.
2. **The Parable of the Ten Virgins:** (Matthew 25) In this parable, the ten virgins understood that the time was near for the grooms return; they prepared their lamps and went out to meet him. Unfortunately, five were ill prepared for a delay and ran out of oil. This parable seems to reinforce the idea that we may not know the exact day or hour but we will know the season.

Some imminence supporters believe that the phrase "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" indicates the suddenness of Christ's appearance; however, this belief is out of context with the passage:

**1 Corinthians 15:50-53:** I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable,

and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

This passage focuses on the change that will occur at Christ's coming... our earthly bodies will be changed into heavenly bodies within "a flash, in a twinkling of an eye."

- **SATAN WILL BE GIVEN DOMINION FOR 42 MONTHS ON EARTH AND THE CHURCH WILL NOT BE PUT UNDER SATAN'S DOMINION**

First, this claim is at least partially truth. The Philadelphia church was promised that it would be kept from the hour of testing; however, this "escape" does not necessarily mean that the congregation will be Raptured to heaven. They may be divinely protected here on earth, either as a group or individually.

Second, Satan is referred to as the "god of this world" during the current age (2 Corinthians 4:4). One need only look at the multiple atrocities commented throughout the centuries to realize that Christians do not live in paradise. Fortunately, the Christian is well armored to deal with such evil (Ephesians 6:10-18). There are no indications that the Holy Spirit will abandon true believers; however, there will be some who run out of oil and may not endure to Christ's coming (Matthew 25:10).

Third, the scriptures are clear that the Antichrist will make war against the saints and will overcome some:

**Daniel 7:21:** I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.

**Revelation 2:10:** Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

**Revelation 12:17:** And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

**Revelation 13:7:** And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

Fourth, persecution and tribulation is a common among those with faith in God; we should expect nothing less:

**2 Thessalonians 1:4-5:** So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer...

**2 Corinthians 4:7-11:** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto

death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

- **COME UP HITHER: THE CHURCH IS NOT MENTIONED AFTER REVELATION 3:22 AND THUS HAS NO ROLE IN THE TRIBULATION**

Adherents to this view claim that the Church, the bride of Christ (John 14:2-3), is raptured in Revelation 4:1 and will be hidden away in the bridal chamber (Cuppah) for seven years. The unveiled bride then emerges in Revelation 19:6 for the wedding banquet. Only those individuals who were left-behind but accept Christ after the Rapture are seen in Revelation 4:1-19:6.

First, there a number of articles that provide a detailed description of how ancient Jewish wedding customs support a pretribulation Rapture. While these portray a beautiful narrative of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church, most extend the analogy much too far:

- ✓ This narrative relies on a non-biblical, non-verifiable description of ancient Jewish wedding customs. We should use extreme care in developing doctrine based on non-biblical sources. The most conspicuous example is the medieval Roman Catholic Church that spawned the need for the Reformation.
- ✓ We must be cautious in extending any analogy too far. In two instances within the New Testament, believers are referred to as someone other than the bride:

**Luke 12:35-36:** Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

**Matthew 22:2-3, 11-13:** The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come... And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- ✓ This narrative requires that the bride, the Church, remain hidden in the bridal chamber for seven days (years). However, Sampson's wife was not hidden from the guests during the entire seven day period (Judges 14); and, according to the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25), the five wise virgins went in directly to the wedding feast upon the groom's arrival.
- ✓ This narrative describes Jesus Christ leaving earth to prepare "living accommodations" in heaven for his bride. However, the pretribulation tradition generally places Christ and his bride's dwelling on earth in Jerusalem during the millennial reign of Christ – this earthly abode is within the realm of God's house (creation) and may account for the use "many mansions" (dwelling places) found within John 14:2.
- ✓ This narrative generally claims that the father of the groom must approve of the couple's living accommodations prior to the retrieval of the bride; thus, the phrase "No one knows the day or hour except the father." However, Christ's living accommodations will not be

complete until he takes possession of his earthly kingdom (Rev. 19:19-21), and it would be doubtful that the Father would give his approval until that task was complete.

- ✓ Considering Jesus Christ's will not claim his earthly abode until the end of Revelation 19, the wedding analogy seems to be more supportive of a post- rather than a pre- tribulation resurrection. Although the portrayal is beautiful, we must be cautious in drawing any major conclusions from such an overextended analogy.

Second, the apparent absence of the Church from Revelation 4:1 to 19:6 is not a unique difficulty. In Revelation 20:4 there are two groups of "saints" described:

- ✓ The first set described is those that sit upon thrones to judge. While some claim this represents all Church age saints, that claim is problematic. While 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 says that the saints will judge the world and angels, the passage is rather vague and does not mention thrones. Matthew 19:28 and Luke 22:30 do mention thrones and judging together, but Matthew limits the number to twelve. In Revelation 4:4, John describes elders and thrones, but there are only twenty-four. It would take a mental leap to believe that there are millions and millions of thrones, one for each pretribulation saint.
- ✓ The second set described is the martyrs coming out of the great tribulation. It would also take a mental leap to claim that these individuals represented millions and millions of pretribulation saints. The description is unmistakable:

**Revelation 20:4:** ... and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands...

Some might claim that the body of Christ, the Church, composes a single entity and that it would be incorrect to use the plural form; however, Revelation 20:4 does use the masculine plural form of the word throne. Thus, regardless of our pre-, mid-, post-tribulation rapture view, we are still left with the question, "Where are the all the saints from the first resurrection?"

- **WHERE ARE THE SAINTS DURING THE GREAT TRIBULATION?**

The tribulation saints found in Revelation 7:9-17 and Revelation 20:4 reflect all redeemed Christians that were caught away to heaven during the Rapture – the first resurrection. Therefore, the Church is on earth between the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal and the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal, and the Church is in heaven between the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal and the Second Coming of Christ.

*See "The 'Great Tribulation' Label is a Misnomer" section of this study.*

## INTRODUCTION

from "AMILLENNIALISM"<sup>236</sup>

### Mongerism

The Amillennialist affirms that the people of Israel have not been cast off or replaced, but rather, that the Gentiles have now been included among the Jews in God's Covenantal promises. In other words, not replacement but expansion. God's redemptive plan, as first promised to Abraham, was that "all nations" would be blessed through him. Israel is, and always has been, saved the same as any other nation: by the promises to the seed, Christ. Amillennialists, do not believe in a literal 1000 year reign of Christ on earth after His second coming. Rather, they affirm that when Christ returns, the resurrection of both the righteous and wicked will take place simultaneously (see John 5), followed by judgment and the eternal state where heaven and earth merge and Christ reigns forever.

Revelation 7: 1-8 and Revelation 14:1-3 speak of 144,000 – 12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel – sealed with the Father's name on their forehead. For the past 2,000 years, the Jews have suffered tribulation, persecution, and attempted annihilation, but they have persevered and many have regathered in the state of Israel. It is difficult to contemplate that Israel had no unique role in God's plan following Christ's crucifixion. Yet, that is what amillennialism contends. They assert that Israel and the Christians merged into a single body – the Church, that the Jew must convert to Christianity to partake of God's blessings, and that the nation of Israel has no unique role in future prophetic events. Did the role of Israel as a nation end with Christ's crucifixion and the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD? Is the Church the new Israel? Or, has Israel's role been placed on the backburner until the Church Age is complete?

## AMILLENNIALISM: REBUTTAL

- **Animal Sacrifices within an Earthly Millennial Reign Are Illogical:**

1. Animal blood sacrifices were imperfect, temporary and foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice,
2. Christ fulfilled the perfect and everlasting when he was crucified for man's sins,
3. Reverting back to the imperfect and temporary would be regressive not progressive, and
4. Performance as a commemorative would be redundant because Christ would be physically present.

**Response:** I agree with the first three points; however, the fourth point possibly ignores traditions such as the Jewish feasts or the Lord's Supper. Shooting off fireworks on the Fourth of July commemorates the battles fought and the men who sacrificed their lives – the act has no material value, but it does bring us into remembrance and gives us a chance to celebrate. I don't pretend to understand God's purpose of bring back animal sacrifice during the Millennial Reign, but the

<sup>236</sup> "AMILLENNIALISM," Monergism: CPR Foundation, 2009. <[http://www.monergism.com/directory/link\\_category/Eschatology/Millennial-Views/Amillennialism/](http://www.monergism.com/directory/link_category/Eschatology/Millennial-Views/Amillennialism/)> Oct. 6, 2011.

potential of reinstating animal sacrifice does not justify rejecting an earthly millennial reign of Christ.

- **Christ's Covenant Supplants (Displaces) Israel's Covenant:**

Heb 8:8-12 identifies the new covenant with Israel (Jer 31:33-34) with the covenant instituted by Christ with the church. Most importantly, Heb 8:13 declares the old covenant obsolete and passing away.<sup>237</sup>

**Hebrews 8:8-12:** For finding fault with them, he saith, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

**Hebrews 8:13:** In that he saith, "A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

**Response:** This passage and the ones before and after explain how Christ now serves as the main priest in heaven and how this covenant is superior to the old, earthly covenant. It also explains how the old covenant is obsolete and passing away. And, I agree perfectly with those assertions.

**The question remains one of timing. When will the old covenant vanish away?**

Amillennialism contends that the old covenant drew its last breath with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and that would make logical sense. However, man's logic does not always follow God's logic, and God's timetable doesn't always follow man's timetable. It was illogical for Israel to turn from God after he brought them out of Egypt, but they did. On the cross, Jesus Christ fulfilled all the requirements necessary to redeem mankind, but it has been nearly two-thousand years and we still await his return.

Has the prophetic vision within Jeremiah 31:33-34 been fulfilled?

**Jeremiah 31:33-34:** But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD...

Is there still a need to teach our neighbors know the Lord? Atheism permeates our own communities, and the mystery of God has been replaced with the god of science and reason. Brotherly love has been replaced with the love of self, and immoral acts are granted constitutional protection.

<sup>237</sup> Robert B. Strimple, Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, California, "Amillennialism," *The Mountain Retreat*, ND. <[http://www.mountainretreat.org/net/eschatology/amil\\_strimple.html](http://www.mountainretreat.org/net/eschatology/amil_strimple.html)> Oct. 6, 2011

While Jesus Christ has paid all debts required to redeem mankind and this earth from the clutches of Satan, the Father has not yet permitted Jesus Christ to take possession:

**2 Corinthians 4:4:** In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The events within the Book of Revelation serve as the first concrete steps in the physical act of repossessing the earth from Satan's clutches:

**Revelation 19:11:** And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Jesus Christ will not force all his enemies into submission until the end of his earthly reign:

**1 Corinthians 15:25-26:** For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy [that] shall be destroyed [is] death.

While the new covenant is far superior to the old covenant, there is little indication that the old covenant has vanished:

**Romans 9:27-28:** Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth."

The prophetic words of Jeremiah 31:33-34 have yet to find fulfillment; there is still a need to teach our neighbors and brothers to "Know the Lord." And, the frequent references to the old covenant with the Book of Revelation tends to indicate that the old covenant has not yet vanished but will be fulfilled within a remnant of Israel during the millennial kingdom.

- **There Is No Distinction Between Israel and the Church**

Response: Abraham's inheritance was extended to the Gentiles through Christ, and within the body of Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Paul's epistles tend to make these facts clear, and, in my opinion, beyond dispute. However, not all Jews accept Christ as their messiah. Are unbelieving Jews then to be placed in the same category as the wicked?

David L. White provides a concise list of passages that "destroys" the fundamental distinction between Israel and the church.<sup>238</sup> This list serves as the foundation for this examination:

Suffice it to say that this passage teaches that membership in the true Israel is not a matter of physical descent, but one of God's election... In other words, Israel (the people of God) consists of elect Jews and elect Gentiles.

<sup>238</sup> David L. White, "My Shift to Covenant Theology and Amillennialism," *Dave White's Links To Reformed Theology*, etc. ND. <<http://qqohelet.tripod.com/shift.htm>> Oct. 6, 2011.

**Romans 9:6-18:** Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed...

**Comment:** White stretches his conclusion a bit too far. The premises of the passage are:

Being an offspring of Abraham does not make one a member of God's people. *[true premise]*  
God has mercy on those who he elects. *[true premise]*

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**Therefore:** Israel consists of both Jew and elect Gentiles. *[invalid conclusion]*

White is correct in his assertion that being born a Jew does not make an individual a member of God's chosen people (illustrated in verses seven through nine), and White is also correct in his assertion that God will have mercy on those who he elects (illustrated in verses ten through thirteen). However, the chapter does not merge the nation of Israel with the Christian church or the Christian church into the nation of Israel.

The apostle Paul, in this chapter, is using Israel as an illustrative model for the Roman believer... God chooses whom he chooses:

1. There is no specific reason why Isaac was chosen and Ishmael was not....
2. There is no specific reason why Jacob was chosen and Esau was not...
3. The apostle Paul takes this line of thought one step further:

**Romans 9:16-18:** So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it. For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth." So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen. (NLT)

The ultimate purpose in Paul's dialogue seems to be, "Despite not being a Jew, you have been chosen by God and should feel very special."

It is clear through Paul's other letters that the Gentiles have become heirs in Abraham's promise, but does that indicate that Israel has been merged with the Church or that the Church has been merged with Israel? I think not. In fact, Paul seems to make a distinction between the natural Israel and the Gentiles:

**Romans 9:25:** Concerning the Gentiles, God says in the prophecy of Hosea, "Those who were not my people, I will now call my people. And I will love those whom I did not love before." (NLT)

**Romans 9:25:** And concerning Israel, Isaiah the prophet cried out, "Though the people of Israel are as numerous as the sand of the seashore, only a remnant will be saved. (NLT)

Paul mourns the sufferings of the people of Israel:

**Romans 9:2:** My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them. (NLT)

And, why this sadness? It seems that Paul understands that the nation of Israel will soon be destroyed and only a remnant will remain:

**Romans 9:27:** And concerning Israel, Isaiah the prophet cried out, “Though the people of Israel are as numerous as the sand of the seashore, only a remnant will be saved.

**Romans 9:29:** And Isaiah said the same thing in another place: “If the LORD of Heaven’s Armies had not spared a few of our children, we would have been wiped out like Sodom, destroyed like Gomorrah.” (NLT)

Although White’s premises are correct – that being a descendent of Abraham does not make one a member of the elect and that God chooses whomever he chooses, his conclusion is flawed. There is no support in this chapter that Israel consists of both Jew and Gentile. In fact, this chapter seems to indicate a distinct destiny between Christ’s believers and the people of Israel.

There is one olive tree composed of both Jews and Gentiles, i.e., there is one united people of God; not two.

**Romans 11:11-24:** ...And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee...

**Comment:** White again takes his conclusion a bit too far:

Some of the branches of Israel were broken off because of unbelief. *[true premise]*

In their place, faithful Gentiles are grafted in among the branches. *[true premise]*

**Therefore:** There is one united people of God, not two. *[invalid conclusion]*

Within the grafting process, the graft takes its nourishment from the trunk. However, the new branches, the old branches, nor the trunk change their nature or characteristics. While the gentiles now partake of God’s promise, at least some of the old branches remain and retain their original nature and characteristics. This analogy does support White’s conclusion.

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## SIDEBAR: THE OLIVE TREE ANALOGY

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One passage frequently cited in partial support of “replacement” or “blended” theories is found in Romans, Chapter 11 – the analogy of the olive tree; this analogy, however, actually illustrates a difference between Israel and Gentiles:

**Romans 11:16-21:** If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. (NIV)



Illustration 1

**Illustration 1:** We will define the tree’s roots as God’s goodness as related through His eternal plan, promises, and interaction with mankind. The branches and leaves represent the recipients of that goodness. For simplicity, we’ll assert that the trunk of the tree represents fulfillment of all God’s covenants through the work of Jesus Christ... the Old Testament scriptures and prophecies looking forward to this promise, and the New Testament scriptures and prophecies seeing fulfillment

through Christ’s earthly ministries, sacrifices on the cross, current priesthood, and kingship.



Illustration 2

**Illustration 2:** Because of unbelief, some of the branches were broken off. We should note that just some, not all, of the branches were removed – *tines: tis*: a certain one, someone, anyone.<sup>239</sup> The branches that remain retain their original qualities and attributes – they retain their “Jewish” character and are

sometimes referred to as the remnant of Israel. What is the unbelief? Some assert that it is rejection of Jesus as the Messiah; however, I think that this “unbelief” is much more general in nature, a lack of submission and faith in God’s nature (see Matthew 23:1-39).



Illustration 3

**Illustration 3:** The wild olive branches – the Gentiles – are grafted into the original olive tree and thus receive the nourishment from a new root network, God’s goodness. Do the new branches take on the qualities and attributes of the old branches? No, they retain their original genetic code and appearance; however, the greatly enhanced root network results in branches that flourish with significantly improved fruit. Can shoots emerge that display characteristics of both? Yes, occasionally within nature a grafted branch will display shoots, foliage, and flowers that are an intermediate between the two plants; they are called “graft hybrids.” Today, Messianic Judaism resembles graft hybrids sharing the same core beliefs with Christians but expressed within their Jewish heritage.<sup>240</sup>

It would be an error to draw too many specific conclusions from this analogy. This analogy does not prove that there is a distinction between the Church and national Israel; nor does it prove that Israel and the Church are blended into a single body. The analogy simply illustrates that the promises of God have

<sup>239</sup> “tis,” 5100, Strong’s Concordance, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/5100.htm>> July 26, 2012.

