

Daniel and Revelation

- From the Islamic Antichrist Perspective -



Babylonian

Medo-Persian

Greek

~~Roman~~

Islamic Caliphate

by Philip B. Brown
www.newwine.org

Daniel and Revelation
From the Islamic Antichrist Perspective

The Coming New Jerusalem
Blasphemed by
The Coming Islamic Antichrist

by **Philip B. Brown**

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Introduction

This is a book about the end times. Eschatology, which is the study of the end times, is the study of what the Bible says about the events leading up to Christ's return, and the age to come. Part One of this book examines in detail the sequence of end-time events I think will begin to unfold soon. Part Two of this book is a commentary on Daniel. Part Three is a similar commentary on Revelation. In other words, this book covers the end-time sequence of events that will unfold, and then it's a complete chapter-by-chapter commentary on Daniel and Revelation in support of this view of eschatology.

This view of eschatology is different from many of the more traditional views. The antichrist, many say, will control a revived Roman Empire, which will control the world. Some claim that the Islamic nations in the middle-east will be destroyed in order to allow for a revived Roman empire to take center-stage. This book however, supports the view held by Joel Richardson, and others, that there will be a revived Islamic Caliphate instead of a revived Roman empire. Islam will be the world religion and used to persecute Christians and Jews around the world.

In many respects, this book is the fruit of what I learned from Joel Richardson about Bible prophecy. Before hearing Richardson, I had never considered the idea that the Islamic Caliphate could be an alternative to the Roman Empire. Before, there were parts of Revelation that I had ideas about, but I knew were a bit murky. With this new understanding, parts of Revelation became much clearer. This was especially true in Revelation 15, 18, and 19.

For example, the seven heads are seven kings. Five have fallen. One is, and one is yet to come. The beast is an eighth king and belongs to the seven. Try to make sense of this with Rome being the last kingdom, even if it's revived. But with the Islamic Caliphate in the picture, the riddle becomes clear. The five that have fallen are the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek empires. The one at the time of John is the Roman Empire. And the one that would come is the Islamic Caliphate. All these are kingdoms that controlled Israel or Jerusalem at some point in Israel's history. This makes perfect sense to me. Suddenly I was looking at Bible prophecy in a whole new way.

I'm Joel Richardson's biggest fan. But in some respects, there are topics for which we have disagreement. And Richardson is the first to respect disagreement. Richardson's view is that the great tribulation is predominantly middle-eastern and that the coming antichrist is the Islamic Mahdi. Perhaps the biggest area of

disagreement is whether or not the antichrist will rule globally. Richardson has a great point in that Bible prophecy is mostly middle-east centric because it's about Israel in the middle-east. The nations surrounding Israel mentioned in the Bible are today Islamic nations. And a very good case can be made for the antichrist coming from Assyria, or more specifically the region that today is Turkey and Syria.

By my count, critics have pointed to four valid problems with Richardson's view. This book presents a slightly altered view that I believe solves all of these rough edges with Richardson's view. The title of this book is *The Two Beasts of Daniel and Revelation*. The sub-title is *The Two-Beast Islamic Antichrist Perspective*. In other words, I think there are two antichrists involved in both Daniel and Revelation. As we will see, this solves three of the problems. The fourth is solved using a different non-traditional interpretation of Daniel 9. First, let's look at the four problems. Then let's take a brief look at the two-beast solution.

Problem One) Richardson believes the antichrist will rule over only middle-east countries. But then we come to those verses in Revelation 13:5-7, where it says the beast will rule over every nation, tribe, people, and language. Does not this prove a global rule of the antichrist? Richardson responds to this argument with a similar verse in Daniel 5:18-19, where all peoples, languages and nations fear before Belshazzar. However, every nation, tribe, people, and language is also used in Revelation for believers (Revelation 5:9, 7:9). And Daniel 7:14 says all peoples, languages, and nations will serve Christ in the everlasting kingdom.

Could it be that God has a purpose for allowing the Church to go through the great tribulation? Persecution and tribulation bring holiness. Each of the seven letters to the seven churches speak of a reward that Christ will bring to those who overcome sin. This includes reigning with Christ over the nations. Today, the Church is not ready for Christ to return. But just before Armageddon, in Revelation 19:7, the Bride finally makes herself ready. Revelation 12:11 says, "They overcame him because of the Lamb's blood, and because of the word of their testimony. They didn't love their life, even to death." Then, Revelation 21:7 concludes with the fact that he who overcomes sin will inherit all this and will be God's son. The theme of Revelation is all about overcoming sin so that we will be ready to reign with Christ in his kingdom. As the Church has become global, I believe the scope of the tribulation and the purpose behind Revelation has become global. The Bride of Christ includes people from every nation, tribe, people, and language of the globe. Thus, we must also conclude that the antichrist will rule over every nation, tribe, people, and language of the globe.

Problem Two) If the antichrist is the man of lawlessness in 1 Thessalonians 2, and if antichrist is a devout Muslim, then why would he enter the temple and proclaim himself to be God? For a man to proclaim himself to be God is one of the highest sins in Islam. Richardson responds to this by saying the antichrist will have already been proclaimed by Muslims to be the Mahdi before this happens. And by then, it will be too late for the Muslims to reverse their assertions. I consider this to be a bit problematic in Richardson's view. It just doesn't have the crisp cleanness of all his other arguments of Scripture. As we will see, the two-beast solution allows for one beast to be Muslim and the other to not be Muslim.

Problem Three) There is a controversy involving Daniel 11:36-45. Are there two kings or three? Verses 36-39 speak of a bold king who does as he wills, and who exalts himself above every god. Again, would a Muslim exalt himself above every god? Verses 40-45 speak of two kings, the king of the north and the king of the south. The king of the north is victorious over Egypt and other countries in the south. But news from the east and the north alarm him. Does this sound like the same proud king that exalts himself above every god? The king of the north attacks the king of the south and destroys him. But in verse 45, the king of the north comes to an end. Those in disagreement with Richardson's views believe this battle between the king of the north and the king of the south represents Islam destroying itself in order to make room for the end-times antichrist, which would be the bold king who does as he wills.

Richardson believes there are only two kings in these verses. He points out that Antiochus Epiphanes, king of the north, is a type for the antichrist. So it doesn't seem to fit that the end-times king of the north would be destroyed before the real antichrist reigns. So Richardson equates the bold face king with the king of the north. Then, this bold face king of the north is destroyed at the end of the tribulation. I agree with Richardson that the king of the north is destroyed at the end of the tribulation, and not before the tribulation like his opponents assert. However, these verses do seem to read like there are three kings and not just two. As we will see, the two-beast solution allows for three kings in these verses and at the same time the king of the north is really an antichrist.

Problem Four) Daniel 9:26 says the "people of the prince who shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." Since the Roman Empire destroyed the city and the sanctuary in 70 AD, some use this verse to argue for a revived Roman Empire. Richardson responds by using evidence from Josephus which says the actual people who destroyed the city and the sanctuary were under Roman command, but were not actually Romans. The Romans drafted local people to do

their battles. Richardson has a point. But this argument seems to be a bit too legalistic for me. A more natural reading would be that the "prince" being referred to is the Roman ruler that commanded these soldiers, and not another "prince" that would come centuries later. The two-beast solution does not directly solve this specific problem. But a new interpretation of Daniel 9 is presented in this book which does a better job of showing why there will not be a revived Roman empire.

Richardson has many very good arguments that the antichrist will come from Turkey or Syria. This view supports a revived Islamic Caliphate instead of a revived Roman empire. But will the leader of a revived Islamic Caliphate be a global ruler? I think there are two possible ways to approach the issue. First, the antichrist might originate from Turkey or Syria and be recognized by the Muslims as their Mahdi. Then later, the antichrist could gain global power. This is what I had assumed for a quite a while after learning about Richardson's teachings. Then, I came to realize that there is another alternative. The second possibility is that there are two antichrists. One antichrist is more middle-east centric. He is the Islamic Mahdi and rules over Islam and the middle-east. The other antichrist rules the globe.

Revelation chapter 13 introduces us to two "beasts." The first beast comes up out of the sea. The second beast comes us out of the land. Nobody doubts that the beasts are a strong allusion to the four beasts of Daniel 7. But these two beasts in Revelation 13 are not two of the four beasts of Daniel 7. The four beasts of Daniel 7 are kingdoms. The two beasts of Revelation 13 are individual rulers that we will know as antichrists during the end-times week of the covenant.

Daniel 7:2-3 ESV Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. (3) And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.

Revelation 13:1 ESV And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.

Daniel 7:17 ESV "These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.

Revelation 13:11 ESV Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

The beast that comes out of the sea (Revelation 13:1) will be the global ruler of the coming one-world government. In Revelation the land and the sea are referenced

together six times. The sea is spoken of 26 times. The sea seems to be much more global in nature, whereas the land seems more local. So the first beast could rule globally and the second beast could rule locally. The second beast comes out of the land (Revelation 13:11). I believe he will reign over the middle-east countries as one of the ten kings, who will give their power to the first beast (Revelation 17:13-14). Islam is a false religion that says Christ didn't die on the cross and is not the Son of God. The Mahdi will be the leader of this false religion. What better name for John to use than the false prophet?

1 John 4:1-3 ESV Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many **false prophets** have gone out into the world. (2) By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, (3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

The Mahdi (false prophet) will unite the Sunni and the Shia of Islam under an Islamic Caliphate. Revelation 13:11 (quoted above) tells us this beast has two horns like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon (Satan). I believe the two horns are the Sunni and the Shia of Islam. He will unite the Islamic world and thus be the Islamic Mahdi. From the world perspective, he will thus be a man of peace. He will bring peace to the middle-east, which is something that nobody has been able to do. So he will be perceived to be like Christ, which is like a lamb. But he will be speaking for the first beast, which is really speaking like a dragon for Satan.

In Revelation 13, both of these men are called "beasts." A beast is either a kingdom or a ruler of that kingdom. So both beasts are kings. Later on, in Revelation 16:13, 19:20, and 20:10, we learn that the beast from the land is also called the "false prophet." Traditionally, we have thought of the second beast as being like a side-kick for the first beast. We start to assume that the false prophet is a new Revelation and was not mentioned by the Old Testament prophets.

But what if the Old Testament really does talk about two antichrists? The word "antichrist" does not appear in either Revelation or Daniel. It only appears in 1 John and 2 John. The word "antichrist" means against Christ. 1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3 and 2 John 1:7 tell us that many antichrists have already come. Both the beasts of Revelation are antichrists. Both are rulers who are against Christ.

This book also takes the unusual view that the New Jerusalem will appear before the start of great tribulation instead of after the thousand-year reign. When

the antichrist blasphemes Christ and those who live in heaven, he will be blaspheming against those living in the New Jerusalem in orbit around the earth. From the perspective of there being two antichrists, I'm sure both will blaspheme those who live in heaven. But Scripture seems to indicate the global ruler, the first beast, also called the man of lawlessness, will be the primary blasphemer.

This two-beast view solves several problems that have been raised against Richardson's Islamic Antichrist view. One of the biggest constructive criticisms that has been voiced against the view of the Islamic antichrist is with regard to 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. Would a devout Muslim set himself up in the temple and proclaim himself to be God? For a man to claim to be God is considered one of Islam's biggest sins. But what if the Islamic Mahdi, as the false prophet, were to endorse the man of lawlessness? In Revelation 13:11-16, the false prophet sets up a statue of the first beast and causes the world to worship the statue. I believe this to be the abomination of desolation. In other words, the second beast sets up the abomination of desolation and causes the world to worship the first beast. To worship can simply mean to give one's allegiance and obedience. Worship doesn't necessarily mean the object of worship is considered to be God. So what if the Islamic Mahdi were to set up the statue of the world ruler, but later that world ruler enters the temple of God and proclaims himself to be God? It might be somewhat of an embarrassment for the Islamic Mahdi. But it's much more likely to happen than for the Islamic leader to proclaim himself to be God.

This book considers the possibility that the Old Testament talks about two antichrists. The one-world government would be divided into ten regions of the globe. These would be the ten horns of Daniel 7. One of those ten would probably be the North American Union (NAU). The NAFTA trade agreement would seem to be the predecessor of the NAU. Likewise, there would probably be a South American Union. And we already have a European Union. One of the ten might be something like a Turkish Islamic Union. This would represent a revival of the Islamic Caliphate. The Islamic Mahdi would rule over this middle-eastern and north African region. Thus, the Islamic Mahdi would be one of ten kings who give their power to the beast (Revelation 17:12-13). In Revelation there are ten kings plus the one-world ruler. This adds up to eleven kings. So in one sense, there will be eleven antichrists. But Old Testament Scripture focuses on the middle-east antichrist. Then Revelation focuses more on the one-world ruler who receives authority from all ten kings.

Another problem solved is the controversy involving Daniel 11:36-45. Are there two kings or three? Verses 36-39 speak of a bold king who does as he wills, and who exalts himself above every god. Verses 40-45 speak of two kings, the king of the north and the king of the south. The king of the north is victorious over Egypt and other countries against the king of the south. When we read what Paul wrote about the man of lawlessness in 1 Thessalonians 2, it seems obvious that Paul was referring to the bold king of Daniel 11:36-45. But Antiochus Epiphanes, the king of the north, really is a type for the antichrist who will reign over Israel in the Middle East. So he is a type for the second beast, which is the false prophet. The second beast is also Gog, from the land of Magog, spoken of in Ezekiel 38 and 39. He is also the Assyrian spoken of in Isaiah and Malachi.

A quick summary of events is as follows. The New Jerusalem appears in orbit around the earth, causing the world to tremble. During the first half of the seven years, the two witnesses prophesy. They will be spoke-persons for the New Jerusalem. They will preach holiness and allegiance to Jesus Christ as a requirement for reigning with Christ when the earthly kingdom is established. But this will only add to the world's fear. This probably promotes the formation of the one-world government out of fear of alien invasion. During this time, the Islamic Mahdi will speak against Jesus Christ and will unite the Islamic world. At the same time, other world regions will be uniting against the New Jerusalem.

In the midst of the seven years, the man of lawlessness will mount an attack against the New Jerusalem with the help of Satan. Michael will lead the war in heaven. Satan and his angels will be thrown down to the earth. But at the same time, Satan will trample some of the host (angels) of heaven. The two witnesses will be killed and lie dead in the streets of Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will most likely disappear until the end of the seven years. The world will see this as a victory and will celebrate by exchanging gifts. The man of lawlessness will be treated as a hero and will be established as the ruler of the world. Michael is the restrainer who holds back the antichrist until the start of the seven years.

Part One of this book contains more arguments for this sequence of events.

1. Damascus is destroyed (Isaiah 17).
2. Using sanctions, the world forces Israel to get rid of her atomic weapons.
3. Israel is attacked by multiple Islamic nations (Isaiah 17:14, Ezekiel 38 (not 39), Revelation 6:12-17). The New Jerusalem appears in orbit around the earth to stop the attack on Israel.

4. The 144,000 are sealed, receiving spiritual bodies (Revelation 7:4-8).
5. The two witnesses begin to prophesy, 1260 days, for the New Jerusalem.
6. The Islamic Caliphate is formed but not without some battles between Islamic nations. Turkey in the north attacks Egypt in the south. A world government forms organized around ten regions of the world.
7. The trumpet-plagues are poured out. This is a wake-up call to overcome sin.
8. Michael leads a war in heaven forcing Satan and his demons down to the earth. The two witnesses are killed in the streets of Jerusalem. The world celebrates by exchanging gifts. They are raised to life after 3 and a half days.
9. The Islamic Mahdi sets up a statue on the temple mount in Jerusalem for all the world to worship, saying they must pledge allegiance to the world government against Christ and the New Jerusalem. Everyone is told they must take a mark on their hand or forehead to symbolize this allegiance.
10. The man of lawlessness is appointed leader of the world government as head of the United Nations. He reigns over the world for 42 months, persecuting Christians and Jews. People are forced into converting to Islam. Those who refuse are beheaded by the sword.
11. The New Jerusalem re-appears and those in Christ are resurrected. Everyone in Christ receives a spiritual body.
12. The bowls of wrath are poured out during a 45-day period.
13. Those in Christ are caught up in the rapture. We have the wedding banquet (celebration) in the New Jerusalem.
14. Christ returns to defeat the world ruler and the Islamic Mahdi at Armageddon (Ezekiel 39, Revelation 19). Christ sets up a world government.
15. During this thousand-year reign, those in Christ live in the New Jerusalem and rule over the nations living on the earth.

Part One

End Time Sequence of Daniel and Revelation

The Coming New Jerusalem Blasphemed by The Coming Islamic Antichrist

Part One of this book gives an overview of events that should happen during the course of the end times. Then Parts Two and Three contain a complete commentary on Daniel and Revelation. This view of eschatology is a literal interpretation and that of future fulfillment. But it doesn't fit most of the more dispensational future-fulfillment views of eschatology. Scriptural reasons for these views will be covered in detail.

The first departure from the traditional is that there are two antichrists. The world ruler is the first beast and the false prophet of Revelation is the second beast. From Daniel, we know that the beast is a ruler who does not acknowledge God. The false prophet, I believe, will be one of the ten kings of the earth and will rule the Islamic middle-east. He will be considered the Mahdi by Muslims. The one-world religion will be Islam.

The second departure from the traditional is that Ezekiel 38 and 39 are two different events occurring at different times. Ezekiel 38, I believe happens perhaps six months before the seven-year covenant. This is also the sixth seal of Revelation. Ezekiel 39, I believe, is Armageddon.

The third departure from the traditional is that the New Jerusalem will appear at the time of Ezekiel 38, which is prior to the seven-year covenant. This is when Christ appears. But the resurrection and rapture are not until after seven-year covenant. Today, the Church is not ready for the rapture. And it's not the antichrist who makes this covenant. Christ makes this covenant of Daniel 9:27, with the Church, to give us seven more years to overcome sin.

Chapter 1

Isaiah 17 - An Oracle Concerning Damascus

*The glory of Jacob will be brought low.
The remnant of Syria will be like the glory of the children of Israel.*

I'm writing this chapter soon after the 2012 US elections. Obama won his reelection. With regard to the recent US election, consider the following. I think Obama's reelection could be prophetically important. (I voted against him.)

Obama is the first US president who is not really a friend of Israel. That could have really-big implications in the near future. Obama says he will protect Israel. But his actions indicate he is no friend of Israel. Soon after he was elected the first time, he went to many of the Muslim nations surrounding Israel and made speeches. But he conspicuously avoided going to Israel. And today he seems to be very unfriendly with Netanyahu.

One point to consider: Israel did not have nukes in 1967. But that war propelled Israel in developing nukes on their own. They had nukes by the Yom Kippur War of 1973. And their nuke program did not come about through the help of the US. The Yom Kippur War began on October 6, 1973. Three days later, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was awakened twice up in the middle of the night by calls from Simcha Dinitz, the Israeli ambassador to Washington. Kissinger did a complete turn-around of previous policy when he presumably learned that Israel had armed their nukes. In his book titled, "The Samson Option," page 230, Seymour M. Hersh writes:

Kissinger was far less casual at the time he learned of Israel's intention. He told none of his colleagues in the cabinet about the nuclear threat, of course, but changed his mind overnight about the need to get military arms - in huge quantities - to Israel. "Israel's [ammunition] consumption rate was gauged for a seven-day war," recalled James Schlesinger - a reflection of Washington's confidence in the fighting ability of Israel's army and air force. "But Kissinger just turned around totally. He got a little hysterical" in urging an immediate and massive resupply. "Henry seemed to be more concerned than I was over the possibility of a nuclear exchange" in the Middle East, Schlesinger added. Kissinger's actions led some senior officials to conclude that Israeli use of a nuclear weapon was

not out of the question. "From where we sat," Schlesinger said, "there was an assumption that Israel had a few nukes and that if there was a collapse, there was a possibility that Israel would use them." William E. Colby, then director of the CIA, shared the assumption: "We were afraid Israel might go for broke." IT was believed, Colby added, that nuclear weapons would be used "only in an extreme situation."

The US helped Israel only after Israel rolled out a nuke and made it clear that it would be used if the US didn't help stop the Yom Kippur attack. After 1973, peace treaties were signed and Israel has not since been attacked in the same united multi-nation way. The very existence of Israel has not been seriously threatened since the Yom Kippur War. I think that people don't realize how much Israel's nuclear weapons encourage the US to help Israel and to why former Islamic-nation dictators signed peace treaties and have restrained from attacking Israel. They know about Israel's nukes. But all that is beginning to change.

Today, with the so-called "Arab Spring," we are seeing the Islamic nations getting rid of their dictators and turning to Islamic Brotherhood rule. The extreme radical Islamic view is to welcome and bring about chaos because they believe the Mahdi will only come when there is chaos in the world. So they are less afraid of nukes. They believe Allah will save them from the nukes.

Again, Obama is the first US president that has not been a friend of Israel. I think past US presidents, if they were not already friends with Israel, have wound up learning about Israel's nukes in security briefs after getting elected. So they try to make peace treaties a priority. But Obama seems to dislike Israel and yet says he will protect Israel. Obama has not really tried for a peace treaty like Clinton and Bush. So I'm sure Obama doesn't like the fact that they have nukes. And being a big-time liberal, the first thing Obama would think of is disarmament. I think Obama wants Israel to abandon their nukes. If Mitt Romney had been elected, he would have continued our nation's strong tradition of friendship with Israel. But I don't see that in Obama, especially in a second term.

Will Obama secretly put pressure on Israel to abandon their nuclear arsenal? Would Obama put pressure on Israel to abandon their nukes, especially when asked by Israel to attack Iran because Iran will have nukes? What if Israel is forced to comply? Most of the Islamic nations around Israel do not have Israel's modern-day military weapons. But Turkey is a member of NATO, and has modern-day weapons. Recently, Turkey has become less a friend of Israel and

more of an Islamic nation. Could all this wind up setting the stage for an Islamic multi-nation attack on Israel which they cannot defend against?

Israel has always needed and wanted our support when attacked. When the next re-occurrence of 1967 or 1973 comes, Israel might not get the support they need from the US. I see Ezekiel 38 (not 39) as being just such an event. I think Israel will be attacked under circumstances that would most-likely lead to her defeat if not for Christ's direct intervention. I think Christ will return with the New Jerusalem in orbit around the earth and stop the attacks, as per Ezekiel 38 (not 39). This, I believe, is the sixth seal. I think this is the first thing the world will see that's related to the great tribulation. And I think the Ezekiel 38 event will happen during Obama's second term.

But Israel will not be attacked as long as Israel has nuclear weapons. If the US secretly puts pressure on Israel to give up her nuclear weapons, Israel would refuse. The pressure would have to be very public. Also, Israel would never use their nuclear weapons unless their very existence was severely threatened. Consider this possible scenario: Perhaps Damascus is destroyed. Israel would never destroy Damascus unless Israel's very existence were severely threatened. But perhaps the destruction of Damascus is not really done by Israel, but is blamed on Israel. The elite globalists, who want a one-world government, would see Israel's nuclear weapons as their number-one obstacle in bringing about a one-world government, controlled by the UN. In other words, the destruction of Damascus could be a false flag operation.

Isaiah 17:1-14 [An oracle concerning Damascus]: "Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it will be a ruinous heap. (2) The cities of Aroer are forsaken. They will be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. (3) The fortress shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria. They [Syria] will be as the glory of the children of Israel," says Yahweh of Armies. (4) "It will happen in that day that the glory of Jacob will be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh will become lean. (5) It will be like when the harvester gathers the wheat, and his arm reaps the grain. Yes, it will be like when one gleanes grain in the valley of Rephaim. (6) Yet gleanings will be left there, like the shaking of an olive tree, two or three olives in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outermost branches of a fruitful tree," says Yahweh, the God of Israel. (7) In that day, people will look to their Maker, and their

eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel. (8) They will not look to the altars, the work of their hands; neither shall they respect that which their fingers have made, either the Asherim, or the incense altars. (9) In that day, their strong cities will be like the forsaken places in the woods and on the mountain top, which were forsaken from before the children of Israel; and it will be a desolation. (10) For you have forgotten the God of your salvation, and have not remembered the rock of your strength. Therefore you plant pleasant plants, and set out foreign seedlings. (11) In the day of your planting, you hedge it in. In the morning, you make your seed blossom, but the harvest flees away in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow. (12) Ah, the uproar of many peoples, who roar like the roaring of the seas; and the rushing of nations, that rush like the rushing of mighty waters! (13) The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters: but he will rebuke them, and they will flee far off, and will be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like the whirling dust before the storm. (14) At evening, behold, terror! Before the morning, they are no more. This is the portion of those who plunder us, and the lot of those who rob us.

This is "an oracle concerning Damascus." The very first sentence of this oracle is the destruction of Damascus. The oracle primarily speaks about things that will happen to Israel. But the oracle is about the destruction of Damascus. That means everything that happens to Israel in this oracle is a direct result of that destruction.

This destruction could be all about getting Israel to give up their nukes. And a US president that forsakes Israel is key. Perhaps Obama will give Israel his assurance of protection. But after they give up nukes, Israel is attacked.

“Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it will be a ruinous heap” (verse 1). Damascus has never been destroyed. This is unfulfilled prophecy.

Damascus is destroyed. The “the glory of Jacob will be made thin” (verse 4). Israel is falsely blamed. “The fatness of his flesh will become lean” (verse 4). The world will put severe sanctions on Israel.

“The remnant of Syria will be like the glory of the children of Israel” (verse 3, ESV). This means the survivors of Syria will be given glory by the world, a glory that is taken away from Israel.

“For you [Israel] have forgotten the God of your salvation, and have not remembered the Rock of your strength” (verse 10). They depend upon nukes instead of Christ. So the nukes will be taken away.

We will hear the “uproar of many peoples” (verse 12). Nations will “roar” in their anger. “The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters” (verse 13). Many nations will be angry that Damascus is nuked. They will force Israel to get rid their nukes. And then they will be glad when the Muslims nations attack Israel (Ezekiel 38). Israel will not have the help of the US, nor of any other nation. “But he [God] will rebuke them, and they will flee far off” (verse 13). God will show up with the New Jerusalem and save Israel. “At evening, behold, terror! Before the morning, they are no more!” (verse 14). Thus, the New Jerusalem shows up and stops the antichrist’s (false prophet - Gog) attack on Israel.

In summary, we know Ezekiel 38 talks about Israel being attacked by multiple Islamic nations, and that God shows up and stops the attack. But since 1973, such an attack has been unlikely. Israel has had to deal with the nuisance of bombs strapped to suicide bombers, and low-tech missiles being fired from Gaza. But since 1973, Israel has not had its very existence seriously threatened. Everyone knows Israel can strike back with nukes if their very existence is threatened. But elite globalists, who want a one-world government, would see this as their number-one problem. This scenario, as outlined in Isaiah 17, along with Ezekiel 38, might be their only solution. As long as Israel believes they can defend themselves, and does not need God, Christ will not show up. But I think God will allow Israel to get into a situation where the very appearance of Christ (their Messiah) is the only thing that will save them.

Chapter 2

An Islamic Antichrist is Coming; No Rapture-Escape from Persecution

*An Islamic Antichrist (the Mahdi) will come.
He will establish a new Islamic Caliphate in Turkey.*

There will be a man known to Muslims as the Mahdi. At first, he will be a moderate Muslim who talks peace, even with Israel. He will unite many of the Islamic nations. He will form a new Caliphate, based in Turkey, perhaps to be known as the Turkish Islamic Union. Egypt will resist.

The idea that an antichrist will be the Muslim Mahdi is relatively new in Christian eschatology thought. Every student of Biblical eschatology should read Joel Richardson's two books. The first is titled, *The Islamic Antichrist*. This book compares Islamic eschatology with Christian eschatology. Richardson calls it anti-parallelisms. Their good guy is our bad guy. Their messiah-like figure is the Mahdi. Their Mahdi is the one we call the false prophet, or perhaps the world-ruling antichrist himself. Many Muslims say the Mahdi will reign for seven years.

Joel's teaching has really filled in the blanks for all the areas of Bible prophecy Scripture that I had been unsure about. I have attended two of his seminars, bought his DVDs, and I own autographed copies of both his books. I have met and spoken with Richardson during two of his seminars. I find him to be a humble and honest man who is quick to recognize that he might not have all the answers. And I have no doubt that Joel is in the center of doing the works the Father prepared beforehand for him to do (Eph. 2:10).

Richardson makes very strong arguments showing that the legs and feet of the statue of Daniel 2 represent the Islamic Caliphate and not the Roman Empire. The Babylon Empire was represented by the head of gold. The Medo-Persian Empire was the chest and arms of silver. The Medo-Persian Empire occupied the same area as the Babylonian empire. The Medo-Persian Empire was even larger, especially to the east. The Greek empire of Alexander the Great was the belly and thighs of bronze. This empire occupied about the same area of land as the Medo-Persian Empire. But the Roman Empire was well outside this middle-east area. That empire was mainly to the west, along the Mediterranean Sea. Only a small part of the Roman Empire overlapped the Babylon Empire. And the Roman Empire did not occupy the location of the city of Babylon itself.

Daniel 2:39-40 NIV "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. (40) Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.

These are kingdoms that would follow Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. These are not kingdoms that surround Israel. Also, verse 40 says the fourth kingdom will crush and break the others. Did Rome crush and break the Babylon Empire, or the Medo-Persian Empire? These governments had long since been destroyed at the time of the Roman Empire. Instead, this verse must be talking about crushing and breaking the people and cultures of the conquered land. But the Roman Empire was known for being very tolerant of the different religions and cultures in all the nations they conquered. The Romans even respected and adopted much of the Greek culture from the previous Greek empire.

So the Roman Empire does not fit the legs and feet of iron. The Islamic Caliphate, on the other hand, fits it perfectly. The land they controlled surrounded Babylon. And it was a much larger area than even the Medo-Persian and Greek empires. Also, they crushed and broke the religions and the cultures of people they conquered. People were forced to convert to Islam. In some cases, they were forced to convert by the sword. In others, they were taxed heavily until they converted. Therefore, the feet of iron and clay is not a revival of the Roman Empire. It's a revival of the Islamic Caliphate which was disbanded by the Turkish government in 1924.

There is another prophecy in Revelation that is very difficult to figure out when the Islamic Caliphate is not considered. But with the Islamic Caliphate in the equation the prophecy becomes simple and easy to understand. It's the seven heads of Revelation 17.

Revelation 17:9-11 Here is the mind that has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits. (10) They are seven kings. Five have fallen, the one is, the other has not yet come. When he comes, he must continue a little while. (11) The beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goes to destruction.

Seven mountains are seven kingdoms. In the Old Testament, kingdoms can be represented as mountains. (See Richardson's second book, *Mideast Beast: The Scriptural Case for an Islamic Antichrist*, page 149.) Five have fallen, one is, and one

will come. This is obviously a progression of empires over time. There is a tendency to start with Babylon because the symbolism of the beast goes back to Daniel. But there were empires that controlled Israel before Babylon. The five fallen empires, at the time of John, were Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persian, and the Alexandrian Greek empire. The empire at the time of John was the Roman Empire. Then the empire that was yet to come was the Islamic Caliphate. The eighth belongs to the seven because it's a revival of the Islamic Caliphate. This interpretation really nails an otherwise very difficult prophecy.

Islam is the only religion in the world that would have followers who, based on literal interpretations of their own holy books, would kill the Jews and the Christians and would consider it to be God's will.

John 16:2-3 They will put you out of the synagogues. Yes, the time comes that whoever kills you will think that he offers service to God. (3) They will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me.

There are many other reasons why Scripture points to Islam as the end-times government and religion. Thus the antichrist will be Islamic. For more information, read Joel Richardson's two books. The first is titled, *The Islamic Antichrist*. The second is titled, *Mideast Beast: The Scriptural Case for an Islamic Antichrist*. Both can be purchased on Amazon and both have Kindle editions.

It's also possible that the Islamic Mahdi will be the second beast of Revelation 13, also known as the false prophet in Revelation 16:13, 19:20, and 20:10. In this case, both the world-ruler beast and the false prophet beast would be antichrists. The Islamic Mahdi would rule over the middle-east region of the world. He would be one of ten regional rulers who would give their authority to the world-ruler beast. They are all antichrists, meaning they are all against-Christ.

As Islam becomes more and more world dominant, many mainstream Christian churches will move further and further into compromise. Already there is a movement called Chrislam. Chrislam says that Christianity and Islam are compatible. Chrislam says you can be both a Muslim and a Christian at the same time. Chrislam uses both the Bible and Qur'an in the worship services.

Chrislam is seen by some as a necessary step towards world peace. But a joint congregation of Christians and Muslims would necessitate the suppression or removal of the very core doctrines of Christianity. To say that God could have a Son is considered one of the most-terrible sins in Islam. In a joint congregation this very fundamental Christian belief would be suppressed for fear of offending

the Muslims. Likewise, the fundamental belief that Jesus died on the cross for our sins is a core teaching of Christianity. Without that core teaching, Christianity is just a social club. But again, this belief is the other most-terrible sin of Islam. Without these two fundamental beliefs, Christianity would quickly degrade and become something that is very close to Islam. Salvation would no longer be through the blood of Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ would be simply a prophet.

1 John 2:22-23 ESV Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. (23) No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

1 John 4:2-3 ESV By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, (3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

John was specifically referring to the Gnostics of his day. Like the Muslims, the Gnostics believed Jesus had lived. But they denied that Jesus himself was the Christ. They believed the spirit of Christ inhabited Jesus during his ministry, starting with his baptism. Then the spirit of Christ left Jesus just before the crucifixion. That's why John insists that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. The Gnostics believed Christ came as a spirit. So just like the Muslims, they denied that Christ died for our sins. The Muslims believe someone else was substituted for Christ so that Jesus himself didn't die on the cross. The Gnostics of John's day and the Muslims of our day are both the spirit of antichrist.

Being faced with the prospect of a forced Islamic world is a scary thought for Jews and Christians. It will be the time of the great tribulation. Many people believe the great tribulation is tribulation for the world. But actually it's tribulation for God's people. It's a time of great persecution. For the world, it's a time of eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. The bowls of wrath are not poured out during the 42-month reign of the antichrist. They happen after the resurrection.

The 42-month reign of the antichrist is therefore not a time of God's wrath. We will escape God's wrath after the resurrection. But for Jews and Christians, the time of the antichrist is a time of great tribulation. By making the false assumption that God's wrath pours out during the reign of the antichrist, many Christians believe they will escape this coming persecution (tribulation) through the pre-

tribulation rapture. God does not promise we avoid persecution. It's just the opposite. Believers for whom God is a consuming fire are persecuted by the world.

Many Christians tend to ignore what the Bible teaches about the end times because they have been taught that they will be caught up in the rapture before all this happens. The first time I heard this doctrine it was along the lines of, "Some people believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. Some people believe in a mid-tribulation rapture. Some people believe in a post-tribulation rapture. But most people believe in the pre-tribulation rapture." So you are left with the belief that since the majority believe in the pre-tribulation rapture, then that must be what the Bible teaches.

Pre-tribulation rapture advocates will often speak of a doctrine of imminence. This is generally argued by quoting Jesus saying, "No man knows the day or the hour." No man knows the day or the hour of what? We don't know the day or hour of the return of Christ. But the only return of Christ that is mentioned in this context is five verses prior. Read it in the context of after the tribulation.

Matthew 24:29-36 KJV Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: (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. (31) 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. (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: (33) So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. (34) Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. (35) Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (36) But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Thus, "No man knows" is taken out of the context of the post-tribulation return of Christ. A pre-tribulation rapture is never mentioned in this context. But a post-tribulation gathering of the elect is almost exactly the same as Paul's description of the rapture. Christ returns, the trumpet sounds, and we are gathered into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Paul is just rephrasing the words of Jesus.

Jesus is not saying that no man will ever know the day and time of his return. He is saying we currently don't know. A different verb tense is being assumed and substituted. The disciples asked the question about when he would return, and he is saying that no man at that time knew the day of his return. He's not saying that we won't know before it happens. As a matter of fact, Jesus refers back to the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel. Daniel tells us the resurrection is 1290 days after the abomination (by context). Therefore, the wise will know the day by simply adding 1290 days to the date they see the abomination.

Does the doctrine of imminence stand the test of Scripture? The doctrine of imminence states that Christ could return at any moment. From the time that Jesus said, "No man knows the day or the hour," the rapture could have occurred at any time after that. In the context of Matthew 24, the abomination of desolation is required before the return of Christ. But the doctrine of imminence states that no additional signs are needed before Christ returns. Christ predicted his own crucifixion and resurrection. Does "no man knows" mean the rapture could have occurred before that? Christ predicted the coming of the Holy Spirit. Does "no man knows" mean the rapture could have occurred before Pentecost? Christ predicted the destruction of the temple. Does "no man knows" mean the rapture could have occurred before 70 AD? Christ predicted the death of Peter. Does "no man knows" mean the rapture could have occurred before Peter was crucified?

Christ predicted that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all the nations, and then the end would come. Does "no man knows" mean the rapture could have occurred before that? Pre-tribulation rapture advocates say the seven-year tribulation begins with the antichrist signing a treaty with Israel. But how could the antichrist sign a treaty with Israel before Israel again became a nation? Does "no man knows" mean the rapture could have occurred before Israel became a nation in 1948? If the rapture could not have occurred before all these signs were fulfilled, then how can it be a doctrine that was true ever since Christ said, "No man knows the day or the hour?" Or could it be that Jesus was saying these signs must take place first? Does "no man knows" mean the rapture could have occurred before the abomination of desolation? If not, the resurrection is 1290 days later. The doctrine of imminence does not stand the test of Scripture. It's a false doctrine.

Some will argue that the rapture could not occur before all these signs, but could occur before the abomination, simply because after the abomination the day is known, and they believe in the pre-tribulation rapture. But would the disciples have interpreted Jesus' words as meaning that all signs must first take place except the one Jesus just mentioned? A pre-tribulation rapture is not in the context.

A pre-tribulation rapture is assumed to be in the context of Matthew 24 and then the doctrine of imminence is built around that assumed context. The verse is assumed to be saying that no man will know until the time it happens instead of no man currently knows before we see all the signs, including the abomination of desolation. We are to watch for the signs so that we will know the day and time of Christ's return. Most of the arguments for a pre-tribulation rapture are based on either taking a verse out of context, or making an assumption and then proving the point using that assumption.

Some argue that, "God has not appointed us to suffer wrath" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). And since it's assumed that the bowls of wrath in Revelation happen during the reign of the antichrist, then the Church must have been already caught up in the rapture. Of course nothing is said about the saints who are turned over to the antichrist during his 42-month reign (Revelation 13:5-7). Are these saints appointed to suffer God's wrath? The bowls of wrath in Revelation are very similar to the ten plagues on Egypt. They happen after the resurrection during a 45-day period between the 1290 days and the 1335 days from the abomination.

In 2 Thessalonians, Paul talks about a restrainer who holds back the antichrist. The restrainer must be taken out of the way before the antichrist can be revealed. Pre-tribulation advocates assume that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit.

2 Thessalonians 2:5-8 Don't you remember that, when I was still with you, I told you these things? (6) Now you know what is restraining him, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. (7) For the mystery of lawlessness already works. Only there is one who restrains now, until he is taken out of the way. (8) Then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will kill with the breath of his mouth, and destroy by the manifestation of his coming;

After the restrainer is assumed to be the Holy Spirit, pre-tribulation rapture advocates argue that when all true believers are removed from the earth, that the Holy Spirit will also be removed. This is also an assumption. Could it be that the Holy Spirit uses angels to hold back the demonic forces of the antichrist? As a matter of fact, it can be shown from Daniel 10-12 that Michael and his angelic forces actually hold back the demonic forces of Satan. But when Michael "takes a stand" to protect his people, the great tribulation comes. Paul indicated that the church at Thessalonica knew the identity of the restrainer. Could it be that Paul had been teaching them the book of Daniel? Again, the teaching of the restrainer

being removed in no way indicates there will be a pre-tribulation rapture. That's based on assumptions on top of assumptions. If we use Daniel to interpret Paul, then the restrainer is Michael the archangel. More on this, and many other problems about the pre-tribulation rapture can be found in Appendix A.

People have come up with other very imaginative reasons for a pre-tribulation rapture. Like, "the church is not mentioned in Revelation after the seven churches of Revelation." (The church is also not mentioned in Titus, Hebrews, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude.) But of course the word "church" simply means assembly. Perhaps we don't hold church (big assemblies) during the great tribulation. And of course the saints are spoken of throughout Revelation. Why are these saints assumed to not be members of the Church? The word "saint" means holy ones. And the word "saints" refers to members of the Church two times in Acts, eight times in Romans, six times in 1 Corinthians, five times in 2 Corinthians, nine times in Ephesians, three times Philippians, four times in Colossians, once in 1 Thessalonians, once in 2 Thessalonians, once in 1 Timothy, twice in Philemon, twice in Hebrews, and once in Jude. Why would the 13 occurrences of "saints" in Revelation not be referring to members of the Church?

Persecution brings holiness for true believers. Perhaps that's why John used the word "saints" instead of "church members." After all, the seven letters to the seven churches all seem to speak of the lack of holiness in the churches. The churches are not ready for the great tribulation. The churches are not ready for Christ to return. Those who are not willing to take up their cross and follow Christ will fall away during the great tribulation. Revelation is all about martyrdom. And the churches are not ready for martyrdom. Martyrdom is rarely discussed in today's churches. And when it is, it's always in the context of ancient history. Also note that it's "great tribulation" for believers, not for the world. Tribulation is the same as distress, or persecution. We are not appointed to God's wrath. But Christ does say that persecution will come for the believers.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 is the verse about the rapture that dispensationalists hold to be the pre-tribulation rapture. This verse says nothing about when it occurs relative to the great tribulation. But it does say something about when it occurs relative to the resurrection. The rapture is after the resurrection, according to this verse. And according to Revelation 20:4-5, the "first resurrection" is after the great tribulation. So the rapture must be after the great tribulation. And for those who try and turn the "first resurrection" into a second resurrection, remember that Jesus told us the resurrection is on the last day. There can only be one "last day." There is much more about the problems with the pre-tribulation rapture in Appendix A.

The only real argument that dispensationalists have for the pre-tribulation rapture is the assumption of dispensationalism itself. Dispensationalists separate the Jews from the Gentiles in a separation of Israel from the Church. Dispensationalists say that God has two separate "programs" for two separate groups of believers. According to dispensationalists, God must remove the Church before he can shift back to His "program" for Israel. This separation of two groups of believers is the core of dispensationalism. In other words, dispensationalism and the pre-tribulation rapture go hand-in-hand. One cannot stand without the other.

Dispensationalism can be quickly disproven just as easily as the pre-tribulation rapture. In Romans 11, Gentile believers are grafted into the olive tree. By the context of chapters 9 to 11, this olive tree is Israel. The Gentile Church does not replace Israel. We have become a part of Israel. We have been grafted into Israel. It's true that Old Testament prophecy must be literally fulfilled in Israel. Israel will rule the nations when the Messiah comes. But we are grafted into that very same Israel. So we will be included in that reign over the nations. We will reign with Christ over the nations during the millennium. In one of the seven letters to a church, we read:

Revelation 2:26-27 He who overcomes, and he who keeps my works to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations. (27)
He will rule them with a rod of iron, shattering them like clay pots;
as I also have received of my Father:

The Gentile Church does not replace Israel. We are grafted into Israel. So we inherit the promises of Abraham (Galatians 3:29) along with Israel. Dispensationalists will say the olive tree is not Israel. Some say the olive tree is Jesus. But were the Jews broken off of Jesus? Some say the olive tree is a "spiritual Israel." But the Bible never mentions a "spiritual Israel." This directly breaks the dispensational grammatical/historical hermeneutic of not spiritualizing Scripture. Were the Jews broken off of a "spiritual Israel?" The olive tree must be Israel because Israel is the only thing you can come up with for which the Jews were broken off. Therefore, we were grafted into that same Israel from which they were broken off.

Some dispensationalists will get clever and say we are grafted into the "blessings of Israel." Thus, the unbelieving Jews were broken off the "blessings of Israel." But they are still Israel. The problem with this view is that it destroys Paul's original argument, in the context of Romans 9-11, as to why God's word had not

failed. Paul agonizes as to how Israel could have rejected the Messiah. Would this not invalidate God's word?

Romans 9:1-7 ESV I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit-- (2) that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. (3) For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. (4) They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. (5) To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. (6) But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, (7) and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."

In other words, Paul is using election to argue that not all of Abraham's flesh descendants are Israel. They will not inherit the promises given to Abraham. So they are not Israel. To turn around and say the olive tree only represents the "blessing of Israel," and thus the unbelieving Jews are still Israel, is to directly invalidate this original premise of Paul. And it's a direct contradiction of verse 6 above. In the verses that follow, Paul makes his case by using the argument of election. By election, only those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah are true members of Israel. The unbelieving Jews were broken off of the olive tree of Israel because they did not believe in the Messiah of Israel. And by election, we were grafted into that very same olive tree. We will inherit the promises given to Abraham because we have become children of Abraham. This makes us be grafted into Israel. Just as the unbelieving Jews were broken off of Israel by election, we are grafted into Israel by election.

By the way, God elects (chooses) those who are a part of Israel. But this does not mean that God elects (chooses) those who will ultimately accept or reject Christ as their Savior. We are elected to be grafted into Israel. That means we will reign over the nations. But the nations can still be saved and eventually inherit eternal life, again through the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Israel will be resurrected and changed at the first resurrection. But don't forget that the unjust will all be resurrected to live in the nations.

Acts 24:15 having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

For more information, read my book titled *New Wine for the End Times*.

Galatians 3:28-29 ESV There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

We are grafted into Israel. But we do not replace Israel. Nor has Paul given up on his brothers, the Jews. Right after the verses about being grafted into the olive tree, we read Paul's conclusion to Paul's anguish.

Romans 11:25-26 ESV Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. (26) And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";

Israel is "hardened in part." The unbelieving Jews are hardened. They are broken off of Israel. But this hardening of the Jews lasts only until all the elect Gentiles have come into the olive tree of Israel. Thus, we do not replace Israel. We are grafted into Israel while Jewish unbelievers are hardened. But the Jews of Jerusalem will be unhardened and grafted back into the olive tree of Israel during the first half of the seven years. Also, Messianic Jewish congregations have been springing up all over the world like never before in history. And it seems to have begun in 1967, after Jerusalem was no longer trampled on by the Gentiles.

Gentiles were once alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. But no longer.

Ephesians 2:11-13 ESV Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands-- (12) remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (13) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Since we are grafted into Israel, there cannot be two "programs" for believers. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile. With Gentile believers being grafted into Israel, dispensationalism itself is disproven. And with dispensationalism disproven, the pre-tribulation rapture falls with it. Without to "programs" there is no separation of believers from before and after the start of the tribulation. So there is no pre-tribulation rapture. We have the same Old Testament destiny as Israel. And that destiny involves going through the great tribulation before the Messiah sets up his earthly kingdom. Then, we who overcome all sinful habits will reign with Christ over the nations, which is the destiny of Israel.

Revelation 2:26-27 He who overcomes, and he who keeps my works to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations. (27)
He will rule them with a rod of iron, shattering them like clay pots;
as I also have received of my Father:

Dispensationalists often react to any teaching against the pre-tribulation rapture by saying we are taking away the "blessed hope" of Titus 2:11-14.

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, (12) instructing us to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we would live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; (13) looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ; (14) who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good works.

Look at verse 12. How often is the "blessed hope" spoken of in the context of holiness? What percentage of Christ's believers really "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts?" How many really "live soberly, righteously and godly [lives] in this present world?" How many are really redeemed from all iniquity? This doesn't mean you can continue to sin but it's overlooked. Does Christ really have a pure people for his own possession? How many of Christ's believers are truly zealous for good works? It's only in this context that we can look for the blessed hope.

The New Jerusalem will appear soon. This happens before the tribulation. This is the blessed hope of his appearing. And the few who will be ready will see Christ face-to-face on Mount Zion in Jerusalem (Revelation 14:1-5). But for most of the Church, Christ will have to "confirm a covenant with many" for seven more years (Daniel 9:27). After the seven years, the dead in Christ will be raised at the

first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-5). Then we will all be caught up in the air to meet Christ. But this is not until after the great tribulation.

The persecution during the great tribulation will turn church members into saints (holy ones.) Getting ready for Christ to return is all about taking this truth of Scripture to heart. We get ready for Christ to return by overcoming sin, just as it says in each of the seven letters to the seven churches. There are other ways people have avoided the blessing of reading Revelation, and taking it to heart (Revelation 1:1). Some say the great tribulation has been occurring throughout the church age. They don't expect a literal antichrist. Others simply do not believe that Christ will return in this generation. They don't consider the great tribulation to be an important topic. Others believe that Christ will return in this generation, and the church must go through the tribulation. But they become consumed with "survival" preparations and don't focus on their own holiness. So they also are not receiving the blessing of reading Revelation, and taking it to heart (Revelation 1:1). Others believe the church will go through the great tribulation but they become consumed with conspiracy theories. Some believers have become so consumed with conspiracies that they lose interest in Scripture and in having fellowship with other Christians at church, saying that all the pastors are involved in the conspiracies. Many, or perhaps even most, conspiracy theories may in fact be true. But we must be consumed with doing the works of the Father and overcoming sin.