<sup>240</sup> Loren Jacobs, “Messianic Judaism: Questions and Answers,” Congregation Shema Yisrael, 2012, <[http://www.shema.com/messianic\\_judaism.php](http://www.shema.com/messianic_judaism.php)> July 26, 2012.

been extended to the Gentiles – one congregation with different heritages all nurtured by God’s goodness.

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Jesus has sheep that come from two "pens" (Jews and Gentiles) and who together form one flock.

**John 10:14-16:** I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

**Comment:** White’s basic argument seems to be valid:

Jews who hear Jesus’ voice will be a part of his flock. *[true premise]*

Other sheep (Gentiles) who hear Jesus’ voice will be a part of his flock. *[true premise]*

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**Therefore:** Jesus will be the shepherd of one flock composed of converted Jews and Gentiles.

The first “sheep” mentioned in this passage refers to the Jews who have heard Jesus’ voice and become members of his flock. The “other sheep” refers to the Gentiles who will hear Jesus’ voice and will also become members of his flock – one flock from two different sources.

However, this passage does not discuss the Jew who remains faithful but has not heard Jesus’ voice and entered his flock – the ones who remain in their original “pen.” They should hear Jesus’ voice and they should join his flock, but not all will. And, it is these few who remain faithful but who have not converted to Christianity who will form the remnant of Israel.

Gentile believers are children of promise, the seed of Abraham, and spiritually speaking there is no distinction between them.

**Galatians 3:15-29:** Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

**Comment:** White’s basic statement seems to be true:

The Law of Moses taught humans to come to Christ in faith. *[true premise]*

Those who come to Christ in faith are now baptized into Christ. *[true premise]*

There is no distinction of groups for those who are baptized in Christ. *[true premise]*

If you are baptized in Christ then you inherit Abraham’s promise. *[true premise]*

It is true that the Christian is not tutored by the Law but by the Spirit and Christians inherit the promises of God. Unfortunately, not all Jew’s learned the lesson of faith through the Moses’ Law. Again, the Jew should convert to Christianity, but not all will. And, it is these few who remain faithful but who have not converted to Christianity who will form the remnant of Israel.

The phrase "the Israel of God," contextually seems best understood to refer to believers in general. In more technical language, this expression is epexegetical to the expression "those who will walk by this rule."

**Galatians 6:16:** And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

**Comment:** The term "epexegetical" is defined as "the addition of the words or phrases to a text to clarify its meaning." It's like an appositive: "Dean, my brother, lives in Indianapolis." The term "my brother" clarifies which Dean I'm discussing.

Within this passage, White errs. In fact, the opposite seems to be true... Israel is addressed separately and respectfully.

The purpose of this passage is to instruct believers that outward appearances have nothing to do with their salvation, specifically whether a male is circumcised. In verse 15, Paul provides the reader with a general rule:

**Galatians 6:15:** It doesn't matter whether we have been circumcised or not. What counts is whether we have been transformed into a new creation. (NLT)

Verse 16, provides a blessing who follows this rule. Additionally, it provides a similar blessing to the nation of Israel:

Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God. (NIV)

Now may peace be on all those who live by this principle, and may mercy be on the Israel of God. (ISV)

And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. (ESV)

And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. (NASB)

I speculate that Paul placed this blessing here so as not to offend those who follow the orthodox Jewish tradition. Regardless, the passage does not refer to the Christian believer as the "Israel of God" but blesses Israel separately from the believer.

- **All Promises to Abraham Need Not Be Literally Fulfilled:**

Amillennialism assert that all promises to Abraham need not be literally fulfilled as the gains under the new covenant are far superior.

The completeness of God's promises to Abraham are well beyond my scope and I will leave this topic for others to debate. For what appears to be a well considered amillennialism view, please read Paul Williamson's article, "Abraham, Israel, and the Church."<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Paul Williamson, "Abraham, Israel, and the Church," *Beginning with Moses*, 2011. <<http://beginningwithmoses.org/bt-articles/183/abraham-israel-and-the-church>> Oct. 6, 2011.

- **The 144, 000 in Revelation:**

How then does amillennialism account for the direct reference to Israel in the sealing of 144,000 with 12,000 coming from each of the twelve tribes? William Hendriksen, in his book *More Than Conquerors*, provides a detailed explanation of his perceptive – I'll include a small portion:

from *More Than Conquerors*<sup>242</sup>  
by William Hendriksen

Entirely in harmony with this representation we read in Revelation 21 that the holy city Jerusalem has twelve gates and twelve foundations. On these twelve gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the twelve foundations were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (21: 9–14). We also read that the wall is 144 cubits in height (21: 17).

It is very clear, therefore, that the sealed multitude of Revelation 7 symbolizes the entire Church militant of the old and new dispensations. In order to emphasize the fact that not a small portion of the Church is meant but the entire Church militant, this number 144 is multiplied by one thousand. One thousand is  $10 \times 10 \times 10$ , which indicates a perfect cube, reduplicated completeness.<sup>1</sup> (See Rev. 21: 16.) The 144,000 sealed individuals out of the twelve tribes of literal Israel symbolize spiritual Israel, the Church of God on earth.

To say that the symbol ultimately indicates Israel according to the flesh is wrong...

Hendricksen's interpretation follows the theory that the Church replaced Israel as God's chosen and that both Jew and Gentile are composites of that Church. In the amillennialism view, there is no room for the old Israel to be treated separately from the Church; thus, any references to old Israel must be alluding to the Church.

Had John's vision only seen 144,000 from all tribes, then Hendricksen's interpretation may have been viable, but the inclusion of a direct reference to 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes seems to be a compelling allusion to the physical nation of Israel. Furthermore, assigning one role to the apostles and a separate role to the twelve tribes within the new city of Jerusalem seems to imply that even in the New Heaven and New Earth their roles will be remembered distinctly.

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## CONCLUSION

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God's covenant with mankind under Christ is the perfect and far superior to the imperfect old covenant with Israel; the old covenant is antiquated. Jews should convert to Christianity; however, I have found no compelling argument that demonstrates that the old covenant no longer exists. There does appear to be evidence that a remnant of Israel will be regathered under the old covenant and be treated as a unique, identifiable entity during the transition from this age to the next.

Further Reading: Although "Replacement Theology" was not directly discussed within this section, it seems to share some commonalities with the amillennialism view discussed here. For a

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<sup>242</sup> William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation*, Mobi Edition, Baker Books: Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 2007.

premillennialism view, please consider “Replacement Theology: Its Origins, Teachings and Errors,” by Dr. Gary Hedrick.<sup>243</sup>

## MILLENNIALISM: SYMBOLIC OR LITERAL

Does the “thousand years” in Revelation, Chapter 20, literally mean a “thousand years” or about a “thousand years” or a “very, very long time?” I found this question to be much more controversial than I originally imaged. Amillennialists and premillennialists are attacking and defending as if their entire belief construct depends on this single issue alone.

### TWO OR THREE WITNESSES

Amillennialism contends that this thousand year period can only be found in Revelation, Chapter 20, implying that the premillennialists’ concept of a literal thousand year reign fails the two or three witness test.

Premillennialism contends that the reference can be found six times in Revelation, Chapter 20, and, therefore, satisfies the two or three witness test. Some will also apply the theory of progressive revelation to address this issue.

In other words it is very important to understand that God revealed Himself progressively, and not all at once. This may seem fairly obvious by looking at the diverse authorship of the books of the Bible, and the many years that God's truth took to be written down, but the understanding of progressive revelation is important in relation to prophecy. The fact that the Millennial Kingdom is to be 1000 years isn't revealed until the 3rd to the last chapter of the Bible. That doesn't make it any less true.<sup>244</sup>

In my opinion, both sides have a valid point. It is hard to ignore something that is written six times within the Bible, but since the occurrences are in such close proximity, additional verification would seem appropriate.

### NUMBERS AS SYMBOLS

Amillennialism contends that since the Book of Revelation is a book of symbols, and numbers, therefore, must also be symbolized. Several contend that one-thousand is ten to the third power and indicates fullness, totality, or completeness. Some also contend that the symbolic numbers help to illustrate that the sections run parallel.

- Premillennialism contends that if a scripture make sense on a literal level, then we should accept its literal meaning. They contend that since a simple reading of the term “thousand years” makes since, then that’s they was it should be interpreted.

<sup>243</sup> Gary Hedrick, President of C/JF Ministries, “Replacement Theology: Its Origins, Teachings and Errors,” Congregation Shema Yisrae, 2001. Retrieved: Oct. 7, 2011. <<http://www.shema.com/Combating%20Replacement%20Theology/crt-004.php>>

<sup>244</sup> “Progressive Revelation,” Mark Esposito, Ed. Endtimes.org. NDA. Retrieved: <<http://www.endtimes.org/progressive.html>> Oct. 2, 2011.

- Premillennialism also contends that whenever the word “year” occurs with a numerical adjective (e.g. forty years) in scripture, it always refers to a regular calendar year. The non-literal view makes Revelation 20 to be the exception. The burden of proof is upon them to show otherwise.<sup>245</sup>
- Amillennialism errs because the entire Bible is a book of figurative language and the Book of Revelation is not unique in that respect. Using sound interpretation guidelines, we must look at the context of the figure being used and then, and only then, determine if its use is figurative.
- Premillennialism errs because they are inconsistent in their application. The “Seventh Week of Daniel” is applied frequently in premillennialism apocalyptic literature and indicates that they readily view biblical numbers as symbolic.

The thousand years may well be literal, but it may also be symbolic... Without additional clarification, it is impossible to determine how that number should be interpreted.

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## FINAL JUDGMENT IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE SECOND COMING

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Amillennialism contend that the New Testament teaches only one return of Christ and that all future judgment occurs at that second coming. It would, therefore, be implausible for the White Throne judgment to take place a thousand years after the second coming.<sup>246</sup>

Premillennialists contend that this view is in error because they fail to consider the Rapture.<sup>247</sup>

This issue will be examined in detail within a dedicated section of this study.

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## CONCLUSION

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Amillennialism sees the Church Age as the last chapter of God’s plan. Christ’s return, in their view, is the final act and mortals cannot possibly live on earth after Christ’s return – What would be the basis of their salvation? Amillennialism contends that both the Old and New Testament point to Jesus Christ and all salvation is rooted in either looking forward or backwards towards the cross. There simply isn’t any room within their theological construct for a new covenant.

Many supporters of premillennialism also support dispensationalism – series of chronologically successive “dispensations” or periods in history in which God relates to human beings in different ways under different Biblical covenants.<sup>248</sup> There is little discussion concerning what “covenant” will be in effect during the thousand year earthly reign of Christ, but the possibility of a new covenant for those mortals surviving the great tribulation doesn’t disrupt the premillennialism theological construct.

The “literal” or “symbolic” meaning of the thousand years has been given greater importance than it deserves. Premillennialism tends to use it as “proof” that amillennialism is a flawed construct, and

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<sup>245</sup> Robert Gromacki, Cedarville University, “Revelation 20: A Premillennial Analysis,” Pre-trib research Center, page 6, NDA, <<http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Gromacki-Revelation20APremille.pdf>> Oct 1, 2011.

<sup>246</sup> from Robert Gromacki, Cedarville University, “Revelation 20: A Premillennial Analysis,” Pre-trib research Center, page 6, NDA, <<http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Gromacki-Revelation20APremille.pdf>> Oct 1, 2011.

<sup>247</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

<sup>248</sup> “Dispensationalism,” Wikipedia, Oct. 31, 2011. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dispensationalism>> Nov. 3, 2011.

amillennialism defends their view accordingly. Ultimately, the exact length of a “thousand years” has little significant impact on God’s overall plan.

## PRETRIBULATION RAPTURE: REBUTTAL

Pretrib Arguments: [http://lamblion.com/articles/articles\\_rapture7.php](http://lamblion.com/articles/articles_rapture7.php)

Proponents of a pretribulation rapture sincerely believe that the Church will be removed from the earth prior to the tribulation and they believe that this doctrine is scripturally sound. This doctrine, however, is an error. True Christian believer – those who confess that Jesus is the Christ, that He is the son of God, that he suffered and died for their sins – those true believers will inhabit the earth during the great tribulation and suffer persecution, turmoil, and martyrdom under the Antichrist. The rapture of the Church does not occur until the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal of the scroll with seven seals.

How can so many learned scholars be wrong? Humans have difficulty in throwing off the things of their youth including those things acquired in error. We strive to protect our beliefs, to prove those beliefs true. Within Christianity, we cling to the lessons taught by our teachers and our preachers. When we read the Bible, we accept those supportive of our beliefs and discard those that do not. There is nothing inherently evil in this act – it is a normative human process, it protects our sense of wellbeing.

Teachers are necessary to help young minds and young spirits comprehend the Word of God. But at some point, the students should outgrow their teachers; they should seek to stand on their own two feet. They should be able to read with an adult understanding, and they should be able to hear the quiet whispering of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, far too many prefer not to extend the effort, the energy, and the time necessary nurture their adult minds, their adult spirits; they prefer to hang onto the lessons of their youth. They may adjust and refine... but the lessons remain essentially the same.

I am not sure when the pretribulation rapture doctrine was first developed. Some say that it was among the earliest church teachings, other attribute it to a Baptist minister named Morgan Edwards in 1788, and others to John Darby in the 1830. The source doesn’t really make a difference. What makes a difference is the soundness of its precepts. This section examines those precepts and their shortcomings.

No effort was made to prove pretribulation arguments wrong; the responses simple provide an alternative view. The purpose is not to convert; that is the job of the Holy Spirit. The purpose is to share. You, the reader, are encouraged to email thoughts, questions, concerns, and refutations. Those comments will be appreciated.

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### DEFINITIONS FIRST

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Proponents of a pretribulation rapture generally define the **Great Tribulation** as a seven year period beginning with the breaking of the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal of the scroll with seven seals and ending with the physical return of Jesus Christ with His armies at the battle of Armageddon. This, in my opinion, is misleading... the **Great Tribulation DOES NOT** encompass the entire seven years of **Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week**.

The **Great Tribulation** is that period described in the Olivet Discourse from the coming of the many false messiahs until the gathering of Christ’s elect from the four winds. In the book of Revelation, the

**Great Tribulation** begins with the breaking the 1st Seal of the scroll with seven seals and ends immediately prior to the breaking of the 7th Seal. The Church will be present on the earth during this period. The Church will be raptured from the earth upon the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal.

The first four seals of the scroll with seven seals **DO NOT** involve God's wrath although they do represent judgment on the wicked inhabitants of the earth. The **Wrath of God DOES NOT** begin until the breaking of the 7th Seal.

**Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week DOES NOT** directly correlate with the **Great Tribulation**, but rather it spans a portion of the **Great Tribulation** and the entire **Wrath of God**. **Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week** begins when the Antichrist makes a covenant with many nations including Israel and ends with the physical return of Jesus Christ with His armies for the battle of Armageddon. The breaking of the 1st Seal occurs before the Antichrist makes this covenant – he must gain prominence, esteem, and power prior to rising to a position with the authority necessary to execute this covenant. Prophetic scriptures do not provide clues concerning how much time transpires from the breaking of the 1st Seal until the signing of the covenant.

While reading this section, **DO NOT** confuse pretribulation rapture terminology with the terms within this study – they are not interchangeable. There is a clear distinction between the **Great Tribulation**, the **Wrath of God**, and **Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week**.

See "The Great Tribulation Label is a Misnomer" section of this study for a detailed analysis.

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## THERE WILL BE A RAPTURE

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During the transition from this age to the next, the Lord Jesus Christ will return twice: first in the clouds to gather His elect and then a few years later with His heavenly host, then He will establish His earthly Millennial Kingdom. This is a scripturally sound fact that is beyond debate:

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17:** For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Until that time, those of us who call Jesus Christ Lord should eagerly await His return in the clouds. This is a scripturally sound fact that is beyond debate:

**Titus 2:13:** while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (NIV)

**Philippians 3:20:** But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV)

Throughout the New Testament, scripture indicates that we should always be prepared because we do not know the day or hour of Christ's return. This is a scripturally sound fact that is beyond debate:

**Acts 1:6-7:** So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. (NIV)

**Matthew 24:36:** No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (NIV)

**1 John 2:28:** And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. (NIV)

There will be two resurrections: one for those who believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and one for those who will face judgment. The resurrection of the believer will come prior to Christ’s establishment of His Millennial Kingdom and the general resurrection at the end of the Millennium prior to the White Throne Judgment.