Another approach in avoiding the great tribulation is to say the tribulation is geographically middle-eastern. As long as we stay out of the middle-east, we should be relatively safe. In other words, you could stay in the United States, or in other remote parts of the world, and not be affected by the great tribulation. However, Revelation 13:5-7 tells us the antichrist will rule over every nation, tribe, people, and language. And in Revelation, people from every nation, tribe, people, and language stand before the throne of God (Rev. 7:9). I don't think that would be middle-eastern only. Those purchased by the blood are from every tribe, language, people, and nation (Rev. 5:9). Over the last two thousand years, the scope of Christianity has grown from middle-east centric to global. So I think the scope of the antichrist's rule must also be global.

Revelation 7:9-14 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. (10) They cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation be to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (11) All

the angels were standing around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before his throne, and worshiped God, (12) saying, "Amen! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might, be to our God forever and ever! Amen." (13) One of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and from where did they come?" (14) I told him, "My lord, you know." He said to me, "These are those who came out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes, and made them white in the Lamb's blood."

In order to come out of great tribulation (verse 14), you must have gone through great tribulation. Thus, a countless number of people "out of every nation and of all tribes, peoples, languages" will go through the great tribulation before they stand before the throne and the Lamb.

Why must they go through the great tribulation in order to get their white robes? It's because tribulation brings holiness. Most of the Church is not ready for Christ to return. Most of the Church is still sinning because they have been taught by wolves in sheep clothing that you can't stop sinning. Since the Church is global, and since Christians all over the world must still learn to overcome sin, the great tribulation must also be global. We must all be willing to take up our crosses and die for Christ. We overcome not by running, but by seeking God's holiness.

Revelation 3:10 ESV Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

A few will learn this and overcome sin before Christ appears. This is the true hope for his appearing. But for most Christians, they will have to overcome by the testimony of Jesus Christ, and by not loving their own lives, even unto death.

Revelation 12:11 They overcame him because of the Lamb's blood, and because of the word of their testimony. They didn't love their life, even to death.

The New Jerusalem will appear before the tribulation. But the saints will be turned over to the antichrist in order to bring holiness to the Church. The antichrist will reign over the saints and the rest of the world for 42 months.

Revelation 13:5-7 ESV And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise

authority for forty-two months. (6) It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. (7) Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,

Notice that the antichrist blasphemes not only Christ's name, he also blasphemes Christ's dwelling. And he blasphemes those who live in heaven. If any government leader today were to blaspheme God, heaven, and the angels, he would be considered insane. But if the New Jerusalem were to show up in orbit around the earth, then this verse starts making lots of sense. Of course this "beast" is still insane for blaspheming something large and powerful like the New Jerusalem in orbit. But one can see such a thing happening, and the world following in that blasphemy. But this would be the entire global world. It's not just the middle-east who would be following the antichrist in this blasphemy. The global nature of the great tribulation can also be seen in these verses.

Revelation 12:7-13 There was war in the sky. Michael and his angels made war on the dragon. The dragon and his angels made war. (8) They didn't prevail, neither was a place found for him any more in heaven. (9) The great dragon was thrown down, the old serpent, he who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (10) I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now is come the salvation, the power, and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ; for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. (11) They overcame him because of the Lamb's blood, and because of the word of their testimony. They didn't love their life, even to death. (12) Therefore rejoice, heavens, and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has gone down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time." (13) When the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.

The woman is Israel. We are grafted into Israel. This war is sandwiched between the 1260 days that the two witnesses prophesy (Revelation 12:6, 11:3), and the time, times, and half a time (Revelation 12:14, Daniel 7:25) that the antichrist rules over the world. Michael is the restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2:7. In Daniel 12:1, Michael, who protects Israel, "takes a stand" right before the time of the great tribulation.

During the first half of the seven years, the two witnesses prophesy. This brings holiness to the Church as sin is overcome. Michael's stand progressively escalates as the Church becomes holy during the first half of the seven years.

Historically, Michael has protected the rulers of the world from the demonic forces (Daniel 10:13, 20-21). Otherwise, they would be overrun by demonic forces and everyone, including the people of Israel, would suffer. Thus, Michael is the restrainer who holds back the full onslaught of the reign of the antichrist. In the midst of the seven-year period, Michael will lead a war against Satan and his demons. He will throw Satan and his demons out of the heavens, down to the earth. Those in heaven will rejoice (verse 12). But "woe to the earth, and to the sea, because the devil has gone down to you, having great wrath." From this perspective, we can understand that this is not a crisis that only affects the middle-east. This is a global event.

Bottom line is that we should all avoid Scriptural stretching techniques that allow us to believe the Church will not go through the great tribulation. We must get ready for Christ to return, which means we must get ready for the great tribulation. This has been true for all generations. This means we must become holy. We must become saints. We don't overcome by focusing on survival. It's just the opposite. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of our testimony about Jesus Christ. We overcome by not loving our lives, even unto death. We must love others and devote our lives to help our neighbors. We overcome by taking up our cross and following Christ. We must overcome all our sinful habits. Only then will we be really ready for the great tribulation and for the millennial reign of Christ that follows.

All sins are habit-forming. The alcoholic gets up in front of an AA meeting and proclaims that he is an alcoholic. Yet he may have completely stopped drinking for years. He knows that he is in danger of falling off the bandwagon. So he remains an alcoholic even though he is not drinking. All sins are like that. We are sinners, saved by grace. But that doesn't mean we continue in our sinful habits. We can become "perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This does not mean that we will never make a mistake. Only God is perfect from the sense of never making mistakes. But we can be perfect from the sense of having overcome all our sinful habits. Yes, we are sinners saved by grace. But we can overcome all our sinful habits and "sin no more" (John 5:14).

Chapter 3

Ezekiel 38 (Not 39) Will Unfold; Psalm 83 Considered

The northern Islamic nations of the middle-east will attack Israel.

An Islamic Antichrist leader will be known to the Muslims as the Mahdi. But is he really Gog, from the land of Magog (Ezekiel 38)? Magog is in modern-day Turkey. He is probably the false prophet of Revelation. He will organize an attack on Israel according to Ezekiel 38. This is probably about six months before the seven-year covenant of Daniel 9. This will not include Egypt, and other Islamic countries of the south because they will not as yet be members of the new Caliphate. Ezekiel 39 is not fulfilled until the end of that "week" of the covenant. Ezekiel 39 is Armageddon.

Joel Richardson's second book is titled, *The Mideast Beast*. Richardson has three chapters on Ezekiel 38 and 39. He argues that the land of Magog is in Turkey. Richardson has shown that traditional Bible prophecy books tend to show maps with Magog in the region of Russia. But all the scholarly Bible dictionary books show Magog to be in what is modern-day Turkey. So Gog comes from Turkey, or perhaps Syria. Turkey is much more likely. Richardson also points to Ezekiel 38:17, speaking about Gog, which says:

Ezekiel 38:17 ESV "Thus says the Lord GOD: Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them?

Some hold that Gog is not a great tribulation antichrist, and that Islam is destroyed, or at least made small, in this battle before the great tribulation antichrist comes to power. This is because of a traditional belief that the antichrist comes from a revived Roman empire, and that the ten nations (ten horns) are in Europe. With the land of Magog being north of Israel, and not in Europe, they believe that Gog is another person that's not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. But this verse (above) clearly states that Gog is the same evil leader that is prophesied throughout Scripture, especially in Old Testament Scripture prior to Ezekiel.

These traditional futurists (dispensationalists) assume that Ezekiel 38 and Ezekiel 39 are talking about the same battle. The traditional view is that this one

battle, of both Ezekiel 38 and 39, is on or before the great tribulation. But I take the position that Ezekiel 38 and 39 are two separate battles. There are some very strong arguments for Ezekiel 39 being the battle of Armageddon at the end of the tribulation. But since I hold that Ezekiel 39 is a separate battle, I don't agree that those arguments automatically reflect back onto Ezekiel 38. We will look at Ezekiel 39 separately in the chapter 11 titled, "Ezekiel 39 - Armageddon."

The point here is that since at least Ezekiel 39 must be Armageddon, then Gog must be the antichrist. This argument holds true even if Ezekiel 38 is considered to be a separate battle. Both Ezekiel 38 and 39 begin with statements to prophesy against Gog. Ezekiel 38 (ESV) begins with, "Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him." Ezekiel 39 begins with, "And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal." Both are prophecies against Gog. Thus, reading these two separate prophecies as two separate battles, occurring at two separate times, does not diminish the argument that Gog must be the antichrist. The means antichrist must come from Magog, which is Turkey.

Are Ezekiel 38 and 39 really two separate prophecies? If so, are they talking about two separate battles? Ezekiel 38 ends with the following:

Ezekiel 38:23 I will magnify myself, and sanctify myself, and I will make myself known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am Yahweh.

This verse sounds like a wrap-up of a vision or prophecy. Then, the first verse of chapter 39 starts out with what seems like the start of a new vision or prophecy. In Ezekiel 38, the attack on Israel is prevented by an earthquake, and by the enemy being made to turn against each other (verses 38:19-21). In Ezekiel 39, fire is sent on Magog (39:6). Assuming that Ezekiel 39 is Armageddon, the armies will be destroyed by Jesus himself as he returns to the Mount of Olives.

Ezekiel 38 describes Israel as feeling secure, as a nation without walls, gates, or bars.

Ezekiel 38:11-12 and you shall say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to those who are at rest, who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates; (12) to take the spoil and to take the prey; to turn your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered out of the nations, who have gotten livestock and goods, who dwell in the middle of the earth.

Does this describe Israel today? Some will point out there are many walls and check-points in Israel. But we must interpret this verse in the same way as Ezekiel's audience would have understood. In ancient times, walls around cities had the purpose of protecting the city from invading armies. Is that the purpose of the walls and check-points in Israel today? Today, walls and check-points do very little to protect a nation from an invading army. The walls and check-points are a protection against terrorists. There is a higher chance of being killed by a car accident than by a terrorist in Israel.

Still, most people argue that today Israel does not dwell securely and in safety. It is reasoned that Israel could be attacked as they have been attacked many times since they became a nation in 1948. But as I pointed out in chapter 1 of this book, Israel is in no danger of being "pushed into the sea" as long as they have nuclear weapons. The last time they had any real danger of being "wiped off the map" was in the Yom Kippur War of 1973. That was about forty years ago. After the 1973 war, probably because of Israel's nukes, peace treaties were signed and Israel has not been attacked by a multi-nation coalition.

Israel has had problems with terrorists, and with low-tech missiles being launched from Gaza and Hezbollah. And today the missiles are getting more accurate and have better range. But Israel has anti-missile defenses. The surrounding nations very much want to destroy Israel. But as long as Israel has nuclear weapons, and as long as Israel's enemies such as Iran do not have significant nuclear weapons, there is no real danger of Israel being destroyed. Israel dwells in safety. But, as I've outlined in chapter 1, this will probably change some time after Damascus is destroyed. The world will force Israel to give up their nukes through tough sanctions. And that will set the stage for Ezekiel 38 to unfold.

There is a theory about Psalm 83 made popular by Bill Salus. In his book *Israelestine*, Salus argues that Psalm 83 prophesies a coalition of Islamic nations which will attack Israel prior to Ezekiel 38. Salus has two major arguments for his position. First, he says Israel does not dwell securely in the land. Salus argues that a victory in the "Psalm 83 War" will allow Israel to expand her boundaries and thus allow for more security. Thus, they would dwell securely at the time of Ezekiel 38. As I have pointed out, Israel already dwells safely because of their nuclear capabilities.

Secondly, Salus argues the goal or purpose in attacking Israel differs between Ezekiel 38 and Psalm 83. In Ezekiel 38, the nations plunder Israel. In Psalm 83, the nations want to take possession of the land of Israel, so that Israel is no longer

a nation. I do not see these goals as being at all mutually exclusive. The nations that surround Israel would not be seeking to expand their borders. They would simply want to destroy Israel and take plunder. But terrorists organizations will probably also be represented in this attack. They want a "one state solution" with Israel being eliminated. The charter of Hama is to completely eliminate Israel as a nation, not recognizing Israel's right to exist. Palestine has already been recognized as a non-voting nation in the United Nations. The terrorist organizations want to take the land and "destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more" (Psalm 83:4).

In his book, *The Mideast Beast*, Joel Richardson has a chapter about problems with Psalm 83 being a separate war. Richardson lists six major problems with this view. Richardson quotes Marvin Tate in saying, "Ps 83 is generally accepted as a national lament, manifesting several characteristics of this form." Richardson also quotes Dr. Thomas Ice and Mark Hitchcock as having the same view.

I agree with Richardson. But at the same time, I think Psalm 83 does reflect on the battle of Ezekiel 38 (not 39). Salus points out that the nations named in Psalm 83 seem to be in an "inner circle" whereas the nations of Ezekiel 38 are an "outer circle." Richardson counters by saying that Assyria and the Ishmaelites really refer to a much broader area than Salus claims. I'm sure this is true, but at the same time I think Salus has a point. Psalm 83 does seem to be speaking about nations closer in than those of Ezekiel 38.

The difference would go back to that difference in purpose, as pointed out by Salus. Ezekiel 38 says the nations will plunder Israel. Psalm 83 says the nations want to "destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more" (Psalm 83:4). So I think Psalm 83 is more representative of the radical Islam terrorist organizations and their desire for a Palestinian state, with Israel being "wiped off the map." Ezekiel 38, on the other hand, speaks of the actual nations who "devise an evil scheme" to attack Israel (Ezekiel 38:10). But until Israel's nukes are removed, there is not much chance of that happening. So that "evil scheme" probably includes the destruction of Damascus.

The people of Israel put their confidence in their own military, and to some degree in the West. The people of Israel, for the most part, put their trust in the military and the nukes, and not in God for their defense. So Israel really is a nation that feels secure in comparison to the attack of Ezekiel 38 that is coming. In that attack, God himself literally steps in to defend Israel. Compare this to Ezekiel 39, where Israel really is made secure by God.

Ezekiel 39:26 They shall bear their shame, and all their trespasses by which they have trespassed against me, when they shall dwell securely in their land, and none shall make them afraid;

In both Ezekiel 38 and Ezekiel 39, God comes to the rescue and defends Israel directly. The military of Israel is not used to defend Israel. As it turns out, God's defense of Israel in Ezekiel 38 is very similar to the sixth seal of Revelation.

Ezekiel 38:18-20 It shall happen in that day, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, says the Lord Yahweh, that my wrath shall come up into my nostrils. (19) For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; (20) so that the fish of the sea, and the birds of the sky, and the animals of the field, and all creeping things who creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the surface of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.

Revelation 6:12-17 I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became as blood. (13) The stars of the sky fell to the earth, like a fig tree dropping its unripe figs when it is shaken by a great wind. (14) The sky was removed like a scroll when it is rolled up. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (15) The kings of the earth, the princes, the commanding officers, the rich, the strong, and every slave and free person, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. (16) They told 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, (17) for the great day of his wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

Notice that Ezekiel 38:20 speaks of the Lord's "presence." God shows up and the world is terrified. Ezekiel 38:18 says, "My wrath shall come up into my nostrils." In the sixth seal of Revelation (quoted above), the world is terrified saying "hide us ... from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

At this point many will argue that the very presence of Christ and his wrath are after the great tribulation. Richardson points to this verse in saying Ezekiel 38-39 is about Armageddon. As Richardson points out, the Hebrew word 'paneh,' in Ezekiel 38:20, suggests the very physical presence of Christ. The word is used in the same way in Genesis 3:8, where Adam and Eve hid themselves from the very presence of the Lord. It's also used in the same way in Genesis 4:16 where Cain went out from the very presence of the Lord. For more information, read what Joel Richardson writes in a blog on his website, dated September 10, 2012, titled "The Battle of Gog of Magog & the Return of Jesus". (<http://archives.joelstrumpet.com/?p=4042>)

According to this text, the Lord Himself says that throughout the earth, both people and animals will “quake at [His] presence.” The word used for presence here is the Hebrew word paneh. Paneh is a reference to the actual face of someone or something. When God says that the people of the earth will quake at His paneh, He is saying that they will be terrified because of His actual physical presence, on the ground, in the land of Israel (see also: Zechariah 14:2-5, Isaiah 29:2-8, Revelation 16:16-20).

Concerning the word paneh, The New Unger's Bible Dictionary says, “The presence (face) of Jehovah is Jehovah in his own personal presence.” The New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words says, “In the OT, being in God's or another's presence is indicated by a preposition (l) prefixed to the Hebrew word panim ('face'). The thought is to be 'before the face of the person.'” Paneh is used throughout the Old Testament to refer to the actual presence of God. Jacob, for instance, after wrestling with the Angel of the Lord, referred to seeing God face-to-face:

“So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, ‘For I have seen God face [paneh] to face [paneh], and yet my life has been delivered’” —Genesis 32:30

It is also interesting to note that in place of the Hebrew paneh, the Septuagint used the Greek word prosopon. Prosopon is one of two words commonly used in the New Testament to refer to actual presence. The other word is parousia, which is commonly associated with the Second Coming. To convey actual presence, between parousia and prosopon, prosopon is the more powerful

term. While parousia most often implies coming, prosopon implies actual face-to-face presence. As Jesus is coming on the clouds, this is His parousia, but once He has actually arrived, then the word prosopon is used.

An excellent example of the New Testament usage of prosopon is a scene where the righteous are actually looking upon the face of God in the eternal city:

“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face [prosopon], and his name will be on their foreheads” —Revelation 22:4

Ezekiel’s description of people quaking in fear of God’s face reveals that at the conclusion of the Battle of Gog and Magog, Jesus the Messiah, God incarnate, is physically present on the earth, in the land of Israel.

Richardson has made a great point in helping me prove that Ezekiel 38:20 is speaking about the literal and physical presence of Christ. But I believe it's talking about the literal and physical appearing of the Christ before the week of the covenant. I'm not talking about a pre-tribulation rapture. It's the appearance of the New Jerusalem. Bottom line is that I believe Ezekiel 38 is before the week of the covenant, while Ezekiel 39 is Armageddon, after the week of the covenant.

This is because Christ and the antichrist both come at the same time. And, as we will see later in this article, the New Jerusalem appears before the week of the covenant. The week of the covenant is after the full seventy weeks have been completed. Christ literally and physically returns, but most of the Church is not ready. Most of the Church will still have sinful habits. Seventy weeks are given for us to stop sinning. Then, the Messiah comes.

Daniel 9:24 Seventy weeks are decreed on your people and on your holy city, to finish disobedience, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy.

But when the seventy weeks are over, and the Messiah comes, most of the Church is still saying that the above verse is impossible to accomplish. Most of the Church is still saying that it's impossible to stop disobedience, and that it's impossible to

stop sinning. But we can overcome all our sinful habits. For more information, read my booklet titled, *Christian Perfection by Grace and Works*. It can be read online, on my website. Or it can be purchased from Amazon.

Christ returns and puts a stop to the attack on Israel in Ezekiel 38. But he finds that most of the Church is not ready to reign with Christ over the nations. Only a very few will be ready. And they will get spiritual bodies before the great tribulation and will see Christ face-to-face (Revelation 14:1-5.) But the "many" are not ready. So Christ confirms a "covenant with many" for one more week (Daniel 9:27). This is an additional week after the completion of the seventy. He allows the Islamic antichrist (the false prophet) to reign for seven years. In other words, only a few will have found the narrow gate of holiness when Christ appears. But Christ expects to have a Bride consisting of a countless number, from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 7:9). They must go through the great tribulation (Revelation 7:13-14), which is the great persecution, in order to become ready for the wedding banquet (Revelation 19:7). This is at the time of Armageddon which is after at the end of the seven years.

There is one other aspect of Ezekiel 38:18-20 (quoted above) which must be considered. The verse says that "the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground." Richardson believes this must happen after the abomination of desolation because those in Judah are told to flee to the mountains when they see the abomination of desolation. Read what Joel Richardson writes in a blog on his website, dated September 18, 2012, titled "Gog of Magog and the Great Earthquake".

(<http://archives.joelstrumpet.com/?p=4078>)

Among the many events that conclude the Battle of Gog and Magog, one major event is "a great earthquake" in the land of Israel. The earthquake will be so great that all creatures and mankind "who are on the face of the earth" will tremble in fear. ... Many seem to miss the fact that this earthquake will result in the mountains of Israel being "thrown down". Beyond this, "every wall will fall to the ground".

But here is where the popular view runs into yet another insurmountable problem. For as we have already seen, the great earthquake of Ezekiel's oracle results in all of the mountains in Israel being thrown down. But if this is the case, then how can it be

that in the middle of the tribulation, Jesus warns the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea to flee to the mountains. ...

How can Jesus tell people to flee to mountains which, according to the popular view, no longer even exist? If Ezekiel's prophecy is to have happened a few, or even several years prior, resulting in the mountains of Israel all falling down, how can Jesus still be speaking of near-by mountains, and telling his people to flee to them? For students of the Scriptures who take the words of the Bible literally, there are really only two options; either Ezekiel's earthquake comes sometime after the middle of the tribulation, or Jesus didn't know what He was talking about. I'm going with Ezekiel's earthquake taking place at the conclusion of the tribulation.

But as much as this causes an insurmountable mountain of a problem for the popular view which tries to cast Gog and Antichrist as two different characters, there is yet another powerful passage in the Book of Revelation which speaks of the final conclusion of the Great Tribulation. Once again, there is the gathering of the gentiles, there is a great earthquake which results in the cities of the earth being destroyed, as well as the mountains being removed.

At this point, Richardson quotes Revelation 16:16-20.

Revelation 16:16-20 ESV And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. (17) The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" (18) And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. (19) The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. (20) And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found.

The birth pains of the woman are described as earthquakes (Matthew 24:7-8). The woman giving birth is the resurrection. And this is the mother of all earthquakes. But do the islands really get up and run away? Or does this sound like Isaiah-style poetry? Revelation, more than any other book in the Bible, makes heavy allusions to Old Testament Scripture. We must be care careful to recognize these allusions,

and to go back to that Scripture and see how it was used. The meaning of the Old Testament Scripture must be brought back into Revelation in order to interpret the symbolism or figurative speech given in Revelation. I think Ezekiel was doing the same thing. A prophet tends to use terminology from prior books of prophecy.

Consider this passage in Isaiah. Notice that this is an end-times passage when Israel's sins are pardoned. Also notice that John the Baptist quoted this verse in identifying himself as being a forerunner to the coming Messiah (Matthew 3:3). Christ is coming. So the poet cries out to make straight the highway for our God. Figuratively speaking, the valleys are lifted up and the mountains are made low in order to make the path for the Messiah in the desert be flat and straight. But this is figurative. It's Isaiah-style poetry. The mountains are not literally removed. Just a few verses down, those rejoicing are told to go "up to a high mountain."

Isaiah 40:1-9 ESV Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
 (2) Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. (3) A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (4) Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. (5) And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." (6) A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. (7) The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. (8) The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. (9) Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"

I do believe there will be a great earthquake when the New Jerusalem appears and the armies are stopped from attacking Israel. But I don't see the purpose behind every mountain and island being literally removed. They do not literally get up and run away. I believe these are simply symbols, or figures of speech, about making a path ready for the coming of the Messiah. The great earthquake, however, is literal. The great earthquake is part of what makes every man so fearful. And I think the

same thing happens again at the end of the great tribulation. In Matthew 24, at the time after the tribulation, we read:

Matthew 24:29-30 ESV "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (30) Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

I think the New Jerusalem appears again after the great tribulation. This time everyone in the world knows it's Christ and that he is returning. So they "mourn" instead of being terrified. Of course they know judgment is coming. So they would be fearful. But this is the second time the New Jerusalem appears. Their emotion is characterized more as "mourning" than as being terrified. They see the sign of the Son of Man appear in the heaven. This sign would be the New Jerusalem.

Matthew 24 talks about the great tribulation and the appearing of Christ after the great tribulation. Luke 21, on the other hand, seems to talk more about the time of the Gentiles leading up to the great tribulation. In Matthew's account, the people of the world "mourn." In Luke's account, the people of the world are terrified. Luke also talks about the roaring of the sea and the waves, which reminds us of Ezekiel 38:18-20 (quoted above) where even the fish of the sea are shaken by the literal and physical presence of the Lord. So I think Luke's account is more about the appearing of the New Jerusalem at the start of the week of the covenant, and Matthew's account is about the re-appearance of the New Jerusalem after the week of the covenant at the time of the resurrection.

Luke 21:24-28 ESV They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (25) "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, (26) people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (27) And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (28) Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

The last two verses of Ezekiel 38 serve to wrap up this vision that starts before the seven-year reign of the Islamic antichrist. These last two verses remind us of judgments that happen against the kingdom of the beast during those seven years.

Ezekiel 38:22-23 NIV I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. (23) And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.'

Revelation 8:7 NIV The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

Revelation 9:17 NIV The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur.

Revelation 11:6 NIV These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

Chapter 4

The Pre-Millennial Appearance of the New Jerusalem

New Wine premillennialism, like dispensationalism, sees the Old Testament prophecies as being literally fulfilled in a Messianic millennial reign of Christ before the heavens and the earth are destroyed. But unlike dispensationalism, New Wine premillennialism says that Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile. We are all in Israel. All Old Testament prophecies must be fulfilled in Israel. So we will all reign with Christ over the nations during the millennium. But if this is true, then what do we do with verses like these?

John 14:2-4 ESV In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (4) And you know the way to where I am going."

Philippians 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from where we also wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; (21) who will change the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working by which he is able even to subject all things to himself.

Dispensationalists simply say those caught up in the rapture will be in heaven, while those “left behind” will live on earth during the Messianic reign. Under New Wine premillennialism, the wise, who mature in Christ to overcome sin, and walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:9), will have citizenship in heaven, and will dwell in these rooms in heaven. The wise will have spiritual bodies, and will be able to come and go like the wind (John 3:8). Only the wise will be able to “enter the kingdom” in heaven (John 3:5).

In other words, dispensationalism distinguishes those living in heaven and those living on the earth as being the Church and Israel. On the other hand, New Wine premillennialism distinguishes those living in heaven and those living on the earth as being the wise and foolish, which is based on holiness. There is no distinction based on what time-period one happens to have lived in. There is no distinction based on whether or not one is a physical descendent of Abraham. There is no distinction of being in the Church or in Israel. The only distinction

made is whether or not one has matured to overcome sin through a relationship with Jesus Christ and is thus doing the works of the Father. For more information about Christian Perfection, please read my booklet titled, *Christian Perfection by Grace and Works*. It's available online. Or it can be purchased from Amazon.

Dispensationalism tends to keep the two groups isolated from one another. Those in heaven stay in heaven. Those on the earth stay on the earth. But New Wine premillennialism says those who overcome sin will literally rule the nations (Revelation 2:26-27). The wise, in heaven, will directly rule over the nations living on the earth. Those who rule over the earth from heaven do so because of their maturity, not because of their bloodline or the age they were born.

Not all dispensationalists have completely separated the Church and Israel. Some have had the idea that the New Jerusalem could appear over the earth during the millennium, and that the Church will be in the New Jerusalem, while Israel dwells on the earth. J. Dwight Pentecost, in his book, "Things to Come", on page 546, writes (emphasis mine):

The conclusion to this question would be that the Old Testament held forth a national hope, which will be realized fully in the millennial age. The individual Old Testament saint's hope of an eternal city will be realized through resurrection in the heavenly Jerusalem, where, without losing distinction or identity, Israel will join with the resurrected and translated of this church age to share in the glory of His reign forever. The nature of the millennium, as the period of the test of fallen humanity under the righteous reign of the King, precludes the participation by resurrected individuals in that testing. Thus the millennial age will be concerned only with men who have been saved but are living in their natural bodies. This heavenly city will be brought into a relation to the earth at the beginning of the millennium, and perhaps will be made visible above the earth. It is from this heavenly city that David's greater Son exerts His Messianic rule, in which the Bride reigns, and from which the rewarded Old Testament saints exercise their authority in government.

If such an interpretation be correct, there would be a solution to the perplexing problem that arises from placing resurrected saints on the earth to mingle freely with the unresurrected during the millennium. The fulfillment of Israel's national promises would be

realized, not in resurrected individuals, but rather in natural saved Israel who are living at the second advent. The unity of God's redemptive purposes in Christ would be preserved by bringing the first resurrection group together into one place, where the Bride will share in His reign and His servants serve Him forever (Rev. 22:3). Such a view is in harmony with the Scriptures and solves some of the problems inherent in the premillennial system.

Thus Pentecost (a very famous dispensationalist) believes that having the New Jerusalem brought into a perhaps visible relation with earth would solve some problems. Pentecost is not the only famous dispensationalist to hold this view. Quite a few dispensationalists hold this view. John F. Walvoord, in a article titled, "The Doctrine of the Millennium - Part IV: The Heavenly Jerusalem," (www.walvoord.com/article/76) writes:

A third view, however, is sometimes offered which is a mediate view between the first two mentioned. This view contemplates the heavenly Jerusalem as in existence during the millennium over the earth as the habitation of the resurrected saints, and is in contrast to the city of Jerusalem located on the earth. The heavenly Jerusalem apparently is withdrawn at the time of the destruction of the present earth and heaven. Then as pictured in Revelation 21:2 it returns to the new heaven and the new earth when the scene is ready for its descent. This interpretation regards Revelation 21:9ff as the heavenly city in the eternal state though recognizing its existence in the millennium. This seems to solve most of the exegetical problems that are involved and, in fact, answers many objections to the premillennial interpretation of Scripture as a whole. It provides a clear distinction between resurrected saints who inhabit the New Jerusalem and the millennial saints on the earth who will inhabit the millennial earth. It is assumed, though the Scriptures do not state it, that the millennial saints at the end of the millennium will be translated prior to their entrance into the eternal state and thus will qualify for entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem.

This is exactly what I believe will happen. However, the dispensational side of Pentecost and Walvoord must look at this possibility only through the dispensational eyes of a separate and distinct Israel and the Church. Pentecost places Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Church as both dwelling

together in the heavenly Jerusalem, but without losing their identity as Israel or the Church. However, if we can abandon the separation between the Church and Israel, and if we can start to view the separation as between the saints (holy ones) and those who have not yet matured, then this view of the millennium starts to make lots of sense. The nations on the earth still need to mature in Christ.

The main point that Pentecost made was that people with spiritual bodies would not be living with people of natural mortal bodies. People with spiritual bodies will dwell in the Father's house, where there are many rooms or dwelling places. Pentecost realized that if the Father's house is brought into a place over the earth, it would solve this problem. I would think that it will orbit the earth.

The wise saints of all ages will rule during the millennium. The wise saints will live in rooms prepared by Christ in the New Jerusalem. And the New Jerusalem, called the Bride, the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 21:9), will be in orbit around the earth. The wise saints will have "citizenship in heaven" (Philippians 3:20-21, quoted above), which is in orbit around the earth.

The purpose of the millennium is not simply so that God can fulfill Old Testament promises. The purpose of the millennium is so that God can complete his redemptive plan for all men of all ages. Christ died for our sins. But now we must overcome sin and walk as Jesus walked. The millennium accomplishes this purpose for all people who come short of walking as Jesus walked, and yet do not reject Christ as King.

1 John 2:5-6 NIV But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: (6) Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Dispensationalism distinguishes the Church from Israel. Dispensationalism considers the Church to be a "parenthesis" between Old Testament Israel and the Messianic Age Israel. Most dispensationalists believe the Church will remain in heaven, while Israel remains on the earth. Does this mean that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will live on earth during the millennium?

Matthew 8:11 tells us the Old Testament saints will be in the wedding banquet, and thus be a part of the Bride of Christ. Indeed, many dispensationalists have concluded that Old Testament saints will remain in heaven with the Bride, because they will have resurrected spiritual bodies. What does this say about the dispensational separation of Israel and the Church?" Is Abraham still a part of Israel? Why does part of Israel remain in heaven with the Bride, while another part remains on earth?

According to dispensationalists, the reason for the millennium is to literally fulfill Old Testament prophecies and covenants. This includes the literal fulfillment of the covenant with Abraham. This covenant promises all the land of Palestine, as defined by Genesis 15:18-21, to be given to Abraham's offspring. Does this mean that Abraham himself will be in heaven, and will not be able to literally inherit according to his own promise?

On the other hand, New Wine premillennialism says Abraham is indeed part of the Church (meaning assembly). We are grafted into Israel. The Church inherits the land on the earth, and Old Jerusalem on earth becomes the capital of a one-world government. Abraham, with his spiritual body, will dwell in the New Jerusalem, in orbit around the earth. Jesus has prepared a room for him there. Abraham will be at the wedding banquet in the New Jerusalem along with all of his offspring, both Jews and Gentiles.

Those who have not as yet matured in Christ will dwell on the earth. The Old Jerusalem, and the entire area of Palestine promised to Abraham, will be the capital of the world. This is necessary because people who do not as yet have spiritual bodies cannot enter into the New Jerusalem in heaven (John 3:5). But they will be able to enter into Old Jerusalem on earth. People will be able to enter the capital city of their seat of government.

As we have seen, God's purpose in the millennium is far more than just fulfilling promises. It's about bringing all who will be saved into holiness through Christ's literal reign. However, this purpose is not seen from the dispensational perspective. All distinctions between the Church and Israel must be discarded in favor of distinctions between the saints (holy ones) and those who have not yet overcome all their sinful habits.

Revelation 3:11-12 I am coming quickly! Hold firmly that which you have, so that no one takes your crown. (12) He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will go out from there no more. I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name.

Notice that those who overcome also get the "name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God," written on them. When does this happen? Is it when Christ returns? Or is it a thousand years later? One of the seven churches promises "the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of

my God." When do we get to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God? Does this happen when Christ returns? Or is it a thousand years later?

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies. To him who overcomes I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of my God.

All of the seven letters to the seven churches give promises to those who overcome and are ready for him when he appears. This includes reigning over the nations during the millennium. These rewards are not intended to be after the millennium.

Revelation 2:25-26 Nevertheless, hold that which you have firmly until I come. (26) He who overcomes, and he who keeps my works to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.

The New Jerusalem is approximately 1400 miles wide, 1400 miles long, and 1400 miles high. If it were to sit on the earth it would tower high into space, much higher than the space shuttle flights and the international space station. In my opinion, it will not sit on the earth, but will be in orbit when Christ returns.

The Jews believed there are seven levels of heaven and that Paradise is in the third level. Paul spoke of visiting Paradise in the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Revelation tells us that the New Jerusalem will come "down out of heaven." But with seven levels of heaven, the New Jerusalem could simply be moved from the third heaven to the first heaven in order to come "down out of heaven." It would then be in orbit around the earth. It does not actually need to sit on the earth.

Revelation 21:1-2 I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth have passed away, and the sea is no more. (2) I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:9-10 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were loaded with the seven last plagues came, and he spoke with me, saying, "Come here. I will show you the wife, the Lamb's bride." (10) He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

The biggest objection to the pre-millennial appearing of the New Jerusalem is that it comes after the new heaven and new earth, with the first heaven and the first earth having passed away. But why does John report seeing the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven twice? Could it be that it happens twice?

Everything recorded from verse 21:1 through 21:8 is about the New Jerusalem coming down to the new earth, after the present heavens and earth have been destroyed. But then in verse 21:9, John is told to "Come here and I will show you..." This is like the "Come up here and I will show you..." back in verse 4:1.

Revelation 4:1 After these things I looked and saw a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, like a trumpet speaking with me, was one saying, "Come up here, and I will show you the things which must happen after this."

Verse 21:9 should be read as if it is a new chapter in Revelation. John is being shown another major section of the vision. As we will see, starting with verse 9, there are several things stated that make more sense if it's during the millennium. So John really does see the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven twice. Verse 21:9 is about a pre-millennial appearing of the New Jerusalem.

One of the strongest arguments used by amillennialists is that the New Jerusalem is called "the wife, the Lamb's bride." But the marriage feast (wedding banquet) occurs when Christ returns, not a thousand years later. I've even heard one dispensationalist try to argue that the wedding banquet is after the thousand years so that those saved during the millennium could be included. But Revelation tells us the wedding banquet happens when Christ returns.

Revelation 19:7 Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory to him. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready."

New Wine premillennialism resolves this conflict with the pre-millennial appearing of the New Jerusalem. And a thousand years later, the New Jerusalem also comes down out of heaven to the new earth. Notice the slight difference in the way "bride" and "wife" is applied to the two appearances of the New Jerusalem. In the pre-millennial appearing, the New Jerusalem is called "the wife, the Lamb's bride." This is where the wedding banquet occurs for Christ's Bride, the Wife of the Lamb. In the post-millennial appearing, the New Jerusalem is said to be "like a bride."

Those who mature in Christ during the millennium will receive spiritual bodies and eternal life. So they also become "children of God." But I don't think they are considered to be the Bride of Christ. They are never grafted into Israel. We, as Israel, are the firstfruits of the harvest (Romans 8:23, James 1:18). But there probably will be a post-millennial celebration for rest of the harvest. So they are "like a bride."

The description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation is very much like the Paradise of Eden. Paradise means enclosed garden. It's the word that is used in the Greek Septuagint for the Garden of Eden. In Jewish eschatology, when the Messiah comes, the gates of Paradise will be opened up. The *Testament of Levi* 18.10 says, "one will open the gates of Paradise." In Latin IV *Eduras* 8.52, God says to Ezra, "because it is for you that Paradise is opened, that the tree of life is planted." A Jew reading Revelation would not assume this waits until after the Messianic age to come. It would happen when the Messiah appears.

Some might object to my use of ancient texts, other than Scripture, to show Jewish culture and their expectations for the appearance of the city of God when the Messiah comes. So let's see the same thing in Galatians, in the book of Hebrews, and even in the Psalms.

Galatians 4:26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Hebrews 11 is the faith chapter. Abraham is known for a man of faith. How does this chapter begin? What is faith?

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, proof of things not seen.

And what is the only thing mentioned in this chapter for which Abraham had faith?

Hebrews 11:9-10 By faith, he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. (10) For he looked for the city which has the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Some might argue this verse refers to the old Jerusalem here on earth. But this city is mentioned later on in this context. It's a "heavenly" city. It's a "heavenly Jerusalem." The "builder and maker [of this city] is God." Some might say the fact that the city has foundations makes it an earthly city. But foundations only makes the reader understand that it's not a metaphor. It's a literal and a very real city.

Hebrews 11:16 But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 12:22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable

multitudes of angels, (23) to the general assembly and assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,

This verse says those in the Bride are “enrolled in heaven.” The elect are “enrolled” to be at the wedding banquet. However, those enrolled in the “heavenly Jerusalem” are only the “firstborn,” according to this verse. If the Bride of Christ is only the “firstborn,” then many others are to follow. Therefore, many in the nations will also become righteous and inherit eternal life.

Hebrews 13:14 For we don't have here an enduring city, but we seek that which is to come.

The author of Hebrews speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem as a city which is to come. That was their hope. That was their faith. Hebrews was written well before Revelation. How would the original Jewish readers of Hebrews have interpreted this verse? The natural interpretation is for the heavenly Jerusalem to come when Christ returns. Our hope is in Christ. This should correspond to a faith and hope for the appearing of the New Jerusalem. The city of God can also be found in the Psalms. These verses can be read either as a heavenly Jerusalem or as an earthly Jerusalem. I believe the earthly Jerusalem is a shadow of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Psalms 46:1-7 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (2) Therefore we won't be afraid, though the earth changes, though the mountains are shaken into the heart of the seas; (3) though its waters roar and are troubled, though the mountains tremble with their swelling. Selah. (4) There is a river, the streams of which make the city of God glad, the holy place of the tents of the Most High. (5) God is in her midst. She shall not be moved. God will help her at dawn. (6) The nations raged. The kingdoms were moved. He lifted his voice, and the earth melted. (7) Yahweh of Armies is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Psalms 87:1-3 His foundation is in the holy mountains. (2) Yahweh loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. (3) Glorious things are spoken about you, city of God. Selah.

Some people believe the heavenly Jerusalem of Psalms, Galatians, Hebrews, and Revelation is a metaphor. Others believe the New Jerusalem of Revelation is literal, but does not come until after the thousand-year reign of Christ. But then when you read about the heavenly Jerusalem in Hebrews, it seems much more like

something associated with the return of Jesus Christ. So even dispensationalists might say the heavenly Jerusalem of Hebrews is a metaphor of our relationship with Jesus while the New Jerusalem of Revelation is literal. It seems as if people are more willing to accept the literal nature of the heavenly Jerusalem if it's pushed way off into the future and not equated to the soon return of Jesus Christ.

In other words, even if they are premillennial, preachers and Bible teachers are trained to think like amillennialists. That's because the Church, both Catholic and Protestant, was predominantly amillennial throughout Church history. The traditional meanings of metaphors and allegorical ways of looking at Scripture are passed down from generation to generation. For example, the Greek word Gehennah is a metaphor that is translated as hell in most English translations of the Bible. Literally it was the garbage dump outside Jerusalem. So it's a metaphor. Yes, there is a hell. But it's the "lake of fire" after the thousand-year reign of Christ. We read the word "hell" in the Bible and very few people know it's a metaphor.

Heaven itself, from the perspective of the ancient Bible authors, is what you see when you look at the sky. It's the universe. In both Hebrew and Greek, there is no difference between "heaven" and "sky." It's the same word in both Greek and Hebrew. The translator uses the word "heaven" in some places and "sky" in other places depending on his own interpretation. But the original authors of Scripture didn't distinguish "heaven" and "sky." Heaven is what we see when we look at the sky. But in the sixteenth century, when Galileo and Copernicus showed that the earth is not in the center of the universe, heaven became a "spiritual realm" that is outside the universe. This allowed theologians to still think of the earth as in the center, or below heaven. This became the new tradition. Today, Bible teachers look at you funny if you say you believe that heaven is the universe. They don't think you believe the Bible. Heaven itself has become a "spiritual realm" and not the literal universe that can be seen when we look at the stars.

Starting with Darby, dispensationalists began to interpret eschatology more literally. But they applied it to the Jews and not to themselves. The focus of the Church remained as heaven-or-hell when you die instead of the more Biblical focus on a literal resurrection. Dispensationalists believe the kingdom of heaven is literally the earthly reign of Christ. But when it comes to the Gentile believers, it remains a kingdom that is not of this world. The pre-tribulation rapture is all about going to heaven when Christ returns. Therefore, things like the heavenly Jerusalem in Hebrews tend to remain under the more allegorical and figurative way of interpreting Scripture. Many preachers, even if they are dispensational, say the heavenly Jerusalem is a metaphor of our relationship with Christ. But the heavenly

Jerusalem is the same as Paradise. Paul went to Paradise. It's a real place even if he only saw it in a vision. It's not a metaphor. And it's coming when Christ returns.

Let's go back to Revelation 21 now and take a look at some of the details about the pre-millennial appearing of the New Jerusalem. These are all things spoken of after verse 21:9. Remember that verse 21:9 can be interpreted as if it is a new chapter in Revelation. This last chapter of Revelation is a conclusion to the overall theme of Revelation, which is to overcome sin. We must overcome sin and have faith and hope for the coming of Christ and the appearance of the heavenly city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. From a Jewish perspective, these are all things that would only make sense if it's during the Messianic age to come.

Revelation 21:24-27 The nations will walk in its light. The kings of the earth bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. (25) Its gates will in no way be shut by day (for there will be no night there), (26) and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it so that they may enter. (27) There will in no way enter into it anything profane, or one who causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The nations will walk by the light of the New Jerusalem. This means the nations will be taught righteousness by the Bride of Christ. And the Bride of Christ will be living in the New Jerusalem. The Greek word for "nations" is the same as the word for "Gentiles." The people of Israel do not refer to themselves as Gentiles. Israel is the holy nation. But a general reference to "the nations" does not include Israel. The Bride of Christ is not part of the nations.

If John is talking about a New Jerusalem that only appears after the post-millennial new heavens and new earth, then why does John make distinctions as to who can enter into the New Jerusalem? Those who are still living in sin will not be able to enter into the New Jerusalem. You must be written in the book of life, not having had your name blotted (Revelation 3:5), in order to enter. But if this is after the great white throne judgment, then everyone not written in the book of life would have already been thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 22:1-2 He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, (2) in the middle of its street. On this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruits, yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

This verse talks about the tree of life. The leaves of the tree are for healing the nations. Again, the Greek word used here for ‘nations’ means Gentiles. Think about this from the Jewish perspective. They believed that when the Messiah comes, Eden (Paradise) will be opened, and Israel will rule the nations. Righteousness will go out to all the nations. This Jewish belief is exactly what is being described here in Revelation. Righteousness and healing goes out to all the nations as a result of the Messiah's rule. Also, think about the fact that those with spiritual bodies will not need healing. Perhaps the water of life will give us eternal life. But we will never get sick. So we will never need healing. The Gentiles on earth, however, with their natural bodies will need healing.

Revelation 22:3 There will be no curse any more. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants serve him.

Romans 8:19-22 For the creation waits with eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. (20) For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but because of him who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of decay into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.

The curse is removed at the start of the millennium, when the children of God are revealed. Revelation 22:3 mentions this because it's talking about a pre-millennial appearing of the New Jerusalem. We don't have to wait for the post-millennial new heavens and new earth for the curse to be removed.

Revelation 22:4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, even as I was also fully known.

When the pre-millennial appearance of the New Jerusalem occurs, we will see Christ face to face. Also, his name will be on our foreheads. This can be seen in the letters to the seven churches.

Revelation 3:12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will go out from there no more. I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my

God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name.

Each of the seven letters conclude with a reward that is given to those who overcome sin. Do we have to wait a thousand years after Christ returns before we can receive our rewards? We will see Christ face to face when he returns. He will write his name on our foreheads when he returns. And the New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven when Christ returns.

Revelation 22:5 There will be no night, and they need no lamp light; for the Lord God will illuminate them. They will reign forever and ever.

Over whom do we reign if not the nations during the millennium? The Jews believed that when the Messiah comes, Israel will reign over all the nations. This verse also connects back to one of the seven letters.

Revelation 2:26 He who overcomes, and he who keeps my works to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.

All these things make better sense with a pre-millennial appearance of the New Jerusalem. But are similar things said before verse 21:9? At first glance, that would seem to be the case. But with a closer reading, the things said before verse 21:9 are only true after the millennium.

Revelation 21:4-5 He will wipe away from them every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; neither will there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more. The first things have passed away." (5) He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." He said, "Write, for these words of God are faithful and true."

This verse (above) says he will wipe every tear from our eyes. At first, one might think this could be talking about the millennial reign. But look at the context of the next sentence in the verse. "Death will be no more; neither will there be mourning or crying." Yet there will be death during the millennium. Paul speaks of the Messianic reign in this verse below.

1 Corinthians 15:24-26 Then the end comes, when he will deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when he will have abolished all rule and all authority and power. (25) For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

The last enemy is death. Some people will reject Christ's reign. In so doing, they reject Christ's salvation. They will reject the healing of the nations. Those who reject Christ's rule over their lives will die the second death. They will not be resurrected. And their souls will come alive again at the end of the millennium to be thrown into the lake of fire. This is cause for tears. It's a cause for mourning and crying, especially when it will happen to someone we know. So the tears are wiped away only after the present earth is destroyed, and the new earth is created. That's why Jesus says, "Behold, I am making all things new" (verse 21:5).

The section in Revelation about the pre-millennial appearing of the New Jerusalem seems to go from verses 21:9 through 22:5. The next verse seems to have left the vision and returns to Jesus (or an angel) talking with John.

Revelation 22:6-9 He said to me, "These words are faithful and true. The Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to show to his bondservants the things which must happen soon." (7) "Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (8) Now I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. When I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who had shown me these things. (9) He said to me, "See you don't do it! I am a fellow bondservant with you and with your brothers, the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

Here we are clearly in the context of waiting for Jesus to return. We are in the context of overcoming sin and doing the works of the Father so that we will be ready for Christ to return.

Revelation 22:12-15 "Behold, I come quickly. My reward is with me, to repay to each man according to his work. (13) I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. (14) Blessed are those who do his commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. (15) Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

When Christ returns he will bring a "reward." He says, "My reward is with me." Notice that "reward" is singular. In this context, Jesus is not talking about different rewards for different people. It's one single reward for us all. In this context, what

is that reward? The reward is the New Jerusalem. It's the Paradise of Eden, opened up for us. Christ will bring this reward when he returns; not a thousand years later.

Christ said, "Blessed are those who do his commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life." We don't get the tree of life a thousand years after Christ returns. We will be able to "enter in by the gates into the city," when Christ returns, as a reward for doing his commandments.

Do you remember back in verse 21:7, where John makes a distinction as to who can enter the New Jerusalem? Those who are still sinning will not be able to enter into the New Jerusalem. Here, in verse 22:15, John elaborates. The theme of Revelation is to overcome sin in order to be ready for Christ to appear. Outside of the New Jerusalem are the "dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murders, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." So again, if the New Jerusalem only appears after the post-millennial new heavens and new earth have been created, then how can all these sinners be outside the New Jerusalem? We know there will be some sin during Christ's millennial reign. But this level of sin is even more than we would expect. Could this suggest that the New Jerusalem appears even before Christ sets up his kingdom? As we will see, the New Jerusalem appears before the great tribulation.

Chapter 5

The Pre-Tribulation Appearance of the New Jerusalem

*The New Jerusalem will appear in orbit
around the earth to stop the attack on Israel.*

According to Ezekiel 38, the attack on Israel will not be successful. God will show up and cause a great earthquake (Ezekiel 38:19). All the people of the world will tremble at God's presence (verse 20). The attacking armies will fight each other (verse 21). God will make himself known in the sight of many nations (verse 23). In other words, the New Jerusalem will appear in orbit around the earth. It will be obvious to the world that those in the New Jerusalem will have stopped this attack on Israel.

The idea that the Day of the Lord begins at the start of the seven-year period is one of the few points where New Wine premillennialism is in agreement with dispensationalism. But the argued reason for this position is very different. Dispensationalism separates Israel from the Church. Dispensationalists argue that God has two programs for two groups of people. They argue that God must shift from his program for the Church back to his program for Israel. This becomes the primary argument for a pre-tribulation rapture.

New Wine premillennialism, on the other hand, simply argues that Christ comes at the same time as the antichrist (false prophet), and that this is at the start of the seven-year period of Daniel 9:27. But only a few will have overcome sin and be ready for Christ's return. They will not be ready for the rapture. Christ must confirm a "covenant with many" for one more seven so that they can also embrace Christian perfection and overcome sin. When Christ returns, the New Jerusalem will appear and be seen by everyone in orbit around the earth. But only the few who are ready will see Christ. They are the 144,000 firstfruits who will receive their spiritual bodies when Christ returns before the seven-year period. They will see Christ standing on Mount Zion (Revelation 14:1-5).

Chapter 15 of this book has a detailed discussion about Daniel's seventy weeks. But a summary is given here to make the case that Christ returns at the start of the seven-year week of the covenant (Daniel 9:27). The important point is that Christ returns with the New Jerusalem at the appointed time, when the seventy weeks have ended. But the majority of the Church is not ready for Christ to return.

Daniel 9:27 has a controversial pronoun "he." "He" makes a covenant with many. "He" stops the sacrifice and offering. Is "he" the Messiah or an antichrist? Can an antichrist really make a covenant? If so, it would be the only place in Scripture where an evil person makes a covenant. On the other hand, does the Messiah really stop the sacrifice and offering?

Preterists argue the seventy weeks of Daniel 9 was entirely fulfilled by Christ in his first coming. They attribute the "he" as being Christ. Christ is said to have stopped the sacrifice and offering when he died on the cross. Dispensationalists and most pre-millennialists, on the other hand, argue that the last week of the seventy is split out from all the others and is fulfilled in the future. They attribute the "he" as being the antichrist. The antichrist makes the covenant with many for one seven.

New Wine premillennialism takes a very different approach. The first "he" is attributed to Christ and the second "he" is attributed to the antichrist (false prophet). This is grammatically valid because of parallelism. Christ confirms a "covenant with many" for one more seven so that they can also embrace Christian perfection and overcome sin. For more information about Christian Perfection, please read my booklet titled, *Christian Perfection by Grace and Works*. It's available online, on my website. Or it can be purchased from Amazon.

The antichrist (false prophet) sets up the abomination and stops the animal sacrifice. As we will see, this interpretation of Daniel 9 shows how Christ can return at the start of the millennium, but at the same time, this world system of government continues for seven more years. Thus, during this seven-year period the temple can be rebuilt and animal sacrifice can be started because Christ will have returned. (The Old Testament system of government was a shadow of the theocracy that will come during the millennial reign of Christ.) But in the midst of that seven-years, the false prophet stops the sacrifice and the first beast rules over every nation, tribe, people, and language for three and a half years.

The vision of Daniel 9 itself has a purpose statement. Each of the three systems of interpretation views this purpose statement quite differently. Preterists say it was fulfilled at the cross. Dispensationalists say it will be fulfilled by Israel and not the Church. New Wine premillennialism says it must be fulfilled by Israel, but we are grafted into that same Israel and thus we must also completely overcome all our sinful habits in order to be ready for Christ to return.

Daniel 9:24 NIV Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

Israel was punished seventy years for sin. Now God is saying that we must stop sinning during these seventy weeks of years. Saying that Christ fulfilled this vision is to avoid the responsibility that we have to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12.) Saying that Christ fulfilled this vision is to completely ignore Daniel's prayer of repentance for Israel. God's response to Daniel's prayer is that Israel must repent and stop sinning. This is sanctification. God does the greatest work in us (Philippians 2:13.) But it's a task that we must undertake, with the Holy Spirit (our Helper) doing the greater work in overcoming sin.

We are grafted into Israel. New Wine premillennialism views "your people and your holy city" as being about Israel, which includes Gentile believers. From Old Testament teaching, the purpose of Israel is to reign with the Messiah over the nations in order to bring righteousness to the world. But in order to bring righteousness to the world, the world's priests and kings (rulers) must themselves first become completely righteous. The seventy weeks is a time allotment during which Jerusalem is not trampled on by Gentiles. During the week of the covenant, at least during the second half, Jerusalem will again be trampled on by the Gentiles (nations). But after the 42 months, Christ will set up his kingdom and Jerusalem will never again be trampled on by the Gentiles (nations).

Revelation 11:1-2 NIV I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. (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."

New Wine premillennialism recognizes a parallelism in Daniel's vision between Christ and the antichrist. The parallelism can be best seen in this ESV translation. It's easy to assume that the prince in Daniel 9:25 is the anointed one. However, the prince in verse 26 is clearly an evil ruler. Try reading the vision with an eye for a parallelism between the "anointed one" and the "prince," with the "prince" always being the antichrist. In the following verses, both the "anointed one" and the "prince" are separately underlined. The "anointed one" is always first and the "prince" (or ruler) is always second. Then follow the same parallelism with the two pronouns translated "he" in verse 27.

Daniel 9:25 ESV Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. [SO] for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

Daniel 9:26a ESV And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

Daniel 9:26b ESV Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

Daniel 9:27 ESV And he [the anointed one] shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he [the prince] shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

Thus, according to the parallelism, the anointed one makes a covenant with many and the prince stops the sacrifice and offering. Christ returns at the appointed time after seventy weeks. But only a few are ready for Him to return. Only a few really understand and accept the stated purpose of the seventy weeks. Only a few are really willing "to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, [and] to bring in everlasting righteousness."

At the time of Christ's coming, after the seventy weeks, only a few will have found the narrow gate. So Christ makes a "covenant with many" for one more week. This is an additional week is after the seventy weeks have expired. The appointed time will have already come. The millennium will have already begun. Christ returns and thus the new covenant is complete. But because the Bride is not ready, an additional covenant extends the new covenant for one more week. The prince, who is the false prophet, stops the sacrifice in the midst of that week.

Go back and take a closer look at verse 25. The anointed one and the prince both come at the same time. Also, look at verse 9:26b. It's at the end of seven weeks, which is the end of the seventy weeks. After the "end" of the seventy weeks comes the additional week of the covenant in verse 9:27. Compare this with what Jesus said in Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:6 ESV And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.

Matthew 24:14-15 ESV And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (15) "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

The gospel of the kingdom is preached throughout all the nations, and then the end comes. There are wars and rumors of wars, and then the end comes. The end comes at the appointed time. Thus, the millennium begins. But the end is extended seven years. So the entire seven-year period can be thought of as the end. But the Day of the Lord (the millennium) still begins at the appointed time, when the seventy weeks are completed. This is when Christ appears. The coming of Christ and the antichrist, at the same time, at the appointed time, on the Day of the Lord, can also be seen in this verse:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 ESV Now, brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to him, we ask you (2) not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. (3) Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction

Let's go back to Daniel 11:25. The sixty-two weeks are associated with the building of Jerusalem. The sixty-two weeks begin with the issuing of a decree to rebuild Jerusalem. During the time that Jerusalem is rebuilt is troubled times. So the sixty-two weeks must come first, followed by the seven weeks. However, there is nothing in the vision that requires the seven weeks to immediately follow the sixty-two weeks.

The vision could have unfolded in one of two ways. The seven weeks could have immediately followed the sixty-two weeks. But as it turned out, the seven weeks was postponed until a later time. After the sixty-two weeks, Christ came at his birth. If Israel had been ready, the final seven weeks could have proceeded immediately following the sixty-two weeks. But Israel was not ready for the Messiah to come.

The first dispersion of Israel was because of sin. Daniel prayed for the dispersion of Israel to come to an end. In response to this prayer, seventy weeks were decreed for Israel to stop sinning before the Messiah would come. The generation in Israel, which grew up at the time of Christ, was tested. Because of sin, that generation did not recognize the Messiah. So after that generation, Israel went back into dispersion. The trampling of Jerusalem by the Gentiles continued until the time of the Gentiles was completed. After the Six Day War, Jerusalem was no longer trampled on by the Gentiles. So the final seven weeks has been unfolding since that time.

Luke 21:20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand.

Luke 21:24-26 They will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (25) There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars; and on the earth anxiety of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the waves; (26) men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world: for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Revelation 6:12-17 I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became as blood. (13) The stars of the sky fell to the earth, like a fig tree dropping its unripe figs when it is shaken by a great wind. (14) The sky was removed like a scroll when it is rolled up. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (15) The kings of the earth, the princes, the commanding officers, the rich, the strong, and every slave and free person, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. (16) They told 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, (17) for the great day of his wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

When the final seven weeks is over, the entire seventy weeks will be completed. At that time, both Christ and the antichrist (false prophet) will come. Christ will return and the New Jerusalem will appear. This will terrify almost everyone, including most of the Church. The high majority of the Church will again not be ready for

the Messiah to come. This time, however, a Church will be in place that at least understands the basic teachings of Christ. So Christ will be able to make a covenant for one more seven, effectively extending the new covenant. The "many" of the Church will get ready by "finishing transgression, putting an end to sin, atoning for wickedness, and bringing in everlasting righteousness."

For the elect, God's grace is extended seven more years. It's also seven more years of faith because the Church will be living during a time of great tribulation for the Church. But for the nations, the age of grace will be over. Christ will be physically present, but he will delay setting up his earthly kingdom. Thus, during these seven years, the temple will be physically built and animal sacrifice will be started. But during the same seven years, the elect will be getting ready to reign with Christ by overcoming sin and embracing Christian perfection.

Our hope is in the appearance of the City of God, which is the New Jerusalem, also called Paradise. As we have seen in the previous section, this can be found in Jewish culture, in Galatians, in the book of Hebrews, and even in the Psalms. But most of the Church has lost that understanding and will be terrified along with the rest of the world when it happens. This hope might shed some light on the blessed hope of Christ's appearance.

Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ;

Many dispensationalists have used this verse to defend the pre-tribulation rapture. I think Jesus really does "appear" before the tribulation in the New Jerusalem. However, only a few will be ready for his return. So he will confirm a "covenant for many" for seven more years. The rapture of the entire Bride of Christ is not until after the "many" are ready. So it's after the great tribulation. The great tribulation is not tribulation experienced by the world. It's tribulation experienced by the Church. It's great persecution. Christ will allow this great persecution to take place in order that his Bride will overcome all sinful habits and get ready to reign with Him.

1 Timothy 6:13-14 I command you before God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate testified the good confession, (14) that you keep the commandment without spot, blameless, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ;

2 Timothy 4:7-8 I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith. (8) From now on, there is stored up

for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day; and not to me only, but also to all those who have loved his appearing.

Hebrews 9:28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, without sin, to those who are eagerly waiting for him for salvation.

When Christ appears in the New Jerusalem, the world will be terrified. Let's go back to the chapter 3 titled, "Ezekiel 38 (Not 39) Will Unfold." God's defense of Israel in Ezekiel 38 is similar to the sixth seal of Revelation.

Ezekiel 38:18-20 It shall happen in that day, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, says the Lord Yahweh, that my wrath shall come up into my nostrils. (19) For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; (20) so that the fish of the sea, and the birds of the sky, and the animals of the field, and all creeping things who creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the surface of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.

Revelation 6:12-17 I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became as blood. (13) The stars of the sky fell to the earth, like a fig tree dropping its unripe figs when it is shaken by a great wind. (14) The sky was removed like a scroll when it is rolled up. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (15) The kings of the earth, the princes, the commanding officers, the rich, the strong, and every slave and free person, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. (16) They told 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, (17) for the great day of his wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

Luke 21:24-26 They will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (25) There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars; and on the earth anxiety

of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the waves; (26) men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world: for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Notice that Ezekiel 38:20 speaks of the Lord's "presence." God shows up and the world is terrified. Ezekiel 38:18 says, "my wrath shall come up into my nostrils." In the sixth seal of Revelation (quoted above), the world is terrified saying "hide us ... from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Jews were taken as prisoners to all the nations. This was the second dispersion. The time of the Gentiles began when Herod the Great died. After Herod died, the Roman Empire began stationing a governor in Jerusalem. The sixty-two weeks were finished after the first coming of Christ, at his birth. The seventy weeks were no longer underway when Christ returned to Israel from Egypt as a child. This marked the start of the time of the Gentiles. The seventy weeks are not underway during the time of the Gentiles.

The trampling of Jerusalem in the time of the Gentiles continued until the Six Day War. This end-times baby-boom generation, beginning after World War II, and becoming adult around the time of the Six Day War, marks the end of the time of the Gentiles. After the final seven weeks of Daniel's vision are over, Christ will appear in the New Jerusalem and the world will be terrified. As we read in Ezekiel 38, Christ's "presence" will return just in time to stop the Islamic nations, led by the Islamic antichrist, from destroying Israel. In Ezekiel 38 and 39, the antichrist (false prophet - Gog), is from the land of Magog, which is in modern-day Turkey.

Let's put it all together. The New Jerusalem will appear before the start of the millennium. It will also appear before the start of the great tribulation. The covenant for seven years is the first seven years of the millennium. And the millennium is the age to come. The pre-tribulation appearing of the New Jerusalem is the blessed hope of Christ's appearing.

Chapter 6

The Powerful Delusion; The Blasphemous Lie of the Antichrist

The world will be terrified. They will rally around the Antichrist as he blasphemes God and those in the New Jerusalem.

One of the better known attributes of the antichrist is that he blasphemes God and the people living in heaven. It's also known that the antichrist will be a world ruler, and as such, a political figure. He wants the world to like him. Today, if a political figure were to blaspheme God and those living in heaven, it would not do well for his political image. If a politician were to blaspheme God during an election, that alone would cause him to lose the election.

Daniel 7:11 NIV "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.

Daniel 11:36 NIV "The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.

2 Thessalonians 2:4 NIV 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.

Revelation 13:5-7 A mouth speaking great things and blasphemy was given to him. Authority to make war for forty-two months was given to him. (6) He opened his mouth for blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his dwelling, those who dwell in heaven. (7) It was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. Authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation was given to him.

But what if the New Jerusalem were to appear in the sky and terrify the whole world? There are signs in sun, moon, and stars as we see them in the sky. Massive earthquakes happen and the armies attacking Jerusalem start going mad and attacking each other. Some would say this is a good thing. But most of the world will just quake in their boots. They will be horrified.

How does the world know that the New Jerusalem, which has appeared in the sky, is really Christ and his angels? Most Christians are not expecting Christ to appear in this way. But the two witnesses will be prophesying for 1260 days during the first half of the week of the covenant. They will be unleashing all kinds of trumpet-plagues that will terrify and anger the world. The turning of water into blood is the second trumpet-plague.

Revelation 11:6 These have the power to shut up the sky, that it may not rain during the days of their prophecy. They have power over the waters, to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

The two witnesses cannot be ignored by the press. The world will hate them as they hate Christ and those living in heaven, which is the New Jerusalem. As the antichrist blasphemes Christ, and the angels living in heaven, the press and the world will rally around the antichrist against Christ and the two witnesses. That's one reason why the world will have such a huge celebration, exchanging gifts, when the two witnesses are killed at the end of the 1260 days. By the way, the beast that comes up out of the abyss is the first beast, the global ruler. He is not the false prophet (Revelation 17:8-12).

Revelation 11:7-11 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. (8) Their dead bodies will be in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. (9) From among the peoples, tribes, languages, and nations people will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not allow their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. (10) Those who dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and they will be glad. They will give gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. (11) After the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood on their feet. Great fear fell on those who saw them.

I also believe Michael's war in heaven will take place during this time. Some of the heavenly host will be thrown down and trampled. But Satan and his angels will be thrown out of heaven. I believe the New Jerusalem will disappear when the two witnesses are killed. So this is the second reason, I believe, that the world will be celebrating by exchanging gifts.

The church leaders will say the New Jerusalem does not come until after the new heavens and the new earth. So the thing they see in the sky could not possibly be the New Jerusalem. The pre-tribulation rapture has not happened. Other church leaders will say the New Jerusalem in Revelation is purely allegorical or symbolic in nature. So this thing they see in the sky could not possibly be related to Christ's return.

Church leaders will also say you don't have to overcome all your sinful habits because you can't. "Nobody is perfect," they will say. "And if you say you don't sin then you are a liar." So they will call the two witnesses liars who are using their space-alien powers to imitate the trumpet-plagues of Revelation. Many of the church leaders will say that Revelation is not supposed to be taken literally. There is no literal great tribulation. They won't understand that the great tribulation is tribulation for the Church, and not the world. The world will be "eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage" during the great tribulation. And the church leaders who come against the preaching of the two witnesses will really be part of the world. So they won't experience the persecution of the great tribulation. Besides, they will argue, God would not pour out his wrath the churches. So this thing in the sky could not possibly be the New Jerusalem.

For more information about Christian Perfection, please read my booklet titled, *Christian Perfection by Grace and Works*. It's available online, on my website. Or it can be purchased from Amazon.

Also, we should not forget about Satan and his demons. They will probably claim to be aliens of a "good" race, and claim that those living in the New Jerusalem are really evil and just want to conquer the earth for evil purposes. They will put an evil spin on Jesus Christ and his angels. They will probably display all kinds of "counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders ... that deceives those who are perishing." All this is the strong delusion of 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 NIV 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, (10) 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. (11) For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie (12) and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

The people of the earth will perish because they refuse to love the truth about the hope for the coming city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. They will say they have faith in Christ (or Muhammad or Buddha), so they must be saved. But the very thing, according to the writer of Hebrews, that Abraham had faith for was the coming heavenly city of God. And they will deny that very faith. They will believe the lie, and so be condemned. They will believe the lie that you don't have to overcome sin in order to be ready for Christ to return. They will be condemned because they have not believed the truth but have delighted in their wickedness.

Hebrews 11:9-10 By faith, he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. (10) For he looked for the city which has the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Hebrews 11:16 But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 12:22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable multitudes of angels, (23) to the general assembly and assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Hebrews 13:14 For we don't have here an enduring city, but we seek that which is to come.

John 14:2-4 ESV In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (4) And you know the way to where I am going."

Philippians 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from where we also wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; (21) who will change the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working by which he is able even to subject all things to himself.

Galatians 4:26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Psalms 46:1-7 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (2) Therefore we won't be afraid, though the earth changes, though the mountains are shaken into the heart of the seas; (3) though its waters roar and are troubled, though the mountains tremble with their swelling. Selah. (4) There is a river, the streams of which make the city of God glad, the holy place of the tents of the Most High. (5) God is in her midst. She shall not be moved. God will help her at dawn. (6) The nations raged. The kingdoms were moved. He lifted his voice, and the earth melted. (7) Yahweh of Armies is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Psalms 87:1-3 His foundation is in the holy mountains. (2) Yahweh loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. (3) Glorious things are spoken about you, city of God. Selah.

Revelation 3:11-12 I am coming quickly! Hold firmly that which you have, so that no one takes your crown. (12) He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will go out from there no more. I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name.

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies. To him who overcomes I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of my God.

Revelation 21:9-10 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were loaded with the seven last plagues came, and he spoke with me, saying, "Come here. I will show you the wife, the Lamb's bride." (10) He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

Revelation 21:24-27 The nations will walk in its light. The kings of the earth bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. (25) Its gates will in no way be shut by day (for there will be no night there), (26) and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it so that they may enter. (27) There will in no way

enter into it anything profane, or one who causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 22:1-2 He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, (2) in the middle of its street. On this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruits, yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22:3 There will be no curse any more. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants serve him.

But how does believing a lie cause someone to be condemned, and to be cast into the lake of fire? When Jesus Christ appears with the New Jerusalem, what happens to those who take sides with the antichrist in blaspheming Christ and the angels living in the coming heavenly city of God? Is it any different than Christ's first coming, for those who saw the miracles of Christ and yet blasphemed the Holy Spirit by saying the miracles were the work of Beelzebub? The word "antichrist" means "against Christ." When you take the side of the antichrist against Christ, you forfeit any hope of salvation that you may have. This is the powerful delusion. Again, the verse says, "They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved." The powerful delusion causes one to come against Christ because they "have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."

This is the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast might or might not involve a chip implant. But a chip implant in and of itself would not make one lose their salvation. I think it is a literal mark on the hand or forehead. Perhaps it's a tattoo. The only thing that can make one lose any possibility of salvation is to come against Christ. So this mark involves taking an oath to stand with the antichrist and to stand against Christ. With the New Jerusalem appearing in the sky, and the whole world being terrified, this strong delusion will deceive many people. Even church leaders such as pastors, priests, and Bible teachers will be deceived. At the time of Christ's first coming, many of the religious leaders rejected the Messiah. It will be the same at the time of Christ's second coming.

They will believe the lie, and so be condemned. They will say that Jesus is not coming in a space-ship. Jesus is returning in the clouds. And we will be caught up into the clouds to meet him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). This is true. But the rapture does not happen until after the resurrection. "The dead in Christ will rise first," before the rapture (verse 16). And the first resurrection is not until after the great tribulation (Revelation 20:4-5). So they will believe the lie and will

continue sinning. They will not listen to the two witnesses who will say that you must overcome sin in order to be ready for Christ's return. They will be condemned because they "have not believed the truth but have delighted in their wickedness."

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 NIV For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie (12) and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

So in a way, it will be like Christ's first coming. Many of the religious leaders will not recognize Christ's appearing. But many will listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches in each of the seven letters to the seven churches. Each of these letters say it's those who overcome sin who are ready. "They overcame [Satan] because of the Lamb's blood, and because of the word of their testimony. They didn't love their life, even to death" (Revelation 12:11). This time, a countless number from every nation, tribe, people, and language will recognize the truth and truly repent of their sins. They will overcome all their sinful habits during the great tribulation and thus be able to stand before the throne of Jesus Christ in the New Jerusalem when he sets up his kingdom.

Revelation 7:9-15 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. (10) They cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation be to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (11) All the angels were standing around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before his throne, and worshiped God, (12) saying, "Amen! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might, be to our God forever and ever! Amen." (13) One of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and from where did they come?" (14) I told him, "My lord, you know." He said to me, "These are those who came out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes, and made them white in the Lamb's blood." (15) Therefore they are before the throne of God, they serve him day and night in his temple. He who sits on the throne will spread his tabernacle over them.

There is one other aspect of the strong delusion that is coming. As mentioned earlier, the authors of the Bible did not distinguish heaven from the sky. When they looked up and saw the stars, they were looking at heaven. But in the sixteenth century, when Galileo and Copernicus showed that the earth is not in the center of the universe, heaven became a "spiritual realm" that is outside the universe. Such thinking allowed theologians to continue believing the earth is in the center of God's universe while leaving astronomy to the scientists. This became tradition and was passed down from generation to generation. Today, Bible teachers look at you funny if you say you believe that heaven is the universe. They don't think you believe the Bible.

But what if the authors of the Bible were right and the sixteenth century theologians were wrong? What if the New Jerusalem shows up and the angels say they are from another planet in the galaxy? What if the two witnesses say the New Jerusalem is from another planet? That doesn't exactly sit well with today's theologians who interpret Scripture as if the earth is in the center of God's universe. They would most-likely denounce the New Jerusalem as demonic, and the two witnesses as working for Satan. And since they don't believe the antichrist (or false prophet) will be Islamic, this deception could play right into the hands of the antichrist.

Chapter 7

The 144,000 Are Firstfruits of Fulfilled Israel

*The 144,000 will get spiritual bodies and will see Jesus Christ face to face.
They are both Jew and Gentile, and are few who will be ready for Christ to return.
The rest of the Church will still be sinning.*

Modern-day Jews are just from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and some Levi. That's because the Jews who returned from Babylon were originally from the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel (or Ephraim) had already been conquered and scattered to Assyria. They never returned. Their bloodlines are today scattered around the world, with their Hebrew culture long lost. Think about James 1:1 and 1 Peter 1:1.

James 1:1 NIV James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

James 1:1 ESV James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

1 Peter 1:1 NIV Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,

1 Peter 1:1 ESV Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

These letters from James and Peter were to the churches. Yet James addresses his letter to the twelve tribes. The twelve tribes were dispersed. I think James sees the twelve tribes as being the Church, which is Israel. We are grafted into the twelve tribes of Israel.

The idea of the Dispersion comes from the fact that Israel was scattered among the nations. God has promised he will gather Israel back from the Dispersion. Yes, the gathering of the Jews in the land of Israel today is the start of that gathering. But the final gathering, when Christ returns, will include all of Israel, both Jew and Gentile. The same Greek word for Dispersion is also used by John. These three verses are the only uses of this Greek word the New Testament.

John 7:35 ESV The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man [Jesus] intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?"

John 7:35 NIV The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man [Jesus] intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?"

Peter addresses the Church as "those who are elect" and "exiles of the Dispersion." The twelve tribes of Israel were scattered among the nations. Israel was considered God's chosen people. In other words, they were the "elect." Here, Peter is addressing Greek Christians in exactly the same way you would address the people of Israel who were not gathered back to Jerusalem. In other words, we are the twelve tribes of Israel, scattered among the nations. We are the "elect exiles of the Dispersion." We are grafted into the twelve tribes of Israel. Therefore, the 144,000, which are 12,000 from each of twelve tribes, would be people from all of Israel, both Jewish and Gentile.

The 144,000 have Christ's name and the Father's name written on their foreheads (Revelation 14:1, quoted below). They are sealed. And they are seen standing on Mount Zion with Jesus Christ. They are seeing Christ face to face. Standing on Mount Zion can mean they will be standing in the land of Israel. It can also mean they will be standing in the New Jerusalem. Most likely it means they are on the Temple Mount in Old Jerusalem. The important point is they will be seeing Jesus face to face.

1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, even as I was also fully known.

Thus, these 144,000 of Israel, both Jew and Gentile, are gathered back to Israel from the Dispersion. And they will see Christ face to face. Christ is the King of Israel. And Israel itself is the promise to Abraham. Abraham was given a promise (covenant) of land and descendants. Land plus descendants equals a nation - an elect and holy nation. In Old Testament times, Israel existed as a kingdom. But the real King of that kingdom had not yet come. Therefore, Old Testament Israel was simply a shadow of that which is to come.

Today, we have a partial fulfillment of that same promise in our hearts. But we don't as yet have a literal earthly kingdom where Christ is the literally the head of the government. When we have Jesus Christ as King of Israel, gathered from the Dispersion with 144,000 of his people, for the first time, we have the start of

the complete fulfillment of the promise of Abraham. Israel has always been an unfulfilled promise. The 144,000 are the start of the fulfilled Israel, both Jew and Gentile. But the final fulfillment of that promise is not until after the seven year "week" of the covenant, when Christ defeats both the antichrists (beast and false prophet) and sets up the earthly kingdom.

OK, so when are the 144,000 sealed? When will they see Jesus face to face?

Revelation 7:3-4 ESV "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." (4) And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

The 144,000 are sealed, according to this verse, before harm to the land, sea, or trees. This would be a reference to the first two trumpet-plagues. The trumpet-plagues will be during the first half of the seven-year "week" of the covenant. Strictly speaking, the second half of that week is the great tribulation. But the first half will also be a build-up of persecution and tribulation as the global antichrist and the false-prophet antichrist gain power.

The 144,000 are firstfruits to God and to the Lamb:

Revelation 14:1-5 ESV Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. (2) And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, (3) and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. (4) It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are [male] virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, (5) and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

Notice all the emphasis on holiness? The 144,000 are ready for Christ to return prior to the seven-year "week" of the covenant. They are "redeemed from the earth." At this point in time, they will have been (past tense) redeemed from the earth. "They are [male] virgins." This means they are holy. They are pure like virgins. They "have not defiled themselves with women." This means they are not addicted to sexual habits that are sinful. Their thought-life is pure.

What does it mean to be “firstfruits”? Why are they firstfruits to God and to the Lamb? If firstfruits simply means believers, then it would not work. Why is it just 144,000? Many more than that are believers today. The same is true about them being sealed. There will be many believers when the 144,000 are sealed. Revelation is a book that’s packed with symbolism. We must interpret the symbolism based on prior uses of the same symbol:

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 ESV But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (21) For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (23) But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

The resurrection of Christ was the firstfruits. His actual resurrection (on the third day) was on the Feast of Firstfruits, during the Passover week. Therefore, what is the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb? When we follow the symbolism of both the firstfruits and being sealed, the 144,000 are first, after the Lamb, to receive a spiritual body. They are first to see Christ face-to-face. They are first to be gathered to Israel from the Dispersion in the final sense of having the true King of Israel. In other words, they have made themselves ready for Christ to return, through holiness and Christian perfection, prior to the seven year "week" of the covenant.

Today, most of the Church is not ready for Christ to return. Today, most people of the Church still have sinful habits. Today, most of the Church is not ready for martyrdom. They have their hope set on a pre-tribulation rapture. Or they don't think about the possibility of a coming great tribulation. Or they simply don't believe the great tribulation is coming in this generation. They are not ready. But toward the end of the great tribulation, the rest of the Bride of Christ makes herself ready.

Revelation 19:7 ESV Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

The 144,000 are the few who will have overcome all their sinful habits before Christ appears. They will have become "perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). They will be ready for martyrdom, but they will not be martyred. They will be ready to go through the great tribulation. But they will not have to endure the great tribulation because they will have spiritual bodies and will be able to enter the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 3:10-13 Because you kept my command to endure, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, which is to come on the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. (11) I am coming quickly! Hold firmly that which you have, so that no one takes your crown. (12) He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will go out from there no more. I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name. (13) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

Notice that Jesus writes the name of the Father on those who overcome sin. He also writes his own name on those who overcome sin. What does it say about the 144,000?

Revelation 14:1 ESV Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

The rest of the Bride will make herself ready as a result of going through the great tribulation. Many will be martyred. So eventually, all the Bride of Christ will have Christ's name, and his Father's name, written on their foreheads. But the 144,000 are the few who will be ready when Christ appears.

The following verse also indicates that not all will go through the tribulation:

Luke 21:34-36 "So be careful, or your hearts will be loaded down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day will come on you suddenly. (35) For it will come like a snare on all those who dwell on the surface of all the earth. (36) Therefore be watchful all the time, praying that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will happen, and to stand before the Son of Man."

We are saved by the blood of Jesus. That is a free gift. No effort or work on our part is required. But those who are saved are asked by Jesus to "seek first the kingdom and his righteousness." Salvation is a free gift. But to seek the kingdom requires lots of work. Only those who seek the kingdom can inherit the kingdom. This is central to the New Wine System.

There are two different kinds of Christians. There is the “foolish” group that does not overcome sin. Then there is the “wise” group who overcome sin. Revelation is not about salvation. Revelation is about overcoming sin and inheriting the kingdom. Each of the seven letters ends with a reward for those who overcome sin. And some of the letters explicitly mention works as being sufficient or insufficient. Salvation is not about works. But inheriting the kingdom is very much about works. As we do the works of the Father, we overcome sin.

In my opinion, the two witnesses are part of the 144,000 who will get spiritual bodies and see Christ face-to-face at the start of the seven year "week" of the covenant. The two witnesses will be spokesmen who talk to the news media and the world. I think the rest of the 144,000 will also appear to the rest of the Church. The resurrected Christ physically appeared to the first generation. At one point, he appeared to over five hundred brothers at once.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, (5) and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (6) Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers at once, most of whom remain until now, but some have also fallen asleep. (7) Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, (8) and last of all, as to the child born at the wrong time, he appeared to me also.

I think the 144,000 will likewise appear to brothers in the churches all over the world after the New Jerusalem appears in the sky. Just as Christ had a spiritual body, the 144,000 will have spiritual bodies. They will be able to appear in the middle of locked rooms. Salvation will be given to them in order to make the rest of Israel envious (Romans 10:19, 11:11). And the Gentile believers are grafted into Israel (Romans 11:17-14).

Do the 144,000 meet Christ face to face, and get their spiritual bodies, immediately after the New Jerusalem appears? Actually, I think this happens about six months after the New Jerusalem appears. Remember that the New Jerusalem appears and stops many of the Islamic middle-east nations from attacking and destroying Israel. This fulfills Ezekiel 38. But the fulfillment of Ezekiel 39 is not until Armageddon, which is after the end of the seven year "week" of the covenant. Ezekiel 38 is before the start of that seven-year period. It corresponds to the sixth seal of Revelation. It also corresponds to Luke 21:25-26.

Ezekiel 38:18-20 It shall happen in that day, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, says the Lord Yahweh, that my wrath shall come up into my nostrils. (19) For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; (20) so that the fish of the sea, and the birds of the sky, and the animals of the field, and all creeping things who creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the surface of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.

Revelation 6:12-17 I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became as blood. (13) The stars of the sky fell to the earth, like a fig tree dropping its unripe figs when it is shaken by a great wind. (14) The sky was removed like a scroll when it is rolled up. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (15) The kings of the earth, the princes, the commanding officers, the rich, the strong, and every slave and free person, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. (16) They told 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, (17) for the great day of his wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

Luke 21:25-26 There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars; and on the earth anxiety of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the waves; (26) men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world: for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

So what happens next? What is after the sixth seal? It's the seventh seal.

Revelation 8:1-2 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. (2) I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

The New Jerusalem appears and stops the Islamic nations from destroying Israel. This terrifies the world. After that, there is silence from heaven. This builds up the terror even more. I think this silence from heaven for half an hour corresponds to about six months. After that, the two witnesses begin 1260 days of prophecy.

Revelation 11:3-6 I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." (4) These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands, standing before the Lord of the earth. (5) If anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies. If anyone desires to harm them, he must be killed in this way. (6) These have the power to shut up the sky, that it may not rain during the days of their prophecy. They have power over the waters, to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

The power to turn water into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, corresponds with the seven trumpets. And as we have seen in verses 8:1-2, the seven trumpets are right after the silence in heaven. So again, when are the 144,000 sealed? They are sealed soon after the sixth seal and before the two witnesses begin to prophesy 1260 days.

The harm to the land, sea, and trees is the first two trumpets. This does not happen until after the 144,000 are sealed. And as I've said, I believe the two witnesses are part of the 144,000. The New Jerusalem appears and stops the Islamic nations from destroying Israel. The appointed time of the end is the end of the seventy weeks of Daniel 9. It's the end of the time that was allocated for Israel to overcome sin. It's the time when the Messiah comes. It's the time when the New Jerusalem appears.

Daniel 9:24 Seventy weeks are decreed on your people and on your holy city, to finish disobedience, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy.

Then, the week of the covenant, which extends the New Covenant for seven more years, probably starts after the six months of silence. That would be the start of the millennium. In other words, the 144,000 are probably sealed at the start of the millennium, which is the start of the thousand-year Day of the Lord.

For more information about Christian Perfection, please read my booklet titled, *Christian Perfection by Grace and Works*. It's available online, on my website. Or it can be purchased from Amazon.

Chapter 8

Daniel 11 - The Day of the Lord Begins

The Islamic Antichrist will attack Egypt and the other more southern Islamic nations that have not joined the Turkey-based Islamic Caliphate.

The time of the end is spoken of in Daniel 11. This chapter, right up to verse 35, is fulfilled prophecy that gives very accurate details from Alexander the Great down to Antiochus Epiphanes, who in 168 BC sacked Jerusalem and set up the abomination of desolation, spoken of in this verse:

Daniel 11:31 Forces shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the fortress, and shall take away the continual *burnt offering*, and they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

Then, verse 35 gives us an indication that the prophecy jumps to the time of the end. After this point, the rest of the prophecy has not yet been fulfilled. But we can expect the rest of the prophecy to be fulfilled just as accurately as the verses prior to verse 35. One could say the prophecy jumps from one abomination of desolation to the next. Later on in the prophecy, Daniel 12:11 tells us about the abomination of desolation that is yet to come.

Daniel 11:35 ESV and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.

The end is the end of the seventy weeks. It's the end of this present age. It's the appointed time when the Messiah comes. Notice that in Daniel 9, the week of the covenant in Daniel 9:27 comes after the end spoken of in Daniel 9:26b (quoted below). So the week of the covenant is after the seventy weeks are finished. The week of Daniel 9:27 is not one of the seventy weeks. It's an additional week that is given by Christ because he returns and yet his Bride is not yet ready. So the week of the covenant is the start of the age to come.

Notice that in Daniel 11:35 (quoted above), the wise are "refined, purified, and made white until the time of the end." Compare this with the purpose statement that is given for the seventy weeks.

Daniel 9:24 ESV "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin,

and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

This helps us in connecting the "end" that is given in Daniel 9:26b with the "end" that is given in Daniel 11:35. Both are talking about the end of the seventy weeks. Both are talking about the allotment of time that is given for Israel to stop sinning. After the allotment of time given to overcome sin, at the "appointed time" (Daniel 8:19, 11:35), the Messiah comes. After that, the start of the week of the covenant is also the start of the millennium.

Daniel 9:26b ESV Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

Daniel 9:27 ESV And he [the anointed one] shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he [the prince] shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

You see, verse 27 is after the end of the seventy weeks (by context). But there is another end, which is an end to the desolator (antichrist). So the entire week of the covenant can be considered to be the end. In another sense, the end of the time for Christians to overcome sin is extended for another week. In the middle of that week the antichrist (false prophet) stops the sacrifice and sets up the abomination of desolation. This second half of the week is the time when the antichrist (global ruler) will rule over every nation, tribe, people, and language for 42 months (Revelation 13:5-7).

Daniel 12 is a continuation of the same vision that we read about in Daniel 11. In Daniel 12:11, we are told that from the abomination there will be 1290 days. What happens at the end of the 1290 days? By context, we can see it in Daniel 12:1-2. After the great tribulation is the resurrection. Thus, the resurrection is on the "last day" (John 6:39-40, 6:44, 6:54, 7:37, 11:24, 12:48) of the 1290 days, from the abomination of desolation, during which the antichrist(s) will rule the world.

Daniel 12:1-3 "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who shall be found written in the book. (2) Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (3) Those who are

wise shall shine as the brightness of the expanse; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

Daniel 12:11 From the time that the continual *burnt offering* shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days.

Now let's go back to Daniel 11:35. This is the time-jump to the time of the end.

Daniel 11:35 ESV and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.

After the end of the seventy weeks is the appointed time of the end. It's the time when the Messiah comes. But very few of the Bride are ready. Very few find the narrow gate that leads to eternal life. So after the end of the seventy weeks Christ confirms a "covenant with many," for one more week, in order that the "many" can get ready to reign with Christ. The first half of this week would be the events from Daniel 11:35 until Daniel 12:1. So what is the first thing we read that happens at the time of the end?

Daniel 11:36 The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods; and he shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done.

This sounds very much like they way Daniel 9:27 concludes:

Daniel 9:27b ESV And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

In other words, Daniel 11:36 introduces us to the end-times antichrist. And the first thing said about him is that he magnifies himself over God and speaks boastful things against God. The blasphemies of the antichrist only make sense when one realizes that it's being done after the New Jerusalem appears. The world is terrified. Without the appearance of the New Jerusalem, the world would just laugh at the blasphemies. But since the world is terrified at Christ's appearance, the world will join the antichrist in his bold blasphemies. The antichrist makes use of this terror to speak against Christ and those who dwell in heaven (Revelation 13:5-7). Those who dwell in heaven are those living in the New Jerusalem.

These blasphemies of the antichrist (global ruler) are also given by Paul as the way we are to recognize the antichrist.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 ESV Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, (2) not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. (3) Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (4) who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

Is there any doubt that Paul had Daniel 11:36 in mind when he wrote these words? The "Day of the Lord" (verse 2) begins after the end of this present age. It's after the seventy weeks. The "Day of the Lord" begins at the "appointed time," after the New Jerusalem appears. The "day of the Lord" is the millennium that begins with the "blessed hope" of Christ's appearance.

Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ;

The Old Testament talks a lot about the "Day of the Lord." Remember that the sixth seal is when the New Jerusalem appears. This happen when we will see the signs in the sun, moon, and stars. The signs in the sun, moon, and stars are before the Day of the Lord begins. I believe the New Jerusalem appears six months before the Day of the Lord begins.

Acts 2:19-21 I will show wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and billows of smoke. (20) The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, **before** the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. (21) It will be, that whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Joel 2:30-32 I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, fire, and pillars of smoke. (31) The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, **before** the great and terrible day of Yahweh comes. (32) It will happen that whoever will call on the name of Yahweh shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as Yahweh has said, and among the remnant, those whom Yahweh calls.

Isaiah 13:6-11 Wail; for the day of Yahweh is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. (7) Therefore all hands will be feeble, and everyone's heart will melt. (8) They will be dismayed. Pangs and sorrows will seize them. They will be in pain like a woman in labor. They will look in amazement one at another. Their faces will be faces of flame. (9) Behold, the day of Yahweh comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land a desolation, and to destroy its sinners out of it. (10) For the stars of the sky and its constellations will not give their light. The sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. (11) I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity. I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will humble the haughtiness of the terrible.

Amos 5:18-20 "Woe to you who desire the day of Yahweh! Why do you long for the day of Yahweh? It is darkness, and not light. (19) As if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; Or he went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a snake bit him. (20) Won't the day of Yahweh be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?

John 9:3-4 Jesus answered, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but, that the works of God might be revealed in him. (4) I must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day. The night is coming, when no one can work.

Malachi 4:4-6 "Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded to him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and ordinances. (5) Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Yahweh comes. (6) He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

Let's look back as 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 ESV Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (4) who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

The Day of the Lord cannot come until the man of lawlessness is revealed. He is revealed by his blasphemies. The antichrist is further revealed when the abomination of desolation is set up in the middle of the seven years. The temple will probably not be built until the first half of the week of the covenant. And the man of lawlessness cannot set himself up in the temple until the temple is built. Also, immediately after these verses, Paul tells us that the restrainer prevents the man of lawlessness from being revealed.

2 Thessalonians 2:5-6 ESV Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? (6) And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.

As we have already discussed, Michael is the restrainer that holds back the antichrist from ruling the world. This will continue until the start of the tribulation. The antichrist will not rule the globe until after the abomination of desolation. At that point in time, we will know for absolute certain who the antichrist, the global ruler, will be. But before that, we can get a really good idea because he will probably blaspheme those who live in heaven.

First, the New Jerusalem will appear and stop the attack on Israel prophesied in Ezekiel 38. This terrifies the world. The world will then be told that Christ has returned and that he protects Israel. This terrifies the world even more. If it were just aliens, much of the world would assume that the aliens come in peace. But the world really doesn't want to hear that Jesus Christ will have really returned and is getting ready to set up his kingdom. After the New Jerusalem appears, there is silence in heaven for perhaps six months. Everyone is waiting for the appointed time, which is the Day of the Lord, to begin. But one or more people will come against Christ and start blaspheming Christ and those who live in heaven. This is the start of the rebellion that will come. This is the spirit of antichrist. This will give us a good indication as to who the global ruler might be.

Six months later the Day of the Lord begins and the two witnesses begin to prophesy. So the Day of the Lord will not come until after the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed through his blasphemies. But we might not know for sure who he will be until the middle of the seven-year covenant, when he sets himself up in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

OK, now back to Daniel 11. The next verse in Daniel speaks further to the pride of the antichrist (global ruler) who magnifies himself above all gods.

Daniel 11:37 Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all.

This verse says the antichrist will "magnify himself above all." This is a continuation of the pride of the global ruler. Remember that verse 36 starts out with, "The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god." To "magnify himself above all" (verse 37) simply echoes this primary characteristic of the global ruler which Paul calls "the man of lawlessness." Again, Paul calls him that because he does anything he pleases according to his own will.

Joel Richardson believes the "gods of his fathers" is a common Old Testament term that is a reference to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But in this case, that would not mean the antichrist is Jewish. I think Richardson is correct. Richardson also states the "desire of women" is a Hebrew phrase that relates to the Messiah. In other words, Hebrew women desired to be the mother of the Messiah. Again, I think Richardson is correct. So the antichrist rejects the God of the Christians and Jews as well as Jesus being the Messiah, the son of Mary and the Son of God. We certainly know that Islam rejects Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Daniel 11:38-39 But in his place shall he honor the god of fortresses; and a god whom his fathers didn't know shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. (39) He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god: whoever acknowledges *him* he will increase with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for a price.

The verse seems to be saying that the antichrist is actually able to defeat strong fortresses with the help of a god. The antichrist will have military powers with the help of a foreign god. Remember that the New Jerusalem does not come from the nineteenth century invention of a "spiritual realm." Heaven is the universe. It's what we see when we look at the sky. The angels are men that are not from this world. They are aliens. But what about the demons? Would not the demons also be from other worlds? Would not the demons also possess UFOs or other spaceship vessels? Verse 39 says the antichrist gets help from a "foreign god." Would not demons be "alien gods?"

Also, when Michael takes a stand and there is a war in heaven we know that he is fighting demonic forces. In many respects, Daniel 8 is a condensed version of Daniel 11. Both work their way through history from Alexander the Great down to Antiochus Epiphanes. Both speak of the abomination of desolation. In Daniel 8, the forces of the antichrist, to some degree, even defeat the angelic forces in heaven. Therefore, to some degree, the antichrist is given the literal military power of UFOs and alien forces.

Daniel 8:10-11 ESV It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. (11) It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown.

I think the antichrist is able to use this demonic alien UFO military power in order to secure his global reign. It's like the states of the United States which are now subject, for all practical purposes, to the rule of the federal government, as enforced by the US military. The states do not have the option to secede.

Some countries might turn over their sovereignty without really realizing it at first. Others will refuse and force the antichrist to take military action. If the antichrist has access to military powers from "alien gods," it's much more likely that he will be able to get all the countries of the globe to unite into one government. Even the threat of military action from (demonic) UFOs would be enough for most to turn over their sovereignty.

When talking about UFOs, many will bring up the verse, "As it was in the days of Noah." A number of books have been written about the return of the Nephilim and alien abductions. I think it's entirely possible that people are being abducted by demonic aliens. But I do not share in the idea that Jesus was saying these type of events from the days of Noah would happen again. Let's look at the verse in context.

Matthew 24:36-39 ESV "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. (37) For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (38) For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, (39) and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

I cringe every time I hear some guy introducing his book or DVD by saying that he always wondered what Jesus meant by, "As it was in the days of Noah." Then they say, let's look back at what Genesis says about the days of Noah. This is taking the verse way out of context. Jesus was simply saying that the coming of the Son of Man would be at a time when the world does not expect it to happen. (The New Jerusalem will appear at a time when the world is not expecting it to happen.) He's not saying that there are other parallels between the two time periods. Any other possible parallels are pure speculation, and should not be presented as fulfillment of this verse. When this is their very first verse used to make their case, and it's so obviously taken out of context, I tend to not buy the book. Nevertheless, for Scriptural reasons completely unrelated to this verse, I believe some of the UFOs are in fact controlled by demonic aliens.

Ok, now back to Daniel 11. Starting with verse 40, there is a bit of controversy. First of all, the verse begins with, "At the time of the end." So it can be talking about a slightly different topic or time. Secondly, the terminology goes back to the "king of the north" and the "king of the south." This terminology was used earlier in the vision when it was talking about two of the four kingdoms of Alexander's generals after his death. The king of the south was the Ptolemaic kingdom, which was basically Egypt. The king of the north was the Seleucid Empire, over which Antiochus Epiphanes reigned.

Antiochus led two wars against Egypt. Antiochus set up an abomination of desolation (Daniel 11:31). The prophecy jumps from the time of that abomination to the end-times abomination of desolation. Most Bible scholars agree that Antiochus Epiphanes is a type for the antichrist. The abomination of desolation is not the only thing that will be repeated. Apparently this conflict between the Seleucid Empire (Turkey or Syria) and the Ptolemaic kingdom (Egypt) will resume in the end times. We are starting to see the beginnings of that in the Arab Springs.

Daniel 11:40 At the time of the end shall the king of the south contend with him; and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass through.

As stated earlier, there is a bit of controversy here. Verses 36 to 39 are clearly talking about the man of lawlessness, who will rule the world. Is the man of lawlessness the same king as the king of the north? If the king of the north is not the antichrist, then there is a big problem.

Many dispensationalists say the king of the north is destroyed before the great tribulation. Why would the king of the north, who is associated with Antiochus Epiphanes, be out of the picture before the great tribulation begins? Didn't Antiochus Epiphanes set up the abomination of desolation in Daniel 11:31? If so, then why is there a prophetic connection between Antiochus Epiphanes and the abomination of desolation associated with the antichrist?

The reason for their argument is they believe the Muslims will be defeated before the antichrist reigns. They believe the antichrist comes from a revived Roman Empire, with the world government rising out of Europe, which is west. But the king of the north is clearly from the north, as was Antiochus Epiphanes. The king of the north is not from Europe. Dispensationalists equate this battle to be about the same time as Ezekiel 38-39. This is said to be pre-tribulation for the same reason. They need to get the Muslims out of the picture before we would see a world government rising out of Europe. To make this case, the king of the north fights with the king of the south and basically they annihilate each other.

There is also a two-king view that states the king of the north is the same person as the man of lawlessness. The problem with this view is that it does not read naturally. The text describes the king who does as he wills. Then verse 40 has a transitional phrase, "At the time of the end." After that, the text begins to refer to the two kings as the king of the north and the king of the south. If the king of the north is the same as the king of verses 36 to 39, why does the text not begin by calling him the king of the north?