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## THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

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Just as the four Gospels provide the foundation for the New Testament Church, the Olivet Discourse within Matthew, Mark, and Luke provide the foundation for New Testament prophecy. Just as the Acts and the epistles expound and refine the gospel accounts, Acts, the epistles, and the book of Revelation expound and refine the Olivet Discourse. Contrary to many proponents of the pretribulation view, the Olivet Discourse does not limit its scope to Israel at the exclusion of the Church. The Olivet Discourse is a beautiful example of God’s living, breathing testament, and it addresses three specific events:

1. It warns of the destruction of the second Temple and the distress experienced during those turbulent times,
2. It provides insights into the regathering of Israel and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom, and
3. It provides a glimpse into the tribulation of redeemed Christians and their gathering to meet the Lord in the air.

All too frequently, we forget that God is omniscient, omnipotent, and the creator of all things. All too frequently we limit God’s ability to the confines of our physical world. All too often we limit God’s mind to the confines of man’s simple mind. Such things are errors; such errors lead to confusion and misunderstanding. We should not place such limits on the Olivet Discourse or the messages it communicates.

The Olivet Discourse was delivered to the Disciples of Jesus Christ – Messianic Jews. By this time in Christ’s earthly ministry, they had begun to understand that Jesus was the Son of God and the Messiah. They had also begun to understanding that the true mission of the Messiah was different than that defined by Jewish tradition. By the time of the Olivet Discourse, Christ’s earthly ministry was drawing to a end; He had made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem and would soon suffer the passion. The assertion, made by some pretribulationists, that the Olivet Discourse was directed purely at the Jews is mistaken. If we adopt this position, then virtually the entire Gospel is directed purely at the Jews, not the new Testament Church. Such a position is untenable.

During research, I encountered several articles that attempted to explain why the Olivet Discourse does not apply to the New Testament Church and why the gathering of the elect is not the Rapture. Few provided substantial, credible scripturally based arguments in support of their position. Such argumentation is not acceptable. A plain reading of the text indicates that the Christ's Disciples, Messianic Jews, would expect to be among the gathering of the elect. Advocates of a differing view have the burden to prove otherwise.

Cooper P. Abrams in his article, "Are Church Age Saints in the Olivet Discourse?" presents a clear and well reasoned argument supporting his beliefs that the Olivet Discourse does not address the present Church Age and does not describe the rapture of the Church.<sup>249</sup> Unlike many, Mr. Abrams does not contradict himself by asserting that portions of Matthew 24-25 apply to the Church while others do not. He asserts that none of Matthew 24-25 has application for the New Testament Church. His gentleness and reasoned arguments should be admired. While I agree with many of his premises, I disagree with his general conclusions.

Every detail of Matthew 24-25 is related to the Jews and the nation of Israel. There is nothing in these two chapters which relates to the present church age or believers of this dispensation. It is therefore a serious mistaken to interpret the Olivet Discourse as referring to end of the church age and there is not found here any support for a Pre-wrath, Mid or Post Tribulational rapture or Amillennialism. If understood properly these passages support the doctrine of a Pre-Tribulational rapture of believers in this present Church age and of the Pre-Millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>250</sup>

- **KINGDOM OF GOD V. THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM:**

The nature, location, and proximity of the Kingdom of God are frequently misunderstood by premillennialists. Many believe that Jesus Christ came to earth to establish this kingdom but was unable to do so because the Jews rejected Him as the Messiah. Many think of the Kingdom of God and the Millennial Kingdom as synonyms. Neither is accurate. The Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, it exists throughout creation, and it is readily accessible to those who seek God's will. The Millennial Kingdom is a physical, earthly kingdom that will be established on earth after Christ's Second Coming fulfilling many of the Old Testament promises concerning Israel. The Gospel that Jesus Christ preached during His earthly ministry was the gospel of His spiritual kingdom, not the Millennial Kingdom. (*See the "Kingdom of God" section of this study.*)

As illustrated in the Gospels, the learned scholars failed to recognize the distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Millennial Kingdom; they failed to distinguish between the spiritual and the material. Perhaps we have a similar problem today? When we fail to distinguish between the Kingdom of God and the Millennial Kingdom, the messages become intermingled and produce a somewhat distorted and confusing picture.

- **THE MOSAIC AGE V. THE CHURCH AGE:**

Mr. Abrams makes an interesting point when he asserts that the Old Testament has not yet reached completion:

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<sup>249</sup> Cooper P. Abrams III, "Are Church Age Saints in the Olivet Discourse?" Bible Truth, ND. < <http://bible-truth.org/OlivetDiscourse.html>> August 17, 2012.

<sup>250</sup> Cooper P. Abrams III, "Are Church Age Saints in the Olivet Discourse?" Bible Truth, ND. < <http://bible-truth.org/OlivetDiscourse.html>> August 17, 2012.

So far only 483 years of the prophecy has transpired which leaves the final seven years (Daniel's 70th Week) still future. The Old Testament dispensation is not completed, but will be finished with the coming of the Messiah at the end of the week.<sup>251</sup>

However, this premise does not justify the assertion that the Church will not be present during the events described within the Olivet Discourse. Some pretribulationists assert that the spiritual Church and spiritual Israel cannot coexist on earth at the same time. Jack Kelly, in his article "Defending The Pre-Trib Rapture (Again)," implies that God can only deal with either the Church or Israel at a time, not both:

One is that the Lord seems to keep Israel and the Church separate, never dealing with both at the same time (Acts 15: 13-18) If the primary purpose of Daniel's 70th week is to finish fulfilling the six promises to Israel in Daniel 9:24, then the Church has to disappear.<sup>252</sup>

If we strictly adhere to these limits, then the vast bulk of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John's gospels must be removed from the New Testament and placed in the Old Testament – their messages would also be limited strictly to the Jews, not the Church. While the New Testament Church did not formally come into being until Pentecost, the Gospels serve as a bridge between Israel and the Church just as Christ's earthly ministry served as a transition between the Jew and the Christian. In a like manner, the end time tribulation will serve as a bridge and transition between the current age and the next. There will be a brief overlap.

If we insist that dispensations cannot overlap, then we must also alter our view of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. Many premillennialist scholars assert that Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is split into two segments of three and one-half years. If Christ's earthly message was directed strictly at the Jews, then His earthly ministry of three and one-half years fulfilled the first segment of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. This first segment ended upon Christ's rejection as the Messiah. The second segment would begin the sealing of the 144,000 from each tribe with the seal of the living God (Revelation 7:1-8). Thus, there would be no barrier to keeping the church on earth for until breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal – spiritual Israel would not exist until the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal.

The prophecies found within the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation are not strictly limited to Israel but describe a transitional period between the current age and the next. During this transition, the Church will be removed and spiritual Israel will be established. We should remember that there is a distinction between the Great Tribulation, the Wrath of God, and Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week. While the three intermingle, they are not synonymous.

- **THE DISCIPLE'S VIEWPOINT OF THE DISCOURSE:**

Mr. Abrams carefully examines the context of the Olivet Discourse including who was being addressed, the subject, and the historical-cultural situation at that time. From this, he concludes:

The disciples perceived that Jesus was referring to events at the end of their present age and the coming of the promised Kingdom. The age the disciples referred to is the end of

<sup>251</sup> Cooper P. Abrams III, "Are Church Age Saints in the Olivet Discourse?" Bible Truth, ND. <<http://bible-truth.org/OlivetDiscourse.html>> August 17, 2012.

<sup>252</sup> Jack Kelly, "Defending The Pre-Trib Rapture (Again)," Grace Thru Faith, August 19, 2006. <<http://gracethrufaith.com/ikvot-hamashiach/defending-the-pre-trib-rapture-again/>> August 17, 2012.

the Old Testament dispensation which would end in God restoring the nation of Israel and their Messiah ruling from Jerusalem.<sup>253</sup>

Certainly, Christ's disciples did not have a clear view of the Church Age until after Pentecost. This is readily evident by Peter's actions during Jesus' arrest:

**John 18:10:** Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) (NIV)

Even at this late date in Christ's earthly ministry, the disciples could not grasp that Jesus would die on the cross. Perhaps they believed Jesus would suddenly assume the role as conquering Messiah and usher in the new kingdom. Modern Jewish literature indicates that this is still the primary test of messianic authenticity – the Mashiach must rebuild the temple and usher in the promised, earthly Jewish kingdom. Thus, it is hard to quibble with Mr. Abrams' analysis regarding the context and the disciples' perceptions.

However, his general conclusion is invalid:

The disciples did not know anything about the coming Church Age. *[True premise]*

The disciples perceived the message as pertaining to the promised kingdom. *[True premise]*

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**Therefore:** Jesus's statements were not about our present age. *[Invalid conclusion]*

If the disciples did not fully understand the message when it was delivered, they did when they transcribed them... the Gospels were not written during Christ's earthly ministry but after Pentecost. The Gospels weren't transcribed by Jews; they were transcribed by Christians. However, even these facts are immaterial because the Gospels are the inspired Word of God... they are not natural words, but supernatural.

Once again, we must not limit God's Word to human understanding. Once again, if we limit the Gospels to the Jewish viewpoint, then the bulk of the Gospels should be moved to the Old Testament. Once again, this is an untenable position.

Rather we should approach the Olivet Discourse as we would other biblical prophecy – with an understanding that the prophet (the transcriber) does not necessarily understand the application of the prophecies at the time they are given. Daniel clearly did not fully comprehend the meaning of all of his prophecies:

**Daniel 8:27:** ...I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding. (NIV)

**Daniel 12:4:** But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge. (NIV)

**Daniel 12:8-9:** I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. (NIV)

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<sup>253</sup> Cooper P. Abrams III, "Are Church Age Saints in the Olivet Discourse?" Bible Truth, ND. <<http://bible-truth.org/OlivetDiscourse.html>> August 17, 2012.

The Bible is neither a narrative nor a book of history. Although transcribed by human hands, the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Should we suppose that the Apostle John fully comprehended the visions he saw within the Apocalypse? I think not... The Bible is a living, breathing document. We need not limit its message to the mind of the human writer. Most importantly, the Olivet Discourse was not delivered by the disciples, but by Christ. Christ certainly understood the impact of His words:

**Mark 4:13:** Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?" (NIV)

- **THE RAPTURE IS INSTANTANEOUS – NO ANGELS REQUIRED:**

Here in Matthew 24:31, Christ sends angels to gather the saints to be present at His arrival. In 1 Thess. 4:16-17, states that Christ Himself will descend with a shout and the dead in Christ shall arise first and those a live will be change and "caught up" (raptured) to meet the Lord in the air. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, states that those caught up will be changed in the "twinkling of an eye." The "gathering" of the saints by angels clearly is a different event than the instantaneous "catching up" of Christians of this age in the rapture.<sup>254</sup>

I have seen this argument in a number of articles so it is not unique to Mr. Abrams.

First, although this argument correctly portrays the "twinkling of an eye" in the first instance, its application is misleading within the conclusion. The instantaneous can only be applied to the change – to the putting on the imperishable, not to the entire process of the "catching up." The passage does not indicate how long the rapture process will take; it only indicates that the change from perishable to imperishable will be instantaneous.

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52:** we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye (NIV)

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52:** will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (NASB)

Second, the argument asserts that the Rapture involves meeting the Lord in the air while only a "sign" of the Lord is seen in the clouds. Unfortunately, this interpretation ignores the interpretation of the "sign" found with the other Gospel accounts:

**Luke 21:27:** At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (NIV)

**Mark 13:26:** At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.(NIV)

Perhaps Matthew uses the term "sign" as an allusion to Matthew 16:4, "wicked and adulterous generation seeks a sign." The Lord appearing in the clouds most certainly fulfills the desires of that generation.

<sup>254</sup> Cooper P. Abrams III, "Are Church Age Saints in the Olivet Discourse?" Bible Truth, ND. <<http://bible-truth.org/OlivetDiscourse.html>> August 17, 2012.

Additionally, the Greek term for sign used here is *sémeion*. According to *HELPSWord-Studies*, the term is “used dozens of times in the NT for what authenticates the Lord and His eternal purpose, especially by doing what mere man cannot replicate or take credit for.”<sup>255</sup> Considering the inclusion of numerous false messiahs, prophets, great signs, and great wonders within the discourse, a sign of authentication of the true Christ would seem appropriate.

Third, it is absolutely true that within the Olivet Discourse angels gathering the elect while such is not mentioned in the rapture scriptures within the epistles. Certainly, imperishable bodies would have no need for physical assistance, but perhaps, just perhaps, the angels are needed to guide the resurrected to a single meeting point, just like herding dogs herd a flock of sheep.

Certainly, two different perspectives are provided: one from the Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry and one from an Apostle after Pentecost. Just because two different perspectives are given does not indicate that they are two different events. In fact, Mr. Abrams deployed two separate passages to describe the Rapture; he needed both to paint a more complete portrait. The same could be said concerning the differences between the Olivet account and those found within the epistles.

Additionally, I personally believe two different events are occurring simultaneously. The first is the rapture of the redeemed Christians who are heading towards heaven. The second is the gathering of remnant Israel who are sealed with the seal of the Living God. Both occur at the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal with the Church being seen in heaven immediately afterwards. Mortal Jews would certainly need a little help getting to Jerusalem.

- **THE ANGELS AND TRUMPET CALLS:**

There is no correlation between 1 Thess. 4:16, and Matthew 24:31. In 1 Thess. 4:16, there is the voice of "one" angel, identified as the archangel. In Matthew 24:31, Christ sends forth, a plurality of angels, meaning more than one.<sup>256</sup>

I have also seen this argument in a few different articles. As mentioned previously, the absence of one or more details within one passage does not indicate that two passages aren't addressing the same event. The case holds true here. The question is, “Does one passage contradict the other?” There is no such conflict in these passages. It is true that there is the voice of only “one” angel but that does not mean that only one angel is present; the other angels are simply not calling out commands or their words are not recorded. Matthew provides more detail about the number of angels, and Thessalonians provides specifics about the sound. There is no conflict.

**Matthew 24:31:** And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call...

**1 Thessalonians 4:16:** ...with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God... (NIV)

<sup>255</sup> “4592 sémeion,” *Helps Ministries: HELPSWord-Studies*, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/4592.htm>> August 17, 2012.

<sup>256</sup> Cooper P. Abrams III, “Are Church Age Saints in the Olivet Discourse?” *Bible Truth*, ND. <<http://bible-truth.org/OlivetDiscourse.html>> August 17, 2012.

- **REPOPULATION OF THE MILLENNIUM:**

This [Matthew 24:40-41: two men in the field and one taken] cannot be the Rapture, because you would have all the saints removed from the earth, thus no one to populate the Millennial Kingdom in their natural un-glorified bodies. Further, at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom there would only be the lost left on earth.<sup>257</sup>

The Church is the body of Christ; once it is removed from the earth, there will be no more being “saved,” at least not in the traditional sense. Once that door is closed, it is closed. The current age closes at the Rapture of the Church; those that are “left behind” will adhere to Millennial Kingdom principles, not to the Church Age principles.

Claims that only “saved” humans will survive the Second Coming of Christ project the current age onto the next. I have found no evidence that suggests that humans will be “saved” or “born again” during the outpouring of God’s wrath. Certainly, millions if not billions will survive the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, those who conspired with Satan will share his fate, and the others will inhabit and repopulate the earth.

Within numerous Christian articles, I have read about the sealed 144,000 from each tribe of Israel becoming Christian evangelists, the two witnesses in Jerusalem preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or the ones “left behind” finding Jesus and converting to Christianity. However, I have found ***no scriptural evidence demonstrating that these claims are true***. Simply believing in Jesus Christ during this time period is insufficient... all mortals will see and believe. They will see Christ coming in the clouds and they will understand that they have rejected the Gospel:

**Revelation 6:15-17:** Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” (NIV)

The Church was a mystery to the previous age; many aspects of the next age are mysterious to us. We should not project the current age upon the next. We must examine the scriptures and base our beliefs on the message they speak. Theories concerning the inhabitants of the Millennial Kingdom are simply that, theories and should not alter the plain meaning of scripture.

In summary, the Olivet Discourse serves as a foundation for New Testament prophecy. It addresses the events that occurred in Jerusalem during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, it addresses the events that will involve the Church at the end of the current age, and it addresses the events that will involve Israel during the transition to the Millennial Age. God’s Word does not provide an answer to all of our questions, and we should be careful not to generate doctrine to fill in the gaps.

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## **IMMINENCE**

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Imminence is the belief that Jesus Christ can return at anytime to Rapture the Church; imminence indicates that there are no prerequisites for this return – no conditions must be fulfilled.

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<sup>257</sup> Cooper P. Abrams III, “Are Church Age Saints in the Olivet Discourse?” Bible Truth, ND. <<http://bible-truth.org/OlivetDiscourse.html>> August 17, 2012.