An alternative view is to consider that there are two beasts in Revelation 13. The second beast is later referred to as the false prophet. We have assumed that the false prophet is simply the antichrist's side-kick, and that he is not mentioned in Bible prophecy prior to Revelation. However, when Christ defeats the antichrist at Armageddon, both the beast and the antichrist are thrown alive into the lake of fire. But the rest of their armies are simply killed. In other words, they are both treated as antichrist leaders and not simply followers. Could it be that both are in Old Testament Bible prophecy? What if the false prophet is the king of the north and the man of lawlessness is the king who does as he pleases? This would mean there are indeed three kings in these verses of Daniel.

In Revelation 13, I believe the statue of the first beast, set up for all the world to worship, is the abomination of desolation. This statue is set up by the false prophet. In other words, it's the false prophet who is equated to Antiochus Epiphanes. He is the one who sets up the abomination of desolation. Antiochus

Epiphanes is a king of the north (the Seleucid empire.) So he is more responsible for directly coming against Israel. If this is the case, then the false prophet would be the Mahdi. He would be Gog, from the land of Magog, which is to the north in Turkey or Syria. He would probably be one of the ten kings. He would be the head of the Islamic region of the world. And he would be an antichrist. But he is a separate antichrist from the man of lawlessness, who will rule over every nation, tribe, people, and language.

At this time, the antichrist (Gog) has unsuccessfully attacked Israel as per Ezekiel 38. It becomes clear that God is not going to let Israel be destroyed. So the antichrist must talk peace with Israel until his Islamic mind again sees an opportunity to destroy Israel. He turns to building the Islamic Caliphate. He will have had the northern Islamic nations of Turkey, Syria, and Iran prior to the attack on Israel. He will also have Libya and (North) Sudan. But noticeably absent from the nations in Ezekiel 38 is Egypt, which is the king of the south with regard to the historically unfulfilled part of Daniel's vision.

Daniel 11:40-41 At the time of the end shall the king of the south contend with him; and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass through. (41) He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.

So the battles begin. The false prophet goes to war with other Islamic nations in order to establish his Islamic Caliphate. Edom, Moab and Ammon is a reference to Jordan. Apparently Jordan is not conquered at this time. Perhaps Jordan joins the Caliphate when it becomes apparent there is no alternative.

Daniel 11:42-45 He shall stretch forth his hand also on the countries; and the land of Egypt shall not escape. (43) But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. (44) But news out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him; and he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to sweep away many. (45) He shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

It would seem that Egypt is one of the main Islamic countries that is conquered. Remember that Egypt is consciously absent from those who attack Israel in Ezekiel 38. This is not just an argument of silence. Libya and (Northern) Sudan are listed in Ezekiel 38. And they are on southern and western borders of Egypt. Here in Daniel 11, Egypt is the main country mentioned that is conquered. And yet apparently other countries are also conquered. Libya and (Northern) Sudan are also mentioned. But it's a little unclear if they are conquered. This translation, and the KJV, says they are "at his steps." The ESV says they are "in his train." The NIV says they are "in submission." I think they allow themselves to be conquered without putting up much of a fight.

With the three-king view of Daniel 11:36-45 we see the only Old Testament passage that speaks of both beasts of Revelation 13. We have the man of lawlessness, or the global ruler, immediately followed by the false prophet. The three-king view, interpreted in this way makes the text read much cleaner than either trying to read it as two kings, or saying that the king of the north is defeated. This then, is one of the key verses in support of the two-beast Islamic antichrist perspective, as stated in the subtitle of this book.

Let's put it all together. The first half of the week is characterized by the world being terrified by the appearance of the New Jerusalem. This becomes proof that we are not alone in the universe. The antichrist blasphemes Christ and those who live in heaven. The false prophet battles various Islamic nations to set up the Islamic Caliphate. The nations of the world begin to unite into ten regions of the world, ruled by ten kings. The antichrist (first beast) has the military help of UFOs controlled by demonic forces. In the middle of the week, Michael fights Satan and these demonic forces, throwing them down to the earth. By this time, the antichrist will have authority over every nation, tribe, people, and language. During the second half of the seven-year week, "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (Daniel 12:1). This is the great tribulation.

Chapter 9

Daniel 7 - The Building of the World Government

Traditionally, the four beasts of Daniel 7 are identified as Babylon, Medes-Persia, Alexander the Great, and Rome. But Daniel 7:17 NIV says, “The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth.” At the time of this vision, Babylon was only a couple of years away from being conquered by the Medes and the Persians. Babylon, and the Medes-Persians had long since risen from the earth. Also, Daniel 7:11-12 tells us that when the fourth beast is destroyed, the other three will be stripped of their authority but will be allowed to live for a period of time. How can ancient long-dead kingdoms be allowed to live for a season and a time? This verse rules out ancient kingdoms, which will have been long gone when the fourth beast is destroyed.

Daniel 7:2-3 Daniel spoke and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the sky broke forth on the great sea. (3) Four great animals [beasts] came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

Daniel 7:17-18 These great animals [beasts], which are four, are four kings, who shall arise out of the earth. (18) But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.

Daniel 7:11-12 I saw at that time because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke; I saw even until the animal was slain, and its body destroyed, and it was given to be burned with fire. (12) As for the rest of the animals [beasts], their dominion was taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

Another point is that the four beasts all come out of the sea at the same time. The fourth beast definitely comes into prominence after the three. But the three remain for a season and a time after the fourth is destroyed. All this evidence speaks against these four beasts as being four ancient empires. And the destruction of the fourth beast puts the context of all the four in the end times. In other words, verse 18 would seem to indicate that all four beasts are overcome by the kingdom of the Most High.

Lion	Lion with wings of an eagle. The wings are torn off. It stood on two feet like a man. Heart of a man.	England and the United States
Bear	Three ribs in its mouth. It's told to eat its fill of flesh.	Russia
Leopard	Four wings like bird on its back. Four heads.	European Union
Fourth Beast	Terrifying and frightening and very powerful. Large iron teeth. Crushed and devoured its victims and trample underfoot whatever was left. Different from the other beasts. It has ten horns.	United Nations

The Lion (Daniel 7:4) is England and the United States. The Lion has wings of an eagle. The wings are torn off. It stands up on two feet like a man. It is given the heart of a man. The symbol of England is the Lion, standing up like a man. The eagle wings represent the United States, torn off from England at the US Revolutionary War.

The Bear (Daniel 7:5) is Russia. The Bear has three ribs in its mouth. The three ribs are the Baltic States which were absorbed into the USSR (Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia). These states were absorbed into the USSR unlike any of the other states of the old Soviet Union. The Bear is told to eat it's fill of flesh. Joseph Stalin executed 1 million political offenders, 14.5 million needlessly starved to death. 9.5 million were deported, exiled, or imprisoned in work camps. An estimated 5 million were sent to "Gulag Archipelago" never to return alive.

The Leopard (Daniel 7:6) is the European Union. It has four wings like a bird on its back. It has four heads and is given authority to rule. The EU was originally a series of economic treaties that over time are turning into a federalization of states, similar to the United States. The EU began with the Treaty of Rome, in 1957. These were the four states of France, West Germany, Italy, and Benelux. (Benelux is Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxemburg.) The four wings, and possibly the four heads, are these four original states.

The fourth beast (Daniel 7:7) is the United Nations. The fourth beast is like no other beast. It's different from the former three. The fourth beast is terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It has large iron teeth. It will crush and devour its victims and trample underfoot whatever was left. This beast has the ten horns. The fourth beast is the kingdom of the antichrist.

Daniel 7:7 ESV After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

The UN is a government that is different from the other three beasts (Daniel 7:7). This government rules all the nations of the world, but does not have its own geographical nation. The UN is a government, but it has not had the military power needed to enforce its "resolutions." In other words, it does not yet have its teeth. However, the fourth beast will have large iron teeth that will crush and devour its victims. UN resolutions are considered international law, but the UN is not always able to enforce its laws. More and more, however, that is changing. The militaries of the world are shifting to the United Nations. The UN was formed right after World War II. We have been under a one-world government for the entire baby-boom generation. But its power has been slowly increasing, like the slow boiling of water with a frog in the pot.

The first three beasts represent nations which directly influence and try to control Israel. The United Nations also tries to directly influence and control Israel. These four beasts, which influence and try to control Israel, can be seen in the organization of nations called the Middle East Quartet. This organization was established in 2002 by Spanish Prime Minister Aznar. The Middle East Quartet consists of the same four powers: The United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations. On June 27, 2007, Tony Blair was appointed as special envoy to the Quartet. This was the day he resigned as Prime Minister of England.

Representatives of the Middle East Quartet are:

UN — Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry
European Union — High Representative Baroness Ashton of Upholland
Russian Federation — Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov
United States of America — Secretary of State John F. Kerry
Special Envoy — Tony Blair

The total purpose of the Quartet is to solve the Middle East problems of Israel and the Palestinians. The Quartet is the author of the Road Map for Peace. The peace treaty process, which began in Annapolis, MD in November of 2007, should be watched. This could turn into a treaty similar to the Oslo Accords seven-year treaty which was signed in September of 1993. That treaty deliberately left out critical issues such as the refugees, Israel settlements, borders, and most importantly, the issue of Jerusalem. This next treaty is expected to cover all the issues, and will probably be more of a unilateral agreement that is enforced by the Middle East Quartet. (In other words, by the four beasts.)

This next treaty with the four beasts might or might not be a seven-year treaty. The covenant of Daniel 9:27 does not have to be interpreted as being with the antichrist, and no other place in Scripture speaks of a seven-year covenant. However, if the coming peace treaty makes East Jerusalem be an international city, controlled by the UN, or if it turns East Jerusalem over to the Palestinians, then it might signal the 42-month reign of the antichrist where Old Jerusalem is trampled upon by Gentiles for 42 months (Revelation 11:2). (Old Jerusalem is today East Jerusalem.)

This three and a half year period (not seven), which is the reign of the antichrist, can also be seen here in Daniel 7. In verse 25 the three and a half year period is spoken of as a time, times, and half a time. Under the coming New World Order, the world will be united into ten economic regions of the world, such as the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that will eventually become ten nations of the world. These are seen here as ten horns on the head of the fourth beast.

Chapter 10

Daniel 8 and 12 - The War in Heaven; The Abomination of Desolation

*Michael will Take a Stand - War in Heaven
The abomination of desolation will be set up.*

Michael "takes a stand." Then we have the great tribulation, followed by the resurrection. After that, we have Christ's Messianic reign where those who will reign with Christ will turn many to righteousness.

Daniel 12:1-3 "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who shall be found written in the book. (2) Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (3) Those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the expanse; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

Michael takes a stand, and then we move into the second half of the seven-year week. What is significant about Michael taking a stand? This verse in Revelation will shed more light on the subject.

Revelation 12:6-14 The woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that there they may nourish her one thousand two hundred sixty days. (7) There was war in the sky. Michael and his angels made war on the dragon. The dragon and his angels made war. (8) They didn't prevail, neither was a place found for him any more in heaven. (9) The great dragon was thrown down, the old serpent, he who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (10) I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now is come the salvation, the power, and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ; for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. (11) They overcame him because of the Lamb's blood, and because of the word of their testimony.

They didn't love their life, even to death. (12) Therefore rejoice, heavens, and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has gone down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time." (13) When the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. (14) Two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, so that she might be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

This passage tells us about a war in heaven with Michael (verse 7) and his angels fighting against Satan and his angels (verse 9). Michael drives Satan and his angels out of heaven down to the earth. Those in heaven rejoice. But woe to the earth because Satan and his angels are thrown down out of heaven (verse 12).

When does this happen? In verse 6, the woman is nourished for 1260 days. In verse 14, the woman is nourished for a time, times, and half a time. 1260 days corresponds to the 1260 days that the two witnesses prophesy (Revelation 11:3). The time, times, and half a time corresponds to the time when the antichrist reigns (Daniel 7:25). We know the antichrist reigns 42 months (Revelation 11:2, 13:5) over every nation, tribe, people, and language. So the 1260 days would most likely be the first half of the seven-year period, and the time, times, and half a time would be the second half. The woman is Israel, with the Gentile believers grafted into Israel. So apparently this battle between Michael and Satan is in the middle of the seven-year "week."

Revelation 11:7-8 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. (8) Their dead bodies will be in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

The two witnesses will prophesy for 1260 days. "When they have finished their testimony," after the 1260 days, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them. They are not simply killed. A war seems to be required. I believe this is the same war as the war in heaven where Michael takes a stand. Thus, the war in heaven is in the middle of the covenant for seven years, right before the abomination of desolation.

Daniel 8:9-12 ESV Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. (10) It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. (11) It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. (12) And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper.

Here we see the battle in heaven a bit more from the antichrist's perspective. The antichrist will actually throw some of Michael's angels (stars) down to the earth and trample upon them. To trample upon means to control. This does not mean they are killed. It means they are put under restraints; perhaps imprisoned. We also see here that the war in heaven is closely associated with the abomination of desolation. The regular burnt offering is stopped because of transgression.

Will the antichrist really have the ability to fight Michael's angels and those who live in the New Jerusalem? Remember that the antichrist will be in league with Satan. This verse seems to verify that the antichrist will have access to "alien" forces. Remember that "foreign" means "alien."

Daniel 11:39 He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.

The abomination of desolation is in the midst of the covenant for seven years. It marks the time when the antichrist has gained full global power and rules over every nation, tribe, people, and language. But what is the abomination of desolation? The single vision of Daniel 10 through 12 has two different references to the abomination (Daniel 11:31, 12:11).

The abomination of Daniel 11:31 was fulfilled at the time of the Maccabees (168 BC). The prophecies of Daniel 11:1-31 are fulfilled by very precise and detailed events in history. And those events of history leads us from Alexander the Great right up to the statue of Zeus on the temple mount, at the time of the Maccabees. Antiochus Epiphanes conquered Jerusalem, put an end to the sacrifice and offering, and set up an abomination that causes desolation. The abomination was a statue of Zeus on the temple mount.

These precise events in history are so accurate that the liberals try to claim Daniel was written after the time of the Maccabees. Why do they say the time of the Maccabees? It's because everything up to the abomination of 168 BC was extremely accurate. And the liberals don't believe in precisely accurate fulfilled prophecy. But the verses from 36-45 have nothing that liberals would worry about. That's because these verses are not yet fulfilled. We can expect that verses 36-45 will have the same level of accuracy as the first part of the vision.

Jesus said, "So when you see standing in the holy place, 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel" (Mat. 24:15). Daniel 11:31 is the real key to just what is the abomination that we will see. Daniel 11:31 was already fulfilled when Jesus spoke these words on the Mount of Olives. Therefore, Jesus is saying that what happened in 168 BC will happen again. Daniel 11:35 is a transition from the time of the Maccabees to the time of the end. It's a transition from the abomination at the time of the Maccabees (Daniel 11:31) to the abomination at the time of the end (Daniel 12:11). Daniel's prophecy goes from Alexander to the first abomination. Antiochus Epiphanes was a type of antichrist. And Daniel 11:40-45 picks up with prophecy about the antichrist at the time of the end. So Daniel's prophecy jumps from the antichrist at the time of the Maccabees to the antichrist at the time of the end.

Here is a quote from the book of first Maccabees about that first abomination. I don't consider Maccabees to be Scripture. But whether it's Scripture or not is unimportant. It is considered an accurate historical reference. The book of Maccabees was around at the time of Jesus. The disciples would have known about the book. Maccabees is where the Jews get Hanukkah. It's a Jewish festival in celebration of the victory after this event. Jesus and the disciples were Jews, so they celebrated Hanukkah (John 10:22). Since they knew about Hanukkah, and they knew about Daniel, they most likely knew the term "abomination of desolation" and associated it with Hanukkah. This is quoted from the New American [Catholic] Bible:

1 Maccabees 1:54-63 On the fifteenth day of the month Chislev, [Hanukkah] in the year one hundred and forty-five [December, 167 BC], the king erected the horrible abomination upon the altar of holocausts, and in the surrounding cities of Judah they built pagan altars. (55) They also burnt incense at the doors of houses and in the streets. (56) Any scrolls of the law which they found they tore up and burnt. (57) Whoever was found with a scroll of the covenant, and whoever observed the law, was condemned to death

by royal decree. (58) So they used their power against Israel, against those who were caught, each month, in the cities. (59) On the twenty-fifth day of each month they sacrificed on the altar erected over the altar of holocausts. (60) Women who had their children circumcised were put to death, in keeping with the decree, (61) with the babies hung from their necks; their families also and those who had circumcised them were killed. (62) But many in Israel were determined and resolved in their hearts not to eat anything unclean; (63) they preferred to die rather than to be defiled with unclean food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. Terrible affliction was upon Israel.

Antiochus Epiphanes conquered Jerusalem, put an end to the sacrifice and offering, and set up an abomination that causes desolation. The abomination was a statue of Zeus on the temple mount. This happened in Jesus' past. He is saying it will happen again. The disciples would have recognized the term: "abomination of desolation." They would have recognized the term, so Jesus is saying to look for what previously happened to happen again.

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold and required that "peoples, nations and men of every language" (Daniel 3:4 NIV) worship the image. In Revelation, the antichrist is "given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast — all whose names have not been written in the book of life" (Revelation 13:7b-8a NIV). The false prophet sets up an image and requires all those who dwell on the earth to worship the image (Revelation 13:14-15). I believe the abomination of desolation is this image in Rev 13. Jesus said the abomination will be "standing in the holy place." I believe it will be erected on the "wing (edge or extremity) of the temple" (Daniel. 9:27). If the temple were built to face east, as it must, and were built to line up with the eastern gate, the Dome of the Rock would be on the south side Gentile courtyard (Revelation 11:2). The Gentile courtyard is like a wing of the temple. It's on the "edge or extremity," (north and south sides,) of the temple.

The Temple Mount is recognized as holy by three major world religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam). The antichrist (global ruler) sets himself up as god in the temple (2nd Thessalonians 2:4). How can the statue be anywhere else?

Let's review what we have learned about the week of the covenant, which takes place after the appointed time of the end. The first half of the week is characterized by the world being terrified by the appearance of the New Jerusalem. This becomes proof that we are not alone in the universe. The Islamic antichrist (false prophet) battles various Islamic nations to set up the Islamic Caliphate. The antichrist (global ruler) is boastful and prideful against the New Jerusalem, which rallies the world to join the cause of the antichrist against Christ and those who live in heaven. In the middle of the week, Michael "takes a stand" (Daniel 12:1) and fights Satan and his demonic forces, throwing them down to the earth. By this time, the global antichrist will have authority over every nation, tribe, people, and language. During the second half of the seven-year week, "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (Daniel 12:1). This is the great tribulation.

Chapter 11

Ezekiel 39 - Armageddon

Previously, we looked at Ezekiel 38 and argued that Ezekiel 38 and 39 are two separate visions of two different battles. Thus, Ezekiel 38 occurs just before the week of the covenant whereas Ezekiel 39 occurs just after the week of the covenant. At this point, we need to look at Ezekiel 39 to see why this vision must be Armageddon, which occurs just after the week of the covenant.

Ezekiel 39:7 ESV "And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

How can Ezekiel 39 be pre-tribulation if the antichrist later profanes the name of the Lord? One of the most central and repeated prophecies about the antichrist is his boastful words against God. And naturally those who follow this global leader will be doing likewise.

Daniel 7:11 NIV "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.

Daniel 11:36 NIV "The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.

2 Thessalonians 2:4 NIV 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.

Revelation 13:5-7 A mouth speaking great things and blasphemy was given to him. Authority to make war for forty-two months was given to him. (6) He opened his mouth for blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his dwelling, those who dwell in heaven. (7) It was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. Authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation was given to him.

Another major point for Ezekiel 39 being Armageddon is this verse:

Ezekiel 39:4 ESV You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.

This seems to be the Old Testament verse that Jesus alludes to in the following:

Matthew 24:28-29a ESV Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. (29) "Immediately after the tribulation of those days..."

This reference to the vultures is a clear allusion to Armageddon. Also, we have a much more detailed description of Armageddon in Revelation 19.

Revelation 19:17-18 ESV Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, (18) to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great."

These connections clearly equate Ezekiel 39 with Armageddon. Back in Ezekiel 39 we read:

Ezekiel 39:17-20 ESV "As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD: Speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field, 'Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. (18) You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth--of rams, of lambs, and of he-goats, of bulls, all of them fat beasts of Bashan. (19) And you shall eat fat till you are filled, and drink blood till you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. (20) And you shall be filled at my table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all kinds of warriors,' declares the Lord GOD.

At this point, it becomes impossible to separate Ezekiel 39 from Armageddon. The very next verse in Ezekiel, and the rest of the chapter, seems to speak of a final point when Christ sets up his earthly kingdom and rules over all the nations.

Ezekiel 39:21-29 I will set my glory among the nations; and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. (22) So the house of Israel shall know that I am Yahweh their God, from that day and forward. (23) The nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they trespassed against me, and I hid my face from them: so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they fell all of them by the sword. (24) According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions did I to them; and I hid my face from them. (25) Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Now will I bring back the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy name. (26) They shall bear their shame, and all their trespasses by which they have trespassed against me, when they shall dwell securely in their land, and none shall make them afraid; (27) when I have brought them back from the peoples, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations. (28) They shall know that I am Yahweh their God, in that I caused them to go into captivity among the nations, and have gathered them to their own land; and I will leave none of them any more there; (29) neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit on the house of Israel, says the Lord Yahweh.

This is conclusive evidence that Ezekiel 39 is Armageddon, which is after the great tribulation.

The next chapter is titled, "Daniel 12:1-3 - The Resurrection and the Millennial Reign." Chronologically speaking, Armageddon is between the resurrection and the millennial reign. But the resurrection and the millennial reign really need to be discussed together as one topic. So instead of trying to split the resurrection, Armageddon, and the millennial reign into three topics, I decided to include the resurrection with the last topic in this sequence of events.

Chapter 12

Daniel 12:1-3 - The Resurrection and the Millennial Reign

The first verse in the Bible that speaks of the resurrection is in Isaiah 26. Isaiah yearns for the coming of the Lord. This happens at the time of the resurrection. When the Lord comes and judges (rules over) the world, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. So Isaiah is talking about the Messianic reign of Christ. But in the mean time, evil rulers have ruled over Israel. There are several more important points to learn from this passage.

Isaiah 26:9-14 ESV My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. (10) If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the LORD. (11) O LORD, your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it. Let them see your zeal for your people, and be ashamed. Let the fire for your adversaries consume them. (12) O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works. (13) O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance. (14) They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise; to that end you have visited them with destruction and wiped out all remembrance of them.

According to these verses in Isaiah, not everyone is resurrected. Evil people are not resurrected. But who exactly are the evil? The evil are those who know about God but ignore God. God's hand is lifted up, but they choose to not see it. They are God's adversaries, which means they are specifically against God. Some of them have ruled over Israel and were against the God of Israel. These evil men will not be resurrected. "They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise" (verse 14.) God has "wiped out all remembrance of them." The evil are not resurrected. But the strong implication here is that most people will be resurrected. For most people, if they see the hand of God, and know that God is real, they are not going to deliberately become one of God's enemies.

Isaiah 26:15-16 ESV But you have increased the nation, O LORD, you have increased the nation; you are glorified; you have enlarged all the borders of the land. (16) O LORD, in distress they sought you; they poured out a whispered prayer when your discipline was upon them.

God has taken care of Israel even during the hard times when ruled over by evil rulers. God has expanded their borders. But God disciplines those he loves.

Isaiah 26:17-18 ESV Like a pregnant woman who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, so were we because of you, O LORD; (18) we were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind. We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen.

Take careful note about the symbolism of the woman in labor. The actual birth is the resurrection. This symbol is used throughout Scripture in reference to the resurrection (Isaiah 26:17, 66:6-16, Hosea 13:12-14, Matthew 24:8, Mark 13:8, John 3:3-10, 1 Thessalonians 5:3, Revelation 12:1-5). But if one is not familiar with these first verses about the resurrection, this important symbol can be misinterpreted. For example, in John 3, to be "born again" refers to the resurrection. Israel is the woman in labor. In Old Testament times, Israel tried to bring righteousness to the world. But the dead remained dead. Israel only gave birth to wind. (This is Isaiah's poetry at work.) And Israel has not brought righteousness into the world.

Isaiah 26:19 ESV Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.

But God will provide a way. The dead will rise and the Messiah will reign over the nations. The world will learn righteousness under the reign of the Messiah. But the Bride of the Messiah, which is Israel, must first become righteous. And Gentile believers are grafted into Israel, which is the Bride of the Messiah.

Isaiah 26:20-21 ESV Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by. (21) For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.

After the resurrection is the wrath of God, poured out on the world. When God returns, the dead are raised. The wrath of God is poured out on the world after the resurrection. Obviously God will not pour out his wrath on those he has raised. That being the case, he is not going to pour out his wrath on any who might still be alive who have not intentionally become one of his enemies. Most of the world will have taken the mark of the beast. This explicitly declares one as an enemy of God by joining the antichrist in his blasphemy of God and of those who live in heaven, which is the New Jerusalem in orbit around the earth.

There are several other references to the resurrection in the Old Testament. But the next major verse about the resurrection is in Daniel 12. The climax of this long vision in Daniel 10-12 is the resurrection.

Daniel 12:1-3 ESV "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. (2) And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (3) And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

The resurrection verse of Isaiah 26:19-21 refers to the dead, about to be resurrected, as "you who dwell in the dust." Likewise, this verse in Daniel 12:1-3 refers to the dead, about to be resurrected, as "those who sleep in the dust of the earth." So both of these two major verses in the Old Testament about the resurrection say the dead are raised from the dust of the earth.

Yet somehow Christians believe this changed in New Testament times. Most Christians today believe the dead are either in heaven or hell. Most Christians today believe that everyone, whether in heaven or hell, will be resurrected. Of course for those in hell, they seemingly have to get a new resurrected body in order to be judged. For some reason, those in hell are already judged from the standpoint that they go to hell, and not heaven. But apparently they must be resurrected for the very short amount of time that it takes to get judged again, even though they have already been judged because they are already in hell. And this just happens to occur on the day of resurrection when those in heaven are also resurrected.

Of course it's just as confusing as to why those in heaven need to be resurrected. Apparently they are rejoicing in heaven but do not as yet have a body. Why doesn't God just go ahead and give them a body? Of course none of this confusion existed back in the Old Testament. People were simply dead in the dust of the earth. Their only hope of life was the resurrection itself.

Martha believed that she would see Lazarus "in the resurrection on the last day" (John 11:24). Martha had hope in the resurrection because that's what the Old Testament teaches. She didn't expect to see Lazarus in heaven before the resurrection. And apparently Christ taught the same. Christ told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-16). Isn't it rather anticlimactic for Christ to be the "resurrection and the life" if the righteous are already in heaven before the resurrection?

The Old Testament clearly teaches the dead will be raised from the dust of the earth. But did the Old Testament prophets get it wrong? Will they really be raised from heaven and hell? If the traditional Christian view of heaven-or-hell when you die is correct, then the dead are not raised from dust of the earth. They are raised from heaven and hell. But of course if these Old Testament prophets were really God's prophets, then they must have been correct. The dead really are still asleep in the dust of the earth.

Then there is the issue that Isaiah seemed to say not everyone will be resurrected. Remember Isaiah 26:14 spoke of evil rulers and said, "They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise." The verse in Daniel seems to agree. Daniel 12:2 says, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." Notice it does not say everyone will be resurrected. Many, but not all, are resurrected. The new point being revealed to Daniel is that within the many who are resurrected there are two different groups. Some are resurrected to everlasting life. Others are resurrected to shame and everlasting contempt. And of course some are not resurrected.

There is another interesting point that should not be overlooked. The verse says, "But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book." In other words, not everyone is resurrected. But those who are resurrected are those whose names are in the book of life. And of those in the Book of Life, there are two groups. Of course some will say this sentence is referring to those who delivered from the "time of trouble." But does being in the book of life really keep us from the "time of trouble?"

Dispensationalists might argue it's talking about the pre-tribulation rapture. But that doesn't work either. We know there will be believers during the great tribulation. Dispensationalists call them the "tribulation saints." If their names are written in the book of life, then why aren't they delivered along with the rest of the Church? The only explanation that works is to say that those in the book of life are resurrected. Those not in the book of life are not resurrected. And those resurrected are in two groups. Both groups are in the book of life. Why is it called the "book of life?" It's because they will be resurrected to be given life again.

All this may sound a bit confusing because there is a strong tendency to force one's New Testament beliefs back onto the Old Testament. Doing so is called "reinterpreting the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament." But it's very doubtful that Old Testament authors would have agreed with these interpretations. In the Old Testament, both the righteous and the wicked went to "Sheol." This is translated as "hell" in the King James Version. But it simply means "grave." It was the place for all the dead, both righteous and wicked. In the Old Testament, the only hope of life after death is the resurrection.

A better approach is to interpret the New Testament in the context of the Old Testament. In other words, if one has grown up with the Old Testament as being one's Bible, then how would one interpret the New Testament? This interpretation of Scripture is called "progressive revelation." When reading any passage of Scripture, we must purposefully forget what was written later. Later comes new revelation. But it will not alter what was believed by the older prophets. And those prophets wrote in a way that explained what they understood to the audience of their day. So we must interpret older Scripture strictly in the way that the audience of that time would have understood. Then later Scripture should only add more details to what was previously written. That's why it's called "progressive revelation."

But, one will argue, what about what the New Testament teaches? Doesn't the New Testament say that we all go to heaven or hell when we die? And doesn't the New Testament say that those who do not die in Christ will be raised to a resurrection of damnation (KJV)? Actually, in the Greek, John 5:28-29 says they are raised to a resurrection of judgment. This has been interpreted to be a resurrection of condemnation or damnation. Let's go back and take a close look at John 5, but this time let's interpret it in more along the lines of progressive revelation. In other words, let's interpret it from the framework of Isaiah 26 and Daniel 12:1-3, where most but not all are resurrected. And those who are resurrected are in two groups.

Acts 24:15 ESV having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

Those who complete their journey of sanctification would be the just. Those who do not, would be the unjust. There are two types of resurrections.

In the following passage, remember that Jesus is speaking to those who do not hear his voice. He is speaking to the wicked Pharisees and teachers of the law. They do not hear his voice. Christ's sheep hear his voice. Even Christ's lost sheep hear his voice. But most of the Pharisees and teachers of the law did not hear Christ's voice. This is important to remember.

John 5:21-23 ESV For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. (22) The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, (23) that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

The wicked are those to whom Jesus is speaking. They do not honor the Son. They do not hear his voice. So they will not be raised from the dead. This is clear to see when interpreted in the Old Testament context of Isaiah 26.

John 5:24 ESV Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Those who hear and believe will not be under judgment after the resurrection. They will have eternal life. The point here is that they hear and believe. The foolish lost sheep hear, but do not believe. Or they believe intellectually. But they do not really believe to do Christ's commands, which leads to the overcoming of sin. Since the foolish lost sheep hear Christ's voice, they will be resurrected. But they will still be under judgment.

John 5:25 ESV "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

Notice that not everyone will live. Only those who hear will live. Only those who hear Christ's voice will be resurrected. The Pharisees do not hear. But even the lost sheep hear Christ's voice. Those who are still his are his sheep. They are in his book. They have not been blotted from the book of life. These sheep belong to Christ even if they are still lost.

John 5:26-27 ESV For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. (27) And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

The Son will also be resurrected to have life in himself. It is only because the Son is resurrected that we can be resurrected, because we belong to Christ if we hear his voice. His sheep hear his voice.

John 5:28-29 ESV Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice (29) and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Both of these resurrections happen in the same “hour”. It’s not two different hours. And it’s not an hour that has been stretched into a thousand years. Both of these resurrections happen when Christ returns. The “hour” can mean “time”, which can be over the course of several years. Or it can mean a sequence of resurrections at the start of a future “time.” But it can’t mean two resurrections separated by a thousand years, which is more like an age.

We have already seen that only those who hear his voice will be resurrected. Verse 25 speaks of this same “hour” and says, “those who hear will live.” Only those who hear his voice will be resurrected. But verse 28 says, “All who are in the tombs will hear his voice.” The word “tombs” cannot be literal. Only the rich could afford tombs. As Jesus said, the “meek will inherit the earth.” Jesus is not saying only the rich will be resurrected. I believe “tombs” is a metaphor for those who await the resurrection. The “tombs” must be a metaphor for those who believe in the resurrection and hear Christ’s voice.

There are two types of resurrections here. “Those who have done good” are those who have completed their journey of sanctification. They no longer have sinful habits. They hear and believe to overcome sin. For them it’s a resurrection of life. They are no longer under judgment (verse 25).

Those who hear Christ’s voice but continue to sin are also resurrected. They have not as yet overcome all their sinful habits. So, it’s a resurrection of judgment. After the resurrection, the wise will no longer be under judgment. The foolish, however, will still be under judgment. That means they will not as yet have eternal life. They could die the second death during the age to come. Or, they could mature and later inherit eternal life. So they are still under judgment. It’s a resurrection of judgment, not a resurrection of damnation. (The Greek word used here is the word for “judgment.”)

Is this how the Jewish audience of that time would have interpreted these words of Jesus? Their presupposition, based on Isaiah 26, was that most, but not all, will be resurrected. If most, but not all, are resurrected, then we have three types of people. The wise are resurrected to a resurrection of life and are no longer under judgment. The foolish are resurrected to a resurrection that is still under judgment. The wicked will not be resurrected. But they will “come to life” at the end of the thousand years for the great white throne judgment and to be thrown into the lake of fire. Remember that Jesus was addressing the Pharisees and teachers of the law. These are the wicked to whom Jesus was warning. They did not hear Christ’s voice. They were in danger of being blotted from the book of life, so that they will not be resurrected.

What does it mean to be resurrected? It means you are being brought back to life. It means you are given the opportunity to live again. The grave is defeated. Condemnation or damnation is death. It’s not resurrection. The idea of a resurrection of damnation is an oxymoron.

Acts 24:15 ESV having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

Thus, there are three types of people in the grave. If you believe in heaven-or-hell when you die, you are forced into believing in only two. You could, however, believe in three types of people if you believe in hell-or-purgatory-or-hell. But the New Wine System provides a free-grace alternative to purgatory. Here is one verse, at the end of John's first letter, which speaks of all three types together.

1 John 5:16-20 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not leading to death [the foolish], he shall ask, and God will give him life for those who sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death. [the wicked] I don't say that he should make a request concerning this. (17) All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death. (18) We know that whoever is born of God doesn't sin [the wise], but he who was born of God keeps himself, and the evil one doesn't touch him. (19) We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (20) We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we know him who is true, and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

The New Wine System is based on interpreting the New Testament in the context of the Old Testament. Amillennialists object by disagreeing with the clear and literal interpretation of the Old Testament. They generally reinterpret the Old Testament to make it fit their presupposition of what the New Testament says. In the second century, much of the Church began to distance themselves from the Old Testament. There was even a movement to exclude the Old Testament from the canon. It was considered Jewish and too barbaric. The Old Testament was not excluded from the canon. But this type of thinking prevailed. Over the centuries, amillennialism was predominant for all Christians, both Catholics and Protestants. Amillennialism says that when Christ returns, the final judgment for all people takes place at that time. There is no millennial reign. So everyone's destiny is determined at the time of death.

When dispensationalism came along, the amillennial way of reading the New Testament remained firmly in place. The Church still went to heaven in the rapture when Christ returns. For the Church, there is no earthly reign. The more literal interpretation of Revelation 20 was allowed for by saying that it is in fulfillment of God's promise to the Jews. There was no longer a need to reinterpret the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, because future Bible prophecy was assumed to be talking only about Israel. And the Church was excluded from Israel. With regard to the Church, dispensationalism is really the same as amillennialism. But Paul seems to say we are grafted into Israel.

The amillennialists will object to this interpretation of John 5 by reinterpreting the Old Testament. And they will admit that the Jews, the very audience of Christ, would not have interpreted the Old Testament like an amillennialist. The dispensationalist will object by saying the hour is a thousand years, and pointing to Revelation 20. But did the audience of Jesus have Revelation 20? Would they have understood this hour to be a thousand years? The only thing they had as a frame of reference was the Old Testament passages about the resurrection. Thus Isaiah 26 and Daniel 12:1-3 is about all they had. We must interpret these words of Jesus in the context of those Old Testament passages, and not in the context of Revelation 20. And we must interpret the words of Jesus using the same Old Testament context as his audience would have understood. This is what is required if we are to be true to the hermeneutic of progressive revelation.

There are always ways to make Scripture fit your system. There are many doctrines out there. And every single one of them have explanations for every single verse. The question is, how well does our system harmonize with Scripture? Do we have Scriptural difficulties such as election vs. free will? How about grace vs.

works? Does salvation require fruits of the Spirit, as in Lordship Salvation? Or do the dispensationalists have it right when they argue Free Grace Salvation? Is salvation a one-time decision or a journey? If it's a journey, then what about Purgatory? Do children who die young go to hell? If not, then what about the children of Pagans? Is amillennialism correct? Or is it premillennialism? If it's premillennialism, then what is the purpose of the millennial reign? Is it just to fulfill Old Testament prophecy? If everyone's eternal destiny is decided at death, then why not just let eternity begin when Christ returns? And why does the New Testament have so many verses that we must spend hours in explanations in order to try and make these verses fit our system? Why did Jesus and Paul seem to disagree on so much, when we know they didn't?

Could it be that simply by letting an hour be an hour that all these problems disappear? As it turns out, the application of Old Testament Jewish eschatology to the New Testament Church solves seven major problems of Scripture, which have divided the Church over the centuries. Most of the New Testament was written by Jews. The New Wine System literally interprets Scripture along the same lines as the Jewish eschatology system of that day. The Jewish New Testament authors applied Old Testament prophecies about Israel to the New Testament Church. If we do the same, then seven major problems of Scripture are solved. In addition, many verses of other topics that have been hard to understand start fitting the system and become easily understood. For more information, refer to my book titled, *New Wine for the End Times*.

Now that we have Isaiah 26:9-21, Daniel 12:1-3, John 5:21-29, and Acts 24:15 under our belts, we can take a look at Revelation 20. Revelation 20 is to be read literally. But even then, it's not easily read. In other words, we don't want to take hard-to-interpret apocalyptic language, written years later, and force our interpretation of that language back onto simpler text written years earlier. I'll do this by going through a few verses of Revelation 20, in order. First, I will establish the context. Then I will follow John's flow of thought.

The context of Revelation 20 is right after Armageddon (from chapter 19.) The broader context is that of the tribulation. John sees the souls of the elect, who will rule with Christ over the nations.

Revelation 20:4a ESV Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.

Then, the focus of what John sees narrows. The focus becomes people who have died during the great tribulation. More specifically, John sees those who have been beheaded for refusing to take the mark of the beast.

Revelation 20:4b ESV Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.

They all come to life in order to reign with Christ. But the focus is still on those who have refused to take the mark of the beast.

Revelation 20:4c ESV They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

The "rest of the dead" do not as yet come to life. Who are they? It depends upon the group in focus. Yes, John had noted that many will reign with Christ. But his focus has been narrowed to those who refused to take the mark of the beast. John has focused on those who die in the tribulation. Therefore, the "rest" are those who did not refuse. They took the mark. They are now dead because of Armageddon. Taking the mark of the beast is an unpardonable sin. It's the rejection of Christ. So they cannot take part in the general resurrection. They must sleep until the thousand years are completed.

Revelation 20:5a ESV The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.

John is still talking about these souls coming to life. He has noted that those who took the mark have not, as yet, come to life. Now, John tells us this resurrection is the first resurrection. We already know there are two resurrections in the general resurrection. The first resurrection, from John 5:28-29, is for those who have done good. They hear Christ's voice and believe. The second resurrection is for those who still have sinful habits. They hear Christ's voice. But they still do evil.

So John is telling us that the coming to life that he sees is in fact the first of these two resurrections in the general resurrection. John waits and tells us this after he has told us about the "rest of the dead" to make it clear that is context of the souls he sees has not changed before associating this coming to life with the first resurrection.

When these two sentences of this verse are read with traditional premillennial views, the two sentences seem to be out of order. The reading becomes awkward. John is not saying that the "rest of the dead" come to life in the second resurrection.

But when it's understood that the first and the second resurrection are both part of the general resurrection, then these two sentences read more naturally.

Revelation 20:5b ESV This is the first resurrection.

John is still talking about the first resurrection. They are no longer under judgment. They cannot die. But those who are raised in the second resurrection are still under judgment. They can die the second death.

Revelation 20:6 ESV Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

The "rest of the dead" are those who take the mark of the beast during the great tribulation. The mark of the beast is an unpardonable sin. It's rejecting Christ. We can generalize from this and say the "rest of the dead" are representative of anyone to rejects Christ. They will die the second death. When you die the second death, you are no longer covered by the blood of Christ.

The millennial reign of Christ is all about bringing righteousness and salvation to the world. Anyone and everyone, from all generations, will have the opportunity to put their faith in Jesus Christ for the overcoming of sin. Christian perfection is required for inheriting the kingdom. But God does not give up on us if we don't make it before we die. The millennial reign is key to really understanding God's plan of salvation. Amillennialism and preterism really messed up the Church and taught us to read the New Testament out of the context of the Old Testament.

The point being made is that we need to go back to the basics of salvation and faith in Christ to completely overcome sin. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. And then, when people argue that very few will make it, remember that doesn't mean they will die and go to hell if they are not perfect when they die.

We become perfect by doing the works that the Father has given us to do. As we do the good works the Father has prepared for us, we are filled with the Holy Spirit to help us do the works. And when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we cannot sin, because God is in us and God cannot sin. But if we give into temptation, the Holy Spirit backs off. But because of Christ's blood, after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit became available to all who would repent and ask. We can continually become filled with the Holy Spirit again and again, so that when we are filled, we can't sin. Over time, we learn to be filled with the Holy Spirit all the time. We become perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect.

Part Two

Daniel from the Islamic Antichrist Perspective

This part of the book is a complete commentary on Daniel. The reader will find this commentary to be significantly different from other commentaries on Daniel. Some commentaries are futurist oriented while others are preterist oriented. Both of these traditional views of Daniel understand the legs of iron to be Rome. This book takes the Islamic antichrist perspective. From this perspective, the legs of iron is the Islamic Caliphate. You will find an abundance of Scriptural evidence for this view.

Since Revelation is interpreted in the context of Daniel and other Old Testament books, the Islamic antichrist perspective also has a dramatic impact on the interpretation of Revelation. I never really understood Revelation clearly until I learned to see Daniel from this perspective. Thus, this commentary on Daniel is important background information for part three of this book, which is a complete commentary on Revelation.

A second area in which this commentary diverges from the traditional is in Daniel's seventy weeks. The view taken in this commentary is based on the decree of Cyrus as the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. This view has vastly more support in Scripture, as I think you will see, than the traditional views held by both futurists and preterists. This view of Daniel 9 is also in harmony with the New Wine System, which says the Church must overcome all sinful habits before we can reign with Christ. But only a few in the Church will have done so by the time Christ returns at the end of the seventy weeks. Thus Christ confirms a covenant with the many for one more seven (outside of the seventy) in order to give the Church the opportunity to overcome sin. The majority of the Church goes through the seven-year covenant, which includes the great tribulation.

Every chapter of Daniel relates to the coming antichrists (beasts) of Revelation. Daniel is all about warning us about the end times. Most of the visions in Daniel also take on non-traditional views. I believe it's because the scroll of Daniel 12 has been opened for this generation to understand that which has been sealed. Not even Daniel was allowed to understand what we see today.

Chapter 13

Daniel Chapters 1-6

Antichrist Type

All of the stories and visions in Daniel, which were dated by Daniel, occur near three specific dates or events. The first event is when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah, bringing the Jews to Babylon (605 BC). The second event is when Belshazzar received power (556 BC). The third event is when Babylon, under the rule of Belshazzar, was conquered by the Medes and the Persians (539 BC). The vision of The Four Great Beasts (Daniel 7) occurred just after the second event, at the beginning of Belshazzar's rule.

Chronologically, there was a big time gap between chapter 2 about Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and chapter 7 about the vision of the four great beasts.

NIV Daniel 7:1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.

Daniel was given this vision 48 years after Nebuchadnezzar had the dream of the statue in chapter 2. Daniel has grown from a young man to an elderly man. Chapter 3, when Nebuchadnezzar set up the statue to be worshiped, happened sometime during the 48 years. Also chapter 4, when Nebuchadnezzar became a beast, is sometime during the 48 years. But these two chapters are not dated. After the 48 years, Daniel gets the vision of the four great beasts (Daniel 7), and then another important vision two years later (Daniel 8). Why does God pick this time to give Daniel these visions? This vision happened the very first year of the reign of Belshazzar, grand-son of Nebuchadnezzar. This is definitely not a coincidence considering there is a 48 year gap between the two dreams that are dated.

The book of Daniel is about the antichrist. It's also about Daniel living under the reign of antichrist types. Every vision and story in Daniel teaches us about the coming antichrist (or the coming two antichrists). Let's look at what each chapter progressively teaches us about the idea of the antichrist.

Chapter 2 is about the statue, which teaches us about the world government-kingdoms of the antichrists. These are world-government kingdoms which controlled the middle-eastern part of the world. (As we will see, this does not

include Rome, which is in the west.) We collectively call these kingdoms Babylon, after the first of the series, the head of the statue. As a prophetic symbol, Babylon returns in the end times (Revelation 17-18) and rules over the middle-east and, from a religious perspective, the rest of the world.

Chapter 3 is about the statue that Nebuchadnezzar sets up for all the world to worship. We will learn that this is prophetic of end times when the second beast, the middle-east antichrist, will set up a statue for all the world to worship. I believe that this statue is the abomination that causes desolation. Chapter 3 is about the choice that has to be made between worshipping the antichrist of that time, the world ruler, and worshipping God. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were officials in the kingdom of Babylon, but they chose God over worshipping the antichrist.

Chapter 4 really defines for us the beast, with God literally turning Nebuchadnezzar into a beast for seven periods of time, until he acknowledged the authority of God over himself. The beast is an earthly ruler that will not acknowledge the authority of God. Chapter 4 also gives us the symbolism of the tree, which is symbolic of kingdoms. And we will learn about the two trees in the Garden of Eden. These two trees represent two kingdoms from which we must choose. So this also relates to the choice between worshipping God or worshipping Satan and the antichrist.

It's very important to look at this dating, and then to see the significance of each of these chapters. Starting with chapter 2, Daniel's chapters progressively develop the idea of the antichrist.

By our definition of the antichrist, Nebuchadnezzar was not always an antichrist. He was turned into a beast, but then after the seven periods of time, he repented. Chapter 5 introduces us to Belshazzar by telling us about the end of his reign. As we will see, Belshazzar is the first real antichrist who did not repent. So he is a type for the end-times antichrist.

Daniel 5 is about the end of Belshazzar's rule. Daniel 6 happened after Belshazzar was dead. But Daniel 7 is a vision given to Daniel during the first year of Belshazzar's rule. These chapters are a bit out of chronological order. But actually the order does make sense since once you realize the significance. Belshazzar did not repent and that led to the fall of Babylon. "Mystery" Babylon returns in the middle-east at the time of the end. And the end-times antichrists do not repent. So the end times Babylon will also fall. Therefore, Belshazzar is very much a type for the end-times antichrist. More specifically, since Belshazzar is ruler of the

middle-east, Belshazzar would be a type for the false prophet, which is the ruler of the one-world false religion, symbolically equated to Babylon.

Chapter 6 is about Daniel in the lion's den. Chapter 6 also relates to our choice between worshipping God or the antichrist. As we will see, every chapter of Daniel is something about the antichrist and our choice between the two trees of the Garden of Eden. We must choose the tree of life, even if that choice gets us thrown in the fiery furnace, or into a lion's den. We must choose the tree of life, even if that choice brings death. When we choose the tree of life even when faced with death, we will be resurrected and given life again.

The chapters are a bit out of chronological order because chapters 1 to 6 give us Daniel's personal history, which are stories that teach us about living under the rule of an antichrist. The vision of the statue in chapter 2 was a dream given to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel interpreted the vision. As we will see, the meaning of the vision applies to the kingdoms that would follow Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. They are not kingdoms that directly relate to Israel. Chapters 7 to 12, on the other hand, are visions given directly to Daniel. These visions directly relate to Israel. They get more prophetic about the end time events relating to the two end times antichrists. They are more complex, and Daniel has trouble understanding them.

13.1) Daniel 1: Introduction

Verse one of Daniel chapter one gives us the date when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah (605 BC). This date is also given in Jeremiah 25:1 and 46:2. From Jeremiah 25:1, we also see that it was also the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule in Babylon. If you compare these two verses, you will see that Daniel 1:1 indicates it's the third year of Jehoiakim's reign. But Jeremiah 25:1 indicates it's the fourth year of Jehoiakim. (Jehoiakim was king of Judah when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah.) This is not a mistake. The Jews dated the first year as the actual year a king gained power. The Babylonians dated the first year of a king starting with the next new-year's day. In other words, they counted the first full calendar year as the first year of a king. In any case, Daniel's story begins in 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and brought the southern kingdom into captivity in Babylon.

The northern kingdom had already been conquered by the Assyrians in 701 BC. The northern kingdom never returned. They are considered to be the ten lost tribes of Israel. But the tribes of southern kingdom are the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. There were also some Levi there because they were the priestly

tribe. They needed to be in Jerusalem at the temple. But only these three tribes went to Babylon. And only these three tribes returned.