- **NO ONE KNOWS THE DAY OR HOUR:**

Proponents of a pretribulation rapture frequently point to multiple scriptures within the Olivet Discourse to support an assertion that since no man knows the day or hour, Christ can return at any moment:

**Matthew 24:42:** Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. (NIV)

**Matthew 24:50:** The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. (NIV)

**Matthew 25:13:** Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. (NIV)

**Response:** Ironically, most proponents of a pretribulation rapture also assert that the gathering of the elect in Matthew 24:31 is not the Church but either souls brought to Christ during the tribulation or saved Jews. They also assert that the Rapture occurs before the tribulation described within the Olivet Discourse. Logic dictates that if the first section of the discourse does not apply to the Church then the later sections also do not apply to the Church. It seems wrong “pick and choose” scriptures that support one position and reject those that oppose it.

However, Acts 1:7 makes it clear that God had no intention to inform the Apostles as to the times or dates of Christ’s return; consequentially, the scriptures do not provide clues about the times or dates. Two-thousand years later, mankind does not know the day or the hour. Searching scripture for clues is fool hearted.

However, not knowing the day or hour does NOT mean that Christ will return at any moment. The Apostle Paul does outline two events that must occur BEFORE Christ’s return:

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-3:** with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed... (NASB)

Paul assures the Thessalonians that that the Lord will not return and gather His saints until two events occur first: (a) an apostasy and (b) the Antichrist revealed. We have difficulty determining the meaning of “apostasy” because Paul does not provide a description. However, Paul does provide a detailed description of the “man of lawlessness,” the Antichrist.

I have read articles where scholars have attempted to “explain away” this passage, but these explanations frequently skew the meaning of the passage so that it is virtually unrecognizable. For example, some assert that the “day of the Lord” in this passage is the Old Testament “Day of the Lord” when God pours His wrath upon the inhabitants of the earth. However, that simply is not the case. Paul clearly defines the “day of the Lord” with the phrase “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and *our gathering together to Him*” – the Rapture.

Others assert that this describes events occurring in 70 AD when the armies of Titus destroyed the second Temple. If we accept this claim, then we should accept a full preterist view and consider all prophecies fulfilled. Accepting a preterist few for some passages and rejecting that view for other passages is arbitrary and should be rejected.

Is there a second and third witness to this passage? Yes, absolutely. Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14 make a direct reference to Daniel's Abomination of Desolation that parallels 2 Thessalonians 2:4 where the Antichrist takes his seat in the Jewish Temple. Yes, many pretribulationists reject these verses application to the Church, but all three passages refer to Christ returning and gathering His saints.

\*NOTE: 2 Thessalonians 2:4 indicates that a third Jewish Temple will be built in the latter days.

Although we do not know the day and hour of Christ's return, we do know that an apostasy must occur and that the Antichrist must be revealed BEFORE He returns. We know for certain that the Antichrist has not yet been revealed – there is no Jewish Temple.

- **DAYS OF NOAH:**

Proponents of a pretribulation rapture frequently point to the Flood allusion within the Olivet Discourse to illustrate that the Rapture will come suddenly and as a complete surprise:

**Matthew 24:36-39:** “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. (NIV)

**Response:** I find this a curious argument as it seems to contradict the theory of imminence. First, verse 36 outlines the topic, “No one knows about the day or hour.” This preface is written in the present tense “knows” indicating that at that time, the time when the words were spoken, no one knew the day or hour of Christ's return. Verse 37 is written in the future tense “will be” indicating that in the future the “knowing” part is comparable to the days of Noah.

Although there is no discernible conjunction joining these two verses, some scholars read the two verse as if it says:

*No one knows the day or hour of His coming, not even the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father. The same will be true in the future, and as in the days of Noah...*

This is an error. We must not add or detract from scripture. The allusion, therefore, compares the “knowing” at the time of the second coming to the time of Noah, not to the “knowing” when Jesus Christ spoke the words.

Now, when God instructed Noah to build the ark, God informed Noah what was going to occur (Genesis 6:13-21), and it took Noah and his family some 98 years to build the ark<sup>258</sup> and seven

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<sup>258</sup> “How Long did it Take Noah to Build the Ark?” God's Point of View, ND. <[http://www.godspointofview.com/public/qanda/how\\_long\\_to\\_build\\_the\\_ark.htm](http://www.godspointofview.com/public/qanda/how_long_to_build_the_ark.htm)> July 25, 2012.

days to load the ark (Genesis 7:4). Certainly, Noah might not have known the “day or the hour” during the 98 years he was building the Ark, but he and his family certainly knew “about what would happen.” They certainly knew the time was very, very close when they started to load the animals. **The rain did NOT come suddenly or as a surprise to Noah and his family.**

Who were the people who knew nothing about what would happen? They were the people who were “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.” They were the people who were destroyed by the flood, these were the people who were caught unaware.

It was the unbelievers, the wicked, who were caught off guard, not the righteous, the blameless, and the ones who walk with God (Genesis 6:9). Instead of supporting the belief that all will be surprised by the Rapture, this passage seems to indicate that the true believer will know about what is about to happen.

If we use the Great Flood as a precursor to the Rapture, then we are to understand that God will give the righteous clear warning before He returns for His Church. True, we may not know the day or hour, but the generation of the Rapture will know what is upon them.

- **DAYS OF LOT:**

Proponents of a pretribulation rapture frequently point to the days of Lot to illustrate that the Rapture will come suddenly and as a complete surprise:

**Luke 17:29-30:** It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

**Response:** This allusion shares many of the same characteristic as the allusion to Noah and the Flood. It also implies that the servants of God will have notice before their sudden departure. The two angels did not come into town and immediately snatch Lot and his family away but rather they came and spent the night. Even when the angels revealed that they had come to destroy the city, they permitted Lot to go out and attempt to persuade his sons-in-law. It wasn't until morning that Lot departed with his wife and two daughters. Certainly, the departure carries a sense of urgency, “Hurry!” (Genesis 19:15) but Lot was warned hours before the time was near.

Certainly, the other inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were caught off guard and unaware. Certainly, their destruction struck a suddenly and unexpectedly. But that was not the case of the righteous.

- **THIEF IN THE NIGHT:**

Proponents of a pretribulation rapture frequently point to multiple scriptures that compare Christ's return to that of a thief in the night. Since a thief can strike at anytime unexpectedly, then Christians should also understand that Christ can also return at anytime unexpectedly.

**1 Thessalonians 5:2-3:** for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. (NIV)

**Matthew 24:43-44:** But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. (NIV)

**Response:** I would agree that a Christian should always be prepared to meet the Lord, not so much because He can return at any moment, but because we never know when we might die and go home unexpectedly. However, there is a provision within these passages. 1 Thessalonians 5:4 claims that we are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. Matthew 24:43-44 has a similar proviso, “he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.” The other analogies along this line – the wise and faithful servant, the ten virgins, and the ten talents – teach a similar lesson. If we study the Word of God, we may not know the day or hour, but His return will not surprise us for we will have noticed the signs of imminence:

**Matthew 24:32-33:** Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. (NIV)

Certainly, Christ’s return for His Church will be a surprise for those who are distracted by the pleasures of this world, those who are not diligent in their Christian duties, and those who become overwhelmed by the cares of this world. However, if we know the Word of God and we keep our eyes clear, we can readily detect the signs that Christ and the Apostle Paul forewarned us about; Christ’s return will not sneak up on us like a thief in the night.

- **3 ½ YEARS, 42 MONTHS, & 1,260 DAYS:**

Within the books of Revelation and Daniel, God reveals specific time periods between events: three and one-half years, forty-two months, and 1,260 days. According to some proponents of a pretribulation rapture these specifics would permit Christians, if they are present during the tribulation, to calculate the day and hour of Christ’s return. This, they claim, violates the “no one knows the day or hour” clause.

**Response:** Proponents of this argument, unfortunately, suffer from tunnel vision – they are so focused on the exact words that they fail to see the context. Asserting no one will know the day or hour until the exact moment of Christ’s return, in my view, is unreasonable... it would mean that even Jesus Christ the Son would not know until the moment the Father gave Him the nod:

**Matthew 24:36:** No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (NIV)

As we have seen in the stories of Noah and Lot, there is lead up time between the moment God decides to initiate an action and the moment that action materially takes place. It took Noah some hundred years to build the ark and seven days to load it; then the rains came. The angels came to Lot at night and Lot did not leave until morning; then Sodom was destroyed.

In a like manner, God the Father will hand the scroll with the seven seals to Jesus Christ the Son... at this moment those who dwell in heaven will know that the time has come and how the

events will unfold. On earth, the breaking of the 1st Seal will set events in motion. The signing of the covenant will reveal the man of lawlessness and the setting up of the abomination that causes desolation will be the fig tree putting forth its leaves; then Christians will know that Christ is near, even at the door.

Even with these signs, will Christians be able to estimate the exact day and hour? I don't believe so. The Olivet Discourse instructs that those in Judea must flee when they see the armies surrounding Jerusalem and when they see the abomination of desolation. It does not indicate that Christ will return for the elect within seconds of those occurrences. It may be minutes, days, weeks, possibly a month until He comes. We will not know exactly, but we are told that those days will be cut short.

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## THE WRATH OF GOD

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See *"The Seals ≠ Day of the Lord"* and *"The Four Sore Judgments"* within the *Seven Seals* section.

- **WRATH, GOD HATH NOT APPOINTED TO US:**

In 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Paul assures us that God has not appointed His people to wrath. This wrath is plainly God's anger that will be poured out during the tribulation. Pre-trib believers interpret this as meaning that Christians will be removed from the earth. Post-trib believers tell a different story. They describe this as meaning that God will protect Christians during the tribulation and pour this wrath out on the unbelievers only. This idea runs against the statement made in Revelation 13:7, in which the Antichrist is given power to make war with the saints and to overcome them.<sup>259</sup>

Certainly, true Christians will never face the Wrath of God; this is the absolute, unalterable truth:

**1 Thessalonians 5:9:** For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV)

However, there is a clear distinction between God's wrath and tribulation. Christians are instructed to expect and endure tribulation:

**2 Corinthians 6:4-5:** Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger. (NIV)

A plain reading of the Olivet Discourse reveals great tribulation: false messiahs, false prophets, deception, war, rumors of war, strife between nations, famines, earthquakes, pestilence, persecution, hatred, imprisonment, torture, wickedness, and betrayal. But God's people from multiple generations have long endured such things; it should not be unexpected for the last generation of Christians to suffer such things.... such tribulation, however, does not necessarily constitute the Wrath of God.

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<sup>259</sup> Todd Strandberg, "Scriptural Evidence for the Pretribulation Rapture," *Rapture Ready*, ND. <<http://www.raptureready.com/rr-pretribulation-rapture.html>> August 17, 2012.

Perhaps some Christians find it untenable that the coming Antichrist will have the authority to make war on and conquer the true believer?

**Daniel 7:25:** He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. (NIV)

**Revelation 13:7:** He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them... (NIV)

Yet, we know from history, that many, many Christians met their death because of their belief in Jesus Christ. The martyrdom of Stephen is described in Acts 7:54-60 and James in Acts 12:1-2. The apostles Peter was allegedly crucified upside down and Paul was allegedly beheaded during the reign of Nero. Early Christians faced persecution and martyrdom at the hands of both Jews and Romans. Even today, missionaries in non-Christian nations face persecution and death. Martyrdom and persecution should be considered a normal and expected Christian experience:

**Luke 6:22:** Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. (NIV)

**Matthew 10:28:** Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (NIV)

The events within the Olivet Discourse and the first six seals do not constitute God's wrath and provide no impediments for the Church's presence during this time.

- **EPISTLES CONTAIN NO WARNINGS OF IMPENDING TRIBULATION:**

God's instructions to the church through the epistles contain a variety of warnings, but never do they warn believers to prepare for entering and enduring the tribulation of Daniel's seventieth week.

They warn vigorously about coming error and false prophets (see Acts 20:29-30; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1-3; Jude 4). They warn against ungodly living (see Eph 4:25-5:7; 1 Thess 4:3-8; Heb 12:1). They even admonish believers to endure in the midst of present tribulation (see 1 Thess 2:13-14; 2 Thess 1:4; all of 1 Peter). However, there is absolute silence on preparing the church for any kind of tribulation like that found in Revelation 6-18.

It is incongruous, then, that the Scriptures would be silent about such a traumatic change for the church. If any time of the rapture other than pretribulational were true, one would expect the epistles to teach the fact of the church in the tribulation, the purpose of the church in the tribulation, and the conduct of the church in the tribulation. However, there is no teaching whatsoever. Only a pretribulational rapture satisfactorily explains such obvious silence.<sup>260</sup>

We can assume that the early Christians were taught the Gospels, at least in some form. If so, then certainly the Olivet Discourse would be within those lessons. Since early Christians experienced persecution as a matter of course, they could readily identify with the suffering

<sup>260</sup> Richard L. Mayhue, *Christ's Prophetic Plans: A Futuristic Premillennial Primer*, Richard Mayhue, John F. MacArthur, John F. MacArthur. Editors. Moody Publishers, February 21, 2012. <<http://books.google.com/books>> August 17, 2012.

associated with the rule of the Antichrist. In fact the entire Bible, oral tradition for those in the early Church, taught lessons in persecution and endurance:

**Hebrews 11:35-38:** ...Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. (NIV)

In the commission to the twelve, Jesus described persecution similar to that expected during the tribulation. Such persecution would seem to be the routine for those who walk in Christ, not the exception. The New Testament is not silent on such matters:

**Matthew 10:17-22:** Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. (NIV)

- **PURIFICATION OF THE CHURCH:**

The Church was purified at the cross at which time all the punishment due us was born by the Lord Himself. From that time forward the Church is considered by God to be as righteous as He is (2 Cor 5:17 & 21) The idea that the Church needs to undergo some discipline to become worthy to dwell with God is not scriptural and denies the Lord's completed work on the cross.<sup>261</sup>

If this claim was true, we would then expect Christians to live without pain, suffering, persecution, and death. Certainly, the New Testament does not convey that we should expect such an idyllic life. While I do not assert that the purpose of tribulation is purification, it seems evident that if the Church was born in persecution and suffering then it will exit under similar conditions. Jesus Christ certainly paid the price for our sin; however, if we accept Jesus Christ as Lord, we also accept a share in His suffering:

**1 Peter 4: 12-16:** Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. (NIV)

<sup>261</sup> Jack Kelley, "Defending The Pre-Trib Rapture (Again)," *GraceThruFaith*, August 19, 2006. <<http://gracethrufaith.com/ikvot-hamashiach/defending-the-pre-trib-rapture-again/>> August 17, 2012.

**2 Timothy 3:12:** In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. (NIV)

- **PURPOSE OF TRIBULATION:**

The stated purpose of the Great Tribulation is twofold, to purify Israel and completely destroy the unbelieving nations. (Jeremiah 30:1-11) The Church isn't destined for either of these outcomes. Take for instance the fact that Enoch, who bears a great similarity to the Church, disappeared before the Great Flood, that the angels couldn't destroy Sodom and Gomorrah until Lot and his family were clear, and that Daniel was missing from the story of the fiery furnace, a model of the Great Tribulation.<sup>262</sup>

Once again, there is a difference between the Great Tribulation (the first six seals) and the Wrath of God (the 7th Seal seven, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of wrath). While the examples provided within the argument serve as examples of deliverance, there are also solid examples of being placed into the fire under the protection of God:

**Daniel 3:24-25:** Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king." He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." (NIV)

**Daniel 6:20-22:** When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king." (NIV)

See "The Great Tribulation Label is a Misnomer" section of this study for a detailed analysis.

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## COMMON PRETRIBULATION ARGUMENTS:

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- **CHURCH IS NOT MENTIONED IN REVELATION 6–18:**

The common NT term for "church" (ἐκκλησία, *ekkl'isia*) is used nineteen times in Revelation 1–3, a section that deals with the historical church of the first century toward the end of the apostle John's life (ca. A.D. 95). However, "church" is then used only once more in the twenty-two chapter book and that at the very end (22:16) when John returns to addressing the first-century church. Most interesting is the fact that nowhere during the period of Daniel's seventieth week is the term for "church" used for believers on earth (cf. Rev. 4–19).<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Jack Kelley, "Defending The Pre-Trib Rapture (Again)," *GraceThruFaith*, August 19, 2006. <<http://gracethrufaith.com/ikvot-hamashiach/defending-the-pre-trib-rapture-again/>> August 17, 2012.

<sup>263</sup> Richard L. Mayhue, *Christ's Prophetic Plans: A Futuristic Premillennial Primer*, Richard Mayhue, John F. MacArthur, John F. MacArthur. Editors. Moody Publishers, February 21, 2012. <<http://books.google.com/books>> August 17, 2012.

I have always found this to be a curious argument. This argument rightly points out that the first chapters address seven separate churches that existed during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century in Asia Minor. Since those specific congregations do not exist today, I would not expect them to be mentioned within the inner chapters of Revelation. Thus, I do not comprehend the gist of the argument. However, I will address the implied implications.