Daniel 1:21 says that Daniel remained in Babylon until the first year of King Cyrus. This was 539 BC, when the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon. Daniel was actually in Babylon a little longer. Daniel is just indicating that he was there during the entire time of the exile, during the entire seventy-year rule of Babylon over the people of Judah. The last vision recorded in Daniel (chapters 10-12) is dated as the third year of King Cyrus, 537 BC. Daniel was perhaps eighty-five or ninety years old by then. The seventy years of captivity was fulfilled in 537 BC, and the Jews were allowed to start returning to Jerusalem:

NIV Ezra 1:1-2 In the first year of Cyrus [539 BC] king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: (2) This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah."

Daniel chapter 1 gives us good introduction to the character of Daniel himself. This is important because we can learn from the uncompromising character of Daniel and his friends while living under the reign of an antichrist.

Daniel 1:3-6 ESV Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, (4) youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. (5) The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. (6) Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah.

Take note of the fact that these were the best and the brightest of the youth of Israel. They were young and impressionable men. Given the horrible events of their captivity, and the fate of most of the Israelites, how many of today's youth, if they were faced with a similar situation, would not jump all over this opportunity

without reservations? But Daniel and his friends turned down the best wine and food. It was more important that they stay true to God.

Daniel 1:7 ESV And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

There is a lot of significance to these name changes. Daniel means, "My Judge is El." It was changed to mean, "May Bel Protect Him." Hananiah means, "Jehovah is Gracious." It was changed to mean, "Illuminated by Shad" (sun god.) Meshach means, "Who is Like God." It was changed to mean, "Who is Like Shack" (love god). Azariah means, "Jehovah Helps Me." It was changed to mean, "Servant of Nego" (fire god). These young boys were being coerced into abandoning the God of Israel for the gods and the culture of Babylon.

Think about the culture of today's baby-boom generation. What sins do the youth of today face? What sins are being taught as not being sinful in our culture today? The four big ones are: (1) sex outside of marriage, (2) abortion, (3) homosexuality, and (4) the compromising of doctrine about the blood of Christ.

All past generations of almost every culture have known that sex outside of marriage is sinful. But this evil baby-boom generation denies this basic Biblical truth. Think back to old television shows such as the Dick Van Dyke Show. Dick Van Dyke played Rob Petrie. Mary Tyler Moore played his wife Laura Petrie. Even though they were a young married couple they were shown as sleeping in separate beds. Today it's hard to watch television without encountering the clear assumption that sex and marriage have nothing to do with one another. The Dick Van Dyke Show aired from October 3, 1961 until June 1, 1966. It's been less than fifty years, less than a generation, since that show was on. How many young people today would have Daniel's character of refusing to submit to the culture of this evil generation?

All past generations of almost every culture have known that abortion is sinful. Abortion is the murder of young children. But this evil baby-boom generation denies this basic Biblical truth. Roe vs. Wade was in 1973. It's been only forty years. How many people today still consider abortion to be murder? What is the difference between killing a child five minutes after birth vs. five minutes before birth? And if five minutes before birth is murder, then would wouldn't five weeks before birth also be murder? Or how about five months? Where do you draw the line before it's no longer murder? Liberals argue that the woman should have the right to do with her body what she wants. But when she becomes pregnant, there

are two bodies involved. What about the rights of the child? Liberals argue that without legal abortion, women will use a coat hanger or seek the horrible-conditions of illegal abortions. But didn't this become a problem only after the free-sex movement of the sixties? How many young people today would have Daniel's character of refusing to submit to the culture of this evil generation?

All past generations of almost every culture have known that homosexuality is sinful. But this evil baby-boom generation denies this basic Biblical truth. Just a few short years ago, our culture understood that homosexuality is not God's design. But for the most part, God has been removed from our understanding of what is right and what is wrong. How many young people today would have Daniel's character of refusing to submit to the culture of this evil generation?

All the past Christian generations have known that the Islamic teaching about Christ not dying for our sins, and their teaching that Christ is not God, is an antichrist teaching. Today the world denies this. And some of the more liberal churches are beginning to deny this very basic Biblical truth for the sake of peace and to compromise with Muslims.

Daniel was trained all about interpreting visions and dreams using Babylonian methods. He became more knowledgeable about Babylonian methods than all the Babylonian magicians and enchanters. But Daniel remained faithful to God and was able to interpret visions and dreams by seeking wisdom from the Lord. We learn about Daniel to learn about God's true wisdom.

NIV Daniel 1:17-20 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. (18) At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. (19) The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. (20) In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

Daniel and his friends were willing to give up their lives before compromising on their love and dedication to God. Daniel lived through the entire seventy years of captivity. This baby-boom generation must also stand firm to the end of a seventy to eighty year evil generation before Christ sets up his earthly kingdom.

13.2) More Important Background Information

We know that Daniel read Jeremiah's prophecies. So in all likelihood he also read Isaiah's prophecies. These prophecies should be considered as background material for interpreting Daniel.

The prophetic significance of the destruction of Babylon is important to understand for a proper understanding of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The entire statue of Babylon is destroyed when the feet of the statue is struck by a Rock cut from the mountain, but not by human hands (Daniel 2:34-35, 2:45). This tells us about the complete destruction of Babylon in the end-times. We will also be relating some aspects of Daniel 9. All this is very important in not only interpreting Daniel 2, but also in understanding God's reasons behind these prophetic events.

Isaiah 13 (quoted below) is about the complete and absolute destruction of Babylon. The prophecy mentions the Medes as destroying Babylon. So it's partially fulfilled. But the Medes did not destroy all the people and leave the land completely desolate. And it was not God's wrath on the Day of the Lord. This prophecy in Isaiah was only partially fulfilled. Therefore, the destruction of Babylon by the Medes and the Persians is only a type for the final destruction and complete devastation of Babylon that is coming when Christ returns.

Don't miss the first verse which says this is a burden (oracle) concerning Babylon. Verse 8 says they will be in pain like a woman in labor. The woman in labor, or the birth pains of a woman, is a metaphor that is used throughout prophetic Scripture beginning with Isaiah 26:17-19. The metaphor is always a reference to the time of the resurrection. Also, you will probably recognize the words in verse 10. The sun is darkened and the moon will not give its light. The stars do not give their light. This was quoted by Jesus in Matthew 24:29, as happening "immediately after the great tribulation." It can also be found in the sixth seal of Revelation 6:12-13. These are signs that will be seen just prior to Christ's return. Also notice verse 11 which says, "I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity." This is the time of God's wrath on the Day of the Lord.

Verses 19-22 make it clear that this is unfulfilled prophecy. The destruction of Babylon "will be like when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." It will not be inhabited after this destruction from generation to generation. "Wild animals of the desert will lie there, and their houses will be full of jackals." Today, ancient

Babylon is no longer inhabited. But this did not occur because of war or sudden destruction. The inhabitants slowly vanished over time.

The only possible conclusion is that of an end-times "mystery" Babylon which will be completely destroyed when Christ returns. This does not mean the ancient city of Babylon will become inhabited again. It means there will be an end-times empire and a city that will strongly parallel ancient Babylon. And that empire will control the same area that ancient Babylon controlled. Ancient Babylon was the center of idol worship for the ancient world. Likewise, the end-times city, similar to Babylon, will be the center of the false religion promoted by the false prophet.

Ancient Babylon was the center of idol worship in the ancient world. So "mystery" Babylon will be all about the false religion of Islam. The ruler of "mystery" Babylon will be the false prophet. The Mahdi of the Islamic Caliphate is both the religious leader for all of Islam, as well as the government leader.

Isaiah 13:1-22 The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw: (2) Set up a banner on the bare mountain! Lift up your voice to them! Wave your hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. (3) I have commanded my consecrated ones; yes, I have called my mighty men for my anger, even my proudly exulting ones. (4) The noise of a multitude is in the mountains, as of a great people; the noise of an uproar of the kingdoms of the nations gathered together! Yahweh of Armies is mustering the army for the battle. (5) They come from a far country, from the uttermost part of heaven, even Yahweh, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land. (6) Wail; for the day of Yahweh is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. (7) Therefore all hands will be feeble, and everyone's heart will melt. (8) They will be dismayed. Pangs and sorrows will seize them. They will be in pain like a woman in labor. They will look in amazement one at another. Their faces will be faces of flame. (9) Behold, the day of Yahweh comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land a desolation, and to destroy its sinners out of it. (10) For the stars of the sky and its constellations will not give their light. The sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. (11) I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity. I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will humble the haughtiness of the terrible. (12) I will make people more rare than fine gold, even a person than the pure gold

of Ophir. (13) Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place in the wrath of Yahweh of Armies, and in the day of his fierce anger. (14) It will happen that like a a hunted gazelle, and like sheep that no one gathers, they will each turn to their own people, and will each flee to their own land. (15) Everyone who is found will be thrust through. Everyone who is captured will fall by the sword. (16) Their infants also will be dashed in pieces before their eyes. Their houses will be ransacked, and their wives raped. (17) Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who will not value silver, and as for gold, they will not delight in it. (18) Their bows will dash the young men in pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb. Their eyes will not spare children. (19) Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, will be like when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. (20) It will never be inhabited, neither will it be lived in from generation to generation. The Arabian will not pitch a tent there, neither will shepherds make their flocks lie down there. (21) But wild animals of the desert will lie there, and their houses will be full of jackals. Ostriches will dwell there, and wild goats will frolic there. (22) Wolves will cry in their castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces. Her time is near to come, and her days will not be prolonged.

Another very important prophecy to understand is Jeremiah 25 (quoted below). Notice verse 4, which says, "you have not listened, nor inclined your ear to hear." No doubt Jesus was picking up on this, and other verses like this, when he constantly told the Pharisees and teachers of the Law that they don't have eyes to see or ears to hear. Eyes to see but not seeing and ears to hear but not hearing is always about seeing and hearing the clear evidence of God but hardening one's heart against it. Israel hardened their hearts to the prophets and would not repent of their sins. So they were scattered to Babylon.

Verse 11 says the whole land will be a desolation. Jerusalem became desolate after it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. The people of Israel had to serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. When the seventy years were completed, according to verse 12, the land of Babylon should have been completely destroyed and become desolate as Jerusalem had become desolate. The king of Babylon was certainly punished. Babylon was conquered by the Medes and the Persians. And king Belshazzar was killed. But the people of Babylon lived on under a new ruler.

Babylon was not made desolate. Daniel himself was one of those who not only lived on. He lived to serve the new rulers. Did this prophecy fail?

As you can surmise from Isaiah 13, the complete destruction of Babylon will not occur until the end-times and the return of Christ. But how does that make the prophecy of Jeremiah be accurate?

Jeremiah 25:12 NIV "But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the LORD, "and will make it desolate forever."

The king of Babylon was punished right after the seventy years. But the land of Babylon was not made desolate. The verse says the people (nation) of Babylon will be punished because of their guilt. The NIV translates the word as "guilt." But most other translations use the word "iniquity." The Hebrew word can mean either "guilt" or "iniquity." The word "guilt" might imply punishment specifically for bringing Israel into captivity. And there is some truth to that. But I think the punishment being spoken of, that of making Babylon a desolate land, is more specifically because of the sins (iniquity) of the people. Israel was scattered to Babylon because of their sins. Could God rightly make the land of Babylon desolate for Babylon's sins if Israel is still sinning after the seventy years? There will be more about this after we read the chapter:

Jeremiah 25:1-38 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (the same was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), (2) which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying: (3) From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, these twenty-three years, the word of Yahweh has come to me, and I have spoken to you, rising up early and speaking; but you have not listened. (4) Yahweh has sent to you all his servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them (but you have not listened, nor inclined your ear to hear) (5) saying, Return now everyone from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that Yahweh has given to you and to your fathers, from of old and even forevermore; (6) and don't go after other gods to serve them or worship them, and don't provoke me to anger with the work of your hands; and I will

do you no harm. (7) Yet you have not listened to me, says Yahweh; that you may provoke me to anger with the work of your hands to your own hurt. (8) Therefore thus says Yahweh of Armies: Because you have not heard my words, (9) behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, says Yahweh, and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against its inhabitants, and against all these nations around; and I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations. (10) Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the lamp. (11) This whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (12) It shall happen, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, says Yahweh, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it desolate forever. (13) I will bring on that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations. (14) For many nations and great kings shall make bondservants of them, even of them; and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the work of their hands. (15) For thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, to me: take this cup of the wine of wrath at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. (16) They shall drink, and reel back and forth, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. (17) Then took I the cup at Yahweh's hand, and made all the nations to drink, to whom Yahweh had sent me: (18) *to wit,* Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and its kings, and its princes, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse, as it is this day; (19) Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people; (20) and all the mixed people, and all the kings of the land of the Uz, and all the kings of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Gaza, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod; (21) Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon; (22) and all the kings of Tyre, and all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the isle which is beyond the sea; (23) Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all who have the corners of

their hair cut off; (24) and all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mixed people who dwell in the wilderness; (25) and all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes; (26) and all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another; and all the kingdoms of the world, which are on the surface of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them. (27) You shall tell them, Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Drink you, and be drunken, and spew, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you. (28) It shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at your hand to drink, then you shall tell them, Thus says Yahweh of Armies: You shall surely drink. (29) For, behold, I begin to work evil at the city which is called by my name; and should you be utterly unpunished? You shall not be unpunished; for I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth, says Yahweh of Armies. (30) Therefore prophesy you against them all these words, and tell them, Yahweh will roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he will mightily roar against his fold; he will give a shout, as those who tread *the grapes*, against all the inhabitants of the earth. (31) A noise shall come even to the end of the earth; for Yahweh has a controversy with the nations; he will enter into judgment with all flesh: as for the wicked, he will give them to the sword, says Yahweh. (32) Thus says Yahweh of Armies, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great storm shall be raised up from the uttermost parts of the earth. (33) The slain of Yahweh shall be at that day from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung on the surface of the ground. (34) Wail, you shepherds, and cry; and wallow *in ashes*, you principal of the flock; for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are fully come, and you shall fall like a goodly vessel. (35) The shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape. (36) A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and the wailing of the principal of the flock! for Yahweh lays waste their pasture. (37) The peaceable folds are brought to silence because of the fierce anger of Yahweh. (38) He has left his covert, as the lion; for their land is become an astonishment because of the fierceness of the oppressing *sword*, and because of his fierce anger.

Again, could God rightly make the land of Babylon desolate for Babylon's sins if Israel is still sinning after the seventy years? To understand better, we must look to Daniel 9. Daniel 9 begins with a prayer. This prophecy of Jeremiah 25:12 was referenced by Daniel as the reason for his prayer. At the time of his prayer, he understood that the seventy years had been completed. Daniel also understood that Israel had been brought in captivity to Babylon because of Israel's sins. So Daniel prayed for the forgiveness of Israel's sins and for the desolation of Jerusalem to come to an end.

God's answer to Daniel's prayer is the vision of seventy weeks. There is an obvious tie between the seventy years of captivity in Babylon and the seventy weeks of years for Jerusalem to not be desolate. The seventy weeks begins with this decree. Popular interpretations of Daniel 9 use either the decree of Ezra 7 or the decree of Nehemiah 2 as the "decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." But I prefer to use the decree of Cyrus, given in Ezra 1. This decree happened the very year that Cyrus conquered Babylon. So this decree was made in the very same year that Daniel prayed for it to happen. No doubt Daniel interpreted this decree as the answer to his prayer. The decree was right after the seventy years had been completed. Thus, the seventy weeks of years began right when the seventy years were finished. Also, at the end of the seventy weeks of years, the Messiah comes. Israel is given seventy weeks of years to stop sinning before the Messiah comes.

Daniel 9:24-25a NIV "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. (25) "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.'"

There is one more very important piece of the puzzle that must be understood. What is the purpose of Israel? Israel itself is a prophecy. Israel is a promise (prophecy) given to Abraham. God's covenant with Abraham promised that Abraham would have many descendants. God's covenant also promises that Abraham's descendants will own much of the land of the middle-east. Land plus a very large number of descendants equals a nation. In this case, it's a "holy nation." The borders of this land are much wider than the borders of Israel today, even with the so-called "occupied territories."

Exodus 19:3-6 NIV Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: (4) "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. (5) Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, (6) you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

This promise of Abraham is not only for the Jews. The Gentile Church is grafted into the olive tree of Israel. The olive tree must be Israel because the hardened Jews who were broken off were excluded from Israel. Jewish Israel will be unhardened when the full number of Gentiles have come into the olive tree of Israel (Rom. 11:25). So the Gentile Church is a part of Israel and will also inherit the literal millennial promises to Abraham (Gal 3:29). Here, Peter quotes Exodus 19:6 (quoted above). By using a promise for Israel and applying it to the Gentile Church, Peter is making the Gentile Church be co-heirs to the promise of Abraham.

1 Peter 2:9-10 NIV But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (10) Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

But there is one other important prophecy that must be fulfilled before the promise of Israel can be truly fulfilled. A holy nation needs to have a holy King. The Messiah must return to rule over Israel. And we, being Israel, will rule over the nations as priests and kings with Christ (Rev. 1:6, 2:26-27, 5:10) in the age to come. But only those who overcome sin will reign with Christ according to Revelation 2:26-27. Israel, both Jew and Gentile, must completely overcome all sinful habits before we can reign with Christ.

Revelation 2:26-27 NIV To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— (27) "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.

So let's put it all together. Jerusalem was made desolate and Israel was scattered to Babylon for seventy years, because of Israel's sins. All the people of Israel must

stop sinning before the full extent of Abraham's promise can be fulfilled. If a holy nation is to rule the world along with God, everyone in the holy nation must first completely overcome all their sinful habits.

But Israel did not stop sinning during these seventy years. If they had stopped sinning, the Messiah could have come and rescued Israel from Babylon. God would have then punished ancient Babylon for her sins, making the land desolate. Then the kingdom of heaven could have been established here on earth. The meek would have inherited the earth at that time. But Israel did not stop sinning while in captivity at Babylon.

So God gave Israel another seventy weeks of years to stop sinning. During this time, Jerusalem would not be desolate. The Messiah will come after the seventy weeks of years are completed.

Daniel 9:24-25a NIV "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

The Messiah came at his birth after the sixty-two weeks. After growing up, of course, Christ was crucified. Christ's crucifixion paid the penalty for our sins. But we, as Israel, must still stop sinning before Christ can set up his kingdom here on the earth.

Daniel 9:26 NIV After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.

If the people of Israel had stopped sinning and had accepted the Messiah, then Christ could have set up his kingdom eight weeks of years (56 years) from his birth. But they did not repent. So Jerusalem became desolate again in 70 AD and the Jews were scattered to the nations.

Matthew 23:33-39 NIV "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? (34) 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. (35) 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. (36) I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. (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. (38) Look, your house is left to you desolate. (39) For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Luke 21:20-24 NIV "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. (21) 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. (22) For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. (23) 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. (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.

After almost two thousand years, in 1967, Jerusalem was no longer trampled on by the Gentiles. So we should have seven more weeks of years until the Messiah comes. But the antichrist will come at the same time. The Gentile Church has been grafted into Israel. And the Jewish portion of Israel will be unhardened after the full number of Gentiles have come into the olive tree of Israel. However, most of the Church today is still not ready for Christ to return. Most of the Church today have not stop sinning. I think 144,000, a relatively few in number, will be ready when Christ returns. The rest of Israel must go through the Great Tribulation. And "he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22, 24:13, Mark 13:13).

The New Jerusalem will appear in the sky when Christ returns. (This is the "heavenly Jerusalem" of Hebrews 11:10, 11:16, 12:22, and 13:14.) But as usual, most of Israel will not be ready to rule with Christ. So Christ will delay setting up his earthly kingdom for seven more years. He will confirm a covenant for one more week after he appears, after the seventy weeks are over. And the antichrist will be revealed at the same time. The Church will go through the great tribulation. Even the great tribulation works for the good of those who love God. It's great tribulation (persecution) for the Church. It's not tribulation for the world. This

great persecution will cause the Church to get holy. The Bride will overcome all her sinful habits and we will be made ready to reign with Christ over the nations.

Revelation 11:1-2 NIV I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. (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.

During the great tribulation, Jerusalem will again be trampled upon by the Gentiles for 42 months. In order for Jerusalem to be trampled upon 42 months, it would not be trampled upon in the months prior. So again, Jerusalem has not been trampled upon since 1967. But it will be trampled upon during the tribulation.

So finally, after the great tribulation, Israel will be ready for the Messiah to punish the wicked and to set up his kingdom. Then, and only then, will God judge Babylon for her iniquities and make the land of Babylon desolate.

Revelation 14:8 Another, a second angel, followed, saying, "Babylon the great has fallen, which has made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her sexual immorality."

Revelation 16:19 The great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

Revelation 18:19 They cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her great wealth!' For in one hour is she made desolate.

Before proceeding, you might want to read two and a half more chapters in Jeremiah. You can read Jeremiah 50 through 51:13. These chapters talk about the sudden destruction of Babylon that has not yet been fulfilled. As you read these chapters, think about what Revelation says about the fall of Babylon. Here above are three verses from Revelation. Revelation chapters 17 and 18 are about Babylon.

There will be an end-times world religion and a city that will strongly parallel ancient Babylon. That empire will control the same land that ancient Babylon controlled. Ancient Babylon was the center of idol worship for the ancient world. Likewise, the end-times city, similar to Babylon, will be the center of the false religion promoted by the end-times false-prophet antichrist.

13.3) Daniel 2: The Statue is Babylon and the Islamic Caliphate

Nebuchadnezzar conquered Israel in 605 BC. Nebuchadnezzar was a **king of kings** (Daniel 2:37). He was the king of Babylon. His kingdom ruled over many nations. Basically, Nebuchadnezzar was ruler of a world government. He ruled over the world that he knew. But he did not rule over Europe. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream from God. This dream was about all the world governments that would follow in his part of the world. In other words, he had a dream about the (middle-east) world governments that would come after his (middle-east) world government. But Nebuchadnezzar didn't understand the dream.

Nebuchadnezzar ordered his wise men to tell him the dream, as well as interpret the dream. This was to insure that he was not tricked and given a false interpretation. The wise men could not tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream, so Nebuchadnezzar ordered that all the wise men be put to death. Daniel was one of the wise men, but not present at first. When he found out about his death sentence, he told Nebuchadnezzar that he could reveal the dream. Daniel and his friends prayed, and that night God revealed to Daniel the dream and the interpretation. The next day Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar his dream and its interpretation.

The head of gold is the Babylonian empire. After the Babylonian empire, another kingdom would arise. This kingdom is represented by the chest and arms of silver. Most biblical historians agree that the chest and arms of silver is the Medo-Persian Empire. This empire conquered the Babylonian empire in 539 BC. (The fall of Babylon was 65 years after king Nebuchadnezzar's dream.) The belly and thighs of bronze is considered to be the Greek empire, which was founded by Alexander the Great in 330 BC.

The legs of iron have traditionally been interpreted to be the Roman Empire. But here is where I have learned from Joel Richardson that we must question that traditional view. Rome did not actually rule over the region of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. We can say that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was the middle-east. Rome controlled primarily in Europe, as well as northern part of Africa, around the Mediterranean Sea. Rome did not control most of the middle-east.

The next major empire that controlled the entire middle-east was the Islamic Caliphate, which later became the Ottoman Empire. The legs of iron is the Islamic Caliphate. Under this interpretive view, the feet of the statue are seen as a revived Islamic Caliphate instead of a revived Roman Empire. Thus, the antichrist will be the Islamic Mahdi from a revived Islamic Caliphate. We seem to be seeing the start this revived Islamic Caliphate in the Arab Spring that is happening today.

The biggest champion of this view is Joel Richardson. Richardson has written two books that are a must-read for any student of Bible prophecy. Joel's teaching has really filled in the blanks for all the areas of Bible prophecy Scripture that I had been unsure about. I have attended three of his seminars, bought his DVDs, and I own autographed copies of both his books. I have met and spoken with Richardson during three of his seminars. I find him to be a humble and honest man who is quick to recognize that he might not have all the answers. And I have no doubt that Joel is in the center of doing the works the Father prepared beforehand for him to do (Eph 2:10).

Richardson's first book is titled *The Islamic Antichrist*. The book became a New York Times bestseller. This book compares Islamic eschatology with Christian Biblical eschatology. It's amazing how the two line up almost perfectly, with their good guy being our bad-guy antichrist. The second book is titled, *Mideast Beast*. This book is sub-titled, "The Scriptural Case for an Islamic Antichrist." There is overwhelming Scriptural support for the antichrist coming from the region of Turkey or Syria. (And not from a revived Roman Empire.) And there is overwhelming Scriptural evidence that Islam is the religion behind the enemies of the Jews of Israel and of the true followers of Christ during the great tribulation (And you can forget about a pre-tribulation rapture.)

Do the regions of the world really matter with regard to identifying the kingdoms? Consider these verses:

Daniel 2:29 ESV To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be.

Daniel 2:37-39 ESV You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, (38) and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all--you are the head of gold. (39) Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.

Did Nebuchadnezzar rule over all the entire world? He did not rule over the land that later became Rome. He did not rule over Europe. The Babylonian Empire is represented by the head of gold. To the north-west it only extended about half way

into today's Turkey. To the east it covered only a small portion of modern-day Iran. To the south, it covered some of Saudi Arabia, as far south as Mecca.

The Medo-Persian Empire is represented by the chest and arms of silver. It covered a whole lot more of the middle-east. To the north-west it covered all of Turkey and most of Bulgaria, which borders Turkey to the north. To the east, it covered all of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and some of Kazakhstan. But to the south, it did not cover any of Saudi Arabia.

The Alexandrian Greek Empire is represented by the middle and thighs of bronze. It covered a very similar region of the middle-east. To the north-east, it covered slightly more than that of the Medo-Persian Empire. To the east it covered slightly less. But for all practical purposes, both empires covered the about same area of the middle-east as Nebuchadnezzar had ruled. These two empires barely touched Europe, which is to the north-east of Babylon.

The Roman Empire covered most of Europe along the Mediterranean Sea. Along the east coast, it covered the area of modern-day Israel. But it did not cover very far inland along that coast. In other words, the Roman Empire was simply not in the middle-east. It was not at all in the same area of the world as the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Alexandrian Greek Empires. The Roman Empire covered the West, not the Middle-East.

The Islamic Caliphate, on the other hand, included all the territory of the previous three kingdoms, plus more. To the north-east, it covered all of Bulgaria, Romania, and almost half of Ukraine. To the east it covered an area similar to that of the Alexandrian Greek Empire. In Africa, it covered Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia. To the south it covered all of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Oman.

The pattern is clear. Verse 39 (quoted above) says, the "third kingdom [is] of bronze, [and it] shall rule over all the earth." All the earth (land), from Nebuchadnezzar's perspective was the middle-east. The succeeding kingdoms grew in size. But they were all geographically centered on ancient Babylon. The Islamic Caliphate was even bigger. It also geographically centered on ancient Babylon. The Roman Empire, for the most part, was completely outside the territories of the first three.

Daniel 2:40 NIV Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.

How is it that the fourth kingdom breaks and crushes the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, and the Alexandrian Greek Empire? Would not the Babylonian Empire have long since vanished? The same is true for the Medo-Persian Empire. These empires have vanished, but the descendants of the same people in the same territories remain. When a new empire appears, it might or might not crush the people of the conquered nations and their religious cultures.

This would prevent Rome from being the fourth empire. Rome did not crush the religious cultures of the nations they conquered. Plus, they could not have crushed the descendants of the previous three empires because Rome ruled over a completely different region of the world. Also, more than any of the three previous empires, Rome was known for its tolerance of pre-existing cultures. Rome even adopted for themselves much of the Greek religion and culture from the Alexandrian Greek Empire. The effort to spread Greek culture in the conquered nations continued from the Alexandrian Greek Empires into the Roman Empire. Greek, and not Latin, continued to be the international language. For the Jews, this was known as the Hellenistic influence. So it would be impossible to say that the Roman Empire crushed the religions and cultures of the previous three empires.

The Islamic Caliphate, on the other hand, completely crushed and broke the people, their religions, and the cultures of all the nations that it conquered. Many, if not most, were forced to convert to Islam or be killed. Those who were allowed to live without converting were required to pay a tax. This tax served to effectively enslave those who would not convert. Eventually, most people would convert to avoid paying the tax. When the tax money ran out, they would move on to conquer another nation. So the iron that crushes is not the Roman Empire. It's the heavy iron fist of Islam. With that in mind, consider the next few verses:

Daniel 2:40-43 NIV Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. (41) Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. (42) As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. (43) And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

When the fourth kingdom is interpreted as Rome, theologians tended to view the feet of iron and clay as the revived Roman Empire. According to verse 41, the people are divided. There was a tendency to say the divided kingdom was represented by the two legs, and was fulfilled by the eastern and western Roman Empires. Joel Richardson argues against this by pointing out that the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire coexisted for only 140 years.

There is another problem with the traditional view. Theologians have said the two legs represent a division of the Roman Empire. Then do the two arms represent a division in the Medo-Persian Empire? One could argue that one arm is the Medo Empire and the other is the Persians. But then what would the chest represent? In my opinion, we should only conclude there is a division in the empire based on the text. We must stick with interpretation given to Daniel. The text only attributes the division of the people to the fact that iron does not mix with clay. Is one leg iron and the other leg clay? Therefore, in my opinion, the two legs do not represent a division.

Today, we would consider the actions of Muhammad and his followers to be radical Islam. So iron represents radical Islam. But over time, Muslims developed a more moderate view of Islam. During the 19th and 20th centuries, a more moderate, or even liberal, Islam developed that does not crush and break people of other faiths. Moderate Islam would be more like clay than iron.

The description of the statue itself mentions the clay only in the feet and toes. But the text would seem to elaborate and say the division of iron and clay exists throughout the fourth kingdom. Verse 40 mentions a "fourth kingdom." Then, in that immediate context, both verses 41 and 42 speaks of "this kingdom." In both verses, "this kingdom" includes both iron and clay. Early on, the Islamic Caliphate would have been primarily the iron of radical Islam. But over time, Muslims became more and more divided between the iron of radical Islam and the clay of moderate Islam. As a matter of fact, verse 41 says the clay is potter's clay or baked clay. A clay pot is easily broken by iron. This is exactly what verse 40 says. The fourth kingdom breaks and subdues other nations and people-groups as it expands.

Some people have suggested that that the division of two legs is the division of Islam between Sunni and the Shia. The problem with this view is in determining which is the iron and which the clay. Both Sunni and Shia have crushed like iron.

Many people equate the ten toes with the ten horns of Daniel 7. With this, I respectfully disagree. I have pointed out the problems of assigning meaning to the two legs as a geographical division of the Roman Empire. We must be cautious

about assigning meaning to the physical properties of a human statue that are not explicitly brought out in the text. Likewise, we should not assume the ten toes mean ten kingdoms. The number "ten" is not in the text. The text does not put significance to the fact that there would be ten toes. The text simply includes the toes as part of the feet. The feet and the toes are made of iron and clay.

Why do I so strongly disassociate the statue of Daniel 2 from the four beasts of Daniel 7? Traditionally, the four kingdoms of the statue have been equated with the four beasts of Daniel 7. In seeing that the fourth kingdom of the statue is the Islamic Caliphate, and working under the assumption that both Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 are talking about the same empires, one would simply assume the fourth beast of Daniel 7 is also the Islamic Caliphate. Thus, working under that traditional assumption, one would naturally equate ten toes of the statue with the ten horns of Daniel 7. But again, the text of Daniel 2 does not have the number "ten."

My view of Daniel 7 is that the first three beasts are modern-day nations and the fourth beast is the United Nations. So Daniel 7 is more about a one-world government system that forms in the end-time generation of today. Daniel 2, on the other hand, is about ancient Babylon leading up to mystery Babylon, and is more middle-east centric. To put it another way: Daniel 7 is more about the antichrist who will be the global ruler. Daniel 2 is more about the antichrist who will be the regional ruler also known as the Mahdi and the false prophet.

There is one other aspect of verse 43 that needs to be discussed. The people are divided, as iron does not mix with clay. But verse 43 says they are mixed, but do not remain united. This has been confusing for many translators because they could not see how this fits with the Roman Empire. The KJV is very literal with this verse and says "they will mingle themselves with the seed of men." The ESV interprets that as marriage. It says, "They will mix with one another in marriage." The NIV eliminates the apparent sex or marriage and just says "the people will be a mixture." Did the east and the west of the Roman Empire mix, but not remain united? Did people from the east marry people from the west, but not stay married? The assumption that the legs and feet represent the Roman Empire is probably why the NIV seemed to have hidden this critical aspect of the verse.

Daniel 2:43 KJV And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

Daniel 2:43 YLT Because thou hast seen iron mixed with miry clay, they are mixing themselves with the seed of men; and they are not adhering one with another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

Daniel 2:43 ESV As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.

Daniel 2:43 NIV And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

When it's understood that iron is radical Islam and clay is moderate Islam, this verse becomes clear. The Islamic Caliphate would crush and break the people of the nations they conquered. They forced the people to convert to Islam. If they did not convert, they were often killed by the sword and their wives were taken as slaves. Muhammad allowed the captors to have sex with these slaves. They had children. In so doing they intermingled with the people of the nations they conquered. But over time, Muslims would not hold together. Radical Islam would naturally separate from moderate Islam. They didn't hold together for the same reason the iron does not mix with clay. As we have seen, this means many Muslims rejected the idea of spreading Islam by use of the sword.

Let's again examine the literal phrase in this verse. Young's Literal Translation says, "They are mixing themselves with the seed of men." The women were taken as slaves and forced to have sex. They were not forced to marry. But these slaves had children. In other words, "the seed of men" was forced upon these women, causing a mixing of sorts. But radical Islam still does not mix with moderate Islam.

When the iron is interpreted as Rome, this verse is very confusing. Some dispensational groups have begun to relate this verse with the Nephilim of Genesis 6:4. Apparently, fallen angels came and married human women. Their offspring were giants (Nephilim). The theory is that the same thing will happen again in the end times. The verse in Daniel 2:43 is used as a secondary proof-text verse to make the claim that it happens again in the end times. The idea is that mixing with the seed of men would have to mean that those doing the mixing are not the seed of men. So it would be aliens having sex with humans. A number of books have been written from this dispensational perspective. A discussion of alien abductions has become one of the hot topics of these books. The idea that the "seed of men" is being forced upon women by men is never considered by these dispensationalists.

Daniel 2:43 is their secondary proof-text verse. Their primary proof-text verse is the "days of Noah" verse in Matthew 24:37. The idea is that as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it at the time of Christ's return. It's reasoned that the fallen angels had offspring with humans in the days of Noah. So it will happen again. I've even heard one of these guys, while promoting his DVD, say things like, "I've always wondered what Jesus meant by that verse." The verse is quoted so often in reference to the Nephilim that people forget its original context. The verses before and after this verse clearly establishes the context.

Matthew 24:36-39 But no one knows of that day and hour, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only. (37) "As the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (38) For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ship, (39) and they didn't know until the flood came, and took them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

The "days of Noah" verse is clearly talking about the sudden destruction that will come at a time when the world is not expecting it. There is even a brief mention of the end times coming like a flood in the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:26. This verse in Daniel 9:26 also says to the end there will be war just like Jesus said in Matthew 24:6. There will be wars and rumors of wars before the end comes. So Jesus is clearly relating the days of Noah to the flood itself, and to the sudden destruction that will come when the world is not expecting it to happen. Also, the days of Noah is clearly an allusion to Daniel 9:26. After this, Jesus gives the parable of the thief in the night, which clearly illustrates this point.

At this point, we see that both of the verses which these dispensationalists have used to talk about the return of the end-time Nephilim are clearly shown to be talking about something else. It is theoretically possible that the Nephilim will return? Does the evidence of alien abductions mean that there will again be half-breeds living among us? It's possible. But we should be very careful to not use Scripture out of context in order to make our points. With that said, let's get back to Nebuchadnezzar dream in Daniel 2.

Daniel 2:34-35 ESV As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. (35) Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and

became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Daniel 2:44-45 ESV And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, (45) just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure."

The Rock (Matthew 7:24-25) that smashed the feet of clay and iron is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The feet represent middle-east Islam in the end times. When Christ returns, he will completely destroy Islam. Most Muslims in the middle-east will have the mark of the beast. They will be killed in the day of wrath. The Rock of Jesus Christ smashes the feet, and the whole statue is destroyed. So it's very important today for us to get as many Muslims converted as possible. Otherwise, they will wind up taking the mark of the beast and being eternally condemned.

After the Rock smashes and destroys Babylon by destroying Islam, it becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth (verse 35). In the major and minor prophets of the Old Testament, mountains can be symbolic of kingdoms, or the land of a kingdom, especially God's kingdom (1 Kings 22:17, 2 Chronicles 18:16, Isaiah 2:2-3, 11:9, 25:6-10, 40:3-5, Jeremiah 50:6, 51:24-25, Ezekiel 28:14-16, Joel 3:17, Amos 4:1, Micah 3:12, 4:1-2, Zechariah 4:7, and Zechariah 8:3). Thus, the mountain that fills the earth is God's kingdom filling the earth. It's the literal earthly reign of the Messiah just as Babylon was a literal kingdom. Daniel 7 also speaks of the kingdom of God which will be set up after the fourth beast is destroyed by Christ. The New Testament should be interpreted in the context of the Old Testament. Thus, in the New Testament, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God is the earthly reign of Christ. But we can also recognize that the kingdom is "here and now but not yet." The kingdom is right now in our hearts.

In the "Important Background Information" of the last section, we saw why Babylon was not made desolate, even though God had promised to do so. The destruction of Babylon waits for the return of Christ. The destruction of the statue,

when Christ destroys Islam in the middle-east, is the destruction of "mystery" Babylon. The whole statue is destroyed. Those ancient empires are already gone. But the statue is not destroyed until Jesus Christ comes again. Babylon is the head of the statue, so the entire statue is Babylon. That is why the destruction of Babylon is foretold in Revelation 17 and 18, even though ancient Babylon is long gone.

The name Babylon comes from the ancient name Babel, which means confusion, from the tower of Babel.

Genesis 11:1-8 The whole earth was of one language and of one speech. (2) It happened, as they traveled east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they lived there. (3) They said one to another, "Come, let's make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. (4) They said, "Come, let's build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top reaches to the sky, and let's make ourselves a name, lest we be scattered abroad on the surface of the whole earth." (5) Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men built. (6) Yahweh said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is what they begin to do. Now nothing will be withheld from them, which they intend to do. (7) Come, let's go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." (8) So Yahweh scattered them abroad from there on the surface of all the earth. They stopped building the city.

You see, this was really the first world government. God saw that when men come together like this, that we can do anything. This is quite a compliment from God! But God knows the danger of mankind being ruled by prideful leaders. So God came down and confused the languages. This scattered us all over the world and formed the nations. But as the nations come back together, we overcome the language problems and start forming a one-world language. In Greek and Roman times, Greek was the one-world language. Today, English has become the one-world language. English is the technology language. A few years back, I was in India, on the other side of the world, hiring computer programmers to do technical things, and telling them what to do using English. Our languages are no longer "confused." Today Babylon is returning. And the world is getting ready to form a one-world government, based on English. Babylon is from Babel, which means confusion. God confused the tongues, and today we are again overcoming that confusion. But the world is still confused about God.

13.4) Daniel 3: The Fiery Furnace - Watch and be Ready

Nebuchadnezzar had a ninety foot image of gold set up and ordered all people to worship the image.

Daniel 3:6-7 ESV And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." (7) Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

In Revelation, we read:

Revelation 13:7-8 ESV Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, (8) and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

Revelation 13:13-15 ESV It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, (14) and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. (15) And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

In both cases, the king of kings orders all the people to worship an idol or be killed. In both cases, the Scripture is clear that it's all the people of every nation and language that's being ordered to worship the statue. In Revelation, it's more explicit. People from every nation, tribe, people, and language are being ordered to worship the beast. The pattern here is clear. The king of kings in ancient Babylon orders the entire world to worship him by worshiping a statue. And the second beast in end-times Babylon, the false prophet, orders the entire world to worship the first beast by worshiping his statue.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship the image. The furnace was heated up seven times hotter than usual and the three were tied up and thrown into the furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar saw four men in the flames.

Daniel 3:25 ESV He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

Amazingly, Nebuchadnezzar recognized the fourth man as the Son of God. Jesus is the Son of God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were willing to be burned alive before worshiping a statue. They could have said, "We know the statue is not a real god. We can just pretend to worship it. Then we can ask God and he will forgive us." But they would not compromise. They were willing to lay down their lives for the Son of God. Jesus said:

Matthew 10:22 You will be hated by all men for my name's sake, but he who endures to the end will be saved.

Matthew 24:11-14 Many false prophets will arise, and will lead many astray. (12) Because iniquity will be multiplied, the love of many will grow cold. (13) But he who endures to the end, the same will be saved. (14) This Good News of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

We must overcome sin and do the works of the Father to the point of being ready to die for Christ. We must be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect. It's only then that we are ready for Christ to return.

Revelation 12:11 They overcame him because of the Lamb's blood, and because of the word of their testimony. They didn't love their life, even to death.

A radical Islamic antichrist is a scary thought. It's scarier than a European-based revived Roman Empire. The Gentile Church is grafted into Israel. So we are a part of Israel. Therefore, we can forget about a pre-tribulation rapture. Israel must go through the great tribulation before Christ will set up his kingdom. So we must be ready to die for Christ. Without holiness, most people will fail when put to the test. Peter thought he was ready to die for Christ. But he denied Christ three times. If we deny Christ during the great tribulation, and take the mark of the beast, we will lose our salvation.

Hebrews 6:4-6 ESV For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) and

then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

Believing in a false pre-tribulation rapture won't get you out of it. Believing, as preterists do, that there is no literal antichrist won't get you out of it. Believing the great tribulation is not global, and that the antichrist will not rule over every nation, tribe, people, and language, won't get you out of it. The only way to get out of it is to get ready for Christ to return. The only way to get out of it is to overcome sin and be completely sanctified before Christ returns.

Luke 21:34-36 "So be careful, or your hearts will be loaded down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day will come on you suddenly. (35) For it will come like a snare on all those who dwell on the surface of all the earth. (36) Therefore be watchful all the time, praying that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will happen, and to stand before the Son of Man."

13.5) Daniel 4: The Dream of a Tree - Two Trees - Two Kingdoms

Sometime later (date unknown), Nebuchadnezzar had another dream. He saw a tree and heard a command from heaven to cut down the tree. Daniel was asked to interpret the dream. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar he would be driven away from people, and would live with the wild animals and eat grass like wild animals.

Daniel 4:31-32 ESV While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, (32) and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will."

Earlier in the chapter:

Daniel 4:15-17 ESV But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. (16) Let his mind be

changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him. (17) The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.'

The dream is immediately fulfilled (verse 33). Nebuchadnezzar became like a beast. This is the first time in Daniel that the beast symbolism is used. Nebuchadnezzar's mind became that of a beast. And the beast is symbolic of the antichrist. After seven periods of time, perhaps seven years, Nebuchadnezzar's sanity was restored and he resumed his role as king of kings, giving glory to God and acknowledging that the Most High is sovereign even over him.

What then does the symbolism of the beast mean? The beast is a king or ruler that does not acknowledge God's sovereignty over himself. One who does not acknowledge his Creator's sovereignty over himself is without sanity. Such a king is foolish or even wicked. One who gives glory to God has wisdom.

Suppose a hunter in the woods encounters a wolf or similar beast. The beast growls at the hunter, thinking he can charge at the hunter and kill him. The beast does not understand that all the hunter has to do is pull the trigger and the beast would be dead. That's the mind of a beast. In the end times, the New Jerusalem will appear. The people of the world will be terrified. The antichrist, however, will blaspheme God and those who live in heaven. This boastfulness against God is the major characteristic given to the end-times antichrist throughout Bible prophecy. The antichrist will get the people of the world to rally around him because of their fear. They will join the antichrist in blaspheming God and those who live in the heavenly Jerusalem. Everyone who takes allegiance with the beast, and joins him in blaspheming God and those who live in heaven, will take the mark of the beast. At the end of the seven years, Christ will pull the trigger. All those who take the mark of the beast will be killed. It's foolishness, like the mind of an animal. Christ will establish his earthly kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar is a type for the antichrist rulers of the world, and thus of the people they rule. In the same way, the beast is symbolic of both the ruler and of his kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar was given seven periods of time to acknowledge God. The final one-world government antichrist will rule for seven years, but will not acknowledge God. The first half of those seven years, I think, will be in establishing his global reign. Then, he will reign over the world for 42 months.

What about the symbolism of the tree?

Daniel 4:10-12 NIV These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. (11) The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. (12) Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.

Nebuchadnezzar saw the tree and heard a command from heaven to cut down the tree. Daniel was asked to interpret the dream. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that he would be driven away from people, and would live with the wild animals and eat grass like the wild animals.

Daniel 4:20-26 NIV The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, (21) with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air-- (22) you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth. (23) "You, O king, saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live like the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.' (24) "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: (25) You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. (26) The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.

The tree is symbolic of the world kingdom. It is also symbolic of the man who rules the world kingdom. After Nebuchadnezzar came the world kingdoms of silver (Medo-Persian), bronze (Greek), and iron (Islamic Caliphate). If Nebuchadnezzar is symbolic (forerunner) of rulers of the world, and the tree is symbolic of Nebuchadnezzar, then the tree is also symbolic of the rulers of the world.

Philippians 2:9-11 ESV Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, (10) so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (11) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream had abundant fruit and gave food for all. Does this remind us of another tree? The tree of life in the Garden of Eden (and the New Jerusalem) gives everlasting life. Nebuchadnezzar's tree has abundant fruit and gives life. Life spans decreased dramatically after Noah. The further we got from the tree of life, the shorter our life spans became. When Jesus sets up his millennial kingdom, a river of life will flow from the temple and trees of life will be found on either side (Ezekiel 47:1-12, Revelation 22:1-4). Kingdoms of man provide for life with our economies, but how much greater will be the tree of life when Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! (Revelation 19:16)

If the tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is symbolic of a world kingdom, what do the two trees in the Garden of Eden symbolize? Could they symbolize two different kingdoms? Adam was created by God, and lived under God's authority. Under this authority, Adam was told to eat (live by) the tree of life, and not the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But, knowledge of good and evil itself is not the issue. God goes to great lengths in the Bible to tell us good from evil. It's knowledge as in experiential sense that is the problem. The only way we can experience being unrighteousness is to become unrighteous. God did not want Adam to experience both good and evil. Also, it's when we begin to decide for ourselves what we should and should not do that there is a big problem. God alone decides what is good and what is evil. Adam and Eve were telling the Creator of the universe that they knew better than God what is right and wrong for us to do. This is Satan's lie.

Today, the world is doing the same thing as Adam and Eve. The world constantly debates whether this or that is right or wrong, without looking to God for the answer. Sex outside of marriage has become "good" when God says it's not. Today we are seeing for ourselves the damage to family life that sex outside of

marriage has caused. Young men are growing up without fathers. They don't have godly fathers as role models. They wind up living for street gangs and drugs. Think of the damage that killing children in their mother's wombs is causing!

Sin separates men from God. Yes, Christ paid the ransom for our sins. But continued sin still separates men from God. The world is saying some things, such as homosexuality, are not sinful. The world is unwilling to submit to God's authority over that which separates God from men. Today, most don't really care that they are separated from God. It really is two separate kingdoms.

When Adam ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in disobedience to God, Adam put himself under Satan's authority instead of God's authority. Because of this, today Satan is the "ruler [or prince] of this world" (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). The kingdom of this world is ruled by Satan. God will allow it to continue only for so long. Then God must stop Satan's rule. And without the tree of life, which is symbolic of God's kingdom, (or authority), there is only death.

So, there are two trees of world rule or world authority: The tree of life is ruled over by Jesus. The tree of knowledge of good and evil is ruled over by Satan. Both trees are kingdoms. Adam became ruled by the authority of Satan instead of the authority of Jesus when he chose to submit himself to Satan's rule.

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree, the tree is another view of Satan's kingdom, because Satan is the prince of this world. We were all born into that kingdom. The stump was bound with iron and bronze. By this we can assume the tree started with Nebuchadnezzar (gold) and continued with Medo-Persian (silver), Greek (bronze), and the Islamic Caliphate (iron). The final kingdom of Satan will be the one of Islam. It's the world kingdom of the last beast and his 42 month reign over every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 13:5-7).

Today the Kingdom of Heaven is spiritual because it exists only in our hearts. The Kingdom of God is advancing as more people find the Lord and overcome all the sinful habits in their lives. But when Christ returns, Christ's literal earthly kingdom will be established. Natural bodies must put on spiritual bodies in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (John 3:3-13, 1 Corinthians 15:50-53). When Christ returns, He will rule here on the earth as "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Revelation 19:16). The tree of life will once again become the world's kingdom. The tree (kingdom) of knowledge of good and evil will be destroyed and Satan will be locked up for a thousand years.

13.6) Daniel 5: Belshazzar and the Fall of Babylon

As stated earlier, all of the stories and visions in Daniel, which were dated by Daniel, occur near three specific dates or events. The first event is when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah, bringing the Jews to Babylon (605 BC). The second event is when Belshazzar received power (556 BC). The third event is when Babylon, under the rule of Belshazzar, was conquered by the Medes and the Persians (539 BC). The writing on the wall occurred on the very day the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon.

Daniel 5:1-3 ESV King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. (2) Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. (3) Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them.