The absence of an item within specific passages does not indicate that the item is not present. We can only draw conclusions from what is stated within the passage; we cannot draw conclusions from what is not stated. In this case, we can look at the passages mentioned in the argument and see what is mentioned regarding the Christian congregation:

**Revelation 6:9:** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. (NIV)

Many assert that these individuals were “left behind” from the Rapture, were converted to Christianity during the tribulation, and were put to death because of their new belief. However, such claims are of a human construction, not scriptural construction.

The title “Great Tribulation” has come to represent a specific time period, either the first half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week (3 ½ years) else the entire week (7 years). This title was probably derived from the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:9, 21, 29 and Mark 13:19, 24) and the book of Revelation (7:14). This title is also of a human construction, not scriptural construction.

What then is the great tribulation? Within the context of the book of Revelation, the great tribulation spans the entire Church Age – from the tribulation experienced by early congregations to the tribulation that will be experienced by the last congregations:

**Revelation 1:9:** I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus... (NIV)

**Revelation 20:4:** I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (NIV)

Scholars assert that one of the primary purposes of the book of Revelation is to demonstrate that the seven churches were not isolated in their tribulation; but despite their difficulty, Christ would be the ultimate victory. It, therefore, should not seem strange for John to refer to the entire Church Age as the great tribulation:

Although the purpose may include "completing the prophetic theme presented earlier in the prophecies of the Old Testament" as Walvoord states, it seems better, in light of the early addresses in chapters 2-3 to the churches, to identify the purpose as being to comfort and encourage believers in the midst of suffering and persecution at the hands of evil ones

by assuring them that Jesus Christ and thus they themselves would ultimately and finally triumph.<sup>264</sup>

The purpose of the Revelation was to reveal Christ as Lord to a suffering Church. Because they were being persecuted, the early Christians could be tempted to fear that the world was getting out of hand - that Jesus, who had claimed "all authority... in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18), was not really in control at all. The apostles often warned against this man-centered error, reminding the people that God's sovereignty is over all of history (including our particular tribulations).<sup>265</sup>

We who live in America and other developed countries live lives of relative ease with freedom of religion and freedom from religious persecution. We, I believe, hold a false perception of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. That has not always been the case, and that will not be the case in the future... Within the United States, we are now experiencing a "war on Christianity," and I expect this war grow in intensity over the next few decades.

The true meaning of being Christian discipleship involves tribulation, hatred, persecution, and martyrdom, such we are told throughout the New Testament:

**1 Peter 4: 12-13:** Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. (NIV)

See "The Great Tribulation Label is a Misnomer: The Souls Under the Altar" section of this study for a detailed analysis.

- **COME UP HITHER:**

(Revelation 4:1). A voice called for the apostle John to "Come up here," and immediately he was in heaven. This could be a prophetic reference to the rapture of the Church. The words "Come up here" are spoken to the two witnesses who are killed in the middle of the Tribulation, who are resurrected and ascend into heaven (Rev. 11:12). Therefore, the phrase "Come up here" could mean the Church is raptured in Rev. 4:1.<sup>266</sup>

The door in heaven is opened to let John into heaven. We believe John's call into heaven is prophetic of the Church being caught up at the rapture (see proof #6). In Revelation 19:11, heaven is opened again, this time to let the armies which are already in heaven out. This is the Church, which has been raptured at a previous time, following Jesus out of heaven at the second coming.<sup>267</sup>

I have also always found these arguments curious. As the author writes this "could be" a reference to the Rapture; however, there is no supporting scriptural evidence that it is the Rapture. Both Revelation 4:1 and 11:12 are "types" of the Rapture just as Antiochus IV Epiphanes was a "type" of the abomination of desolation and the conquest of Jerusalem in 70

<sup>264</sup> David Malick, "An Argument of the Book of Revelation (part 1)," bible.org. ND. <<http://bible.org/article/argument-book-revelation-part-1>> August 17, 2012.

<sup>265</sup> David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, quoted in "The Contemporary Focus of Revelation," Tentmaker, ND. <[http://www.tentmaker.org/articles/contemporary\\_revelation\\_chilton.html](http://www.tentmaker.org/articles/contemporary_revelation_chilton.html)> August 17, 2012.

<sup>266</sup> Don Koenig, "Proofs for pretribulation rapture theology," *The Prophetic Years*. <<http://www.thepropheticyears.com/reasons/rapture.htm>> August 17, 2012.

<sup>267</sup> Don Koenig, "Proofs for pretribulation rapture theology," *The Prophetic Years*. <<http://www.thepropheticyears.com/reasons/rapture.htm>> August 17, 2012.

AD was a “type” of “Jerusalem being surrounded by armies.” Biblical “types” permit us to envision complex concepts and events that are difficult to comprehend. Claiming that the call “Come up here” is the Rapture is purely speculative.

- **WHO HAS DOMINION – SATAN OR THE CHURCH? THE RESTRAINER?**

Satan will be given dominion for 42 months on earth, the second half of Daniel's 70th week, and the Church will not be put under Satan's dominion. The Church, given power by the Almighty Father in heaven, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, restrains Satan, as was shown in 2 Thess 2. We know that Satan has not had full dominion over the Church, even though there are many Christian brothers dying still today, for if Satan did have this power, the Word of God would have been extinguished from the face of the earth by now. History alone proves that the Church is more powerful than Satan in this age, but the scriptures speak for themselves.<sup>268</sup>

Before the Antichrist can be revealed, Paul said a certain "He" must be taken out of the way. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:7, the "He" that must be removed is widely thought to be the Holy Spirit. It has been promised that the Holy Spirit would never leave the Church, and without the working of the Holy Spirit remaining on earth, no one could be saved during the tribulation. The removal of the Church, which is indwelt by the Holy Ghost, would seem the best explanation for this dilemma. The working of the Holy Spirit could go on during the tribulation, but His influence would be diminished because of the missing Church.<sup>269</sup>

First, assertion that the Church is the restrainer in 2 Thessalonians 2 is purely speculative and not based on sound scriptural evidence. The “restrainer” is never defined in word or context. The belief that the Church must be removed prior to the revealing of the Antichrist is a human construction, not scriptural construction. The restrainer could be Michael the archangel, the Church, the Holy Spirit, governments, or simply the Hand of God. Additionally, the passage does not indicate that the “restrainer” must be removed from the earth:

- ✓ ...he is taken out of the way. (NIV)(KJV)(AKJV)(NASB)
- ✓ ...steps out of the way. (NLV)
- ✓ ...out of the way. (ESV)
- ✓ ... may be out of the way, (YLT)

The restrainer need only step to one side in order to fulfill passage requirements. Removal of the Church is neither required nor implied.

Second, the statement “Satan will be given dominion for 42 months on earth, the second half of Daniel's 70th week” has no bearing on this argument. Unlike posttribulationists, I believe the Rapture will take place after the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal sometime after the Antichrist sits in the third Temple. The breaking of the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal ends the “tribulation” period and initiates the “wrath of God” period. The Church will be absent from this second period.

Third, the scriptures clearly states that the Antichrist will possess authority over the saints:

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<sup>268</sup> Jason Hommel, “Pre-Tribulation Rapture Scriptures,” Jason Hommel's Bible Prophecy Study on the Pre Tribulation Rapture, ND. <<http://www.bibleprophecy.org/rapture.htm>> August 17, 2012.

<sup>269</sup> Todd Strandberg, “Scriptural Evidence for the Pretribulation Rapture,” Rapture Ready, ND. <<http://www.raptureready.com/r-pretribulation-rapture.htm>> August 17, 2012.

**Revelation 13:7:** He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them... (NIV)

**Daniel 7:21:** As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them... (NIV)

**Daniel 7:25:** ...The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. (NIV)

Now, pretribulationists claim that the church will be absent from this period because God would not permit them to be under such power; however, Revelation 12:17 clearly indicates that the Antichrist's war is with Christians, those who "hold to the testimony of Jesus." Claiming that these saints are Jews isn't convincing.

**Revelation 12:17:** Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring--those who obey God's commandments and hold to the *testimony of Jesus*. (NIV) [*Emphasis added*]

The author is correct that Satan does not have full dominion over the Church during the current age, and the same will hold true during the time of tribulation. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are excellent examples of how God can protect His children in the midst of great tribulation. The Four Sore Judgment, Ezekiel 14:12-19, illustrates that the Lord can keep His own safe even if there they are surrounded by utter destruction.

**Matthew 10:28:** Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (NIV)

To equate martyrdom with abandonment is a miscalculation of the true meaning of standing with Christ. The early church suffered great tribulation, why should today's church expect any different? Certainly, the time of tribulation will be a time of great distress, but Satan does not win the victory. That victory is won by the saints who endure till the end:

**Revelation 7:14-17:** And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

The Antichrist may be given authority over our bodies, but he has no authority the soul:

**Luke 6:22:** Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. (NIV)

**Matthew 10:28:** Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (NIV)

- **JEWISH WEDDING: BRIDAL CHAMBER = HEAVEN:**

John 14:2-3: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Our "many mansions" are in heaven (Rev 21:2). Jesus went away to heaven in Acts 1. The words in Italics above are an expression, used by the groom in a Jewish Wedding. A groom would say those words to his bride and then leave to build an addition onto his father's house before returning for his bride. He returns for his bride in the middle of the night, as a thief, at an hour she might not think, with a loud cry, and a procession of trumpet blast and his friends saying "Behold! The Bridegroom Comes!" Entering our "bridal chamber/heavenly mansion" will be the start of the bridal week.<sup>270</sup>

This tale, found frequently on the Internet, matches perfectly the pretribulationists view of the final seven years. Unfortunately, I could not locate credible, authoritative evidence demonstrating the accuracy of all the tale's elements. Eventually, I concluded that the tale takes portions of ancient tradition, adds embellishment, and emphasizes the portions that illustrate their particular belief. Generally, the tale can help us understand the complex related to Christ's earthly ministry, His absence, and His return; however, it would be an error to use this tale as supporting evidence of a specific doctrine.

This tale and my construct conflict in regards to the "bridal week." Some pretribulationists assert that the Rapture must occur before Daniel's week (7 years) begins because the bride (the Church) and the groom (Jesus Christ) must have seven uninterrupted years together (the bridal week). While an interesting theory, the unfolding of the Daniel's week does not conform to this tradition. In Revelation 5, we see Jesus Christ accepting the scroll with seven seals from God the Father; in Revelation 6-8, we see Jesus Christ opening those seals. Since the 7th Seal brings the seven trumpets and the seventh trumpet brings the seven bowls of wrath, they also originate from Jesus Christ. ***We see Jesus Christ performing work and conducting business during those seven years.*** This work and business violate the tradition of the bridal week:

from "After the Wedding Ceremony"<sup>271</sup>

In Jewish tradition, bride and groom do not embark upon a honeymoon immediately after the wedding; they remain for a full week (three days if it is a second marriage for both) to celebrate. These Shiv'at Y'mei Mishteh, or Seven Days of Feasting, are said to have been ordained by Moses, and are a custom that is thought to go back to patriarchal times. These feasting days serve as a focal point for communal rejoicing and for the couple to begin their married life together while in the lap of the community.

***During the Seven Days of Feasting, the bride and groom do not work, nor may they be involved in business transactions of any kind.*** They only eat, drink, and rejoice with each other. [Emphasis added]

<sup>270</sup> Jason Hommel, "Pre-Tribulation Rapture Scriptures," Jason Hommel's Bible Prophecy Study on the Pre Tribulation Rapture, ND. <<http://www.bibleprophecy.org/rapture.htm>> August 17, 2012.

<sup>271</sup> Dr. Michael Kaufman, "After the Wedding Ceremony," My Jewish Learning, ND. <[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life\\_Events/Weddings/Liturgy\\_Ritual\\_and\\_Custom/After\\_the\\_Ceremony.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life_Events/Weddings/Liturgy_Ritual_and_Custom/After_the_Ceremony.shtml)> August 18, 2012.

Additionally, it is impossible to identify the placement of wedding ceremony within John's chronology. Revelation 19 seems to imply that the ceremony takes place after the fall of Babylon. There is also the problem of identifying the wedding guests as Revelation 19:9 tends to indicate that they are not the hosts of heaven. Certainly, a diligent scholar can develop "fixes" to the difficulties, but "fixes" illustrate weaknesses within an argument.

Comparing Jewish wedding traditions to Christ's relationship with the Church can help explain the relationship; however, its application to support that the Church is raptured out of the earth prior to Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is problematic.

- **PHILADELPHIA CHURCH: HOUR OF TESTING:**

Revelation 3:10 says we will be kept out of the hour of testing which will come upon the whole earth (the Tribulation). Some have wrongly believed "keep" means to keep through, or protect through the Tribulation. Suppose you approach a high voltage area with a sign that says, "Keep Out." Does that mean you can enter and be protected? No, it means you are forbidden from entering the area. But this verse also says He will keep us from the hour of testing. It is not just the testing, but the time period. If a student is excused from a test, he still may have to sit in the class while others take the test. But if he is excused from the hour of testing, he can go home. The Church will be called home before the hour of testing.<sup>272</sup>

First, the Greek word translated as "keep" is *téreo*: I keep, guard, observe, watch over.<sup>273</sup> *HELPS Word Studies* defines the term as: maintain (preserve); (figuratively) spiritually guard (watch), keep intact.<sup>274</sup> Thus, the author's claim that the church "will be called home" is unsubstantiated by the verse. There are multiple ways God could keep the church from the hour of testing: He could hide them (Zephaniah 2:3), He could seal them (Revelation 7:1-2), He could shelter them (Daniel 3:16-35), He could prevent the wicked from harming them (Daniel 6:22), or he could simply make them invisible. Rapturing the church out of the tribulation is just one of several options; there is no indication that this option is the preferred option. The Fore Sores Judgment (Ezekiel 14:12-19) illustrates how God's righteous can safely walk through a country while destruction surrounds them. Since the Revelation's first four seals tend to parallel those passages, the Church will probably experience a similar journey.

**John 17:15:** My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. (NIV)

Second, it has become common practice to associate the churches in Revelation 2-3 with modern day churches and individuals. Some assert that the seven churches reflect the seven historical phases of the Church. While biblical "types" help explain complex concepts, we should be very cautious in using them to develop "doctrine." The church in Philadelphia may serve as an example; however, it does not provide evidence of a pretribulation rapture:

<sup>272</sup> Don Koenig, "Proofs for pretribulation rapture theology," *The Prophetic Years*. <<http://www.thepropheticyears.com/reasons/rapture.htm>> August 17, 2012.

<sup>273</sup> "téreo," 5083. *Strong's Concordance: Bible Concordances*, ND. <<http://concordances.org/greek/5083.htm>> August 18, 2012.

<sup>274</sup> "5083 téreo," *HELPS Word Studies: Bible Concordances*, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/5083.htm>> August 18, 2012.

Jesus explains that He will "keep them from the hour of testing, which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth." Although some interpret this to mean that Jesus was promising to keep the entire church out of the final tribulation by rapturing it in what was still the far-off future for the Christians of the first-century, it seems more consistent with the rest of Scripture to interpret Jesus' words in accord with how He previously used the verb keep when He asked the Father "to keep them (all Christians) from the evil one" (John 17:15). Jesus "keeps us from the evil one" (I John 5:18). We are "strengthen and protected" (II Thess. 3:3) by "the power of God" (I Peter 1:5), "rescued from temptation" (II Peter 2:9), for "God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able" (I Cor. 10:13).<sup>275</sup>

## PROGRESSIVE PARALLELISM

Progressive parallelism divides the Book of Revelation into seven sections with each running parallel to the others (occurring within the same time period). Each section reveals specific eschatological progress with the later sections describing events closer to the end. Each section reveals a specific facet of the church age from the resurrection of Christ, to his second coming, to the renewed universe.

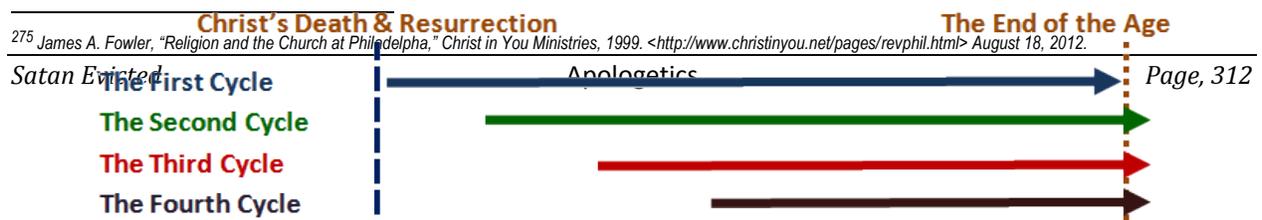
### The Seven Divisions of Progressive Parallelism

1. **Revelation 1-3:** The Seven Churches: Addresses events, people, and places that were meaningful to the Christians in the first century; however, its message is still relevant today.
2. **Revelation 4-7:** The Seven Seals: Proclaims the various divine judgments on the world and the sufferings and persecution of the Church centered on the victory of Christ.
3. **Revelation 8-11:** The Seven Trumpets: Announces judgment along with an avenged, protected, and victorious church.
4. **Revelation 12-14:** The Woman, Dragon, and Beasts: Describes the birth and resurrection of Christ, continued opposition of Satan, and introduces the two beasts who are the Satan's assistance.
5. **Revelation 15-16:** The Seven Bowls of Wrath: Graphically depicts the final visitation of God's wrath on the remaining impediments.
6. **Revelation 17-19:** The Fall of Babylon & Beasts: Describes the end to those forces who oppose God and the final punishment of the beasts.
7. **Revelation 20-22:** New Heaven & Earth: Describes the end of Satan, the final judgment, the final triumph of Christ and his church, and the renewed universe.