This was a huge party. Everybody was getting drunk. Verse one says that thousands of the top officials were invited. (This party was probably why the Medes and the Persians picked that night to conquer Babylon.) Belshazzar did something here that apparently Nebuchadnezzar had never dared. He brought out the gold and silver goblets that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem. He has a party with the goblets, with his wives and his concubines! The final abomination is a statue on the temple mount. But Belshazzar had his own abomination against the Temple. Belshazzar is the first type for the antichrist who did not repent.

Daniel 5:4-6 NIV As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone. (5) Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. (6) His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way.

Daniel was brought in to interpret the writing on the wall. It predicted Babylon's fall to the Medes and the Persians. That very night Belshazzar was killed and his kingdom fell to the Medes and the Persians (Daniel 5:30). The battle between the Babylonians and the Persians continues today. The Babylonians inhabit Iraq and the Persians today live in Iran.

Daniel 5:18-21 NIV O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. (19) Because of the high position he gave him, all the peoples and nations and men of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. (20) But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. (21) He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes.

In the above verses, Daniel points out that Nebuchadnezzar was king of kings, over the whole world. Belshazzar, his grandson, now has that position. Daniel reminds Belshazzar about Nebuchadnezzar's experience of being turned into a beast until he acknowledged the authority of God. Nebuchadnezzar repented, but Belshazzar did not. Belshazzar was the first beast, the first antichrist.

Daniel 5:22-23 NIV "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. (23) Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.

The writing on the wall was interpreted to be death for Belshazzar, and Belshazzar knew it to be true. He ordered that Daniel be honored even though it was Belshazzar's death sentence. Belshazzar was defeated, but he never repented. And so it will be with both of the end-times antichrists.

Daniel 5:30-31 NIV That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, (31) and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.

13.7) Daniel 6: The Lion's Den

Under Belshazzar, Daniel was an unknown. Somebody happened to remember him when the writing on the wall appeared and none of Belshazzar's men could interpret it. But Darius the Mede liked Daniel.

Daniel 6:1-3 NIV It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, (2) with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. (3) Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

This made the other officials jealous of Daniel. They set out to trick the king of kings into setting Daniel up. They asked the king of kings to issue an order that no one during the next thirty days could pray to anyone except to Darius. Again, we have the two trees. Daniel had to pick between praying to God, and praying to a ruler of the government. Daniel chose the tree of life, and Darius reluctantly had to give Daniel the death sentence. But God saved Daniel in the lion's den, just as he saved Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace.

But Darius was not an antichrist. He acknowledged God's authority.

Daniel 6:16 NIV So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

Darius was greatly distressed over having to put Daniel in the lion's den. But somehow, even Darius knew that God could save him.

Daniel 6: 19-22 NIV At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. (20) 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?" (21) Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! (22) 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."

The key here, is that Daniel was found innocent in the sight of God. The kingdom of heaven is about to come again. The New Jerusalem will appear. But we must overcome all our sinful habits before we can be caught up in the rapture. We must

be found innocent in his sight. We must stop sinning so that we can endure the great tribulation. The blood of Jesus gives us forgiveness, but we must still stop sinning, just as Daniel did 500 years before Christ ever came.

Daniel 6: 23-24 NIV The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. (24) At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

When Christ returns, it will be much the same. He will kill all who falsely accuse us. The writing is on the wall for both of the end time's antichrists!

Daniel 6: 25-27 NIV Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: "May you prosper greatly! (26) "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. (27) He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."

This is the way it will be when Christ appears.

Chapter 14

Daniel Chapters 7-8

End Time Kingdoms

14.1) Daniel 7: The Four Beasts

Traditionally, the four beasts of Daniel 7 are identified as Babylon, Medes-Persia, Alexander the Great, and Rome. The fourth beast is seen as Rome, so many argue for a revival of the old Roman Empire. But Daniel 7:17 NIV says, “The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth.” At the time of this vision, Babylon was only a couple of years away from being conquered by the Medes and the Persians. Babylon, and the Medes-Persians had long since risen from the earth. Also, Daniel 7:11-12 tells us that when the fourth beast is destroyed, the other three will be stripped of their authority but will be allowed to live for a season and a time. This verse rules out ancient kingdoms which are long gone and will not be around when the fourth beast is destroyed.

Daniel 7 was covered back in chapter 9 of this book. We concluded that the four beasts are modern-day end-time kingdoms. The lion represents England and the United States. The bear represents Russia. The leopard represents the European Union. And the fourth beast represents the United Nations. These four, which influence and try to control Israel, can be seen in the organization of nations called the Middle East Quartet. Representatives of the Middle East Quartet are:

United Nations — Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
European Union — High Representative Baroness Ashton of Up Holland
Russian Federation — Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov
United States of America — Secretary of State John F. Kerry
Special Envoy — Tony Blair

Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, is the special envoy to the Quartet. Thus the lion, which represents both England and the United States, has a representative in the Quartet from both England and the United States.

Back in chapter 9 we talked about the large iron teeth of the fourth beast. The United Nations is a government, but it does not have the military power needed to enforce its "resolutions." In other words, it does not yet have its teeth. The UN is not yet a complete one-world government. However, the fourth beast will have

large iron teeth that will crush and devour its victims. UN resolutions are considered international law, but the UN is not always able to enforce its laws.

There is another aspect of the iron teeth which should be considered. In Daniel chapter 2, we learned that the legs of iron, and the feet and toes of iron and clay, represent a revived Islamic Caliphate. Could it be that the United Nations will adopt Sharia law all for the sake of "peace and safety"? Could Sharia law be the "large iron teeth" of the United Nations? Could the rich elite of this world decide to use Islam and Sharia law as a means to clamp down on and control the people while they remain effectively exempt from their own laws?

The head of gold is Babylon. Thus, the entire statue is symbolically referred to as "mystery Babylon." Let's take a quick peek at Revelation to see how Islam, which is itself a form of government, will become the one-world religion. And the one-world government is the United Nations.

Revelation 17:1-6 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here. I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters, (2) with whom the kings of the earth committed [adultery], and those who dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her [adulteries]." (3) He carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet-colored [beast], full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. (4) The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of the [adultery] of the earth. (5) And on her forehead a name was written, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." (6) I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered with great amazement.

The woman is a prostitute. From a prophetic Scriptural perspective, prostitution is worshipping other gods (Ezekiel 16). It's a false religion. What other religion of the world today could become "drunken with the ... blood of the martyrs of Jesus?" Hinduism and Buddhism considers all life to be sacred and would never condone the murder of Jews and Christians. But the radical Muslim reads the Koran literally when it says to kill the unbelievers (Jews and Christians). The iron in the statue

represents radical Islam and the clay represents moderate Islam. Sharia law is radical Islam, and is growing very fast world-wide. It's fueled by hatred of the West, which is understood to be the Jews and the Christians.

The woman sits on many waters. This means that radical Islam is spreading world-wide. The beast is scarlet-colored. The woman is dressed in purple and scarlet. So the beast is the antichrist and the one-world government. The woman represents the peoples of the world as they follow the beast and become Muslims. Today we have a compromise between Christianity and Islam called Chrislam. Any form of compromise would have to down-play or even deny the death of Christ on the cross, and the fact that the Son of God died on the cross for our sins. The Koran teaches that Jesus did not die on the cross (4:157-158).

Islam cannot compromise on their belief that God cannot have a Son, and that God cannot and would not die on the cross. The worst sin in Islam is called shirk. It's the association of partners with Allah. The Islamic sin of shirk is attributing to anyone or anything Allah's unique sovereignty. So believing that God has a Son is shirk. The Koran (4:51) says that Allah can forgive any other sin. But all who commit shirk will go to hell. Belief in the Trinity sends you to hell. How can there be a true compromise between Christianity and Islam? What does Scripture teach?

1 John 2:22-23 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. (23) Whoever denies the Son, the same doesn't have the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also.

Let's continue reading in Revelation 19. Remember that the woman is the one-world religion of Islam. The first beast is the one-world government of the United Nations. The second beast (false prophet) is the leader of that one-world religion. The ten horns are ten regions of the world. Today, we see the beginnings of these regions as world trade centers such as European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Revelation 17:12-18 The ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour. (13) These have one mind, and they give their power and authority to the beast. (14) These will war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings. They also will overcome who are with him, called and chosen and faithful." (15) He said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples,

multitudes, nations, and languages. (16) The ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the prostitute, and will make her desolate, and will make her naked, and will eat her flesh, and will burn her utterly with fire. (17) For God has put in their hearts to do what he has in mind, and to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished. (18) The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."

The woman is mystery Babylon. It's Islam. The woman is the great city. From the next chapter in Revelation, we know this city is a port city. It could be the port city Jeddah, which is the principle gateway to Mecca. Or perhaps it's some other port city in the Arabian Peninsula. The beast receives power and authority from ten kings, who come into power for "one hour." Most likely these ten kings will be ten regions of the world. The authority and power of the entire world goes to the United Nations, who will give that authority and power to the beast. The beast uses Islam to make the people of the world desolate and naked. But while this happens, during this "one hour," the Islamic people of the world will martyr many Christians and Jews. But after this "one hour", Christ will overthrow the beast and set up his kingdom. Those who die for the testimony of Christ will be resurrected to reign with Christ (Revelation 20:4-5). Others, who have not taken the mark of the beast, will also be resurrected with mortal bodies to live in the nations.

Daniel 7:19-28 Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth [beast], which was diverse from all of them, exceedingly terrible, whose teeth were of iron, and its nails of brass; which devoured, broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet; (20) and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other *horn* which came up, and before which three fell, even that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke great things, whose look was more stout than its fellows. (21) I saw, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; (22) until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. (23) Thus he said, The fourth [beast] shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be diverse from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. (24) As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be

diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings. (25) He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High; and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time. (26) But the judgment shall be set, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it to the end. (27) The kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole sky, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. (28) Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts much troubled me, and my face was changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Notice that the antichrist will change the times and the law. This is the forcing of Sharia law throughout the world. The antichrist will come against all those who refuse Islam and Sharia law because we know that Jesus Christ really is the Son of God, and that Christ died on the cross for our sins. The antichrist will reign for three and a half years (a time, times, and half a time). But then Christ will overthrow the one-world government.

After Christ destroys the government of the antichrist the saints will be given the authority to reign with Christ over the nations. The word saints means holy ones. The saints are those who will have overcome all their sinful habits through a discipleship relationship with Jesus Christ. We will reign with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

Revelation 2:26-27 He who overcomes, and he who keeps my works to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations. (27) He will rule them with a rod of iron, shattering them like clay pots; as I also have received of my Father.

This vision in Daniel 7, along with Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, give us the first clear information about the Kingdom of God that will come. There were previous prophets which spoke some about this coming kingdom. Isaiah was told about the child that would be born, and the government would be on his shoulders (Isaiah 9:6). Likewise, King David was told that his descendent would rule on his throne forever. But was this just to be the government of Israel? Abraham was told that his descendants would be a blessing to all the nations. But would they rule over all the nations? Thus, Daniel's visions and dream interpretations gave Israel a whole lot more information about the

coming kingdom. The Rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain that filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:35). And the fourth beast will devour the whole earth (Daniel 7:23). And here we see that the Kingdom of God will rule over all the nations under heaven.

Daniel 7:27 ESV And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.'

In New Testament times, there was great expectation and hope for this coming kingdom. When Jesus taught parables about the "kingdom of heaven" or the "kingdom of God," the Jewish people would have understood that he was teaching about the coming kingdom as taught by Daniel 2 and 7. But it's clear in Daniel 7 that the kingdom is only turned over to the "holy ones" (saints.) Israel was not yet ready for the coming kingdom. Their leaders were not "holy ones." Paul and John refer to Christians as saints ("holy ones"). This most likely comes from Daniel 7. The kingdom will be turned over only to those who completely overcome all their sinful habits through a discipleship relationship with Jesus. Therefore, Jesus taught in parables. He taught parables about holiness and what it takes to inherit the "kingdom of God", or the "kingdom of heaven."

Today we are living in a generation that has seen the kingdoms of the lion, the bear, and the leopard become world leaders. The United Nations was formed right after World War II. Both the United States and Russia became "superpowers" after World War II. The European Union was the first to unite a bunch of nations to form what will be one of the ten horns. And all four of these powers are putting great pressure on Israel to give up their land, including Jerusalem, which was part of the land given to Israel by God. Jesus tells us the parable of the fig tree, which is the sign that the kingdom of God is coming soon.

Matthew 24:32-34 "Now from the fig tree learn this parable. When its branch has now become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near. (33) Even so you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. (34) Most certainly I tell you, this generation will not pass away, until all these things are accomplished.

Many people believe that the rebirth of Israel after World War II was the fig tree putting forth leaves. In the Old Testament, both the olive tree and the fig tree is symbolic of Israel, as Israel becomes a nation with a king. But as we know Christ is the real King of Israel.

Judges 9:8-10 The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said to the olive tree, Reign over us. (9) But the olive tree said to them, Should I leave my fatness, with which by me they honor God and man, and go to wave back and forth over the trees? (10) The trees said to the fig tree, Come and reign over us.

Israel became a nation in 1948, soon after World War II. The United States (lion) and Russia (bear) became superpowers after World War II. Thus, the baby-boom generation is the generation that will not pass away until the earthly kingdom of God comes.

But just how long is a generation? The length of a generation is not what is important. The verse states that the generation “will not pass away” before all these things happen. So the real question is how long do people live? Psalm 90:10 tells us that we live 70 years, or if by strength 80 years. (Yes, a very small percentage of the people reach 90 or even 100. But let’s use Psalm 90 to interpret these words of Jesus. We live to be 70 or 80 years. Israel was reborn in 1948. Add 70 or 80 and we get a date range of 2018 to 2028. All these things would have to include the seven-year tribulation period. Subtract 7 for the tribulation and we get 2011 to 2021. For other reasons, I’m narrowing it down a bit and looking at 2016.

At this point some will say, "No man knows the day or the hour." But does that mean no man will ever know? Suppose I were to take a coin out of my pocket, and without looking, put it in the palm of my hand hiding it with the other hand. At that point, no man knows whether heads or tails is showing - not until I remove my hand. Likewise, at that time, no man knew the day or the time when the earthly kingdom of God will be established. But no man knew when the fig tree would put forth leaves. But now we know. The kingdom of heaven will be established before this generation passes away. And as the signs get closer, we will know better and better the day of the resurrection.

When we see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel in Daniel chapter 12, we will know that the resurrection is 1290 days later.

14.2) Daniel 8: The Ram and the Goat

During the third year of Belshazzar's rule, at about 554 BC, Daniel had a vision of a ram and a goat. The ram had two horns and the horns were long. One horn was longer than the other, but the shorter one later grew up. The goat had a prominent horn between his eyes. The goat overpowered the ram and trampled on him. At the height of the goat's power, the prominent horn was broken off and was replaced by four prominent horns. The vision is interpreted for Daniel by the angel Gabriel.

Daniel 8:1-8 In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, even to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first. (2) I saw in the vision; now it was so, that when I saw, I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision, and I was by the river Ulai. (3) Then I lifted up my eyes, and saw, and behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. (4) I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; and no animals could stand before him, neither was there any who could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and magnified himself. (5) As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west over the surface of the whole earth, and didn't touch the ground: and the goat had a [prominent] horn between his eyes. (6) He came to the ram that had the two horns, which I saw standing before the river, and ran on him in the fury of his power. (7) I saw him come close to the ram, and he was moved with anger against him, and struck the ram, and broke his two horns; and there was no power in the ram to stand before him; but he cast him down to the ground, and trampled on him; and there was none who could deliver the ram out of his hand. (8) The male goat magnified himself exceedingly: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and instead of it there came up four notable horns toward the four winds of the sky.

Traditionally, the vision of the ram and the goat is believed to be about the ancient Medes and the Persians who were conquered by the Greek empire of Alexander the Great. But as we will see, the vision states that it's for "the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end" (verse 19). Of course

the last part of the vision is undoubtable about the time of the end. Perhaps it starts with the Medes and the Persians and then jumps to the time of the end.

But since the vision states that it's about the time of the end, some have endeavored to find an interpretation that is entirely fulfilled in the end times. This would be called a consistent futurist view. First, we will look at the more traditional view that begins with the ancient Medes and Persians. Then we will take a look at the latter part of the vision, which is assumed to be about end times. There are some very interesting aspects to the later-day aspects of this vision. Finally, we will take a look at how the entire vision might be fulfilled entirely during the end times. Consistent futurist views have the advantage that it doesn't force the vision to unnaturally take a time-jump. The text itself does not have strong language indicating that it time-jumps. It's also possible to consider both to be true, in that the earlier interpretation would become a type for the latter end-times fulfillment.

According to verse 20, the two horns of the ram are Media and Persia. One horn is longer, because Persia was more predominant than Media. When Daniel received this vision, he was most probably physically in Babylon, in service of Belshazzar the king. But in Daniel's vision, he saw himself in the city of Susa. Daniel was apparently familiar with the city of Susa, because he recognized the canal in his vision. The city of Susa was in Persia, and was about 200 miles east of Babylon. Daniel sees the ram from Persia. About 15 years after the date of this vision, the Medes and the Persians conquered the Babylonian empire and took over rule of Babylon. Here, we see that the ram charged west, north, and south. Persia is modern-day Iran. That was about as far to the east as people knew about in that day. Again, the city of Susa was about 200 miles east of Babylon. So the Persian Empire expanded west, north, and south as it conquered the Babylon Empire.

Now, what about the shaggy goat? Verse 21 says the shaggy goat is Greece. The Medo-Persian Empire was overthrown by Alexander the Great. His empire is the shaggy goat with one horn. When Alexander the Great was killed in 323 BC, his top four generals each received a portion of the empire. These four generals are the four horns that replaced the one that was broken off. Some people, however, have argued that this is a weak fit for history. As we will see, such an argument may indicate that the vision is primarily focused on and end-times fulfillment.

Ptolemy Soter was one of the four generals of Alexander the Great that received a portion of the empire. Ptolemy Soter received rule over Egypt. After Ptolemy Soter, came Ptolemy Philadelphus, and then Ptolemy Epiphanes. When Ptolemy Epiphanes died, his son, Ptolemy Philometor, was too young to properly

rule. Antiochus [IV] Epiphanes of Syria took the opportunity and invaded Egypt in this time of weakness. In 168 BC Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed a pig on the altar and put an end to the sacrifices. The "abomination of desolation" was a stone structure, a statue of Zeus, set up on the temple mount. The "abomination that causes desolation" that is to come has several parallels to this one.

Thus, we see a connection between this general of Alexander's and the antichrist. The vision of the ram and the goat follows one of the four horns to the antichrist.

Daniel 8:9-11 ESV Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. (10) It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. (11) It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown.

Antiochus Epiphanes is a type for the antichrist (false prophet). He does not acknowledge God's authority over him. Antiochus Epiphanes set up an abomination of desolation, and stopped the sacrifice and offering. In Matthew 24, Jesus tells us to watch for the abomination of desolation. He tells us to read Daniel for understanding. Daniel 11 is a prophecy about the abomination of desolation that was set up by Antiochus Epiphanes. That abomination of desolation was fulfilled in 168 BC. Since that abomination had already been fulfilled in the time of Jesus, he was telling us to look for the same thing to happen again. So, it makes sense for Antiochus Epiphanes to be a tie-point between the events up to verse 9, and the events in the end times.

In chapters 11-12 of Daniel, we will see the same thing. Antiochus Epiphanes and the abomination of desolation (Daniel 11:31) is a type of the antichrist, and what will happen in the end times. Daniel 11:35 takes a time-jump from the fulfilled prophecy of 168 BC to the unfulfilled prophecy of the end times. Then, in Daniel 12:11, we see the second abomination of desolation that will happen in the middle of the week of the covenant.

14.3) The End-Times Battle in Heaven

Daniel 8 mentions the abomination of desolation. Instead of "abomination," it's called a "transgression that makes desolate" (Daniel 8:13). But more emphasis is placed on an event that happens about the same time. The antichrist becomes great. This vision even compares the antichrist with the host of heaven! The word "host" in the ESV can also be translated as "army." There is a battle in heaven at this time, and some of the host (Christ's army) and some of the "stars" are thrown to the ground and trampled upon. What does it mean for "stars" to be thrown down? In Daniel, "stars" are symbolic for angels. Some of Christ's army and angels are trampled upon. This does not mean they are killed. To be trampled upon, in Scripture, means they come under the control of those doing the trampling. Perhaps they are put into some kind of prison. This battle is probably the same battle in heaven that we read about in Revelation 12.

Revelation 12:7-9 There was war in the sky. Michael and his angels made war on the dragon. The dragon and his angels made war. (8) They didn't prevail, neither was a place found for him any more in heaven. (9) The great dragon was thrown down, the old serpent, he who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

When we read the context of these verses, we can see that this battle happens after the 1260 days (Revelation 12:6) and before the times, times and half a time (Revelation 12:14). Thus, this war in heaven happens in the middle of the seven-year covenant. It's about the same time as the abomination of desolation.

In chapters 4 and 5 of this book, I made the argument that the New Jerusalem will appear in orbit around the earth at the start of the seven-year covenant. I also made the point that "heaven" and "sky" are the same thing in Scripture. The universe is heaven. There is no separate "spiritual realm." So there is no real distinction between aliens and angels. The "host of heaven" (Daniel 8:10) are aliens who are also Christ's angels. This is Christ's army.

Of course we also know that not all angels (aliens) are part of Christ's host. There are many fallen angels who fight for Satan. Apparently this "cold war" will turn into a hot war in the middle of the seven-year covenant.

Okay, let's go back to Daniel 8. Verse 10 starts talking about the antichrist of the end times. And verses 17 and 19 make it clear the vision is about the end times, the time of God's wrath. (The wrath is stated in verse 19.)

Daniel 8:17-19 So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was frightened, and fell on my face: but he said to me, Understand, son of man; for the vision belongs to the time of the end. (18) Now as he was speaking with me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face toward the ground; but he touched me, and set me upright. (19) He said, Behold, I will make you know what shall be in the latter time of the indignation; for it belongs to the appointed time of the end.

Now that we know this refers to the end times, let's back up to verse 12. Here we see that the battle in heaven, in which some of the host will be trampled upon, happens at the same time that the burnt offering is stopped. This is understood to happen at the same time as the abomination of desolation.

Daniel 8:12-14 ESV And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper. (13) Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?" (14) And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."

The 2300 days, given here in verse 14, has been a puzzle for a lot of people. It doesn't add up to anything for the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. So, it must have to do with the end times, not with 168 BC.

The host is trampled underfoot, the regular offering is stopped, and the transgression [abomination] that makes desolate, all happen at about the same time. This is the start of 2300 days. Yet we know from Daniel 12:11 that from the abomination there are 1290 days until the post-tribulation resurrection. So the 2300 days must extend past the end of the seven-year covenant.

Verse 14 clearly indicates the 2300 days ends with the sanctuary being cleansed. Must the sanctuary be cleansed right after the seven-year covenant? What if the sanctuary is destroyed at the time of Armageddon? Then it would take time for it to be rebuilt before it can be cleansed again and animal sacrifice restored.

There is growing evidence that the temple mount is not actually the location of Solomon's and Herod's temple. At the time of Solomon, the boundaries of Jerusalem was the smaller City of David located about three quarters of a mile south

of the temple mount. The evidence is mounting that the temple was built on the northern side of the City of David. They would not have built the temple three quarters of a mile outside the city.

But tradition is very strong. Tradition holds that the temple was built on the temple mount. Most likely the Jews will rebuild Herod's temple on the temple mount. Ezekiel's temple is too big and won't fit on the temple mount. I think Herod's temple will be rebuilt and then destroyed at Armageddon. Then Ezekiel's temple will be built in the City of David after the week of the covenant.

14.4) Israel, The United States, and the Two-State Solution

On March 3, 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke to the United States Congress. Many claimed this week was chosen for his visit because it would boost his political ratings in his upcoming election campaign. But it's much more likely that the week was chosen because of the Jewish holiday of Purim, which was March 4 and 5 of that week. During the speech Netanyahu talked about Purim, saying that it begins tomorrow. This is the day when the Jews celebrate Purim by reading the entire book of Esther. Queen Esther was the queen of the Persian King Xerxes. Esther had not revealed to the king that she was Jewish. Iran is modern-day Persia. In the story Haman obtained permission from the king to exterminate all the Jews everywhere. There are obvious parallels to the modern-day Iran who wants to push Israel into the sea and kill all the Jews. Here is what Netanyahu said to Congress.

My friends, I've come here today because, as prime minister of Israel, I feel a profound obligation to speak to you about an issue that could well threaten the survival of my country and the future of my people: Iran's quest for nuclear weapons.

We're an ancient people. In our nearly 4,000 years of history, many have tried repeatedly to destroy the Jewish people. Tomorrow night, on the Jewish holiday of Purim, we'll read the Book of Esther. We'll read of a powerful Persian viceroy named Haman, who plotted to destroy the Jewish people some 2,500 years ago. But a courageous Jewish woman, Queen Esther, exposed the plot and gave for the Jewish people the right to defend themselves against their enemies.

The plot was foiled. Our people were saved.

People have drawn further parallels between the events of today and the story of Esther. For example, Glenn Beck equates the United States with Esther and Netanyahu with Mordecai. Esther was the daughter of Mordecai's uncle, who died. Her mother also died. She was brought up by Mordecai, who took her as his own daughter (Esther 2:7). The reason that Glenn Beck equates Mordecai with Netanyahu, and the United States with Esther, is that Mordecai asked Queen Esther to approach the king in order to save the Jewish people. She risked her life in approaching the king, without being called, because it was against the law and doing so would mean her death if the king did not extend his scepter to save her life. She did so and the Jews were saved. But what if Esther had refused? Would God have allowed the Jews to be destroyed? Mordecai said that God would find another way to save the Jews. But that Esther and her father's house would perish. Who knows if God's blessing on the United States has not been for the protection of Israel?

Esther 4:13-14 Then Mordecai asked them return answer to Esther, "Don't think to yourself that you will escape in the king's house any more than all the Jews. (14) For if you remain silent now, then relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Who knows if you haven't come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

It's very true that God has blessed the United States because this country was founded upon faith in God. We were a Christian nation. We have been Israel's greatest ally. But if we were to stop helping Israel, God will still find a way to protect Israel. Would abandoning Israel lead to the downfall of the United States?

In this baby-boom generation since World War II, we have prohibited prayer in schools, distorted the meaning of separation of church and state, promoted the killing of children in the mother's wombs, and we are now attempting to redefine marriage as being other than the union between a man and a woman. In this generation we have glorified the sins of sex outside of marriage and the sin of homosexuality. Why then, has God continued to bless this nation as we continue to lead the world down the path of rebellion against God? Could it be that God has not removed his hand of blessing because we have continued to stand with Israel? Remember that the modern state of Israel was born at the start of this baby-boom generation right after the start of World War II. The United States became a superpower and world leader also after World War II. We have been Israel's only real ally. Could it be that this is been our true purpose all along?

At this point many will say that the people of Israel do not believe in Jesus as Savior and that modern-day Israel has nothing to do with Bible prophecy. Calvinism is mostly associated with election. The Calvinist view of Covenant Theology sees the chosen people of God as being the Church whereas God's chosen people used to be Old Testament Israel. The Old Testament covenants are seen as continued in the New Testament Church. That's why the Bible is divided into the "Old Testament" and the "New Testament." The word "Testament" means covenant. It's the traditional belief that the Church fulfills the promises of Israel and that the Jews are no longer God's chosen people.

Detractors such as dispensationalists refer to this belief as Supersessionism or Replacement Theology. Historically speaking, there were always some people who viewed the Jews as God's chosen people. But they were rare. When dispensationalism came along with Darby around 1830, much of this view began to change. Dispensationalism sees the Jews as being a separate plan or purpose with the Church age viewed as a "parenthesis" between two ages of Israel. Thus, God switches his focus between two sets of chosen people. (The correct view, I believe, is that Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. And thus there is no difference between two sets of chosen people.) In any case, there is a strong historic belief that God abandoned the Jews and they are no longer his chosen people. This was the source of most anti-Semitism throughout history.

Joel Richardson has a new book titled, "When a Jew Rules the Word," has a shocking quote from Martin Luther. Richardson deals very effectively with Supersessionism. I highly recommend that everyone read this book.

Martin Luther believed that he was in the end times and thus the Jews would turn to Christ. But it didn't happen. Later on in his life, Martin Luther became very bitter towards the Jews. The first chapter of Richardson's new book quotes excerpts from Martin Luther shocking treaties titled, "On the Jews and Their Lies".

It called for the burning of the synagogues and homes of Jews. It called for the burning of their prayer books and copies of the Talmud. Luther wanted to make it illegal for the rabbis to teach under the threat of death. Luther wrote, "Next to the devil, a Christian has no more bitter and galling foe than the Jew." Martin Luther was German. Years later, another German used this treaties to bring about the Holocaust against the Jews in Germany. Hitler's major motivational argument for the "final solution" to the "problem of the Jews" came from this treaties of Martin Luther about the Jews.

After World War II, Hitler was defeated and the United States, along with the USSR, became world superpowers. The United States became the leader of the free world and the primary ally of the newly formed nation of Israel. No doubt dispensationalism spawned the growing view that God has not given up on the Jews and was instrumental in the United States' bipartisan support of Israel.

The biggest rift between the United States and Israel is that of the two-state solution. United States presidents have wanted to take land from Israel. Christians who stand with Israel see that the two-state solution as an attempt to divide the land that God gave to Abraham. In the 1967 Six Day War, Israel was attacked by Egypt, Syria and Jordan. God clearly helped Israel in miraculous ways and Israel wound up occupying much of Egypt, the Golan Heights of Syria, and the West Bank of Jordan. The United Nations asked Israel to stop, and Israel did so. Israel even returned to Egypt much of the land. But Israel kept the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip which was originally part of Egypt.

Today, the "two-state" solution is not about returning these lands to their former countries. It's about making a new Palestine state that has never before existed. Israel needs this land to protect itself. Israel has already turned over the Gaza Strip to the Palestinians. Almost immediately they elected the Hamas terror group as their government. And Hamas has constantly sent rockets into Israel. Without the West Bank, Israel has no defense against the Hezbollah terror group in Lebanon, who has attacked Israel with much more suffocated missiles that are supplied by Iran. Plus, the Golan Heights is a buffer zone between Israel and Syria.

In the next chapter, we will see the importance of the 1967 war. In it, Old Jerusalem was restored to the Jews. Jesus said about the Jews, "They will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." (Luke 21:24). The Jews were led captive into all the nations in 70 AD. As of 1967, Old Jerusalem was no longer being trampled down by the Gentiles.

In the next chapter, we will see why this marked the start of the final seven weeks that were decreed in response to Daniel's prayer for the desolation of Jerusalem to come to an end. After the seventy weeks, which ends with seven weeks, both the Messiah and the antichrist will come. The seven weeks will expire in 2016. Thus, Israel should be able to keep Old Jerusalem until at least 2016. Jerusalem will not be trampled down by the Gentiles during that time. However, in Revelation 11:2 we read that the Gentiles will trample Old Jerusalem for another forty-two months, which is the second half of the seven-year tribulation period.

The United States has been a great ally of Israel. But recent presidents of the United States, including Obama, have sought to divide Israel by bringing about the two-state solution. In section 14.1 of this chapter, we saw that the four beasts of Daniel 7 seem to be about the Middle-East Quartet in which the United States is the leader. The Middle-East Quartet is all about bringing about the two-state solution. It will be argued in the next section (14.5) that Daniel 8 is also about the United States and the two-state solution. The two-state solution seems to be directly related to the forty-two month reign of the antichrist. One would think that God's hand of blessing for the United States will be removed when the United States turns against Israel and tries to force the issue of the two-state solution.

14.5) A Consistent Futurist View of Daniel 8

A number of people have read the following verses and concluded that the entire vision should be consistently about the end times that we are now living.

Daniel 8:17-19 So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was frightened, and fell on my face: but he said to me, Understand, son of man; for the vision belongs to the time of the end. (18) Now as he was speaking with me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face toward the ground; but he touched me, and set me upright. (19) He said, Behold, I will make you know what shall be in the latter time of the indignation; for it belongs to the appointed time of the end.

The NIV translates the Hebrew word for 'indignation' as wrath. But the Hebrew word means anger and Strong says it's "strictly froth at the mouth." In other words, the entire vision should be about a time when God is angry but has not yet poured out his wrath. The vision should relate to Israel. But Israel is not mentioned in the interpretation that is given by the Gabriel. But the visions of the end times are almost always about how other nations relate to Israel. This vision is no exception.

The two horned ram is identified with the Medes and the Persians. Both were in modern-day Iran. The problem with interpreting the vision as consistently about the end times is that the goat is identified Greece. It's hard to imagine Greece as overthrowing Iran. It's been suggested that the Hebrew word 'Javan' for Greece could really mean Turkey because the region of Greece was expanded after Alexander's conquest and the broader area into Turkey was then called Javan. But this would violate grammatical-historical interpretation which says that names for places should reflect what the author and his audience would have understood.

But what if Gabriel used the word ‘Javan’ to identify a country that didn’t exist at the time of Daniel? The United States is a melting pot of people from all over Europe, including Greece. We are the ‘West’. And the goat is explicitly stated as coming from the west. The Hebrew word Javan can also mean ‘mire,’ as in muddy land. With this meaning the word occurs two times, in Psalm 40:2 and 69:2. In both cases the mire serves as metaphor for the absence of a stable foothold. This is in contrast to building your house on a Rock. Thus, the word Javan figuratively can accurately describe the United States, and the West, as it has become during this end-times baby-boom generation since the rebirth of national Israel right after World War II. If the vision is really about the end times, then the following statement should really identify the goat as being the United States.

Daniel 8:5 As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west over the surface of the whole earth, and didn't touch the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes.

The United States can literally send the B2 stealth bomber directly from a base in the United States across the ocean to a country in the middle-east. It can drop its bombs using stealth technology to avoid radar. It then returns to the United States without ever landing. This is accomplished by refueling several times in the air.

According to Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu the world’s greatest problem is Iran’s aspirations to acquire atomic bombs. All conservatives and many moderates tend to agree. But in Netanyahu speech to congress, he asserts that Obama’s deal with Iran will all but guarantee that Iran achieves its goal and will acquire atomic bombs. Thus, the United States may very well have to attack Iran. Combine this with the possible scenario laid out in chapter one of this book and the destruction of Damascus. Today, the United States is politically divided almost as much as it was at the time of the Civil War. These events, along with an apparent upcoming financial crisis involving our historically unheard of national debt, could bring the United States to the point of internal destruction. We could wind up with many states declaring a secession from the union. If all this happens, the United States would split into four nations. The first beast of Revelation would come from one of these four. He is the bold-faced ruler who understands hidden things.

Daniel 8:22-23 As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power. (23) And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise.

Chapter 15

Daniel Chapter 9

The Seventy Weeks

There are two major views of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9. The question is which decree to use for the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

The dispensationalists and most premillennialists tend to go with the letters of King Artaxerxes in 445 BC (Nehemiah 2) as the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. The 70th week is split off from the rest of the 70. They place a big time-jump between the 69th week and the 70th week. Then the 70th week is the time of the great tribulation, which they view as the seven-year period prior to Christ's "glorious appearing." During the second half of the seven years, a world-government ruler called the antichrist rules over every tribe, people, language, and nation of the world (Revelation 13:5-7).

Preterists tend to go with the decree of King Artaxerxes in 458 BC (Ezra 7) as the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Preterists do not split off any of the seventy weeks. All 490 years continues without a break. Most amillennialists and preterists do not believe in a seven-year great tribulation period prior to Christ's return. They do not believe in the world-government ruler called the antichrist.

There is a third view, minor in its acceptance, which is based on the decree of Cyrus in 536 BC. Most theologians reject this view because the date seems to be too early for it to work. This, however, is the view that I will argue, based on Scripture. Most theologians who would take this view would tend to be preterists. They would not separate some weeks off into the future. On the other hand, I take the futurist position. So I split some of the weeks off into the future.

This is done with close attention to the purpose of the seventy weeks, based on Daniel's prayer. You can't understand the answer to a question without understanding the question. Likewise, you can't understand the vision without understanding the prayer. The vision is interpreted in the context of the prayer.

Finally, the Olivetti Discourse (Matthew 24 and Luke 21) will be examined in the context of this purpose, as given in the vision itself. Thus, the Olivetti Discourse can be interpreted better in the context of Daniel. This is appropriate because Daniel was Scripture at the time of Christ, and because Jesus makes reference to the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel.

15.1) Seventy Weeks Based On Nehemiah 2 (Decree of Artaxerxes)

Most futurists, and especially dispensationalists, tend to split the seventy weeks between the 69th and the 70th. This theory uses the letter of King Artaxerxes in 445 BC (Nehemiah 2) as the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. The timeline of sixty-nine weeks beginning in 445 BC requires that each week be based on 360-day years, with no correction for the solar cycle. Those who advocate the use of these letters as the decree are convinced of its correctness by the accuracy of the math.

I don't think we should decide the decree based on the accuracy of the math. The dates themselves require information outside of Scripture. You have to go to the footnotes in study Bibles to get these dates. Unlike Scripture itself, they are subject to error. I like the idea of first examining Scripture to see what the decree should be. Use Scriptural precedent. If we don't, the accuracy of math can deceive us. The math can be very accurate. But if the assumptions are incorrect, assumptions upon which the math are based, then the theory can still be wrong. Many dispensationalists, I believe, are deceived by the accuracy of the math of the 360-day year.

Many advocates of this view tend to portray the 360-day year as being Jewish. However, the Jewish calendar does not have 360 days in a year. The Jewish calendar is based on the lunar month. The lunar cycle is 29 1/2 days. Therefore, half the months are 29 days, and the other half are 30 days. This makes a 12-month Jewish year be 354 days, not 360 days. Also, the Jewish calendar adds an extra month, totaling 13 months, every three years or so in order to correct for the sun.

The only justification for the 360-day year, with no correction for the sun, is based on numbers in Revelation (not Daniel). Revelation 13:5 says the beast will reign for 42 months. Revelation 11:1-3 also mentions the 42 months. And this verse says the two witnesses will prophesy 1260 days. The 1260 days is also given in Revelation 12:6, where the woman is nourished for 1260 days. If you divide 1260 days by 42 months, you get exactly 30 days. Daniel 9:27 is interpreted as saying the sacrifice is stopped in the midst of the week of the covenant. All this is put together and it's concluded that the abomination is exactly in the middle of the seven years, and that each half is 1260 days.

Scripture, however, never explicitly equates the 1260 days with the 42 months. Also, why is Revelation used to interpret Daniel? Revelation was written many years after Daniel. What does Daniel say about the number of days in half the week? Daniel 12:11 says from the abomination there are 1290 days. Would not

that make the seven years be 1290 days times two? Seven years would be 2580 days, making one year be 368.57 days. Of course this doesn't get us anywhere. But it's just as good a number as 360 days for a year. There are several assumptions here that are being made, to get 360 days, which are invalid assumptions.

The first assumption is that the abomination is exactly in the middle of the seven years. It can simply be in the midst of the seven years. The second assumption is that 1260 days is equated to 42 months. The 1260 days could be the first half, and the 42 months could be the second half. Daniel 12:11 says that from the abomination there are 1290 days. That, therefore, is the second half.

Let's look at an alternative math theory. The first half is 1260 days. The second half is 1290 days. In the middle, dividing these two time-periods, there are seven days. The two witnesses prophesy for 1260 days. After that, they are killed and lie dead in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 1/2 days (Revelation 11:3, 9-11). 3 1/2 days is obviously half of seven days. Adding it together, the seven years is 1260 days plus 7 days plus 1290 days. This adds up to 2557 days. Seven years is 365.25 days times 7, which is 2556.75. Round up for the leap-year and we have 2557 days. It's an exact match.

I reject the letters of Nehemiah 2, from 445 BC, for the following two reasons.

The first reason is that the seventy weeks are obviously weeks of years. The Scriptural precedent for weeks of years is the Jubilee (seven weeks of years) from Leviticus 25. Here, the growing seasons and Jewish festivals are very important in establishment of these weeks of years. In Leviticus 25, the weeks of years are based on the growing seasons, where a year corrected to the solar cycle. 360-day years will get way off in the growing seasons. With the 360-day year, 5.25 days short of the number of days in a year, it only takes 70 years for summer to be winter and winter to be summer - a full half-year out of sync with the solar cycle. Also in Leviticus 25 we have the jubilee defined. The seventy weeks is ten jubilees. There has never been a calendar that was not corrected to the solar cycle. The Jewish calendar has 354 days in a year, and is corrected to the solar cycle approximately every third year.

The second reason for rejecting the letters of Nehemiah 2 is that they were not a public law-making decree. They were only letters written to the governors of Trans-Euphrates for safe conduct, and to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, so that he would give Nehemiah timber. The public law-making decree to release the Jews and rebuild Jerusalem had already been given by Cyrus. No further decree was necessary.

15.2) Seventy Weeks Based On Ezra 7 (Decree of Artaxerxes)

Preterists generally use the decree of King Artaxerxes in 458 BC (Ezra 7) as the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Preterists do not split off any of the seventy weeks. All 490 years continues without a break. The math of this date works quite well. Sixty-nine weeks brings us to 26 AD, the start of Christ's ministry. Thus the crucifixion would be in the middle of the seventh week. The problem, however, is that the decree given in Ezra 7 is not for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. It was not for the rebuilding of anything. It was simply for supplies for the temple. Verses 16, 17, and 20 of Ezra 7 specifically say it's for the temple. (The KJV says the "house of their God which is in Jerusalem." The NIV says the "temple of their God in Jerusalem.") I could find no mention of building anything in Ezra 7. And, the temple was already completed at the time of this decree.

The BC dates that we have in our study Bibles are not in Scripture itself. They are computed from ancient lists of kings. There is very little disagreement among scholars on these dates. Nevertheless, they are based on ancient texts outside of Scripture, and can have errors. As we will see, all the arguments of Scripture itself, without data from outside of Scripture, point to the decree of Cyrus. If we didn't have those lists of kings that are not in Scripture, then nobody would suggest Nehemiah 2 or Ezra 7. Everyone would be in agreement that it's the decree of Cyrus, because Scripture itself suggests no other decree.

15.3) BC Dates Should Only Be For Comparison

It's my belief that the sixty-two weeks begins with the decree of Cyrus and completes with the birth of Christ. At this point most theologians will say that my dates do not add up. The decree of Cyrus is said to have been in 536 BC. The birth of Christ was around 6 BC to 2 BC. And sixty-two weeks of years would be 434 years. The date of 536 BC would seem to be about 96 years too early.

But where in Scripture does it say the decree of Cyrus was in 536 BC? Scripture only tells us that it was in the "first year of Cyrus king of Persia." Scholars have spent huge amounts of time trying to piece together ancient king-lists and other information that is used to determine the dates when various kings ruled. The study of all this information is extremely complex and can be prone to lots of error because much of the ancient information often itself has errors.

Ptolemy of Alexandria was an astronomer who lived in the second century AD. Many of the Bible dates are based on his king-list, which includes lunar eclipses. When the lunar eclipses are verified, the lists are given a high level of

credibility. This assumes that historians observed and recorded the lunar eclipses as they occurred. But what if Ptolemy did the computations for back-dating the lunar eclipses himself? After all, he was an astronomer, not a historian. What if Ptolemy simply included his own computations of the lunar eclipses alongside a faulty king-list that the historians of his time had compiled based on limited and error-prone information? If so, then the credibility of this king-list would be no better than if no lunar eclipses had been given. Bottom line is that the subject of dates for all the ancient kings is extremely complex and prone to error.

BC dates are good for comparison. They help us understand what events took place before or after other events. They help us lay out the timeline as a tool for a better understanding of Scripture. But ancient BC dates should never be used to determine theology. Ancient BC dates should be completely ignored when determining the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. We must use Scripture alone to determine theology.

15.4) Seventy Weeks Based On Ezra 1 (Decree of Cyrus)

Some have argued that the decree of Cyrus was not a decree to rebuild Jerusalem, but was instead a decree to rebuild the temple. But is not rebuilding the temple the first step of rebuilding Jerusalem? Is not the temple in Jerusalem? Isaiah lays this argument to rest. Isaiah prophesied the decree to rebuild Jerusalem in Isaiah 44:28, even naming Cyrus' name, hundreds of years before Cyrus was born. Isaiah said that Cyrus would rebuild both the temple and Jerusalem. So from a perspective of letting Scripture interpret Scripture, the decree of Cyrus is the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:1-5 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, (2) Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has Yahweh, the God of heaven, given me; and he has commanded me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. (3) Whoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Yahweh, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. (4) Whoever is left, in any place where he sojourns, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with animals, besides the freewill offering for the

house of God which is in Jerusalem. (5) Then rose up the heads of fathers' *houses* of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Yahweh which is in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 44:28 Who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure,' even saying of Jerusalem, 'She will be built;' and of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.' "

The prayer of Daniel 9 was given after Babylon had been conquered by Cyrus, in the first year of Darius the Mede. The decree of Cyrus was also given the first year of Cyrus, which would be the first year of his rule over Babylon. Cyrus was ruler over the entire Persian Empire. Thus Darius was probably a governor of Babylon starting in the year that Babylon was conquered. For Darius' rule to have started several years later would not make sense. Why would Daniel pray for something that had already been given in the first year of Cyrus? Also, Daniel 5:30-31 tells us that Darius began to reign at the age of 62, right after Belshazzar was killed. So Daniel's prayer must have been given in the same year that Babylon was conquered. Daniel must have prayed knowing that Cyrus had already conquered Babylon, but before Cyrus had made his decree. In other words, the conquering of Babylon would have given Daniel hope that Jeremiah's prophecy was about to be fulfilled. He was praying in response to that hope. His prayer was answered that very year.

Daniel's prayer specifically asks for the fulfillment of Jeremiah's 70 years (Daniel 9:2). And Scripture itself tells us that the decree of Cyrus was in fulfillment of Jeremiah's 70 years (Ezra 1:1). So the decree of Cyrus was in direct answer to Daniel's prayer.

Daniel's prayer (Daniel 9:2) mentions the 70 years that Jeremiah said the captivity would last. This prophecy (Jeremiah 25:11-12) also said that the king of Babylon would be punished. Daniel had obviously recognized this punishment and was thus prompted to pray for Israel. Ezra 1:1 also mentions Jeremiah's 70 years and says that the decree of Cyrus was in its fulfillment. Much of this can be found in 2 Chronicles 36:20-23.

2 Chronicles 36:20-23 ESV He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, (21) to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years. (22) Now in the

first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: (23) "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up."

These verses in Chronicles connects the decree of Cyrus to the building of the temple in Jerusalem. The point is that the temple is in Jerusalem. So it's a decree to rebuild Jerusalem. Also note the relation of the 70 years with the Sabbaths for the land. They were in captivity one year for each year that the land had not been given a Sabbath's rest. The land lay "desolate." Thus Jerusalem was desolate for these 70 years. There can be no doubt that the seventy weeks of years must be interpreted as real calendar years for which the land is expected to be given a year of rest every seven years. Also, there can be no doubt, based on Scripture, that the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem must be the decree of Cyrus.

By relating Daniel's prayer to the vision of seventy weeks, we can see that these are seventy weeks during which God has promised that Jerusalem will not be desolate. This promise for Jerusalem to not be desolate is related to the years of rest for the land, and the need for Israel to obey all of God's commands.

15.5) Daniel's Prayer

You can't understand the answer to a question without understanding the question. Likewise, you can't understand the vision without understanding the prayer to which the vision was in response. Thus, the vision is better interpreted in the context of Daniel's prayer.

Daniel prayed for the forgiveness of Israel's sins. Daniel confessed that Jerusalem had been desolate for 70 years, because of Israel's sins. Daniel, in his prayer, explicitly mentions the prophecy of Jeremiah, which said the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. Is not the seventy weeks of years in Daniel 9 related to the 70 years of Jeremiah 25:11-12? Would not one begin when the other ends? Are not both periods of time related to sin?

In the vision, God is saying that He would put an end to the desolation of Jerusalem. But God gives a reason for doing so. God says that "your people, and

your holy city" have seventy weeks of years to put an end to sin. It all adds up together. God immediately brought the desolation of Jerusalem to an end. The prophecy of Jeremiah 29:10 even says that after the 70 years the people of Israel would be brought back to Jerusalem. Jerusalem would no longer be desolate. So seventy weeks that Israel was given to put an end to sin would logically start right then, when God brought the desolation of Jerusalem to an end. The start of the seventy weeks of non-desolation immediately followed the 70 years of desolation.

Daniel was praying for forgiveness of sin. The seventy weeks of non-desolation of Jerusalem are given for us to completely stop sinning, according to Daniel 9:24 (quoted below). The seventy weeks are for "your people and your holy city" to do this. Therefore, this will be completed for all of Israel before Christ returns. Also remember that the Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. So we are included. We must stop sinning before Christ returns. That's the literal interpretation of the verse, so that's what we must believe.

However, failure to do so does not mean the loss of salvation. The verse says we must "finish transgression, put an end to sin, ... and bring in everlasting righteousness." Failure to completely overcome sin by the time Christ sets up his kingdom means that one is not a part of the true Israel, which is the true Church, the Bride of Christ. One would simply continue their journey towards salvation living in the nations of the world during the millennium. This is the New Wine System. The New Wine System is a literal interpretation of Scripture such that Old Testament Jewish eschatology is applied directly to the New Testament Church. For more information on the New Wine System, refer to my book, "New Wine for the End Times."