### What is the Progressive-Parallelism?<sup>276</sup>

*adapted from "The Progressive-Parallelism or Recapitulation of the Book of Revelation" by Chad Knudson*

Each vision or cycle parallels or re-tells (recapitulates) previous visions or cycles, but progressively reveals more about the future (multi-perspectival in information, emphasis, aspect, or detail); thus, spending more time describing the future and less time describing the past. The multi-



perspectival nature of the future by each vision also applies to how each vision re-tells the past or present.

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## GENERAL ANALYSIS

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Amillennialism employs progressive parallelism in order to explain how the Book of Revelation supports an already established theological belief system. In their view, John's Revelation does not reveal any new theological ideas but simply reinforces (supplements) the existing ideas presented in the other books of the Bible:

The theological system does not permit an actual kingdom on this earth over which Christ reigns; therefore, certain passages cannot be interpreted literally.<sup>277</sup>

For an amillennialist, Christ's work was essentially completed at the cross, and the time between Christ's resurrection and the final judgment is a "mopping up operation" – provide sufficient time for the predetermined number of Christians to be born and then shut down the entire operation.

In partial support of progressive parallelism, some authors claim that the John's Revelation is obscure, enigmatic, and symbolic. They assert that the book is encrypted and can only be deciphered using "clear" passages from previous scriptures:

*from "The Millennium of Revelation 20"*<sup>278</sup>

David A. Sherwood

One of the basic principles of biblical interpretation is that obscure passages of Scripture should be interpreted in light of clear passages of Scripture, not the other way around. With respect to eschatology, we should first find out what the Bible teaches with relative clarity about the end times and then seek to find out how the more difficult texts may be understood in light of what is clear.

Superficially, this seems to be a sound, logical assertion; however, progressive parallelism, as applied by amillennialism, doesn't necessarily use other scriptures to clarify but rather uses their existing belief constructs to define Revelation's passages:

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<sup>276</sup> Chad Knudson, "The Progressive-Parallelism or Recapitulation of the Book of Revelation," *The Road To Emmaus*, July 2007. <<http://theroadtoemmaus.files.wordpress.com/2007/07/the-recapitulation-of-revelation.pdf>> Oct. 1, 2011.

<sup>277</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1988. Pg 112. Quoted in Robert Gromacki, Cedarville University, "Revelation 20: A Premillennial Analysis," Pre-trib research Center, NDA, <<http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Gromacki-Revelation20APremille.pdf>> Oct 1, 2011.

<sup>278</sup> David A. Sherwood, "The Millennium of Revelation 20," *The Mountain Retreat*, ND. <[http://www.mountainretreat.org.net/eschatology/millennium\\_rev20.shtml](http://www.mountainretreat.org.net/eschatology/millennium_rev20.shtml)> Oct. 17, 2011.

There is this age and there is the age to come. This age is characterized by the inauguration, the partial fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. The age to come will be characterized by the consummation, the complete fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. The clear witness of the Scriptures seems to be that, after this present age, the only major epoch will be the final state.<sup>279</sup>

This seems to be a very narrow, telescopic view that sharply limits the ability to significantly expand concepts presented within the Synoptic Gospels or adopting new understandings from the epistles and John's Revelation. We should be very cautious of such narrow approaches remembering that the Jewish religious leaders during Christ's earthly ministry failed to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. They were looking for an incarnation of King David who would rule an earthly kingdom with an iron rod.

This narrow interpretation approach tends to look at the end results of God's plan (the final judgment) without considering the complexities involved in arriving at that point. If God's entire message could have been contained within a single book, there would have been no need for sixty-six Bible books. God, however, chose to reveal his message progressively – one piece at a time with each new piece adding detail and clarity to the previous pieces. Each Bible book provides a unique perspective and various elements that when pieced together paints a complex but unified portrait of God's message to man.

The Book of Revelation is an equal and legitimate book of the Bible. We must read John's Revelation with an open mind and accept expanded or new understandings as they are revealed. To the book as a mere supplemental text is an error and ignores John's stern warning:

**Revelation 22:18-19:** ...If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and [from] the things which are written in this book.

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## REBUTTAL OF ARGUMENTS

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- **THE SEVEN TRUMPETS APPEAR AND THE SEVEN SEALS**

The most glaring difficulty of the progressive parallel paradigm is found in Chapter 8:1-2:

And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. (KJV)

When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. (NIV)

When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. (NASB)

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<sup>279</sup> David A. Sherwood, "The Millennium of Revelation 20," *The Mountain Retreat*, ND. <[http://www.mountainretreatorg.net/eschatology/millennium\\_rev20.shtml](http://www.mountainretreatorg.net/eschatology/millennium_rev20.shtml)> Oct. 17, 2011.

In progressive parallelism, the seven seals belong to section two and the seven trumpets belong to section three. Since the sections run in parallel sequence, the breaking of first seal and the blowing of the first trumpet occur in close proximity – sometime at the beginning of the Church age.

However, a natural reading of Revelation 8:1-2 seems to indicate that the seven trumpets immediately follow the breaking of the seventh seal. Throughout the narrative combinations such as “and I looked,” “and I saw,” and “and I heard” provide what may be natural transitions from one vision to another, but that is not the case here. The word “and” connecting verses 1 and 2 seems to be a normal conjunction – *kai*: and, even, also.<sup>280</sup> I found no attempt to explain this apparent difficulty within my reading though one author cited it as a potential problem.

- **WILLIAM HENDRIKSEN’S EXPLANATIONS**

Several of the articles that I encountered appealed to William Hendriksen’s book *More Than Conquerors* for justification of progressive parallelism.<sup>281</sup> I purchased the book as a Kindle e-book and read the introductory sections which were beautifully written.

The chapter entitled “General Analysis” was more descriptive of progressive parallelism than argumentative, and I hesitated to use these descriptions as a foundation for analysis. However, at the conclusion of the first section, Hendriksen asserts:

A careful reading of the book of Revelation has made it clear that the book consists of seven sections, and that these seven sections run parallel to one another.

The following analysis makes no attempt to prove that Hendriksen’s descriptions are wrong; however, it does attempt to uncover the weaknesses in his argumentation and illustrate that alternative views are viable.

**SECTION 1: REVELATION 1-3: THE SEVEN CHURCHES:**

William Hendriksen claims that since Jesus Christ is seen walking among the seven lampstands representing the seven churches that we may conclude that this section extends throughout the current age:

As this number seven occurs again and again in the Apocalypse and is everywhere symbolical of completeness, we may safely take it for granted that such is the case here, and that it indicates the entire Church throughout the full span of its existence to the very end of the world.

Hendriksen’s argument does not follow sound logical argumentation. While its premises (statements of fact) are true, the conclusion does not stem (result) from the premises.

- a) Seven lampstands represents the seven churches [True premise]
- b) The number seven represents completeness [True premise]
- c) The number seven is repeated throughout Section 1 [True premise]

<sup>280</sup> “*kai*,” Strong’s Concordance: *Biblos.com*, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/2532.htm>> Oct. 17, 2011.

<sup>281</sup> William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation*, *Mobi Edition*, Baker Books: Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 2007.

**Conclusion:** Section one indicates the entire Church throughout the full span of existence to the very end of the world. *[Invalid conclusion]*

The conclusion contains the key element “full span of existence to the very end of the world.” Unfortunately, that element is not found in any one of the premises. Hendriksen seems to assume that “completeness” and “full span of time to the very end of the world” are synonymous, but they may not be. A premillennialist could just as easily argue that “completeness” and “full span of time to the very end of the church age” are synonymous.

Because of the literary nature of biblical texts, it is necessary to make some assumptions – not every biblical concept can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. However, we should guard against leaps in logic whenever possible. In this case, I don’t think we can “safely take it for granted” that Section 1 extends from Pentecost to the final judgment. In this case, I think we need additional information.

## SECTION 2: REVELATION 4-7: THE VISION OF HEAVEN AND THE SEALS

William Hendriksen asserts that this section also spans the entire age:

It should be carefully noted that this section also covers the entire dispensation, from the first to the second coming of Christ. The very first reference to Christ pictures Him as having been slain and as now ruling from heaven (5: 5,6).

Unfortunately, Hendriksen’s claim is somewhat distorted. He states, “The very first reference to Christ pictures Him as having been slain and as now ruling from heaven.” However, the first reference to Jesus Christ in this section is not of a slain lamb:

**Revelation 5:5:** And one of the elders saith unto me, “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”

This very first reference to Christ alludes to the nation of Israel and Christ’s ascension to the throne of David. This allusion seems to be a very strong reference to the Jewish messianic tradition rather than the early Christian church.

There is no specific mention of Christ actually ruling from the throne. In fact, throughout most of John’s Revelation, the Father is on the throne and Jesus Christ seems to be elsewhere. In this case, verse 6, the Lamb appears among the four creatures in the midst of the throne area, not on the throne.<sup>282</sup>

Premillennialists might argue that although Jesus Christ has earned the right to ascend to David’s throne (*de jure*), he has not actually done so (*de facto*). They might also claim that the breaking of the seven seals is the first concrete step necessary to physically assume that throne.

Hendriksen also asserts that Christ’s second coming towards the end of the section:

<sup>282</sup> mesos: middle, in the midst from “mesos,” Strong’s Concordance: Biblos.com, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/3319.htm>> Oct. 17, 2011.

Towards the end of this section the final judgment is introduced. Notice the impression of the second coming on unbelievers. 'And they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One sitting on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!

However, the verse Hendriksen quotes is Revelation 6:16 and occurs just past the halfway point within the section. A mid-tribulationist might argue that this verse describes the rapture of the Church and reflects the anguish of those who understand that they've missed it.

My critique of Hendriksen's description of the second section may be viewed as nitpicky; however, Hendriksen tends ignore details that do not fit within the image he wishes to see. For example, he fails to mention the sealing of the 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel another reference that seems more descriptive of the nation of Israel rather than the Christian Church.

### **SECTION 3: REVELATION 8-11: THE SEVEN TRUMPETS:**

William Hendriksen asserts that Revelation 11:15-19 describes the final judgment:

Also at the close of this section there is a very clear reference to the final judgment... Having reached the end of the dispensation, the vision ends.

However, premillennialists could just as easily assert that Revelation 11:15 is descriptive of Christ establishing his earthly kingdom in preparation for his Millennial Reign:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

### **SECTION 4: REVELATION 12-14: THE PERSECUTING DRAGON:**

In general, premillennialists would probably agree with most of Hendriksen's description within this section. They would probably even agree that the latter portion refers to Christ's second coming. Their main contention, however, is with what occurs after that second coming.

Hendriksen recognizes that the "male child" is a direct reference to the birth of Christ and that the "caught up" refers to Christ's resurrection. He does not, however, seem to recognize that the woman who gave birth to Christ was Israel and that she is protected in the wilderness for an extended period of time.

### **SECTION 5-6: REVELATION 15-22: THE BOWLS OF WRATH AND THE FALL OF BABYLON:**

Hendriksen provides no justification for these sections running parallel with the other sections.

### **SECTION 7: REVELATION 20-22: THE GREAT CONSUMMATION:**

Although Hendriksen asserts Chapter 20 "definitely begins a new section and introduces a new subject," he provides scant evidence in support of the claim that Chapter 20 begins a new section. He implies that the casting down of Satan to the earth in Chapter 12 is equivalent to Satan being bound and thrown into the abyss, but there is no binding mentioned in Chapter 12 and the earth is distinct from the abyss.

Premillennialist would argue that the events of Chapter 20 are the direct result of the events in Chapter 19, and Hendriksen provides no explanation of why this argument would be in error.

**OTHER JUSTIFICATION: REPETITION OF 1,260 DAYS IN TWO SECTIONS:**

Hendriksen asserts that Section 3 and Section 4 must run concurrently because they describe the same duration:

**Revelation 11:2:** But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

**Revelation 11:3:** And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

**Revelation 12:6:** And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

**Revelation 12:14:** And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

I tend to agree with Hendriksen that these time periods probably run concurrently. However, premillennialists would argue that these time periods represent literally three and one-half solar years not the entire Church age which has been close to 2,000 years. There is also the potential problem of dual-fulfillment – prophetic events can be fulfilled more than one time, e.g. the “abomination of desolation” was fulfilled by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 BC, by Roman legions in 70 AD (according to amillennialism), and once again when the Antichrist sets himself up as God within the third Jewish temple (according to some premillennialism).

**THE SEVEN TRUMPETS AND THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH ARE PARALLEL:**

Hendriksen claims to “prove” that Section 3 and Section 5 are parallel by comparing the seven trumpets to the seven bowls of wrath. Let’s first look at how Hendriksen aligns the two sections:

Section 3: Trumpets	Section 5: Bowls of Wrath
1st Affects earth	1st Affects earth
2nd Affects seas	2nd Affects seas
3rd Affects rivers	3rd Affects rivers
4th Refers to the sun	4th Refers to the sun
5th Refers abyss	5th Refers throne of beast
6th Refers Euphrates	6th Refers Euphrates
7th Refers 2nd Coming	7th Refers 2nd Coming

Next, let’s look at a very brief outline trumpet and bowl of wrath as describe in the text:

Section 3: Trumpets	Section 5: Bowls of Wrath
1st Hail & Fire with Blood: 1/3 of the earth burned	1st Great Sores for Those with Mark
2nd Mountain of Burning Fire: 1/3 sea destroyed	2nd Seas Turn to Blood
3rd Fiery Star: The fresh water becomes bitter	3rd Fresh Water to Blood
4th Sun, Moon, and Stars Struck: darkness	4th Sun Scorches People with Fire
5th Locus From Abyss: Torture but not kill	5th Beast’s Kingdom Plunged into Darkness
6th Hideous Army: 1/3 killed by fire, smoke, sulfur	6th Beast Gathers His Armies at the Euphrates
7th The seven bowls of wrath introduced	7th Christ on a White Horse & the Battle

There does seem to be some similarities among the trumpets and bowls of wrath; however, Hendriksen's oversimplification tends to be misleading. For example, he claims the first trumpet and bowl affects the earth, but that could be true for all fourteen. The fourth trumpet and bowl seems to be opposites – one results in darkness the other in scorching fire.

While interesting, Hendriksen's comparison does not prove parallelism. Unfortunately, his faulty comparison tends to lessen his credibility rather than prove his point.

#### **THE SAME PARALLEL STRUCTURE IS FOUND IN DANIEL'S VISION:**

Our final argument in support of the parallelistic position is the fact that we find exactly the same thing in the prophecies of Daniel, which has been called the Apocalypse of the Old Testament. Thus the parts of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (chapter 2) correspond exactly with the four beasts of Daniel's dream (chapter 7).<sup>1</sup> The same period of time is covered twice, and is seen from various aspects.

I agree with Hendriksen that one portion of Daniel parallels a second section, but Hendriksen is incorrect to claim that they are "exactly the same." Progressive parallelism divides an entire book into seven sections with each section discussing multiple topics... that is a far cry from Daniel's two visions on a single topic. While Hendriksen makes an interesting observation, it has little value in validating progressive parallelism.

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## **CONCLUSION**

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I find the argumentation for progressive parallelism less than compelling.

The first difficulty arises when the Book of Revelation seems to be treated as a supplemental text rather than full fledged book of the Bible. Rather than forcing John's revelations to conform to established doctrine, I believe that his visions expand and enlighten other scripture – I believe a forward looking approach is more appropriate.

The second difficulty arises in the subdividing the book into seven parallel sections. The most glaring problem occurs in the break between the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of wrath – the text seems to indicate that the seven bowls are a subset of the seventh trumpet. To artificially divide these two elements and force them to run concurrently seems to destroy the primary narrative. Without sufficient justification, this error calls into question the entire seven section scheme.

The third difficulty arises out of the tendency to make statements that are possibly misleading. This is most notable in Hendriksen's description of the second section, seventh section, and again when he compares the seven trumpets with the seven bowls of wrath. While we all tend emphasize the things that support our opinion, we should be cautious not to ignore those things that contradict our view.

The fourth difficulty arises when there is a lack of justification. This is most notable in Hendriksen's description of the second section, the fourth section, and the 1,260 days. Hendriksen provides little substance that would indicate that an amillennialism view is preferable to the prevailing premillennialism view.

In conclusion, a natural reading of the Book of Revelation tends to reveal one long narrative with periodic interruptions that provide supplemental details. An alternative framework should be considered if there is sufficient justification that the alternative is preferable. The scriptural evidence and reasoning supporting progressive parallelism is less than compelling and does not justify abandoning a more natural reading.

## PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

### INTRODUCTION

Some supporters of premillennialism justify, in part, their claim that the Millennial Reign of Christ will last a literal thousand years by appealing to “progressive revelation.” Progressive Parallelism asserts that since the Book of Revelation is the last book in the Bible, it should carry greater weight than those that precede it – the book, they claim, clarifies those scriptures that were written earlier. The following excerpts provide the progressive revelation basics:

from “Progressive Revelation”<sup>283</sup>  
Wikipedia

Progressive revelation in Christianity is the concept that the sections of the Bible that were written later contain a fuller revelation of God compared to the earlier sections. For instance, the theologian Charles Hodge wrote,

The progressive character of divine revelation is recognized in relation to all the great doctrines of the Bible... What at first is only obscurely intimated is gradually unfolded in subsequent parts of the sacred volume, until the truth is revealed in its fulness.

The ultimate revelation of God is understood to be found in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospels. Hence according to this idea, the New Testament should be used to understand and interpret the Old Testament, even though all sections of the bible are believed to be accurate according to conservative theology.

from “Progressive Revelation”<sup>284</sup>  
Endtimes.org

Probably the best example of progressive revelation in the Bible is the doctrine of the trinity. The Old Testament only alluded to this truth, but the New Testament explains it more fully. In Genesis when God said "Let us make man in our image", He doesn't go on to explain why He would speak as if to Himself in this way, but it is evident that He is speaking with Himself as if there were more than one person there. We know that He wasn't speaking with angels or any pre-existent beings, as some would say, because Genesis goes on to say in 1:27 "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." He went out of His way to tell the reader that man was created specifically in the image of God, and not God and someone else. After all, no being is equal with God, and therefore could not share in God's statement.

from “Progressive Revelation”<sup>285</sup>  
by Michael Penny

<sup>283</sup> “Progressive revelation (Christianity),” Wikipedia, November 20, 2010. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive\\_revelation\\_\(Christianity\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_revelation_(Christianity))> Oct. 2, 2011.

<sup>284</sup> “Progressive Revelation,” Mark Esposito, Ed. Endtimes.org. NDA. <<http://www.endtimes.org/progressive.html>> Oct. 2, 2011.

In Genesis 3 we read of the Seed of the woman Who is to bruise the Serpent's head. Later we learn that that Seed is to come from the descendants of Abraham. Later, He is to come from the line of David. Even later that He is to be born in Bethlehem, and even later still, that He is to be called Jesus.

Thus one of the important principles in understanding the Bible is to appreciate that revelation is progressive. That means that we should not expect to find in earlier Scripture something that is revealed later. We do not find Noah circumcising his sons, as God did not reveal circumcision until afterwards, in the time of Abraham. And we do not find Abraham keeping the Sabbath day, as God did not reveal the Sabbath (to Moses) until after the exodus from Egypt.

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## SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE

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**Ephesians 1-5:** For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit..

**Romans 16:25-26:** Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

**Revelation 1:1-2:** The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified [it] by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

I would assume that amillennialists would not have an overall problem with the concept of progressive revelation except as it pertains to the Book of Revelation. In the case of Revelation, there seems to be a divergence of thought:

Progressive Revelation	Progressive Parallelism
Provides new theological ideas	Provides no new theological ideas
Explains previous, unclear biblical scripture	Requires previous biblical scripture for clarity
All scripture builds to a greater understanding	All scripture points to the cross
Leads to new understanding	Verifies existing understanding

I first encountered the term “progressive revelation” while conducting research into theories on the literal interpretation of the “thousand years” found in Revelation 20. Amillennialists made no mention of the concept while premillennialists used it to partially justify their literal interpretation. The following outlines the basic argument while focusing on the concept of progressive revelation:

Premillennialism	Amillennialism
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<sup>285</sup> Michael Penny, "Progressive Revelation," The Open Bible Trust, 2011. <<http://obt.org.uk/About/progress1.htm>> Oct. 2, 2011.

Literally 1,000 solar years	Figuratively a very long time
Numbers are literal	Numbers are symbolic
Mentioned 6 times in Revelation 20	Not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible
Revealed as a new concept in the last book	Must be verified by previous scripture
Refers to an earthly reign of Christ	Refers to the heavenly reign of Christ
Takes place at a future date	Takes place during the current Church age

In this case, when something is mentioned six times in the Bible, we should most certainly pay attention. However, the six times occur within the first seven verses of a single chapter of a single book. It doesn't seem to fulfill the requirement of two or three witnesses. This thousand year period may well be a clarification of previous scripture and it may well be a literal thousand year period, but without additional information drawing such conclusions seems rather arbitrary. In this case, applying progressive revelation doesn't seem to clarify the matter.

Generally speaking, progressive revelation seems to be a valid concept as we do acquire a greater and clearer understanding of God's message as we proceed through each book of the Bible. However, its application must be used judiciously. Progressive revelation should not be used to override other interpretation guidelines including the need for two or three witnesses. While we should expect new revelations within the last book of the Bible, those revelations cannot stand on their own.

## IS SATAN BOUND?

### INTRODUCTION

Amillennialists claim that Satan lost the battle at Christ's resurrection the binding in Revelation 20:1-4 occurred at that time. They assert that this binding should not be taken literally but symbolically. Before Christ's earthly ministry, the good news of God's grace was only available to the Jews; however, after the resurrection, the good news could be spread to all nations – Satan was no longer permitted to deceive the Gentiles – he was bound.

This theory, I believe, was developed to justify progressive parallelism and demonstrate their belief that Revelation, Chapter 20, begins the seventh parallel section. Remember, each parallel section describes the major events from the beginning of the Church Age until the White Throne judgment. If the progressive parallelism theory is valid, Satan had to be bound early in the Church Age.

My initial reaction upon reading this theory was one of amazement, "How could anyone look at the drug addiction, homicide, genocide, greed, and other atrocities and claim that Satan was bound?" However, amillennialism is a widely doctrine within Western Civilization and should be considered.

#### When was Satan Bound?<sup>286</sup>

by Ross A. Taylor

It is clear from scripture that Satan was bound during the ministry on earth of Jesus. This was legally secured by his death (Heb 2:14) and we see that at his resurrection he was raised far above all rule and authority, power and dominion (Eph 1:21, also Phil 2:9).

<sup>286</sup> Ross A Taylor, "When was Satan Bound?" Revelation: Apocalipsis.org. NDA. <<http://www.apocalipsis.org/t20-amillennialist.htm>> Oct. 3, 2001.

The same word used to bind Satan in 20:2 (deo:G1210) is also used for the binding of Satan in Mat 12:29, Mark 3:27. Jesus is referring to the casting out of spirits from the demon possessed; he says that first the strongman must be bound and then you can plunder his goods. In Luke 10:17 the seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." Jesus responds by saying "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." Shortly before his death Jesus said:

(John 12:31-32 NIV) Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. {32} But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

We should notice the connection here between the prince of this world being driven out and drawing all men to himself. In John 16:11 Jesus says that the prince of this world now stands condemned. In Acts 26:17 Jesus commissions Paul to go to the Gentiles and Jews to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. In Col 1:13 Paul tells them that they have been rescued from the kingdom of darkness.

This means that Satan was bound during Jesus' ministry and especially at his resurrection for the purpose that the gospel can be successfully preached to all nations.

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## SATAN BOUND: REBUTTAL

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Anthony Hoekema in his article "Amillennialism" provides a comprehensive yet concise argument that Satan has already been bound.<sup>287</sup> I will use his argument for the basis of my analysis.

**PLEASE NOTE:** *The following rebuttal is intended for academic purposes. It is not intended to slight Dr. Hoekema or his work. This rebuttal is intended to help illustrate that there is a viable alternative to the amillennialism viewpoint.*

- **SURELY THE DEFEAT OF SATAN BEGAN WITH THE FIRST COMING OF CHRIST, AS HAS ALREADY BEEN CLEARLY SPELLED OUT IN CHAPTER 12:7-9.**

**Revelation 12:7-9:** And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

This passage occurs immediately following the description of Christ's resurrection and the flight of Israel into the wilderness (Revelation 12:5-6). There is little indication that there is a break in John's vision between verse 6 and verse 7; therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the war in heaven occurred shortly after Christ's resurrection.

The next verse seems to validate the belief that Satan was cast out of heaven because Christ's redemption of mankind removed Satan's justification for accusing man before the God's throne:

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<sup>287</sup> Anthony Hoekema, Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminar, "Amillennialism," *The Highway*, c. 1977. <[http://www.the-highway.com/amila\\_Hoekema.html](http://www.the-highway.com/amila_Hoekema.html)> Sep. 30, 2011.

**Revelation 12:10:** And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

While we see the seeds of victorious Christians in the next verse, the final clause tends to indicate that the victory comes not through the binding of Satan but because the believer is willing to sacrifice their lives for their belief in Christ:

**Revelation 12:11:** And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

The next verse, Revelation 12:12, also seems contrary to the notion that Satan was bound:

**Revelation 12:12:** Therefore rejoice, [ye] heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

While there is rejoicing in heaven because the victory has been won, there is woe on the earth because (a) Satan has been cast down to earth and (b) he is angry because he knows he has only a short time left.

Instead of Satan being bound, he seems to have been let loose:

**1 Peter 5:8:** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

It seems counterintuitive to claim that Satan was bound in one arena but not others:

**2 Corinthians 4:3-4:** But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

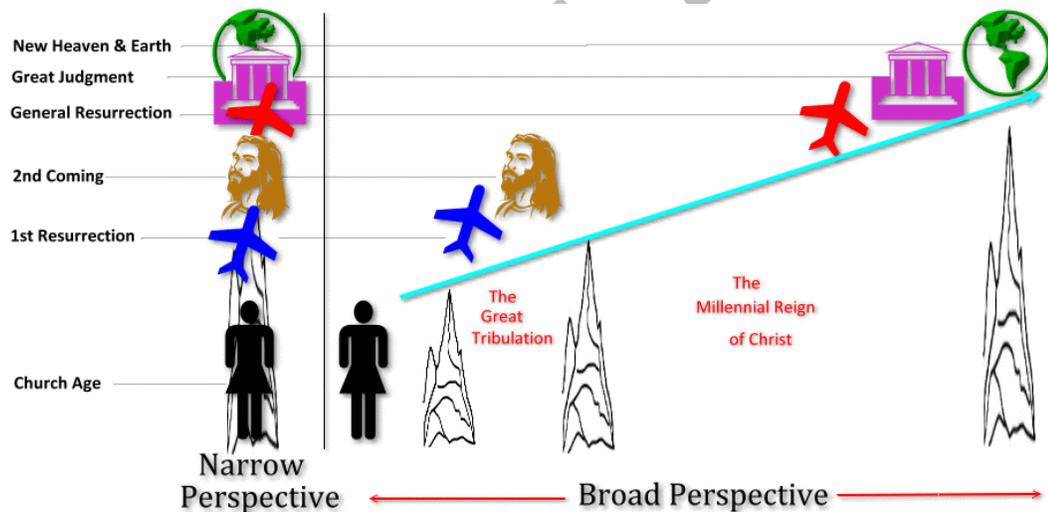
**Ephesians 2:1-2:** And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

**1 Thessalonians 3:5:** For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

- **THAT THE MILLENNIAL REIGN DESCRIBED IN VERSES 4-6 OCCURS BEFORE THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST IS EVIDENT FROM THE FACT THAT THE FINAL JUDGMENT, DESCRIBED IN VERSES 11-15 OF THIS CHAPTER, IS PICTURED AS COMING AFTER THE THOUSAND-YEAR REIGN. NOT ONLY IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION BUT ELSEWHERE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT THE FINAL JUDGMENT IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST. (SEE REVELATION 22:12 AND THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES: MT. 16:27; 25:31-32; JUDE 14-15; AND ESPECIALLY 2 THESS. 1:7-10.) THIS BEING THE CASE, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE THOUSAND-YEAR REIGN OF REVELATION 20:4-6 MUST OCCUR BEFORE AND NOT AFTER THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.**

The amillennial construct does not allow for two physical resurrections. This disagreement was examined in detail in the section entitled “The 1st Resurrection” to include specific responses to the scriptures Hoekema cites here. However, this might be a good point to discuss the problem with taking a narrow instead of a broad perspective.

Amillennialism takes a narrow perspective on biblical prophecy. This perspective tends to view prophetic events as one lined-up directly behind the other. (See diagram below.) With this perspective, it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish gaps between events. In fact, two or more events may be seen as occurring at the same time.



I fear that an amillennialism construct may suffer a similar shortcoming as the Old Testament prophecies. From their viewing angle, it is nearly impossible to distinguish time gaps between the first resurrection (the coming of Christ in the clouds), the second coming (the coming of Christ as conqueror), the general resurrection, the white throne judgment, and the New Heaven and New Earth. All of these major events are stacked up one behind the other – they can't visualize anything in between. A less abstract reading of the Book of Revelation would help fill in these valleys, but amillennialism resists accepting any new from that book.

Now, I believe that Jesus understood what was in the gaps between key prophetic events during his ministry on earth, but his primary focus was on the eventual complete victory. I speculate that the apostles had at least a general understanding because several passages hint of a resurrection for the elect and a resurrection for the wicked:

**John 5:28:** Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

**1 Corinthians 15:20-26:** But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then [cometh] the end...

**1 Thessalonians 3:13:** So that he may establish your hearts blameless holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of the Lord Jesus with all his saints.

The Gospels and Epistles paint an incomplete portrait of entire prophetic events. Therefore, the Lord revealed to John those pieces of the puzzle that were missing from the Gospels and Epistles. Unfortunately, amillennialism has a very difficult time accepting anything new concepts from John's vision. The Book of Revelation helps us to understand the broad view, but we must be willing to listen before we can be enlightened.

**Revelation 20:4-6:** and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This [is] the first resurrection. Blessed and holy [is] he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

- **THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS FULL OF SYMBOLIC NUMBERS. OBVIOUSLY THE NUMBER "THOUSAND" WHICH IS USED HERE MUST NOT BE INTERPRETED IN A LITERAL SENSE.**

This topic discussed in greater detail within the next section.

- **HOEKEMA'S NEXT ARGUMENT IS MULTIPART:**

*Please refer to Hoekema's article for his full explanation.*

**Revelation 20:1-3:** And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

During the gospel era which has now been ushered in, Satan will not be able to continue deceiving the nations the way he did in the past, for he has been bound. (The Gospel can now be preached to the Gentiles.)

There seems to be a logical disconnect here. First, although Satan may be known as the god of this world, Satan was not the one preventing the God's revelations from reaching the Gentiles... rather it was God who chose to limit his vision to the Jews. Second, until the end of Jesus' ministry, not even the disciples were permitted to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles. Thus, the binding of Satan would have no effect on the spreading of the Gospel to all the nations.

**Matthew 10:5:** These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into [any] city of the Samaritans enter ye not.”

Hoekema does not provide a valid argument. In order to be a valid, an argument must possess two qualities: (1) the premises (claims) must be true and (2) the conclusion must be derived from the premises.

Satan prevented the God’s message from being preached to the Gentiles. *[False Premise]*  
Following Christ’s ministry the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles. *[True Premise]*

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**Therefore:** Satan was bound by Christ’s ministry. *[Invalid Conclusion]*

Hoekema’s argument is invalid because the first premise is false. There is no biblical evidence that indicates that it was Satan who was preventing God’s message from being preached to the Gentiles; the scriptural evidence indicates that it was God who limited his message to the Jews.

We could alter the argument to make both premises true:

God’s plan was not available to the Gentiles prior to Christ. *[True Premise]*  
Following Christ’s ministry the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles. *[True Premise]*

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**Therefore:** Satan was bound by Christ’s ministry. *[Invalid Conclusion]*

Since Satan is in neither premise, then the conclusion cannot be derived from the premises.

This does not imply that Satan can do no harm whatever while he is bound. It means only:

- He cannot prevent the spread of the gospel:
- He cannot gather all the enemies of Christ together to attack the church:

This seems to be an artificial limitation placed on the term “deceive.”

4105 *planáō* – properly, go astray, get off-course; to deviate from the correct path (circuit, course), roaming into error, wandering; (passive) be misled.<sup>288</sup>

We know from the epistles that Satan continues to attempt to hide the Gospel:

**2 Corinthians 4:3-4:** But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

There is possibly some scriptural support for the second claim, “He cannot gather all the enemies of Christ together to attack the church” ...

**2 Thessalonians 2:6-7:** And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

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<sup>288</sup> *planáō*, "HELPS Word Study, Helps Ministries, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/4105.htm>> Oct. 5, 2011.

...but we know that passage is referring to the Antichrist that will come in the authority of Satan. However, I can find no scriptural evidence that limits Satan's deception to the spread of the Gospel, nor does Hoekema provide such evidence.