15.6) Comparison between Three Systems of Interpretation

As stated previously, I believe the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem is the decree of Cyrus. But unlike some preterists who might agree, I put a significant portion of the seventy weeks in the end times. In other words, I believe in a futurist interpretation of Daniel's seventy weeks – specifically the seven weeks of the seventy. And I view this interpretation of Daniel 9 as being compatible with the New Wine System. The New Wine System interprets Old Testament prophecies about Israel ruling the world, in the Messianic age to come, as being literally fulfilled, with the Church being grafted into Israel.

Jesus will be the literal King of Kings and Lord of Lords in the age to come. And we will be priests and kings with Christ, ruling over the nations. Through the

rule of Christ’s Bride, which is Israel, which is all who are in Christ, the gospel will go out to all the nations. Those who are in Christ are Israel, and will literally fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies about Israel ruling the world when the Messiah comes again. This is the New Wine System.

The other two major systems of interpretation have been preterism and dispensationalism. Traditional preterism has had predominance throughout most of Church history. Dispensationalism is more recent in Church history, but today it enjoys a lot of acceptance, especially with the more literal minded theologians. Preterists usually use Ezra 7 as the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Dispensationalists usually use Nehemiah 2 as the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. And the New Wine System uses Cyrus (Ezra 1) as the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. It’s interesting to do a comparison between these three systems of interpretation, and to see why their specific approaches to Daniel 9 strongly reflects the differences between these three systems.

Preterism means “past fulfillment.” The preterist view of Daniel 9 is that the seventy weeks are contiguous, and go from the decree in Ezra 7 to the crucifixion of Christ. The crucifixion itself happens in the middle of the seventieth week. The end of the seventieth week is often assumed to be the stoning of Stephen. (We don’t actually know how long it was between the crucifixion and the stoning of Stephen.) Preterists pick Ezra 7 primarily because the dates work out nicely. Preterism goes hand-in-hand with the covenantal view, which says the Church, under the new covenant, is a continuation of the Old Testament system of covenants. This means that the Church basically replaces Israel. With preterism, the kingdom of heaven is spiritual. It’s in our hearts. So there is no literal fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about Israel literally ruling the nations.

Preterist view of Daniel 9

7 Weeks	62 Weeks	Week of the Covenant
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Dispensationalism, on the other hand, draws major distinctions between Israel and the Church. Dispensationalism views all of history as being divided up into seven dispensations, which is roughly seven time periods. But more accurately, each dispensation has a different set of rules by which God judges men for salvation. The Church dispensation is seen as a “parenthesis” between Old Testament Israel and the millennial age to come. The dispensationalists view the

seventy weeks as sixty-nine contiguous weeks from the decree in Nehemiah 2 until Palm Sunday when Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. The seventh week is the week of the covenant. It is split off from the rest. The seventh week begins with a covenant between the antichrist and Israel. The pre-tribulation rapture is also believed to be at the start of this week. The “glorious appearing” of Christ is said to be at the end of the seventh week. With dispensationalism, the kingdom of heaven is more literal. The kingdom will come when Christ returns to rule here on the earth during the millennium. However, there is a newer view called progressive dispensationalism which says the kingdom is in our hearts as a partial fulfillment. Then when Christ returns, the kingdom of heaven will come literally to earth in the millennial reign of Christ.

Dispensational view of Daniel 9

7 Weeks	62 Weeks	Church Age	Week of the Covenant
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The New Wine System, on the other hand, views Israel and the Church as being identical. Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. The New Wine view of Daniel 9 is that the seventy weeks are split between sixty-two weeks and seven weeks. The Messiah comes twice. Each allocation of weeks brings us to a coming of the Messiah. The sixty-two weeks go from the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1) to the birth of Christ. Then there is an extra week from the birth of Christ to Herod’s death. After the seven weeks the Messiah comes again in the appearance of the New Jerusalem.

The time in-between the two allocations of weeks is the time of the Gentiles, when Gentiles trample on Jerusalem by ruling over it, or when Jerusalem is desolate. After the time of the Gentiles there is a final seven weeks during which Jerusalem is not trampled on by the Gentiles. The entire seventy weeks (sixty-two plus one and seven) is non-desolate time for Jerusalem. After the seven weeks is over, there is a covenant for one more week, not included in the seventy. During that final week, Jerusalem is again trampled upon by the Gentiles for forty-two months (Revelation 11:2). Then the Messiah sets up his earthly kingdom.

New Wine System view of Daniel 9

62 weeks (+1)	Time of the Gentiles	7 weeks	Week of the Covenant
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The New Wine System agrees with progressive dispensationalists in that the kingdom of heaven is partially fulfilled in our hearts, but will literally be fulfilled when Christ sets up his earthly kingdom. We will literally reign with Christ over the nations during the millennium.

15.7) The Purpose of the Seventy Weeks

The vision of Daniel 9 itself has a purpose statement. Each of the three systems of interpretation views this purpose statement quite differently.

Daniel 9:24 NIV Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

Preterists will argue that Christ fulfilled this purpose entirely at the cross. It's true that Christ's crucifixion paid for our sins. So in a way, transgression was finished. In a way, sin was put to an end. And the cross did atone for wickedness. Sin is still with us. But since the sins are paid for, you could argue that we have everlasting righteousness. So certainly the cross has a lot to do with the fulfillment of Daniel 9. But is this something that we ourselves did? Or is this something that Christ did? Yet the text says these are things that "your people and your holy city" must do. Israel was punished 70 years for sin. Now God is saying that we must stop sinning during these seventy weeks of years. Saying that Christ fulfilled this vision is to avoid the responsibility that we have to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12.) Saying that Christ fulfilled this vision is to completely ignore Daniel's prayer of repentance for Israel, and God's response that Israel must repent and stop sinning. Salvation is a journey. This is sanctification. God does the greatest work in us (Philippians 2:13.) But it's a task that we must undertake, with God doing the greater work.

Preterism says the vision is completely fulfilled. Therefore, the purpose must also be fulfilled. Even though the purpose statement says "your people" must do these things, preterists believe all these things were accomplished by Christ on the

cross. In other words, sins were put to an end because of the cross. Transgression was finished because of the cross. It's true that our sins are forgiven because of the cross. But the cross did not bring about an end to transgression and sin. By saying the purpose was fulfilled at the cross nullifies the vision's requirement that all sin in God's people must stop before Christ returns.

Dispensationalists, on the other hand, would view "your people and your holy city" as being entirely Israel and not the Church. Thus, dispensationalists tend to ignore the requirement to overcome sin. The time in-between the sixty-ninth week and the seventh week is considered to be a "parenthesis" between two dispensations for Israel. The Church is believed to be caught up in the rapture and in heaven when the seventh week begins. Some of the more ultra-dispensationalists even say the Church is saved by grace but that Israel is saved by grace plus works. So they have to stop sinning but we don't. It's absurd. By saying the vision is for Israel, and not the Church, dispensationalists nullify the vision's requirement that all the sinful habits of God's people must stop before Christ returns.

The New Wine System views "your people and your holy city" as being about Israel. Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. So the vision is for us all. The Old Testament purpose of Israel was to reign with the Messiah over the world in order to bring righteousness to the world. But to teach righteousness, the world's priests and kings must themselves be righteous. Israel was not ready to rule the world at the time of Christ's first coming. How many of us find the narrow gate of holiness? The seventy weeks are time periods during which Jerusalem is not trampled on by Gentiles. This is important because after the week of the covenant, during the Messianic reign of Christ, Jerusalem will be the capital of the world.

We who are in Israel must all completely stop sinning before Christ sets up his earthly kingdom. Those who completely overcome all their sinful habits, through a relationship with Jesus Christ, will be in the wedding banquet and will reign as priests and kings during the Messianic age to come. There will be many who will be resurrected to live during the millennium. Everyone has the free-will opportunity to accept Christ as their Savior and King. But not everyone is elected to be in the commonwealth of Israel. In other words, not all who believe in Christ will be kings and priests during the millennium.

Therefore, the people who have died, having never heard about or accepted Christ as their personal Savior, will be able to hear the gospel during the millennium. They will have the opportunity to accept Christ as their Savior after the resurrection of both the just and the unjust. It's only those who deliberately

and knowingly reject God's salvation that will not be resurrected, and will wind up going to the lake of fire, which is hell, after the thousand-year reign of Christ. The final Judgment, therefore, is not until a thousand years after the resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

If you are Baptist, you might believe that vision and prophecy were sealed with Christ's first coming. Other Christians believe that vision and prophecy are still with us today. But even if vision and prophecy were sealed with Christ's first coming, it would not have been sealed at the time of the crucifixion. The book of Revelation, as an example, was written years later, and it's certainly a book of vision and a prophecy. The entire New Testament was written after the preterists say that the seventy weeks were finished. So preterists would have a problem with vision and prophecy being sealed at the time of the crucifixion.

Daniel 9:24 NIV "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

The seventy weeks were given for "your people and your holy city" to anoint the most holy. Messiah means the anointed one. In Old Testament times, this meant to literally pour oil over the head of a person, saying that he is king. The Church today considers Christ to be our king. He reigns in heaven. But he reigned in heaven from the creation of the world. Everything that was made was made by Him and through Him (Colossians 1:16). But during the ministry of Christ, he avoided being made king by the people (John 6:15). Someday, however, when Christ returns, "your people and your holy city" will anoint him King. He will reign here on the earth. This has not yet happened.

The decree is for "your people and your holy city." All true believers are included in "your people" because the true Israel and the true Church are the same. Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. But are we included in "your holy city"? Sure you could say there is a spiritual Jerusalem. But in the context of the vision, Daniel was praying for the restoration of the natural city of old Jerusalem. Context is king. The decree of Cyrus was for the restoration of that natural city, not for the restoration of a spiritual Jerusalem. So "your holy city" must be talking about the natural old city of Jerusalem.

Matthew 23:37-39 makes it clear that Jesus will not return until those who "sit on the seat of Moses" (verse 2) say about Jesus, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." The people of Jerusalem had already said these exact words

(Matthew 21:9) when Jesus rode in on a donkey. So this is not a requirement for Christians, or Jewish people in general, or even for Jews in Jerusalem. The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, who “sit on the seat of Moses,” must also fulfill this prophecy. Romans 11:25 also talks about the fact that the Jews must turn to Christ before Christ returns. It fits that Daniel's vision says that “your holy city” must anoint the most holy. The Jewish leaders in old Jerusalem must acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah before the seventy weeks are fulfilled.

With this in mind, the seventy weeks cannot have already been finished. There must be a gap between Christ's first coming and his second coming. It's true that the text does not suggest a gap between the 69th and the 70th week. But the text does allow for a gap between the seven weeks and the sixty-two weeks. Both time periods are decreed. Nothing in the text requires them to be added or to occur concurrently. Forcing them to be contiguous is forcing a requirement on the timeline that the text itself does not indicate. It's only an assumption to say that the two allotments of time are contiguous. Making them as two separate allotments of time in two separate comings of Christ makes a lot more sense than trying to find some significant event that might have occurred at the point where they would be joined contiguously.

Daniel 9:25 NIV "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.

Since the seventy weeks are not yet fulfilled, and since the sixty-two weeks were fulfilled when the Messiah was “cut off”, then the seven weeks must remain to be fulfilled in the end times, just prior to Christ's second coming. As a matter of fact, the time when “the end shall come” (Matthew 24:14) is probably the “end” of the seventy weeks. It fits the context because Jesus is referring back to the abomination of desolation, spoken of in the prophet Daniel.

Since the seventy weeks are not yet completely fulfilled, it would hold that the abomination of desolation is still in the future. This makes Matthew 24 also be future, while Luke 21 deals with the surrounding of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Later in this article I will discuss more about how the Olivetti Discourse (Matthew 24 and Luke 21) ties back to the seventy weeks.

15.8) The Messiah is Cut-Off

It's my belief that the sixty-two weeks goes from the decree of Cyrus to the birth of Christ. Christ is "cut off" at his birth, not his death. Most people interpret this verse to mean the Messiah is crucified after the sixty-two 'sevens.' The Hebrew word that is translated 'cut off' is karath. The first five books of the Bible use the word 66 times. Only 8 of these references actually mean to be killed or destroyed. And there are other Hebrew words that always mean to kill or destroy.

Daniel 9:26 NIV After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.

This word is usually used when a covenant is cut (or made). Originally, a covenant was made by cutting an animal in half. The two parties of the covenant would walk between the pieces of flesh to seal the agreement (Genesis 15:9-10, 17-18). In the following passage, we see that the 'cutting off' of flesh in circumcision is the same. The word karath is used here as well. Moses is on the way to Egypt to tell Pharaoh to let God's people go.

Exodus 4:24-26 It happened on the way at a lodging place, that Yahweh met him and wanted to kill him. (25) Then Zipporah [Moses' wife, (2:22)] took a flint, and cut off [karath] the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me." (26) So he let him alone. Then she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision.

Israel is God's firstborn son. Israel went down into Egypt and became a slave. Just as Israel was freed from the bonds of slavery to Pharaoh, Christ came to free us from the bonds of slavery to sin and Satan. Satan is the prince of this world (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). Christ came to free us from the Pharaoh of this world. As Moses went down into Egypt, his son's circumcision [karath] had to be performed. When God sent his Son into this world, to free us from Pharaoh, he too was circumcised (Luke 2:21-23) and then went down into Egypt (Matthew 2:14). Christ was born to be a "bridegroom of blood," (as the verse above says) which refers to karath or circumcision.

To 'cut off' is to separate. Circumcision is the cutting of skin or flesh. It is symbolic of the cutting off of ourselves that must be done. Our sinful nature, our desires of the flesh, must be cut off (Romans 2:29, Philippians 3:2). We must be

separated from the evil part of ourselves that we inherited from Adam. When Israel crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land, the waters of the Jordan River were 'cut off' [karath] from the city of Adam to the Dead Sea (Joshua 3:16). This allowed Israel to cross the Jordan on dry ground. If our inheritance that flows from Adam, which leads to death, is not 'cut off' we cannot enter the Promised Land. We enter God's Rest (Hebrews 3-4), which is the Promised Land, when sin - our fleshly desires, are 'cut off.' In obedience to the Law, and as an example for us, Christ was circumcised at his birth. The purpose of the seventy 'sevens' of time is stated to be time for overcoming sin. To overcome sin, we must be crucified with Christ.

The word 'karath,' meaning 'cut off,' has four basic uses or meanings. All four meanings can be applied to Christ's birth. The first five books of the Bible use the word 29 times in reference to being separated from Israel. At Christ's birth, God was 'cut off' from Himself. God became Man. It is used 20 times in these same books in reference to cutting a covenant. When Christ came at his birth, God was cutting a new covenant with Man. A simple act of cutting something occurs 9 times. (OK, at Christ's birth the umbilical cord was 'cut off'.) It is used 8 times to mean killed or destroyed. Jesus is the Word, the Word is God, and the "Word became flesh" (John 1:14). At the end of the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Word became flesh so that the flesh could be 'cut off.' God was 'cut off' (separated) from God so that God as flesh could be 'cut off' (killed/destroyed) in our place. This is the new covenant given by Jesus at the Last Supper. In acceptance of this covenant we must 'cut off' (separate and kill/destroy) sin from ourselves. "If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away" (Matthew 5:30).

At the end of the sixty-two 'sevens,' the "Word became flesh" and Jesus was circumcised. This sums up the meaning of the word 'karath,' or 'cut off.' The birth of Christ marks the end of the sixty-two 'sevens.'

Most of the modern translations say that after the Messiah is "cut-off", he will have nothing. This includes the NAS, NIV, RSV, NASB, ASV, Darby, and the NRSV. If "cut-off" means to be killed, then "will have nothing" doesn't really flow very well. On the other hand, if "cut-off" means the birth, then it makes a lot of sense. Christ came from heaven where he was rich. He was 'cut off' from heaven and had nothing. He was born into a poor family. You could say that Christ also died poor. But to say that would distract from the purpose of his coming. His real sacrifice of poverty was at his birth.

15.9) The Sixty-Two Weeks

In the previous sections, we saw that the purpose for the allocation of seventy weeks has not yet been fulfilled. Therefore, the seventy weeks themselves have not yet been completely fulfilled. Furthermore, we saw that Scripture highly supports the decree of Cyrus as the time when the seventy weeks began. As soon as the seventy years of Jeremiah were finished, God used Cyrus to bring Israel back to Jerusalem. In answer to Daniel's prayer, Jerusalem became no longer desolate. Thus the seventy weeks of years began as soon as the seventy years were ended. We also saw that the text does not support the idea of a contiguous sixty-nine weeks followed by a gap between the 69th and the 70th week. The text does, however, allow for the seven weeks to be a separate allocation of time. The sixty-two weeks are given until the first coming of the Christ. The seven weeks are associated with the second coming of Christ. The full seventy weeks are about both of Christ's comings. The full seventy weeks of Daniel are given for "your people and your holy city" to "stop sinning", to "seal up vision and prophecy", and to anoint the most holy. These are all things that will be fulfilled before Christ comes again.

Daniel 9:24-26 ESV "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

(25) Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. [SO] for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

(26) And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

From the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, to the coming of the Messiah, there will be seven weeks, preceded by a sixty-two week period. Christ's first coming was at his birth, not his death. But then he left and went to Egypt for a few years. After Christ came, with the death of Herod, the trampling upon Jerusalem by the Gentiles began because of the rejection of Christ by the Jewish leadership. This started when Herod the Great deliberately and purposefully tried

to kill God's Messiah by killing all the babies in Bethlehem. Finally, there will be a final seven week period that leads up to the second coming of the Messiah.

In the previous section on the "Purpose of the Seventy Weeks," we saw that Jesus will not return until those who "sit on the seat of Moses" say about Jesus, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." The seventy weeks requires that "your people and your holy city" must "anoint the most holy." Failure of the Jewish leadership, those who sit on the seat of Moses, to anoint the most holy brings desolation to Jerusalem. This process of trampling by the Gentiles started with the death of Herod the Great. The desolation of Jerusalem was finished in 70 AD. Herod the Great was the last ruler of Jerusalem that had any arguable independence from Rome. After Herod, Jerusalem was ruled directly by Roman governors, such as Pilate. Time ran out in 70 AD, for those who sat on the seat of Moses, to repent. The temple and Jerusalem were destroyed.

After the sixty-two weeks, the Messiah came to Jerusalem. Christ came at his birth, not his death. But then Christ left Israel and went to Egypt for a few years until Herod's death. After Herod's death, Christ came back to Israel. We don't know exactly how long it was between Christ's birth and Herod's death. But it's a reasonable guess to say that Christ was born around 6 BC and that Herod died around 2 AD. This would be a difference of seven years. The difference could have been shorter. But we know that Herod killed all the children two years old or younger. And we know that Mary, Joseph, and Jesus lived in Egypt for a while. It's reasonable that it would have been a few years.

Sixty-two weeks plus seven weeks adds to sixty-nine weeks. It's been assumed that the week of the covenant in Daniel 9:27 is a part of the seventy weeks. But the great tribulation cannot be included in the seventy weeks. During the second half of that week, Jerusalem is trampled upon by the Gentiles for 42 months (Revelation 11:2). Therefore, the great tribulation cannot be a part of the seventy weeks. The missing week cannot be the week of the covenant. There will be more on this later.

I believe there were sixty-two weeks from the decree of Cyrus until the birth of Christ. And then there was another week until Herod's death. This is the missing week that makes it add up to seventy weeks. After Herod's death, the trampling of Jerusalem by the Gentiles began, and the seventy weeks were no longer underway. Herod's death marked the beginning of the trampling on Jerusalem that Jesus called the "time of the Gentiles." Jesus said:

Matthew 23:36-39 Most certainly I tell you, all these things will come upon this generation. (37) "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets, and stones those who are sent to her! How often I would have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not! (38) Behold, your house is left to you desolate. (39) For I tell you, you will not see me from now on, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Luke 21:20-22, 24 NIV "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. (21) 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. (22) For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. ... (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.

Matthew 23 teaches us that the rejection of Christ by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem was the cause of the trampling upon Jerusalem, eventually leading to the desolation of Jerusalem. Luke 21 teaches us the desolation is a "time of punishment," and that it is in fulfillment of "all that has been written." Full Preterists argue that this verse means that all Bible prophecy was fulfilled by the time of 70 AD. But a better way to interpret the verse is to see that the punishment of 70 AD directly relates to "all that has been written." It's not the last thing that will happen in Bible prophecy.

Christ redeemed the world from sin. But when men reject Christ's salvation, it brings destruction and desolation. Daniel prayed for the forgiveness of Israel's sins and for the desolation of Jerusalem to end. Seventy weeks of non-desolation were given for "your people and your holy city" to entirely stop sinning, seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Messiah. In other words, the seventy weeks of Daniel is a summary of "all that has been written." It goes to the heart of the gospel for all time, for both the old covenant and the new covenant. The heart of the gospel is the reversal of Man's fall into sin and the restoration of Man's relationship with God. This is carried out as outlined in a seventy-week prophecy. After this vision is completed, there will be no more need for vision and prophecy.

Luke 21:24 NIV 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.

The Jewish leaders were expecting the Messiah to overthrow the Roman (Gentile) rulers and then to set up the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven would bring righteousness to the nations. But the Jewish leaders were so full of sin that they could not recognize Righteousness when he was standing right in front of them. So Christ had to allow Jerusalem to become desolate again, and for the Jews to be taken as prisoners to the nations. The true gospel of the kingdom must spread to people from every nation, tribe, people, and language. Then, Christ will have the true Israel who will reign with him during the age to come, after Christ returns.

Since the time of Herod the Great, Jerusalem has been trampled upon by the Gentiles. And Jerusalem became desolate in 70 AD. But the time of the Gentiles has now come to an end. Jerusalem is no longer desolate. Jerusalem is no longer being trampled upon by the Gentiles. After the Six Day War of 1967, the Jews again controlled Old Jerusalem. Some will argue that the Jews in Jerusalem today do not believe in Christ, and therefore cannot be a fulfillment of the time of the Gentiles. But the word Gentile means non-Jewish. The word Gentile says nothing about belief in Christ. For Jerusalem to be controlled by Gentiles means it's not being controlled by Jews. Nothing is being said about the repentance of the Jews.

Of course we do believe there will be un-hardening and repentance of the Jews during the week of the covenant. But the seventy weeks are underway simply because Jerusalem is no longer being controlled by Gentiles, based on Daniel's prayer and God's allocation of seventy weeks in response to that prayer. The Six Day War of 1967 is a clear reversal of 70 AD. The time of the Gentiles is when Jerusalem is controlled by Gentiles. It began with Herod's death, continued with the desolation of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and ended in 1967. Therefore, Daniel's seventy weeks are again underway. We are currently in the seven weeks.

Others have argued the time of the Gentiles continues because the temple is not rebuilt. But the seventy weeks began with the decree of Cyrus. It took a good number of years for the temple to be completed. The seventy weeks were still underway as soon as Cyrus issued the decree. Thus, the temple does not have to be standing during the entire seventy weeks. I believe the temple will be built during the first 1260 days of the week of the covenant, during which the two witnesses of Revelation 11 will be prophesying. The temple does not have to be standing for the final seven weeks to be underway. Based on Daniel's prayer, the only requirement is that Old Jerusalem not be desolate and not be under Gentile control.

15.10) The Seven Weeks

The sixty-two weeks ended with the birth of Christ. In between the sixty-third week and the final seven weeks is the time of the Gentiles. Jerusalem is trampled upon by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled. Then the seventy weeks of non-desolation, promised to Daniel, starts up again. Starting in 1967, Jerusalem was no longer trampled on by Gentiles. When do these last seven weeks end? Would the seven weeks end when Christ sets up his kingdom? That would mean that Jerusalem will never again be trampled upon by the Gentiles. However, Scripture teaches there will again be a time when Jerusalem will be trampled again for forty-two months.

Revelation 11:1-2 NIV I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. (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.

If Jerusalem is trampled upon by Gentiles for 42 months, it means that the month before and the month after this time-period Jerusalem is not trampled upon by Gentiles. So this is further evidence that today Jerusalem is not currently being trampled on by Gentiles, and thus the time of the Gentiles is over with – except for another 42 months.

Matthew 24:12-15 Because iniquity will be multiplied, the love of many will grow cold. (13) But he who endures to the end, the same will be saved. (14) This Good News of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (15) "When, therefore, you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

Notice several points about the end, as given in this passage. The gospel is preached and then the end comes. Then we see the abomination of desolation. The natural interpretation of this passage is that the Church is free to preach the gospel until the end. But after that, we will see the abomination that causes desolation and we will not be free to preach the gospel all over the world. As we have seen, there is a 42-month period between the last of the seventy weeks and the return of Christ. During this time, the saints are turned over to the beast (Rev. 13:5-7).

The disciples had asked for signs of Christ's return and the end of the age. When the end of the seventy weeks comes, the week of the covenant begins, which includes the time of great tribulation. And he who stands firm to the end of that will be saved. This means the week of the covenant is after the end of the seventy weeks. Christ and the antichrist come at the same time.

So there are two "ends" being discussed. First, there is the end of the seventy weeks. The seventy weeks are over, so Christ returns. After that we will see the abomination that causes desolation. This marks the start of the 42 months when Jerusalem is trampled upon by Gentiles again. After the week of the covenant there is the "end that is decreed [which is] poured out on the desolator" (verse 27.) Therefore, for all practical purposes, the entire 42-month period of great tribulation can be called the "end." It goes from the end of the seven weeks until the end of the reign of antichrist. The week of the covenant can be considered to be a seven-year ending, from the perspective of Satan's reign. But it's also the first seven years of the age to come, from the perspective of Christ's reign. Christ and the antichrist both come at the same time.

The Jews at the time of Christ were not ready to reign with Christ over the nations. The Jewish leaders appeared to be holy on the outside. But inside they were as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). Outside, they were like clean cups. But inside they were unclean (Matthew 23:25-26). The Messiah was supposed to come and take on the burden of government.

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born. To us a son is given; and the government will be on his shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

They were not ready to reign with Christ over the nations. So Christ had to wait and come again in a future generation when he would have people from every nation, tribe, people, and language who will have overcome all their sinful habits, both inside and outside, and will be ready to reign with Christ.

During the 42 months, during the week of the covenant, the saints will be turned over to the antichrist. But this will only bring about a purification of the Church, the Bride of Christ. The great tribulation will bring holiness. By the time Christ sets up his earthly kingdom, he will have people from every nation, tribe, people, and language who have completely overcome sin, and will be ready to reign with Christ over the nations.

15.11) The Messiah vs. the Prince (or Ruler)

The NIV translation simply adds the seven weeks and the sixty-two weeks, making them appear contiguous.

Daniel 9:25 NIV Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.

The ESV translation, on the other hand, seems to recognize two independent allocations of time. This much better fits the separate allocation of two periods of weeks, as presented in this article.

Daniel 9:25 ESV Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

This translation unfortunately has the word “then” to make the seven weeks appear like it happens before the sixty-two weeks. But in the Hebrew, the seven weeks simply appears before the sixty-two weeks. Nothing in the text really requires the seven weeks to happen first. There is a conjunction word between the seven and the sixty-two. It can be translated as “then.” But it can also be translated as “and”, “so”, “but”, or “that.” This conjunction does not require the seven weeks to come first. I prefer the use of the word "so", because the sixty-two weeks are given "so" the seven weeks can come.

Daniel prayed for the forgiveness of Israel's sins and for the desolation of Jerusalem to come to an end. The sixty-two weeks of non-desolation for Jerusalem were given "so" that "your people" and "your holy city" could overcome sin and get ready for that end-time generation when the Messiah would come. The Messiah came at his birth, which could have been the start of the final seven-week end-time generation. But of course we know that when the original end-time generation came, the Jews were not ready to reign with Christ. So, the final week had to wait on another end-time generation. Today, we are living in that second end-time generation that will see the return of Christ. This is the end-time generation that sees Jerusalem not being trampled on by Gentiles, just as promised to Daniel. We are living in that final seven weeks of Daniel 9.

Daniel 9:25 ESV Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. [SO] for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

The thing I like about this translation is that it shows the relationship between the sixty-two weeks and Jerusalem being built in a troubled time. The book of Nehemiah tells us all about the rebuilding of Jerusalem in a troubled time. Likewise, this translation also seems to associate the coming of the “anointed one” with the seven weeks.

Another thing I like about this translation, as compared with the NIV, is that it doesn't use a definite article ("the") for "an anointed one, a prince." Indefinite articles ("an" and "a") are used instead. This allows for the Anointed One to be a different person from "a prince" (or "ruler.") Verse 26 uses this same word "prince" or "ruler" in reference to the city and the sanctuary being destroyed. The "prince" or "ruler" of verse 26 is obviously an antichrist. So the "prince" or "ruler" of verse 25 can also be an antichrist. After the seventy weeks of non-desolation for Jerusalem, the antichrist comes ushering in great tribulation. At the same time, the Messiah comes ushering in the age to come and the Messianic reign, where the people of Israel (which is the Church) will reign with Christ for a thousand years. But Christ does not set up his earthly kingdom until after the antichrist is destroyed seven years later.

From this perspective, the vision has a parallelism between Christ and the antichrist. The parallelism can be seen best in this ESV translation. Christ is **bolded and underlined**, and the antichrist is in ***bolded and in italics***.

Daniel 9:25 ESV Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of **an anointed one, a prince**, there shall be seven weeks. [SO] for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

Daniel 9:26a ESV And after the sixty-two weeks, **an anointed one** shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of ***the prince*** who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

Daniel 9:26b ESV Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

This end that comes like a flood and war is found in both Matthew 24 and Luke 21. There are two end-time generations. The generation of Christ and the end-time generation of today are both described in the same way. There are many parallelisms between the two generations. If the generation of Christ had not rejected the Messiah, then that generation would have been the generation that ushered in the age to come with the Messiah. This vision of Daniel 9 works under either scenario.

During the 42 months that the antichrist reigns over the entire world, there will be no wars and rumors of wars because it will be a one-world government. The Anointed One, and the "prince," both come at the same time, which is at the end of the seventy weeks, which is also the end of the seven weeks. The vision treats Christ and the antichrist as a parallelism. Now, follow the same parallelism in the two pronouns of the week of the covenant, which is after the end that comes like a flood (verse 26b), and after the continuous wars and rumors of wars (also verse 26b).

Daniel 9:27 ESV And **he** shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week **he** shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

Dispensationalists interpret both pronouns in verse 27 as referring to the antichrist. Their weakness is in the idea of an antichrist entering into a covenant. Preterists, on the other hand, interpret both pronouns as referring to Christ. Their weakness is in saying that Christ stopped the sacrifice and offering. Christ made the sacrifice and offering no longer necessary. But he didn't stop it from happening at the time of the crucifixion.

With the New Wine System, the truth hides in the middle. The first pronoun refers to Christ, and the second pronoun refers to the antichrist. The New Wine System argues that the two pronouns follow the same parallelism of Christ and antichrist, as in verses 25 and 26. The order is consistent. Christ makes a covenant with many for one week. The antichrist stops the sacrifice and offering during the second half of that same week. The abomination of desolation is set up on the wing of the temple, which is the gentile courtyard (Revelation 11:1-2). And on the wing of this abomination, the antichrist makes Jerusalem desolate until the decree of Christ's judgment is poured out on the antichrist.

15.12) Two Generations

There has been a lot of debate over the differences and/or similarities between Matthew 24 and Luke 21. These two accounts are often both called the Olivetti Discourse, even though only Matthew's account says it happened on the Mount of Olives. As will be shown, I believe these are two different discourses and are talking about two different generations. Luke's account is preached to the people at the temple. Matthew's account is given privately for the disciples only, and happens on the Mount of Olives.

The sixty-two weeks of Daniel 9 reflect the first generation after Herod's death. It's the generation after the sixty-two weeks. That generation was the generation of Christ. That generation was born when Christ was born. That generation was adult during Christ's ministry. And that generation passed away in 70 AD when Jerusalem was destroyed.

The seven weeks of Daniel 9 reflect the second generation. This generation is the baby-boom generation that was born right after World War II. This generation was born when Israel became a nation again. This generation was adult when Old Jerusalem was no longer trampled on by the Gentiles. And this generation will not pass away before the return of Christ and the week of the covenant.

When we read Matthew 24, Jesus tells us to watch for the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel. A study of the abomination in Daniel points to a future time when the antichrist will erect a statue, on the temple mount, for the entire world to worship. But when we look at the account in Luke 21, we get the preterist perspective. Instead of the abomination of desolation, it speaks of Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, and its desolation being near. The Jews were taken as prisoners to all the nations. Obviously this was fulfilled in 70 AD.

The key to the problem is found in the original question that was asked by the disciples. All of Matthew 24 and 25 was in answer to this question. Remember that Matthew 24 was addressed privately to the disciples. The disciples were wandering through the temple, looking at the buildings. Jesus had just left the temple. The disciples called his attention to the buildings. Jesus said, "Do you see all these things?" He asked, "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down" (verse 2, NIV).

The disciples were in culture shock. The temple was the greatest and most important thing they had ever known. Its construction had started before they were born and was still under way. The construction of this temple was not finished until 64 AD, just six years before it was destroyed. From the disciple's

point of view, its destruction must be the end times. They were speechless as the group went up the Mount of Olives, which is just outside the eastern gate leading from the temple mount. It probably took about fifteen minutes to walk.

"As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will all this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (verse 3, NIV). "All this happening" was the destruction of the temple. "Not one stone here will be left on another." This is one question. Another question is, "what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" There are two fulfillments to the prophecy. One is when the temple was destroyed in 70 AD. The other is when Jesus returns. The prophecy is true about both times. I don't believe the disciples actually understood that they were asking more than one question. But prophecy is prophecy. God's word is God's word. You ask the question, you get the answer to the question(s) you ask.

When we read Luke's account, we notice some differences. Matthew's account reads, "So when you see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel..." (Matthew 24:15 NIV) Luke's account instead reads, "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies you will know that its desolation is near" (Luke 21:20 NIV).

Luke's account is primarily in answer to the first question. Matthew's account is primarily in answer to the second question.

Matthew's account reads, "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" (Matthew 24:21-22 NIV). Luke's account instead reads, "There will be a 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" (Luke 21:23-24 NIV).

Matthew's account ends in victory. Luke's account ends in defeat, but jumps in time to the point of victory.

The greatest distress of all time is at the end times, at the time of the resurrection. It's a greater distress than in 70 AD. Depending on how you measure distress, there has since been wars of much greater distress and scope than in 70 AD, even for the Jews. Consider the Holocaust of World War II. 70 AD was not the greatest distress of all time. Christ will return and save Jerusalem and his

people. This is Matthew's account. A great distress, but not the greatest of all time, was in 70 AD. That is when the Gentiles (Rome) conquered Jerusalem and the Jews were taken as prisoners to all the nations. This is Luke's account. Gentiles have trampled on Jerusalem from the death of Herod the Great until 1967, when Israel regained Jerusalem. In other words, the trampling of Jerusalem began after Herod's death, and the desolation of Jerusalem was in 70 AD. Then it all reversed in 1967, when Israel regained Jerusalem.

In Matthew's account, Jesus gives this speech in private to the disciples, up on the Mount of Olives. If you read Luke's account, without letting Matthew's account influence what you read, the speech is given in the temple. Luke's account was a warning to the people in Jerusalem. Matthew's account is a private warning to the disciples and the Church.

In Matthew's account, we are told to watch for the abomination of desolation. In Luke's account, we are told to watch for the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies. Well which one did Jesus say? If both accounts are of the same speech, then we have a problem of Scriptural accuracy. The text does not say to watch for, "the abomination of desolation, which is the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies." That's not what the text says. One text says one thing, and the other text says the other thing. There are other examples of multiple accounts of the same event, as seen by different disciples. There can be some minor differences in detail. But the question of whether Jesus said to watch for the abomination or for the surrounding of Jerusalem is a more than just different perspective of the same event. On the argument of Scriptural inerrancy alone, it must have been two different speeches.

So Matthew's account must be more about the end time generation. And Luke's account must be more about the generation of Jesus. In Luke's account, the statement, "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," is our clue that the prophecy skips over time. It skips over the times of the Gentiles. From Luke's perspective, everything before this statement is about the generation of Jesus, and everything after this statement is about the end time generation.

The statement, "this generation shall not pass away," is given to the adult generation, both to the adult generation of Jesus, and to our adult generation today. The baby boom generation that was born right after World War II had just reached adult age when Israel regained Jerusalem in 1967. Israel became a nation again right after World War II.

Basically, what we have here is a timeline as follows:

- 1) The adult generation of Jesus, that didn't pass away before 70 AD.
- 2) The continuation of time of the Gentiles, which began after Herod the Great died. With the desolation of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the time of the Gentiles was irreversible. Jerusalem would continue to be trampled on by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles was completed.
- 3) The baby-boom generation, born when Israel became a nation (1948), and the generation that saw the Jews regain Jerusalem when they were adults (1967).

The statement, "This generation shall certainly not pass away until all these things have happened," is applied to both generations! And the time in between both generations is a continuation of the time of the Gentiles. If you were born after World War II, the baby boom generation, you should live long enough to see the return of Christ Jesus and the great tribulation.

As you can see, the two-generation view of the Olivetti Discourse fits very nicely with the seven weeks split off from the sixty-two weeks. Israel, at the time of Jesus' generation, was not ready to reign with Christ during the Messianic age to come. Jesus often referred to that generation as an evil generation. In the age to come, Jerusalem will be the capital of the world. But because of that evil generation, Jerusalem was trampled on by the Gentiles. After that generation had passed away, Jerusalem was destroyed and became desolate.

Those who reign with Christ must do so entirely out of a love of God and neighbors. They must reign completely without sin. The time of the Gentiles was needed for the gospel of Jesus Christ to spread all over the world. So the kingdom of heaven is in our hearts in preparation for the kingdom of heaven to literally come into the world. Today, the good news of the kingdom is known, at least in part, in every nation of the world. Before this baby-boom generation passes away, people from every nation, tribe, people, and language will have completely overcome sin through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Therefore, when Christ sets up his earthly reign, he will have a Bride to rule over the nations with him.

After 1967, Jerusalem was no longer trampled upon by Gentiles. Jerusalem is part of the "occupied territories" that was taken by Israel in 1967. The Jews have not yet recognized Christ as the Messiah. But they are Jews, not Gentiles. So Jerusalem is no longer being trampled upon by Gentiles. However, Jerusalem will be trampled upon again for 42 months (Rev. 11:2). During the second-half of the seven-year period, Jerusalem will no longer be under the control of Israel.

Jesus said, “this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.” The adult generation of that day saw all these things fulfilled in 70 AD (Luke 21). Jesus would have been about 75 years old at that time. The baby-boom generation of Israel became adult and saw Jerusalem no longer being controlled by Israel in 1967.

The seven weeks are now being fulfilled during this rebirth of Israel. The seven weeks began in 1967, as part of the answer to Daniel’s prayer for the desolation of Jerusalem to come to an end. Seven weeks of years is 49 years. 1967 plus 49 is 2016. The seventy weeks comes to an end in 2016. Then we will have the week of the covenant after that.

15.13) Prophecies Are Conditional

As we have seen, there are two different generations that will not pass away before all these things take place. One could say there are two different end-time generations. Did Jesus know Jerusalem would be destroyed and that the "time of the Gentiles" would then continue for some time before he would return? Of course Jesus knew, because he told us about it in Luke 21. He predicted the Jews would be taken as prisoners to all the nations, which actually happened. But consider the following verses:

Matthew 10:23 ESV When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Matthew 16:28 ESV Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Matthew 24:34 ESV Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

Was Jesus telling the disciples that he would return within their lifetimes? These three verses would seem to say yes. Full preterists start with these three verses and argue that Jesus did in fact come in 70 AD. Did Jesus fail to keep his promise? Full preterists, therefore, argue that Jesus actually did come (parousia) in 70 AD. They say he came in the clouds, in the Great White Throne Judgment, when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 tells us the resurrection happens before the coming (parousia) of Christ. If Christ came in 70 AD, then the resurrection must also have

occurred in 70 AD. Full preterists therefore argue that the resurrection is not a physical body resurrection. Would the Jews have believed that resurrection is not physical? That's Greek culture. After the resurrection of Christ, Jesus demonstrated that he was physical. He ate with the disciples and allowed Thomas to touch his wounds. The resurrection of the Church will be like that of Christ.

As one goes down this full-preterist rabbit hole, it gets worse. 2 Peter 3:1-13 relates the coming (parousia) of Christ to the time of the destruction of the heavens and the earth, and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth (verse 13). Since full preterists believe the parousia (coming) of Christ was in 70 AD, then the new heavens and the new earth must also have been in 70 AD. Full preterists believe the new heavens and the new earth is the new covenant. In other words, just redefine a few terms and it all works out. But it destroys God's plan to redeem his Creation from sin.

Paul tells us that Christ must reign until the last enemy is destroyed, which is death (1 Cor. 15:26). Again, full preterists interpret this as something that was fulfilled in 70 AD. Those living in heaven will not die, so the last enemy is destroyed, in heaven. But sin and death will continue here on earth indefinitely. Of course they say God could still do something about sin and death here on earth. But all Bible prophecy has been fulfilled, so the Bible does not say what God might do in the future. Would God leave the final victory over sin and death out of Scripture? Would God leave us wondering if sin and death will ever really be defeated here on the earth?

Under the full preterist system, Satan continually receives souls that God has created and will be eternally tormented in hell. There is no end in sight for this. It could go on throughout eternity. God just continues to create more souls to burn in hell. Satan just keeps laughing all the way to the First National Bank of Hell. And there is no end in sight for this. The world just keeps getting worse and worse. Is this really God's plan? Is this what Jesus had in mind when he indicated that he would return in that generation?

At this point, one could argue that Jesus as a man may have really believed he would be able to return in their lifetimes, but that the Father in heaven would have known otherwise. For Jesus to have returned in that generation would have required that those who sat on the seat of Moses to repent and acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. Obviously Jesus had hoped they would do so. Jesus said he did not know the day or the time of his return. Not even the angels knew. Only the Father knew. But Jesus did seem to be saying that he would return in that

generation. Jesus, as directed by the Holy Spirit, should not have made these promises that he would not be able to keep. However, Jeremiah tells us that all prophecies concerning kingdoms and nations are conditional.

Jeremiah 18:7-10 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; (8) if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to them. (9) At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; (10) if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they not obey my voice, then I will repent of the good, with which I said I would benefit them.

All prophecies concerning kingdoms and nations are conditional. These prophecies are conditional upon obedience to God. The prophecy does not need to explicitly state this condition.

As we have seen, Christ cannot return until those who sit on the seat of Moses say, “Blessed his he who comes in the name of the Lord.” Therefore, any prophecy that Jesus made concerning the time of His return was conditional upon whether or not the scribes and Pharisees would repent during the next forty years. There was no need to explicitly state this condition, because (A) the rules of prophecy do not require it, and (B) the disciples would have known that Jesus would not return if the Jewish leaders didn’t repent. They would understand that he had hoped to return, but that it had become impossible for Him to do so. They would not have felt they had been told a lie, because it was not a lie. Jesus was simply speaking His heart’s desire.

This hermeneutic of conditional prophecy works much better than full preterism. Why? We should interpret Scripture not only by what is said, but in the way the Jewish audience of that day would have naturally understood. They would have naturally understood that Jesus really would come, and be physically seen, in their lifetimes. The disciples would not have interpreted Jesus as saying he would just come just in the clouds or come with judgment, or come in some spiritual way. This is not what they would have naturally believed Jesus to be saying. Did Jesus intentionally deceive or mislead them?

It works both ways. Futurists must admit that the tricky ways to explain these verses are not what the disciples would have naturally believed. Likewise, full preterists should realize that the words of Jesus must naturally be interpreted as a physical return in their lifetimes - not just in the clouds. That's not what they would

have understood. Jesus was not deceiving them. The words of Jesus should be interpreted like they would have naturally believed. It simply became impossible for Christ to return when Jerusalem's time for repentance ran out.

Now, let's put this conditional aspect of prophecy back into our interpretation of Daniel 9. The preterists view Daniel 9 as being entirely fulfilled. The futurists read the same prophecy and say that some (or one) of the weeks are in the future. Could the prophecy have been intentionally written so that it could be fulfilled either way? In other words, Old Testament prophecy was written in a way that it allowed for, and even expected, the Jewish leaders to recognize the Messiah when he came. But only in hindsight, we see aspects of Old Testament prophecy which allowed for and to some degree expect the Jewish leaders to reject the Messiah. We all have true free-will to accept or reject Christ. God does not pre-ordain anyone for the lake of fire. This included the Jewish leaders at the time of Christ. Prophecies of destruction and desolation are always conditional upon repentance.

Earlier, we discussed the purpose of Daniel's vision.

Daniel 9:24 NIV "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

The Jewish religious leaders failed to carry out this purpose. They were too consumed with self-righteousness, which leads to hypocrisy. And they did not recognize the Messiah. Even after the crucifixion and resurrection, they still had time to repent. The crucifixion and resurrection should have been seen as the sign of Jonah. Nineveh was told by Jonah they would be destroyed in 40 days. No condition was given in this prophecy. However, the king of Nineveh repented and led his people to repentance. God did not bring destruction in 40 days. Did this make Jonah be a false prophet? No, because prophecy is conditional upon repentance. The prophecy of Jonah to Nineveh was conditional upon repentance even if not explicitly stated.

Likewise, the prophecy of Israel's second dispersion was conditional upon repentance. The Jewish leaders should have "put an end to sin", endeavored to "bring in everlasting righteousness," and they should have "anointed the most holy." They could have done so through the power of Christ's blood. They had the free-will to repent. God's prophecy of seventy weeks did not foreordain them to condemnation. If they had repented, then Christ would have returned in that generation. The seven weeks of Daniel 9 could have played out in that generation.

And the week of the covenant could have been fulfilled in that generation. In other words, if the Jewish leaders had accepted Jesus as the Messiah, then the struggle with Rome could have led to the abomination of desolation and it would have ushered in the great tribulation and the resurrection. The city and the sanctuary would probably have still been destroyed. But Christ would have returned to save the Jewish people. The Jews would not have been taken as prisoners to all the nations.

Matthew 12:38-41 Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you." (39) But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, but no sign will be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet. (40) For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (41) The men of Nineveh will stand up in the judgment with this generation, and will condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, someone greater than Jonah is here.

Nineveh was given 40 days to repent. The Jewish leaders were given 40 years to repent. The king of Nineveh repented. The Jewish leaders did not repent. The desolation of Jerusalem came 40 years after Christ was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The final seven weeks, which is the final (last) Jubilee, had to wait until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled.

15.14) The Week of the Covenant

With this conditional view of Daniel 9 in mind, let's go back and look again.

Daniel 9:25 ESV Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of **an anointed one, a prince**, there shall be seven weeks. [SO] for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

Daniel 9:26a ESV And after the sixty-two weeks, **an anointed one** shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of *the prince who is to come* shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

Daniel 9:26b ESV Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

As we have seen, at the end of the seven weeks comes the Anointed One (Christ) and also the antichrist (a prince). After the sixty-two weeks, Christ is born. And later Christ would die on the cross. The people of the antichrist who is to come destroys the city and the sanctuary. Then end comes like a flood. There are wars and rumors of wars until the end.

By context, the end is the end of the entire seventy weeks. The end of the seventy weeks (9:26b) is AFTER the city and the sanctuary is destroyed (9.26a). In other words, 9:26a is about the people of the antichrist who is to come. These people destroy the city and the sanctuary. Then, verse 9:26b is about the end of the seventy weeks. After verse 9:26b, the seventy weeks are completed.

But remember that the destruction of the Jewish people was conditional upon repentance of the Jewish leaders, just as the destruction of Nineveh was conditional upon repentance of the king of Nineveh. (The Jewish leaders could have led the Jewish people to repentance, just as the king of Nineveh led the people of Nineveh to repentance.) If there had been repentance, then the end of the seventy weeks would have happened back then. The end would have come with a flood back then. The seven weeks until the coming of the Anointed One would have occurred back then. But without the repentance, the desolation of Jerusalem occurs, and return of Christ is delayed until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled. Since the return of Christ moves into the future, the seven weeks also moves into the future. That's because the seven weeks come just prior "to the coming of an Anointed One."

The desolation of Jerusalem was reversed in 1967. In other words, these seven weeks that God promised to Daniel for the non-desolation of Jerusalem are happening right now. Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. So Israel, both Jew and Gentile, has these seven weeks "to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness." These are things that "your people" must do before Christ can return. "Your people" are the holy people of Israel. And Church is Israel. Israel (the Bride of Christ) must stop sinning before Christ sets up his earthly kingdom.

Today, however, most people in the Church are not much different than the world. The Church of today's generation is not any better than the religious leaders of Christ's generation, except for one difference. The Church does believe Jesus is the Messiah. So we do have hope, whereas the religious leaders of Christ's generation did not recognize the Messiah. Or those who did were not willing to acknowledge Christ as the Messiah out of pride and the desire to protect their

power. (Paul was an exception.) However, most of the Church today is deceived about the need to overcome all sinful habits in our lives before Christ returns.

No doubt the seventy weeks will complete, and the majority of the Church will still be deceived by sin. The New Jerusalem will appear but the Bride will not be ready. Only a few will have found the narrow gate. For this reason, Christ must confirm a covenant for one more week, after the seventy weeks. The seventy weeks are over in verse 9:26b. Then we have one more week in 9:27.