- **HOEKEMA UTILIZES THE STRONGMAN PARABLE TO ILLUSTRATE THAT CHRIST HAS THE POWER TO BIND SATAN**

**Matthew 12:28-29:** But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

I'll certainly agree that this looks like the binding in Revelation 20:1-3, but then what of the timing and extent? Hoekema asserts:

One could say that Jesus bound the devil when he triumphed over him in the wilderness, refusing to give in to his temptations. Jesus' casting out of demons, so he teaches us in this passage, was evidence of this triumph.

First, placing the binding of Satan during the beginning of Christ's ministry seems to place the event outside amillennialist scope for the Book of Revelations... but, perhaps, that is getting too nit-picky. Second, I could assert that this parable is only related to casting out demons, but Hoekema has a response for that:

But I would reply that the casting out of demons is an evidence of the presence of the kingdom of God (Mt. 12:28) and that it is precisely because the kingdom of God has come that the gospel can now be preached to all the nations (see Mt. 13:24-30, 47-50).

I would then respond, "Why do amillennialists limit this binding only to the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles?" Interestingly, Hoekema provides the answer:

**Luke 10: 17-18:** And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

Hoekema tells us that we cannot take these verses literally. (Satan cannot fall from the heaven at this point in time because he has already been bound after the temptation, correct?) He also leaves out the next verse because it does not support his thesis:

**Luke 10: 19:** Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

If we are to accept Hoekema's argument that the casting out of demons illustrates that Satan was bound, then we should also accept the ramifications of that assertion... that this binding was not limited to the spread of the Gospels to the Gentiles... but it empowers sanctified Christians with a wide array of powers. We must, therefore, assume that Hoekema's restrictions on the term "deceive."

- **JOHN 12:31-32 US USED TO ILLUSTRATES THE RESTRICTION OF SATAN’S ACTIVITIES WITH CHRIST’S MISSIONARY OUTREACH**

**John 12:31-32:** Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

First, this scripture does not restrict Satan’s binding as originally presented: That the binding of Satan is limited to (a) he cannot prevent the spread of the gospel and (b) he cannot gather all the enemies of Christ together to attack the church.

Second, the use of the word “now” does not indicate that the judgment or the casting out will take place at that exact period of time:

3568 *nŷn* (an adverb) – now, as the logical result of what precedes; now, in light of what has gone before.<sup>289</sup>

The term simply indicates that because of Christ’s ministry and crucifixion, God has the legal justification necessary to rightly judge the earth and Satan. He has yet to physically act upon those two judgments because he is still waiting for the full harvest of his saints... then the end will come.

Third, this is an excellent example of how the scripture seems to say something is going to happen now... but that event doesn’t truly take place under sometime later.

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## CONCLUSION

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In my opinion, this amillennialist argument is less than honest. The casual observer readily sees that there is deep, dark evil in the world... there have been too many Hitlers, Stalins, and Pol Pots. Knowing this, amillennialism hedge their argument limiting it only to the preaching of the gospel to the nations. But even this limitation does not withstand casual observation. Throughout history there have been organized government attempts to keep Christianity out. Just last week, a native Christian Iranian was convicted of apostasy and potentially faces the death penalty.

Even if we limit our rebuttal to biblical scripture, the argument seems less than honest. They claim that it was Satan who prevented God’s message from reaching the Gentiles. That is simply a false claim. How could Satan restrain the spread of the God’s message unless God permitted it to spread first? Then they use the authority to cast out demons as an illustration of Satan’s binding but they then claim that the casting out of demons and the other powers are symbolic only. They give Christians a slice of pie, but do not permit them to eat it... something seems wrong with that?

Jesus Christ has fulfilled all of the requirements for the redemption mankind and the planet earth: he resisted Satan’s temptation, he led a obedient life as a man, he suffered the persecution and humiliation of mankind, he was separated from God, he gave his life on the cross, and he was victoriously resurrected. Satan was cast out of heaven because his accusations before God’s throne

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<sup>289</sup> *nŷn*, "HELPS Word Study, Helps Ministries, 2011. <<http://concordances.org/greek/3568.htm>> Oct. 5, 2011.

were no longer justified. However, the Father has not yet granted permission for Jesus Christ to repossess the earth and evict Satan as the god of this world... Satan is loose on the earth, not bound.

## \*WHO IS SATAN?

Is Satan a real entity or simply the personification of evil? As with most biblical topics, there is considerable controversy over Satan's origins, role, characteristics, and ultimate destiny. Some claim that Satan is a fallen cherub who is the source of all evil; others claim he is nothing more than the embodiment of the idea and does not exist as an entity. The truth probably rest somewhere in between these two extremes.

<http://bible.org/seriespage/survey-bible-doctrine-angels-satan-demons>

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## THE NAMES OF SATAN

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The names given to Satan are the best indicators of his character traits:

1. **Abaddon:** *Abaddón*, the angel of the abyss, the destroyer: Revelation 9:11
2. **Accuser:** *kategoros*: a prosecutor, accuser: 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 12:10
3. **Adversary:** *antidikos*: an opponent, adversary: 1 Peter 5:8
4. **Apollyon:** *Apolluón*: "a destroyer," the angel of the abyss: Revelation 9:11
5. **Beelzebul:** *Beelzeboul*: Beelzebul, a name of Satan: Matthew 12:24, Luke 11:15
6. **Belial:** *Beliar*: "lacking worth," a name of Satan: 2 Corinthians 6:15, Deuteronomy 13:13
7. **Devil:** *diabolos*: slanderous, accusing falsely: Matthew 4:1, Revelation 12:9
8. **Enemy:** *echthros*: hostile: Matthew 13:39, Acts 13:10
9. **God of this World:** *theos*: God, a god: 2 Corinthians 4:4
10. **Great Red Dragon:** *drakón*: a dragon or huge serpent: Revelation 12:3, Revelation 13:2
11. **Liar and Father of Lies:** *pseustés*: a liar, deceiver: John 8:44, 1 John 2:22
12. **Murderer:** *anthrópoktonos*: a manslayer: John 8:44, 1 John 3:15
13. **Prince of the power of the air:** *aér*: air, the lower air we breathe: Ephesians 2:2
14. **Ruler of Demons:** Beelzebul the ruler of the demons: Matthew 12:24, Luke 11:15
15. **Ruler of World:** *archón*: ruler, chief: John 12:31, John 14:30
16. **Satan:** *Satanas*: the adversary, Satan, i.e. the devil: 1 Timothy 1:20, Acts 28:16
17. **Serpent:** *ophis*: a snake: Revelation 12:9, Revelation 20:2
18. **Tempter:** *peirazó*: to make proof of, to attempt, test: 1 Thessalonians 3:5, Matthew 4:3
19. **Wicked one:** *ponéros*: evil, bad, wicked, malicious, slothful: Matthew 13:19, Matthew 5:37

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## THE ORIGINS OF SATAN

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The Bible provides only indirect evidence as to Satan's origins. Through laments for the King of Babylon (Isaiah 14:3-21) and the Prince of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:2-19), we can acquire a glimpse into Satan's origin and fall:

**Isaiah 14:12-14:** ...How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on

the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' ... (NASB)

**Ezekiel 28:12-15:** You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God... On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you. (NASB)

If we assume that these passages serve a dual role,<sup>290</sup> then we can identify several of traits as to the origin and fall of Satan:

1. **He was created perfect:** He was perfect, full of wisdom, and beautiful.
2. **He was a covering cherub:** He was one of the angels covering the glory of God on the throne, e.g. there were the two covering angels on the Ark of the Covenant.
3. **He walked in the midst of God's throne:** He was a member of God's inner circle.
4. **He was the Morning Star:** He is called Lucifer within the King James and Vulgate versions of the Bible. The bringer of light. (Jesus refers to himself as the morning star in Revelation 22:16.)
5. **His pride led to his fall:** He proclaimed that he was greater than God.

Some traditions hold that there were originally three archangels: Michael, Gabriel, and Lucifer. Each of the three archangels was in charge of one-third of all angels. Thus, when Lucifer fell, the angels under his charge followed him in rebellion.

Since the Bible references are indirect, we must be cautious in how we apply these passages.

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## IS SATAN A REAL ENTITY OR THE PERSONIFICATION OF EVIL?

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Satan is probably both, a real entity and the personification of evil. Satan is a real entity – creature. In the book of Job, Satan is seen coming before the throne of God:

**Job 1:6:** Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

There doesn't seem to be any indications that the "demons" Jesus and his disciples cast out were metaphorical; in once instance, the demon gave Jesus his name:

**Mark 5:9:** And he asked him, "What is thy name?" And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion: for we are many."

Satan is also the embodiment of evil. The apostle Peter was the beloved disciple of Jesus Christ, but at one point, Christ calls him Satan:

**Matthew 16:23:** But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

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<sup>290</sup> See *Topics for Analysis: Dual Purpose Literary Devices for details on dual role passages.*

Peter certainly wasn't Satan nor possessed by Satan. The lament for the Prince of Tyre provides a second example of how Satan represents the embodiment of evil:

**Ezekiel 28:12-13:** Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God..."

Other passages are more difficult to differentiate. For example, when Satan "entered" the disciple Judas, was it a demonic possession or simple the "spirit" of evil?

**Luke 22:3-4:** Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples, and he went to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard to discuss the best way to betray Jesus to them. (NLT)

*For a detailed outline for a study on Satan, see "Satan the Devil," by James A. Fowler at <http://www.christinyou.net/pages/satan.html>.*

[http://www.herealittleherealittle.net/index.cfm?page\\_name=Christ-Old-Testament](http://www.herealittleherealittle.net/index.cfm?page_name=Christ-Old-Testament)

[http://www.herealittleherealittle.net/index.cfm?page\\_name=Satan](http://www.herealittleherealittle.net/index.cfm?page_name=Satan)

<http://www.godonthenet.net/evidence/satan.htm>

## THEOLOGICAL POINTS OF VIEW

As a child within the Methodist Church, I listened to the Bible stories and generally accepted that if we led a good Christian life we would go to heaven and that if we didn't we would go to hell. As a teenager, I participated in the Roman Catholic catechism and a few lessons from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Neither fulfilled my desire for greater spirituality. In my very early twenties, I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior within a storefront, Pentecostal holiness environment.

Luckily, the churches I attended during those early years encouraged their congregations to seek the truth through personal Bible study. However, it wasn't until I began this study did I realize the great variety in viewpoints concerning the events that will transition the Church Age into the next. A few of the mainstream viewpoints are listed here and serve as a general point of reference:

**AMILLENNIALISM** holds that the thousand-year reign of Christ is figurative, not to be taken as referring to a literal thousand-year period. The reign of the church as the body of Christ is seen as the symbolical or spiritual millennium, which has already exceeded two literal millennia; this opinion also includes that the church is the earthly, spiritual expression of the Kingdom of God. Though some people believe in the relative inactivity of satanic forces in areas of the world where the church is influential, as opposed to those areas where paganism still prevails, amillennialists believe the church and the forces of evil will coexist throughout the reign of Christ as head of the church. With some variations, amillennialism is the traditional eschatology of the Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Calvinist (Presbyterian, Reformed), Anglican, and Methodist Churches.<sup>291</sup>

<sup>291</sup> Jon Kennedy, "Christian Disagreements about 'Ultimate Things'," netplaces, NDA. <<http://www.netplaces.com/jesus/the-jesus-of-the-future/christian-disagreements-about-ultimate-things.htm>> September 30, 2011.

**PREMILLENNIALISM** teaches that the Second Coming of Christ will occur before the millennium, which will be a literal thousand-year reign on earth of the conquering Prince of Peace. In the United States and in the parts of the world where missionaries are primarily American evangelicals, premillennialism is by far the most widely held view among Baptists, Pentecostals, and most other evangelicals. Though advocates see a belief in premillennialism reaching back to early church history, it has had its greatest growth since the dispensational system introduced by John Nelson Darby.<sup>292</sup>

**POSTMILLENNIALISM** teaches that the Second Coming will occur after the millennium, and therefore, like the amillennialists, they believe that the thousand-year reign of Christ is figurative, in and through the church, not literal, as from an earthly throne. The postmillennial emphasis is on purifying the church and, through the church, defeating and binding Satan in the world, and bringing about the peace of the Prince of Peace. In this way the postmillennialists hope to purify the world in order to make it ready to meet Christ as his bride. Postmillennialism is often characterized as triumphalism, pushing for the victory of the church in the present age. No major denominations are identified as postmillennial, but individuals like the late R. J. Rushdoony, Gary North, and Greg Bahnsen, and their movements (theonomy, reconstructionism) advocate it.<sup>293</sup>

**REALIZED ESCHATOLOGY** is a Christian eschatological theory popularized by C. H. Dodd (1884–1973) that holds that the eschatological passages in the New Testament do not refer to the future, but instead refer to the ministry of Jesus and his lasting legacy. Eschatology is therefore, not the end of the world but its rebirth instituted by Jesus and continued by his disciples, a historical (rather than transhistorical) phenomenon. Those holding this view generally dismiss "end times" theories, believing them to be irrelevant. They hold that what Jesus said and did, and told his disciples to do likewise, are of greater significance than any messianic expectations.<sup>294</sup>

**PRETERISM** is a Christian eschatological view that interprets prophecies of the Bible, especially Daniel and Revelation, as events which have already happened in the first century A.D. Preterism holds that Ancient Israel finds its continuation or fulfillment in the Christian church at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The term preterism comes from the Latin *praeter*, which is listed in Webster's 1913 dictionary as a prefix denoting that something is "past" or "beyond," signifying that either all or a majority of Bible prophecy was fulfilled by AD 70. Adherents of preterism are commonly known as preterists.<sup>295</sup>

**FUTURISTIC ESCHATOLOGY** is a Christian eschatological view that interprets the Book of Revelation, the Book of Daniel, the Olivet discourse and the parable of the Sheep and the Goats as future events in a literal, physical, apocalyptic, and global context. Futurism interprets these passages as prophecies that will be fulfilled in the future (in some cases, the imminent future) as literal, physical events.<sup>296</sup>

<sup>292</sup> Jon Kennedy, "Christian Disagreements about 'Ultimate Things'," *netplaces*, NDA. <<http://www.netplaces.com/jesus/the-jesus-of-the-future/christian-disagreements-about-ultimate-things.htm>> September 30, 2011.

<sup>293</sup> Jon Kennedy, "Christian Disagreements about 'Ultimate Things'," *netplaces*, NDA. <<http://www.netplaces.com/jesus/the-jesus-of-the-future/christian-disagreements-about-ultimate-things.htm>> September 30, 2011.

<sup>294</sup> "Realized eschatology," *Wikipedia*, Sep. 20, 2011. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Realized\\_eschatology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Realized_eschatology)> Oct. 20, 2011.

<sup>295</sup> "Preterism," *Wikipedia*, Oct. 2 2011. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preterism>> Oct. 31, 2011.

<sup>296</sup> "Futurism (Christianity)," *Wikipedia*, Sep. 20, 2011. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism\\_\(Christianity\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_(Christianity))> Oct. 20, 2011.

**INAUGURATED ESCHATOLOGY** is the belief in Christian theology that the end times were inaugurated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and thus there are both "already" and "not yet" aspects to the Kingdom of God.

George Eldon Ladd suggests that the Kingdom of God is "not only an eschatological gift belonging to the Age to Come; it is also a gift to be received in the old aeon."

D. A. Carson sees John 5:24 ("whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life", NIV) as giving the "strongest affirmation of inaugurated eschatology in the Fourth Gospel": it is not necessary for the believer to "wait until the last day to experience something of resurrection life."<sup>297</sup>

**IMMINENT ESCHATOLOGY** refers to the perspective—pioneered by Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer in the 20th century and long considered orthodox in Jesus studies—that Jesus' central message was one of apocalyptic expectation. That is, he believed that God was about to act decisively to usher in the Kingdom in its fullness by means of a supernatural intervention (with Jesus himself as, in some sense, God's instrument). The unavoidable implication of this view is that Jesus was wrong, since the Kingdom manifestly didn't appear in 33 A.D.<sup>298</sup>

Each theory has its supporters and detractors with some proponents argue vehemently that theirs is the only reasonable viewpoint and others are plagued with serious flaws. And, each theory has many different versions and variations. So how do we determine which provides the most accurate approach?

Unfortunate, many scholars tend to stretch, twist, and bend the scriptures just to make their position a little more attractive... It's like putting on a little makeup just to cover our minor flaws. We must be cautious in our examinations and do our best to validate the opinion of others. The responsibility for rightly dividing the Word of God rests on our shoulders not those of our pastors, teachers, or other theologians.

<sup>297</sup> "Inaugurated eschatology," Wikipedia, Sep. 20, 2011. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inaugurated\\_eschatology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inaugurated_eschatology)> Oct. 20, 2011.

<sup>298</sup> "Whose Jesus? Which Eschatology?" Posted by Lee M. in Bible, Books, History, Marcus Borg, Theology & Faith. A Thinking Reed, Oct. 29, 2010. <<http://thinkingreed.wordpress.com/2010/10/29/whose-jesus-which-eschatology/>> Oct. 30, 2011