Daniel 9:26b ESV Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

Daniel 9:27 ESV And **he** shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week **he** shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

Remember the parallelism discussed in the section titled, "The Messiah vs. the Prince (or Ruler)." The first pronoun refers to Christ. The second pronoun refers to the antichrist. So the end (of the seventy weeks) comes, and then Christ makes a covenant with many for one more week. We can also see the "end" coming before the week of the covenant in the words of Jesus.

Matthew 24:6 ESV And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.

Notice how this verse parallels Daniel 9:26b? Then, a few verses down, we read:

Matthew 24:14-15 ESV And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (15) "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

The end comes. After that, we will see the abomination of desolation. (The desolation relates to the desolation of Jerusalem, which was the subject of Daniel's prayer.) The abomination of desolation is in the middle of the additional week for which Christ confirms a covenant with many.

Why does Christ confirm a covenant for a week with many? It's because his Church, which is Israel, is not ready for Christ to return at the end of the seventy

weeks. In response to Daniel's prayer for the forgiveness of Israel's sins, God promises Daniel seventy weeks of non-desolation for Jerusalem. In other words, the Church has it relatively easy. Great tribulation has not yet come. But in our relatively easy lives, the Church has become sinful just as Old Testament Israel did throughout her history. At the end of the time allotted for Israel to overcome sin, only a remnant in the Church are ready for Christ to return. So Christ must make a covenant for one more week. But during that week Jerusalem will again be trampled upon by the Gentiles for 42 months (Revelation 11:2).

Today, relatively few in the Church have overcome all their sinful habits and are thus ready for Christ to return. It's only through great tribulation that the many of the Church will be made ready for Christ to return.

The ESV (quoted above) renders the covenant as a "strong" covenant. However, I don't think that's what is being said in the Hebrews. I asked a friend of mine (Alexis Nicole Carter) to translate the verses as literally as she could, without having much preconception as to the meaning. (She did not have a strongly held belief as to the interpretation of the verse.) Here is the translation of verse 27 that my friend did for me:

(27) And he will confirm a covenant to many, one seven, and a half of the seven and sacrifice and offering he will cause to cease and on a wing of abominations one will make desolate (desolate is a participle, and the peculiar thing is that it is not grammatically modifying the entire phrase, but only "abominations") and until he finishes and that which is decided will be poured upon [the] desolate.

Carter made this comment about the covenant with many:

***It seems that it is mostly likely "and he will confirm the covenant to many ones"--> but the word can mean great ones, but scholars apparently think it is the former. There is no "strong covenant" translation from the Hebrew here, it is reading into the text.

The ESV, quoted above, renders the verse as a "strong covenant with many." But Carter said there is a problem with that translation. The word for "many" people can also mean "strong" people. But most translations render it as "many." The problem here is that the same word for "strong" (or "many") is also used to say it's a "strong covenant." You can't use the same word to mean it's a strong covenant, and at the same time it's with "many" people. It's the exact same word in the Hebrew, and the word does not appear twice.

Why do some translations say it's a strong covenant with many? Translators have often viewed this prophecy from the preterist perspective. They would agree that the covenant is made by Christ. But it tends to be associated with the time of the crucifixion and not the future. Did Christ make a new covenant at the time of the cross? Well, yes there is the new covenant. But did the new covenant last for only seven years? Thus, preterists tend to think of the covenant being strengthened for seven years. In other words, during the seven-year period with the cross in the middle, the new covenant was strengthened. But it was not limited to seven years. Thus, preterist translators have cheated and used the same word for both the strengthening of the covenant and for the covenant being with "many."

However, Carter said the Hebrew text does not support the idea of an existing covenant being strengthened. A covenant is made for one week. So it can't be a strengthening of the new covenant. And it's not a "strong" covenant. Christ makes a covenant with "many" for one week. And by context, the week-long covenant seems to be after the end of the seventy weeks.

So after the seven weeks there is one more week. During the seven weeks of the non-desolation of Jerusalem, relatively few in the Church overcome all their sinful habits and are thus ready for Christ to return. But during the week of the covenant, many in the Church become ready for Christ to return. (The trumpets serve as a wake-up call for the Church. And tribulation tends to bring about either rebellion or holiness.)

Revelation 7:3-4 NIV "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." (4) Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

The same can be seen in Revelation. In Revelation chapter 7, we see a progression from 144,000 to a "countless number." The 144,000 are sealed before there is any harm to the land, the seas, or the trees (Rev. 7:3). Harm to the land, sea, and trees is the first two trumpet-plagues (Rev. 8:7-8). Then later, we see a "countless number" who have "come out of the great tribulation" (Rev. 8:13-14). To come out of the great tribulation requires one to have been in the great tribulation.

Revelation 7:9 NIV 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.

In other words, 144,000 are ready for Christ to return when the final seven weeks of the seventy are finished. After the seven weeks the Messiah comes (which means Anointed One). But so does the prince (antichrist).

Daniel 9:25 ESV Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of **an anointed one, a prince**, there shall be seven weeks. [SO] for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

Revelation 14:4 NIV These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.

Revelation 7:13-14 NIV Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?" (14) I answered, "Sir, you know." 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.

The Messiah comes and 144,000 are found to be ready. This is a relatively small number as compared to the full number in the Church. So Christ makes a covenant with the "many" for one more week before he actually sets foot on the Mount of Olives and destroys the antichrist. During the first half, the two witnesses preach for 1260 days. We know the world is terrified during this time because when they are killed at the end of the 1260 days, the whole world celebrates by exchanging gifts. (Does this replace Christmas?) Then the abomination of desolation is set up and the whole world is made to worship the beast and to take the mark of the beast. This great tribulation lasts for 42 months. But it changes the Church. The Church gets ready for Christ to return.

I believe the New Jerusalem will come at the end of the seven weeks, just as the prophecy says. The Anointed One will come. (But at the same time, the prince, the false-prophet antichrist, will also come.) The whole world will be terrified when the New Jerusalem appears. The two witnesses will preach holiness. Many of the people in the churches will resist, saying that holiness is not required to be a Christian. Many will deny that the New Jerusalem appearing in orbit around the earth is the return of Christ. But the 144,000 will literally be with Christ (Rev. 14:1), face to face. Those in the churches who still have sinful habits will have to decide if they are going to follow Christ or deny that Christ has returned. But during at

least the first half of the week of the covenant, Christ will remain in the New Jerusalem, in orbit around the earth. He will not come all the way to the Mount of Olives until after the seven-year period. After the seven-year period, he will gather the countless number up in the rapture. Then we will have the wedding banquet in the New Jerusalem. And then Christ will return to the Mount of Olives, with the holy ones, to defeat the antichrist at Armageddon.

15.15) The People of the Prince

We need to tie up one loose end. The "people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." This sentence of Daniel's vision has been discussed quite a bit with regard to the debate as to whether the end-time government will be a revived Roman empire or a revived Islamic Caliphate. Dispensationalists point out that Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 70 AD by Rome. The prince who is to come in the end times must be a Roman. They argue that at least he must be from Europe and rule over a revived Roman empire.

Joel Richardson has argued that the people who actually destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, for the most part, were not actually Romans. According to Josephus, the Roman Empire recruited locals from around the middle-east into their army. The actual people who destroyed the city and the sanctuary were not Romans, but were from the middle-east. Thus, it is argued, the end-time prince who will come will actually himself be from the middle-east. No doubt the Mahdi will rule over the middle-east. And of course he will be from the middle-east, perhaps Turkey. He is probably the false prophet of Revelation. So this end-times antichrist is from the middle-east. And his people from the end-times is the same Arab ethnicity as the people who destroyed the city and the sanctuary in 70 AD.

Perhaps this is true. But it comes across like one is trying to side-step the argument on a technicality. Even if the people who destroyed the city and the sanctuary were from the middle-east, the ruler (prince), who commanded these people was a Roman. A natural reading of this text does seem to indicate the prince, which is to come, will be Roman. Even if the people were middle-eastern, the prince was Roman. These middle-eastern people would have been under the command of a Roman prince.

Preterists believe the seventy weeks of Daniel 9 was entirely fulfilled by 70 AD. As a matter of fact, Preterists believe the seventy weeks are all contiguous, and that the crucifixion was right in the middle of the seventh week. So they have a problem with the fact that the city and the sanctuary were destroyed some 40 years later.

But the text does seem to indicate that the end-times prince is the one who destroyed the city and the sanctuary, which has to be Roman. Notice the “coming” of the prince in verse 25 would naturally be read as the “prince who is to come” in verse 26a. Both verses seem to be talking about the same “prince” who is to come. Assuming that the text is not to be interpreted with Preterism, the text seems to be saying prince which is to come, in the end times, is the same prince which destroyed the city and the sanctuary. At least the prince of the end-times would also be the prince (Caesar) of the Roman Empire at the time of 70 AD.

Daniel 9:25 ESV Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of **an anointed one, a prince**, there shall be seven weeks. [SO] for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

Daniel 9:26a ESV And after the sixty-two weeks, **an anointed one** shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And **the people of the prince** who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

An alternative view is to acknowledge that the people of the ruler were really under Roman command, and thus were acting as Romans. Thus, the end-times antichrist ruler that will come was once a Roman ruler. What if a Roman ruler, who has been dead for all these years, were to come up out of the Abyss to become the antichrist?

Revelation 17:8 NIV The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come.

Thus, the prince (or ruler) who is to come was once a Roman emperor. He once was, but now he is dead. Yet he will come out of the Abyss to become the end-times beast. He once was, not is not, yet he will come again. Does this mean the Roman ruler who will come must be the same person as the one who destroyed the city and the sanctuary in 70 AD? No, I think that’s why the text says the “people of the ruler” destroys Jerusalem. The ruler could be another Roman emperor. It’s still the same Roman people who destroyed the city and the sanctuary.

We should remember that John wrote Revelation after the destruction of the city and the sanctuary. (Preterists argue that Revelation was written prior to the destruction. But the evidence is much stronger for the late-date writing of Revelation.) We should also remember that the title, “Emperor Nero” adds up to 666. We should also remember that the early Church actually believed Nero would return to become the end-times antichrist. (See section 27.7, titled “The Mark of the Beast and the Number of his Name.” Also refer to section 30.1, titled “Once Was, Now is Not, Will Come Again.”) Given the fact that the early church believed Nero would return to be the antichrist, and given the fact that Revelation was written after Nero’s death, how would the above verse in Revelation have been interpreted by the audiences of John in that day and time?

We must also note that John would have been very familiar with the seventy weeks of Daniel 9. John wrote Revelation at a time when the destruction of Jerusalem would have been a horrible personal memory. How would John have interpreted, “The people of the prince who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary?” All Scripture, including Daniel and Revelation, must be interpreted in the context of the historical time and culture of the author.

The evidence is strong that the antichrist will suffer a fatal wound and will be healed. In other words, he will be brought back to life. But he won’t be the same man. He will have the soul of Nero. But that doesn’t mean that the antichrist will be Roman, or that there will be a revived Roman empire. It will be a revived Islamic Caliphate. And the antichrist will enforce Islam and let the false prophet (the coming Mahdi) lead the world into Islam.

Chapter 16

Daniel Chapters 10-12

End Time Vision

Daniel 10 through 12 consists of one big vision. It was given to Daniel in the third year of Cyrus, the ruler of Persia, after the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon. This was in 539 BC. Daniel 10 gives us the introduction to that vision, including information on the angel who brought Daniel the vision. Daniel 11, up through verse 35, gives us a very detailed prophecy which was exactly fulfilled in the years to follow. The fulfilled prophecies of Daniel 11:1-35 are important because they not only validate Daniel's prophecy, but the vision jumps from Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC), who is a type for an antichrist, to two end times antichrists. Daniel 11:36 through Daniel 12 is future fulfilment of the vision and a conclusion to the vision as a whole. The unfulfilled portion of this vision includes both the world ruling antichrist and the false prophet antichrist.

Daniel 11:1-35 gives fulfilled prophecy that is so detailed and so accurate, that many liberal scholars have tried to say Daniel was written many years later, after 164 BC. But this would make the whole book a fraud, because Daniel reports himself as the author, and he gives the specific dates of his visions. As seen in the chapter on Daniel 9, a reasonable interpretation of the seventy weeks gives the exact year of Christ's birth. To believe that the whole Bible is God's inspired word, we must accept that the book of Daniel was in fact written by Daniel and that he did in fact have a vision of incredible accuracy. We can expect the end time portion of this vision to have the same degree of incredible accuracy.

Daniel 10:13-14 ESV The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, (14) and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come."

As we see in verse 13, this angel has been fighting the prince of the Persian kingdom. Michael the archangel comes to help. In verses 20 through chapter 11 verse 1, we get more details about this battle.

Daniel 10:20 - 11:1 ESV Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of

Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come. (10:21) But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince. (11:1) "And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.

Darius the Mede is somewhat confusing. Daniel 9:1 indicates that Darius was the "son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent)." Daniel 5:30 indicates that after killing Belshazzar, "Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two." Ezra 1:1 indicates that Cyrus took over Babylon when the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon. Daniel also refers to Cyrus. The historians all agree that Cyrus took over Babylon when he conquered it in 539 BC. There was a Darius who became king of Persia 17 years later (522 BC). But the son of this Darius was Xerxes, not his father. The Darius in Daniel was the son of Xerxes (just the opposite). Since Daniel 5:30 indicates that Darius the Mede took over the kingdom when Belshazzar was killed (at the writing on the wall), some commentators believe that Darius the Mede was another name for Cyrus. The whole issue is very confusing. And it's the primary argument used by the liberal scholars who say the book of Daniel is a fraud.

When we meet Daniel at the Resurrection, this issue should be our first question. We are going to assume that there was an earlier ruler named Darius the Mede whose father was Xerxes. Perhaps the later pair were named for their predecessors. Perhaps Darius the Mede was under the authority of Cyrus, with both of their reigns beginning when the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon. Darius the Mede probably ruled over the city of Babylon whereas Cyrus rule over the entire Persian Empire.

In any case, this angel seems to be battling the "prince of Persia," starting when Darius the Mede (or Cyrus) took power. The angel also says that he will later be battling the prince of Greece. The angel says that no one supports him in these efforts except for Michael the archangel. The fulfilled prophecy that follows is about the progression of power from the Medes and the Persians to Alexander the Great. Daniel 8, about the ram and the goat, was also about this progression of power that would come. These angels are fighting demons who have spiritual dominion over the nations that rule the middle-east.

We need to do a little study here to see the significance of these battles with demonic princes of nations that rule the middle-east. Looking forward to Daniel 12:1, we see that Michael will arise, or "stand up." The Hebrew word for "stand

up" in Daniel 11:1 (quoted earlier) is the same word as in Daniel 12:1. In Daniel 11:1, it's clearly talking about a battle in heaven involving Michael that took place in Daniel's time. Apparently the same thing happens right before the 42-month reign of the antichrist. Michael "stands up" again and there is a battle in heaven.

Daniel 12:1 ESV "At that time shall stand up 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.

When this happens, we have the time of greatest distress, or greatest tribulation, of all time. Right after Jesus says to watch for the "abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel - let the reader [of Daniel] understand," we find these verses:

Matthew 24:21-22 ESV For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. (22) And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Now look back and read Daniel 12:1 again. Notice that there can be only one greatest distress of all time. The people whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life are delivered [escape] after the greatest distress of all time. Michael fought the demonic princes of nations that rule the middle-east. And apparently there will be a similar battle right before the greatest tribulation of all time.

One thing should be noted here. Michael is a prince who is in charge of "your people." This greatest distress (or greatest tribulation) of all time is not tribulation for the world. It's tribulation for Israel. And the Gentile Church is grafted into Israel. This is great tribulation for God's holy nation. During this time the world will be "eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. The world will submit itself to Islam. Those who do not submit will be in great tribulation.

Matthew 24:37-39 "As the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (38) For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ship, (39) and they didn't know until the flood came, and took them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Why do we have the have the greatest tribulation of all time when Michael stands up (KJV) or arises (NIV)? Does not stand up mean to 'take a stand,' or to fight? When Michael 'takes a stand', why do we get the great tribulation? Michael takes a stand at the appointed time, yet we have the greatest distress of all time. Is Michael's stand ineffective?

The angel speaking to Daniel is not named. But he speaks of Michael, saying that Michael is the only other who helps him fight the prince of Persia. This vision was given two years after the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue (Daniel 2), and Daniel's interpretation, show us these changes in world rule. The statue starts with Babylon the head of gold. Then there is the Medes and Persians which are the chest and arms of silver. Next we have Greece, which is the belly and thighs of bronze. Later, we have the legs of iron, which is the Islamic Caliphate. And finally we have the feet of iron and clay, which is an end-times revival of the Islamic Caliphate.

Michael's purpose is to protect the rulers of the world so that Satan does not completely overtake them. In so doing, Michael is protecting us. When Christ returns, Israel (both Jewish Israel and Gentile Israel) will rule the world. Jesus said to the churches:

Revelation 2:26 He who overcomes, and he who keeps my works to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.

So, Michael naturally takes a stand to protect the new rulers. Let's look at the verse again.

Daniel 12:1 NIV At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered.

When Michael takes a stand to protect Israel, Satan is free to completely overtake the antichrist. As long as Michael protects the world rulers, the Church can work to bring more people into the kingdom of God. But when Michael takes a stand to protect Israel, no longer protecting the world rulers, those not in the kingdom of God will be shut out.

John 9:4-5 NIV As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. [5] While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Matthew 25:10-13 NIV But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. (11) Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' (12) But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' (13) "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Jesus tells us to watch for the signs of His return. Jesus will not return until the signs have been fulfilled. Paul had to correct a few Christians on this point.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 KJV Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, (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. (3) 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;

The day Christ returns and gathers us, (rapture means caught-up) cannot occur until Michael takes a stand to protect Christians, and removes his protection for the world rulers. When he does this, Satan will completely overtake the antichrist, and the "son of perdition" will be revealed.

2 Thessalonians 2:5-7 NIV Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? (6) And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. (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.

The "secret power of lawlessness" was already at work, even back to the time of Daniel. Paul is not talking about some secret revelation that God gave him, which he supposedly shared with the church at Thessalonians, but failed to share in his letters. No, Paul was very good at writing. He was a better writer than he was a speaker. Paul recorded the revelations that God gave him in his letters. Paul was also a Pharisee. He was very educated in Old Testament Scripture. I'm sure Paul had been teaching Daniel to the church at Thessalonica. Paul was simply reminding them of this teaching in Daniel - that Michael must be removed before the antichrist can be revealed, because Michael prevents Satan from completely overtaking the world rulers.

The "one who now holds it back" is Michael. When Michael is taken out of the way, the antichrist will be revealed. From Daniel 12:1, we know that Michael takes his stand before the great tribulation. In Revelation 12, we read about this battle in heaven in which Michael is on our side.

Revelation 12:6-12 ESV and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days. (7) Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, (8) but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. (9) And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (10) And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. (11) And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. (12) Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

Here, we see that the battle in heaven is after the 1260 days. It's also before the time, times, and half a time (Revelation 12:14) during which the antichrist rules over every nation, tribe, people, and language. In other words, this war happens in the middle of the seven-year covenant. The two witnesses prophesy for 1260 days (Revelation 11:3). Then we have the war in heaven during which Satan and his angels are thrown down to the earth. Then we have the great tribulation period during which the antichrist rules for 42 months (Revelation 13:5-7). Apparently the abomination of desolation is set up right after this war in heaven. Again, Michael takes a stand, Satan is thrown out of heaven, and then we have the greatest tribulation of all time.

When Michael's restraint is removed, Satan will take over the world ruler who is the antichrist. In section 15.5, titled "The People of the Prince," we talked about how the antichrist is killed and then brought back to life. The soul of Nero comes out of the Abyss and becomes the antichrist. This can happen only after Michael the restrainer is taken out of the way from protecting the rulers of this world.

All this brings us back to Daniel 8. (See section 14.2 of this book).

Daniel 8:9-14 ESV Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. (10) It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. (11) It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. (12) And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper. (13) Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?" (14) And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."

In many respects, the vision of Daniel 8 is a mini version of the vision of Daniel 10-12. Both have fulfilled prophecy based on the breakup of Alexander the Great's (Greek) kingdom into four kingdoms. Daniel 8:13 mentions the "transgression that makes desolate" which happens in the end times. Daniel 11:31 mentions the abomination of desolation that occurred in 168 BC, and later Daniel 12:11 mentions the abomination of desolation that happens in the end times. In other words, both prophecies follow history in a way that enables us to recognize the events of the end times and the final reign of the antichrist. Both prophecies identify the war in heaven and the abomination of desolation as immediate precursors to the great tribulation. The vision of Daniel 10-12 gives us a highly expanded view of now-fulfilled history as well as the details of what will be happening during the seven-year covenant of Daniel 9:27. (The abomination of desolation is in the midst of those seven years.)

The now-fulfilled part begins with Daniel 11:2 and continues through verse 11:35. As we will see, the details given leave us no room to doubt the accuracy of that which follows. The unfulfilled part begins with Daniel 11:36 and continues through verse 12:3. Then, in Daniel 12:4 through the end of the chapter, an important question is answered: "When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

16.1) Daniel 11:2 - 11:35: Fulfilled Prophecy

All of this information below about the fulfillment of Daniel 11 was compiled from the following study Bibles. With one exception, there is no information in this chapter about fulfilled prophecy in Daniel 11 that did not come from one of the following study Bibles and commentary. The one exception is that I included a quote from Maccabees.

The NIV Study Bible
Zondervan Bible Publishers

The Life Application Study Bible, NIV
Published by Tyndale House Publications

The Believer's Study Bible
Editor: W.A. Criswell, Ph.D.
Managing Editor: Paige Patterson, Th.D.
Old Testament Editor: E. Ray Clendenen, Ph.D.

New Commentary on the Whole Bible
Based on the classic commentary of
Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown
General Editor: J. D. Douglas
Old Testament Editor: James K. Hoffmeier
Associate Editors: Ted A. Hildebrandt, Mark R. Norton
published by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Ryrie Study Bible, NASB
Expanded Edition
By Charles Cadwell Ryrie, Th.D., Ph.D.

The fulfilled portion of this vision begins with verse 2 of Daniel 11.

Daniel 11:2 NIV "Now then, I tell you the truth: Three more kings will appear in Persia, and then a fourth, who will be far richer than all the others. When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece.

At the time of this vision, Cyrus (or Darius the Mede?) was in power. This vision was in 539 BC. This verse in Daniel says that three more kings would appear after Cyrus. After Cyrus came Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. Cambyses was the first of

the three. He ruled from 529 BC to 523 BC. The second of the three was Pseudo-Smerdis (or Gaumata), who ruled a short period from 523 BC to 522 BC. And then the third of the three was Darius I Hystaspes who ruled from 522 BC to 485 BC. (This is the Darius who is confused with Darius the Mede in Daniel. We are assuming that the Darius the Mede who was a friend to Daniel ruled under the authority of Cyrus. Darius the Mede in Daniel is not found in history outside of Daniel. We assume that Darius I Hystaspes was named after the Darius in Daniel.)

The verse in Daniel says the fourth king, after these three, would be very powerful and wealthy. The son of Darius I Hystaspes is Xerxes (or Ahasuerus). He ruled from 486 BC to 465 BC. Xerxes was the most powerful and wealthy of the four. His wealth was proverbial. (We are assuming that Xerxes was named after the father of the Darius in Daniel.)

Xerxes is the husband of Esther in the book of Esther. This book tells how Esther influenced Xerxes and saved the entire Jewish population from being annihilated. This verse in Daniel says that this fourth king, when he has gained his power and wealth, would stir up everyone against Greece. In fulfillment of this prophecy, at the climax of this king's power he invaded Greece, in 480 BC. But Xerxes was defeated at Salamis, and after that his power began to decline.

Daniel 11:3-4 NIV Then a mighty king will appear, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases. (4) After he has appeared, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others.

This mighty king was Alexander the Great. This was 146 years later, but much of Alexander the Great's motivation was because of Xerxes' cruel treatment of Greece in the 480 BC invasion. From 334 BC to 330 BC Alexander conquered the lands of the Medo-Persian Empire, Syria, Asia Minor, and Egypt. He even conquered as far as India. We also see Alexander the Great as the goat of Daniel 8:8. Alexander is the large horn that was broken off in the height of his power. In place of Alexander's horn, came "four prominent horns [that] grew up toward the four winds of heaven" (NIV Daniel 8:8). Here in this verse of Daniel 11:4, we also see that his empire would be "parceled out toward the four winds of heaven." This term, "the four winds of heaven" is used in both verses.

The "four winds of heaven" in Daniel 8:8 is talking about the four generals who received power after Alexander the Great died. Daniel 8:8 says that the large

horn is broken off at the height of his power. This verse in Daniel 11:4 says the four are not Alexander's descendants, nor would they have the power that Alexander exercised. Alexander the Great died at the age of 32 in 323 BC. This was at the height of his power. He died from malaria with complications of alcoholism. Alexander had no heirs. (The verse says, "It will not go to his descendants.") His empire was parceled out to his four generals, Ptolemy I Soter (323 - 285 BC), Seleucus I Nicator (311-280 BC), Lysimachus, and Cassander. Ptolemy ruled the south, which is Egypt. Seleucus ruled Babylonia and Syria, which is north of Israel. Lysimachus ruled Thrace and parts of Asia Minor, which is east of Israel. And Cassander ruled Macedonia and Greece, west of Israel. Thus we have the "four winds of heaven," north, south, east, and west.

Daniel 11:5 NIV The king of the South will become strong, but one of his commanders will become even stronger than he and will rule his own kingdom with great power.

The king of the south (Ptolemy) became strong. Ptolemy was the king of Egypt. But Ptolemy wanted far more. Seleucus (in the north) was under the sponsorship of Ptolemy. Later, Seleucus became more powerful than Ptolemy. Ptolemy became king in 323 BC, right after the death of Alexander. But Seleucus was not given the title of king until 311 BC, 12 years later. Seleucus was one of Alexander's generals, yet Seleucus was at first under the sponsorship of Ptolemy. So, in the verse, "one of his commanders" is one of Alexander's commanders as well as one of Ptolemy's commanders. Seleucus' original kingdom was Syria and Babylonia, but he later added more territories toward both his east and his west.

Daniel 11:6 NIV After some years, they will become allies. The daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North to make an alliance, but she will not retain her power, and he and his power will not last. In those days she will be handed over, together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her.

Ptolemy I Soter, the original king of the south, one of Alexander's original generals, died in 285 BC. His son, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285 - 246 BC) became king of Egypt. Meanwhile, back in the north, Seleucus was murdered in 281 BC. His son Antiochus I Soter ruled until 262 BC. Later, the grandson of Seleucus, Antiochus II Theos (262 - 246 BC), ruled in Syria. Now, this son of Ptolemy (Ptolemy II Philadelphus) and this grandson of Seleucus (Antiochus II Theos) hated each other. The north and the south were major enemies. And Judah was caught in the middle.

But "after some years, they [became] allies." This was in about 250 BC. To bring about this alliance, Ptolemy II gave his daughter in marriage to his enemy, Antiochus II. His daughter's name was Bernice. But as the prophecy says, Bernice would "not retain her power." Also, the prophecy says that "he [Antiochus II] and his power [would] not last." In order for Antiochus II to marry Bernice, he divorced his wife Laodice, and disinherited his son Seleucus Callincus. But his divorced wife Laodice had considerable influence. She didn't just take the divorce and go away. Laodice arranged for the assassinations of both Bernice and Bernice's son. Then, in 247 BC, Laodice poisoned her former husband Antiochus II. So, Bernice did "not retain her power, and he [Antiochus II] and his power [did] not last." Again, Laodice was very influential. Laodice then obtained the throne, and gave the kingdom to her disinherited son, Seleucus II Callinicus (246 - 227 BC).

Daniel 11:7-8 NIV One from her family line will arise to take her place. He will attack the forces of the king of the North and enter his fortress; he will fight against them and be victorious. (8) He will also seize their gods, their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt. For some years he will leave the king of the North alone.

Is the king of the south going to take the murder of Bernice lightly? Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221), the brother of Bernice, succeeded his father and became king of Egypt. He then avenged his sister's death by conquering Syria and all the territory to the Euphrates River. And, of course, he killed Laodice. This war was from 246 to 241 BC. The prophecy says, "He will also seize their gods, their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt." As spoils of war, Ptolemy III brought back to Egypt 40,000 talents of silver, precious dishes, and 2,400 images, including Egyptian idols (gods) that Cambyses had taken from Egypt to Persia. This prophecy is so accurate that even the list of items plundered fits recorded history! This was how Ptolemy III Euergetes got his name Euergetes. The Egyptians were very pleased with this plunder, and named him Euergetes, which means "benefactor."

Daniel 11:9-10 NIV Then the king of the North will invade the realm of the king of the South but will retreat to his own country. (10) His sons will prepare for war and assemble a great army, which will sweep on like an irresistible flood and carry the battle as far as his fortress.

Seleucus II Callinicus (king of the north) had received a major humiliating defeat. The king of the south had killed his mother, defeated him in war, and had plundered many valuable things. Seleucus II Callinicus tried to seek revenge and tried to invade Egypt, but he was unsuccessful. Then, in 227 BC, 14 years after his humiliating defeat, he fell off his horse. The fall killed him. Verse 10 of the prophecy says, "His sons will prepare for war..." The older of these two sons became king after Seleucus II fell off his horse. His name was Seleucus III Soter (227-223 BC), but his kingship lasted only three years. He was killed during a military campaign in Asia Minor by conspirators. That left his brother, the younger of the two sons, to carry on with the war efforts against the king of the south (Egypt). This younger brother's name was Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BC). He was just 18 years old when he became king, and he ruled for 36 years.

Back in the south, two years after this 18-year old boy became king in the north, the son of Ptolemy III Euergetes became king in the south. His name was Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-204 BC). At this time, Antiochus III the Great managed to recover all of Syria that Ptolemy III Euergetes had conquered. Antiochus III the Great pushed down to Dura, near Caesarea, where he made four-month truce with Ptolemy IV Philopator. But war started again after the four-month truce. The fortress, mentioned in the verse, belonged to the south. It was located at Raphia. This fortress was there to protect Egypt from attacks coming through Edom and Arabia Petrea, near Gaza. At this fortress, Antiochus III was defeated by a smaller army of Ptolemy IV. That's the fulfillment of the verse talking about his sons assembling a great army, which penetrated as far as this fortress. The larger army was defeated by a smaller army at the fortress. This prophecy of Daniel is extremely accurate! This military campaign was from 219-217 BC. This 18-year old king of the north, the younger of the two sons, was just 22 years old when he began this military campaign.

Daniel 11:11-13 NIV Then the king of the South will march out in a rage and fight against the king of the North, who will raise a large army, but it will be defeated. (12) When the army is carried off, the king of the South will be filled with pride and will slaughter many thousands, yet he will not remain triumphant. (13) For the king of the North will muster another army, larger than the first; and after several years, he will advance with a huge army fully equipped.

Verses 11 and 12 are again about this same battle at Raphia, the fortress guarding Egypt. Verse 11 again says that the north raises a large army that is defeated. (Remember, the larger army was defeated by the smaller army.) Verse 12 says the

king of the south would be filled with pride and will slaughter many thousands. The historian Polybius records that Antiochus III the Great lost nearly 10,000 infantrymen during this battle at Raphia. Then the verse says that Ptolemy IV would not remain triumphant, that the north would muster another army, larger than the first, after several years. And of course, this happened. Fourteen years later, the war was renewed. During these fourteen years, Antiochus III the Great had several successful victories against Persia and India. Back in the south, Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203-181 BC), the son of Philopator, became king of the south. So, Antiochus III, king of the north, took the opportunity to return again to make war with this new king of the south.

Daniel 11:14 NIV In those times many will rise against the king of the South. The violent men among your own people will rebel in fulfillment of the vision, but without success.

Philip V of Macedonia (king of the west) joined forces with Antiochus III, in the north against Ptolemy V in the south (Egypt). Also, many Jews joined forces with Antiochus III against Egypt. Thus, as the verse says, "many will rise against the king of the South." The verse is also saying that "violent men among your own people will rebel in fulfillment of the vision, but without success." The "men among your own people" are the Jews. They are the people of Daniel. This is talking about the rebellious Jews who revolted against Ptolemy V, joining with Antiochus III, bringing back provisions they took from Egyptian garrisons. This is recorded by the Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities*, 12.3.3). These Jews had hoped to bring about independence of Judah from control by Ptolemy V of Egypt. That's why the verse says, "in fulfillment of vision."

They probably believed that prophecy said they would be freed. But they did not succeed, as these verses of this prophecy states. Actually the campaign by Antiochus III against Egypt was quite successful. But then Judah became controlled by Antiochus III instead of Ptolemy V. They just jumped from one devil to another. Of course prophecy does say that Israel will be free. Israel is free today. But that won't last either. It's not until Christ returns that Israel is truly free.

Daniel 11:15 NIV Then the king of the North will come and build up siege ramps and will capture a fortified city. The forces of the South will be powerless to resist; even their best troops will not have the strength to stand.

So again, Egypt was ruling over Israel. Right at the beginning of the reign of Ptolemy V Epiphanes, Antiochus III the Great attacked military armies of Egypt

at Paneas, which is at the headwaters of the Jordan River, on the northern side of Israel. The Egyptian general there was named Scopas. This Egyptian general fled to the Mediterranean port of Sidon, a strongly fortified city, where he was forced to surrender. Verse 15 is talking about the siege ramps that were built up against this fortified city of Sidon. The verse also says that Egypt would be powerless to resist, even with their best troops. Egypt's choice armies commanded by Eropus, Menocles, and Damoxenus, were sent to help Scopas, but they were unable to stop Antiochus III, king of the north.

This was right at the beginning of the reign of Ptolemy V Ephiphanes, after the fourteen years since the battle at Raphia. In other words, verse 15 has further detail about the battle spoken of in verse 13. So, verse 14 is a kind of parenthesis that explains about the Jews joining in the conflict between the north and the south. As we saw in the study of verse 14, that parenthesis (verse 14) has a lot of meaning in the overall meaning of prophecy. Israel (the Church) will be victorious over Satan. But it has to be in God's power, not by our own power. We can't use one devil to defeat another, and still hope to be free.

Daniel 11:16 NIV The invader will do as he pleases; no one will be able to stand against him. He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land and will have the power to destroy it.

After Antiochus III, in the north, was victorious over Ptolemy V, in the south (Egypt), he sought to consolidate his control over Israel from which he had expelled the Egyptians. In the verse, "the Beautiful Land" is referring to Israel. Antiochus III was in full control of Israel by 197 BC. This is recorded by the Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities*, 12.2.2).

Daniel 11:17 NIV He will determine to come with the might of his entire kingdom and will make an alliance with the king of the South. And he will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom, but his plans will not succeed or help him.

Now, Antiochus III was not satisfied with his victory at Sidon, or in his more established control of Israel. Antiochus III wanted to control Egypt itself. The north wanted to control the south. But instead of using military power, Antiochus III arranged a peace treaty by giving his daughter, Cleopatra, in marriage to the young king Ptolemy V. He also promised a portion of land, including all of Judea, as a dowry. The plan was for him to influence this young king of Egypt through his daughter. That way, he would indirectly control Syria, Cilicia, Lycia, and Egypt through his daughter. That's why the verse says, "He will determine to come with

the might of his entire kingdom and will make an alliance with the king of the south." As the verse says, he gave his "daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom." But, as the prophecy also said, his plans would not succeed. Cleopatra loved her husband more than her father and ignored his schemes.

Daniel 11:18-19 NIV Then he will turn his attention to the coastlands and will take many of them, but a commander will put an end to his insolence and will turn his insolence back upon him. (19) After this, he will turn back toward the fortresses of his own country but will stumble and fall, to be seen no more.

When this scheme of Antiochus III failed, he turned his attention to conquering islands along the coast of Asia Minor in 197 BC and Greece in 192 BC. But these plans failed as well. In 190 BC, a Roman commander named Scipio Asiaticus defeated Antiochus III at Magnesia and put a stop to Antiochus' attacks to the west. Antiochus III was forced by Rome to give up all his land west of the Taurus Mountains. After this, in 188 BC, Antiochus III returned to his own land in shame. He died a year later. He died in 187 BC when he attempted to plunder the temple of Jupiter at Elymais in order to obtain some money that he needed for paying forced tribute, imposed by Rome. But he and his soldiers were killed by the locals at Elymais. So, as the verse says, he "stumbled and fell, to be seen no more." Antiochus III the Great had wanted to reunite Alexander's empire under his authority. He carried out the most vigorous military efforts of anyone since Alexander. But his dream of reestablishing Alexander's empire was never accomplished.

Daniel 11:20 NIV His successor will send out a tax collector to maintain the royal splendor. In a few years, however, he will be destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle.

The successor of Antiochus III the Great was his son Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 BC). The tax collector mentioned in this verse was Heliodorus. Rome was still requiring tribute that Seleucus IV did not have. So Seleucus IV was heavily taxing his people. In 2 Maccabees 3:4, we learn that Simon, a Benjamite, gave information to Seleucus IV about the treasures in the Jewish temple. Simon gave this information out of hatred for the high priest Onias III. Now Seleucus IV got back Syria and Judah. Syria and Judah had formally been given as a dowry by Antiochus III the Great to Cleopatra. When Seleucus IV got it back, he sent his tax collector Heliodorus to Jerusalem in order to plunder the temple, based on the information given to him by Simon the Benjamite. But "in a few years, however,

he [was] destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle." His reign lasted only 12 years. Heliodorus the tax collector, whom Seleucus IV had sent to plunder the temple in Jerusalem, was also the one who killed Seleucus IV. Heliodorus had Seleucus IV poisoned. The only son and heir, Demetrius I, took the throne.

Daniel 11:21 NIV He will be succeeded by a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue.

Demetrius I was the rightful heir. At the time, Demetrius I was very young. He actually became Demetrius I later on. But at the time, the throne was taken by a "contemptible person, who [had] not been given the honor of royalty." In other words, he did not have the legal right to the throne, but he got it anyway. This was the younger brother of Seleucus IV, named Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC). With the help of Eumenes, king of Pergamos, Antiochus IV Epiphanes immediately (175 BC) took the throne from Demetrius I. So for all practical purposes, Antiochus IV Epiphanes was the successor of Seleucus IV Philopator.

Daniel 11:22 NIV Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant will be destroyed.

Even though Antiochus IV Epiphanes was not the rightful heir to the throne, he was accepted because he was able to turn aside an invading army, perhaps the Egyptians. The next part of this verse says that both this army and a "prince of the covenant" would be destroyed. In fulfillment of this, Antiochus IV Epiphanes deposed Onias III, the high priest in Jerusalem. So this verse called the high priest a "prince of the covenant." Remember that Simon the Benjamite gave information to Seleucus IV about the treasures in the Jewish temple out of hatred for Onias III. As we shall see, Antiochus IV Epiphanes is the antichrist that is a fore-runner to the end-times antichrist (false prophet). This prophecy will jump from him to the end-times mid-east regional antichrist (false prophet).

Daniel 11:23 NIV After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully, and with only a few people he will rise to power.

Verse 23 is again referring to the way Antiochus IV got his power. With the help of Eumenes, king of Pergamos, Antiochus IV Epiphanes immediately (175 BC) took the throne from his nephew when his older brother Seleucus IV was poisoned. So the "agreement with him" was the agreement with Eumenes.

Daniel 11:24-25 NIV When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did. He will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers. He will plot the overthrow of fortresses but only for a time. (25) "With a large army he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him.

After Antiochus IV was established on his throne and had consolidated his kingdom, he waged war on Egypt in 170 BC. Antiochus advanced his army without meeting resistance all the way to the border of Egypt. There, he was met by the Egyptian army at Pelusium near the Nile Delta. He conquered as far as Memphis. Ptolemy Physcan (king of the south) attempted to withstand the attacks with a "large and very powerful army," but they were defeated by Antiochus IV. He shared his conquered lands with his followers. (The verse says, "He will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers.") (Also see 1 Maccabees 1:19)

His dominion over Egypt was something that had never been done before by any of his predecessors. In other words, he was closer to re-establishing Alexander the Great's kingdom. The verse says, "He will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did." The end-times antichrist (Mahdi) will do the same. Also, no one has ever ruled over every nation, tribe, people, and language of the world. But the end-times antichrist (global ruler) will rule over every nation, tribe, people, and language of the world (Revelation 13:7).

Daniel 11:26-27 NIV Those who eat from the king's provisions will try to destroy him; his army will be swept away, and many will fall in battle. [27] The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time.

Just as the end-times antichrist will be a popular politician, Antiochus IV was also more than just a military leader. After his victories in Egypt, Antiochus IV professed friendship with Ptolemy Physcan and Egypt. Even though Antiochus IV was the victor, he sat at the same table together with Ptolemy Physcan and talked peace. But both kings were lying to each other. Neither king had any intention of keeping the alliance. The same things will be happening in the end-times with the both end-times antichrists. "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 1 Thessalonians 5:3). The alliance was soon broken when Ptolemy Physcon made another alliance with his deposed brother Physcon to attack Antiochus' army. And so it has been going for all these years. People talk peace and safety, but it never lasts. Only when Christ is King of Kings will there be lasting world-wide peace. That's why this verse says, "but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time."

This verse is establishing these peace talks between these two evil kings as being the pattern for all of history until the antichrist establishes a false peace, and then there is Armageddon. With Satan in control of this world, this world cannot last more than one generation with the atomic bomb. The atomic bomb was invented right at the end of World War II. The whole world changed after World War II. The end-time generation is the baby-boom generation that was born right after World War II. "This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened" (NIV Matthew 24:34)

Daniel 11:28 NIV The king of the North will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country.

Antiochus IV returned to the north with "great wealth" from Egypt. But he had not conquered all of Egypt like he wanted. On his way back from the south to his home in the north, he passed through Judah. Antiochus IV set "his heart against the holy covenant." He took out his frustrations on the Jews. As mentioned earlier, Antiochus IV had deposed Onias III, the high priest. Verse 22 referred to this high priest as "a prince of the covenant." Antiochus IV had earlier deposed Onias III and replaced him with corrupt men who would take orders from Antiochus IV. The first false high priest was Jason. Then, in 172 BC, Menelaus bribed Antiochus IV for the position of high priest. So, when Antiochus IV returned from Egypt with "great wealth" he got the help of Menelaus, and entered the Jewish temple. Antiochus IV took the gold and silver dishes that were used for the sacrifices (2 Maccabees 5:15-21). But this was only the first desecration that Antiochus did against the temple.

In the end-times, it will be much the same. It's the false prophet antichrist (Mahdi) who desecrates the temple. The false prophet sets up a statue, probably on the temple mount, and requires the whole world to worship the statue. This is the abomination of desolation in the end-times. But the abomination of desolation done by Antiochus IV is a few verses down.

Daniel 11:29-30a NIV At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before. (30) Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart.

The Hebrew word used here for "western coastlands" is:

kit-tee', kit-tee-ee'

Patrial from an unused name denoting Cyprus (only in the plural); a Kittite or Cypriote; hence an islander in general, that is, the Greeks or Romans on the shores opposite Palestine:—Chittim, Kittim.

In other words, way back in 529 BC, Daniel had predicted all these events, including the fact that Rome would be able to oppose this king of kings. Two years after Antiochus IV had his partial victory in Egypt, he marched against Egypt again. But this time, in 168 BC, he was stopped by the Romans. The Romans sent ships and met him at Eleusis. The Roman ambassador Popilius Loenas met him with a decree from the Roman senate, forbidding him from attacking Egypt. Antiochus IV asked for time to consider. But the Roman ambassador drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus and demanded an answer before stepping out of the circle. To step out of the circle without agreeing to the decree would have been the equivalent to declaring war on Rome. Antiochus agreed to the demands of Rome and returned home.

Daniel 11:30b-32 NIV Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant. (31) His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. (32) With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.

Antiochus IV had taken his anger out on Judea when he had failed to completely conquer Egypt two years earlier. This time, the Romans completely stopped him, and had humiliated him. So, this time Antiochus IV was a real antichrist, and took out his anger like never before on God's people. Antiochus IV sent his general Apollonius with 22,000 soldiers to Jerusalem on a "peace mission." But they attacked Jerusalem on the Sabbath and killed 80,000 people. They took 40,000 prisoners, women and children, to be sold as slaves (2 Maccabees 5:5-14). This number was most of the inhabitants. They plundered and burned the city. Antiochus IV made it illegal to follow Judaism, including the religious festivals and

circumcision. Anyone caught doing so was put to death. Antiochus IV commanded that all copies of the Law be burned. In 167 BC, Antiochus IV erected an altar to Zeus on the altar of burnt offering in front of the temple. He had a pig sacrificed on the altar. (Pigs are the ultimate unclean animal and it would be major sacrilege to sacrifice one on the altar.)

The Jews were forced to sacrifice a pig on the altar every month, on the 25th day, in honor of Antiochus IV's birthday. This started with the 25th of the month of Kislev on the Jewish calendar. The Jews had victory over Antiochus IV exactly three years later, on Kislev 25. So, Kislev 25 became Hanukkah. But the 25th of the month was originally this antichrist's birthday. It's interesting that Christians celebrate the birthday of Christ on the 25th of December, which is about the same month as the Jewish month Kislev. But the 25th of December is not Christ's birthday. It's the birthday of a Pagan god. Is Kislev 25 and December 25 a coincidence? Antiochus IV offered great reward to any Jew who would worship Zeus, the god of Greece.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes identified himself with his god, in an attempt to make his religion the world standard religion. (1 Maccabees 1:41; 2 Maccabees 6:7). The false prophet (Mahdi) antichrist of the end times will do the same. He will try and force Islam on the world.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes erected a statue of Zeus in front of the temple in Jerusalem. This was the "abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand - standing in the holy place" (NIV Matthew 24:15). Jesus was teaching us to watch for the same thing to happen again. It will happen again. In Revelation 13:11-18, the false prophet erects a statue and forces all the world to worship it. The abomination of desolation is a statue on the temple mount.

These verses are quoted from the New American [Catholic] Bible:

1 Maccabees 1:54-63 On the fifteenth day of the month Chislev, in the year one hundred and forty-five [December, 167 BC], the king erected the horrible abomination upon the altar of holocausts, and in the surrounding cities of Judah they built pagan altars. (55) They also burnt incense at the doors of houses and in the streets. (56) Any scrolls of the law which they found they tore up and burnt. (57) Whoever was found with a scroll of the covenant, and whoever observed the law, was condemned to death by royal decree. (58) So they used their power against Israel, against those who were caught,

each month, in the cities. (59) On the twenty-fifth day of each month they sacrificed on the altar erected over the altar of holocausts. (60) Women who had their children circumcised were put to death, in keeping with the decree, (61) with the babies hung from their necks; their families also and those who had circumcised them were killed. (62) But many in Israel were determined and resolved in their hearts not to eat anything unclean; (63) they preferred to die rather than to be defiled with unclean food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. Terrible affliction was upon Israel.

Here is verse 32 of Daniel 11 again:

Daniel 11:32 NIV With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.

The abomination of desolation, on the temple mount, inspired the Maccabean revolt. Exactly three years later, to the very day, the temple was cleansed. The temple was rededicated by the Jewish leader Judas Maccabaeus. The book of Maccabees, in the Apocrypha, tells us all about their fight for freedom.

When Antiochus IV first took the throne from his nephew, he gave himself the name Epiphanes, which means "Illustrious One." In other words, he thought of himself as well known and very distinguished. But he was considered untrustworthy by the people and was nicknamed Epimanes which means "the Madman." Epimanes rhymes with Epiphanes. This "Madman" foolishly joked and had fun with the lowest class of people. He bathed with them in public baths, and he threw rocks at passersby.

Back in Daniel chapter 4, we learned about how Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a tree and then was given the mind of a beast for seven years. In other words, he went mad for seven years. Nebuchadnezzar was a forerunner of antichrist, but after the seven years he gave glory to God. So, he did not stay being an antichrist. Throughout Scripture, the wicked are spoken of as foolish and the righteous are spoken of as wise. But the foolish believe that they are wise. Antiochus IV believed he was well known and distinguished. But the people saw him as a "Madman." Just as Nebuchadnezzar was a madman for seven years, Antiochus IV Epiphanes reigned a short eleven years as a Madman. Antiochus IV Epiphanes is the antichrist that Jesus was speaking about when he said, "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet

Daniel - let the reader understand" (NIV Matthew 24:15). Antiochus IV Epiphanes set up that abomination of desolation to which Jesus was referring. The disciples would have understood this because they were Jews and they celebrated Hanukkah (John 10:22).

But we must watch for another madman who believes he is wise. As a matter of fact, the whole world will believe his is wise. There will be two madmen. The first madman will reign as the Mahdi over the middle-east region for seven years. The second madman will rule over the entire globe for 42 months. This madman will be revealed without a doubt (2 Thessalonians 2:3) when the first madman sets up the abomination that causes desolation, just as Antiochus IV set up the abomination that causes desolation. Nebuchadnezzar literally became a madman for seven years. Antiochus IV died literally insane in Persia in 164 BC.

Daniel 11:33-34 NIV Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. (34) When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who are not sincere will join them. (35) Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.

These verses are transitional between Antiochus IV Epiphania and the End-Times antichrist. Those who are wise are God's people, from that age until the end-times. The wise are seen by the world as foolish. But the wise are "refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end." We must be spotless to be ready for the time of the end. We must completely overcome sin. Understand that sin is blinding. Sin will bring you into foolishness. Those who continue to sin believe they are wise. They somehow believe they are saved from sin, even if they continue to sin. It's foolishness, but the foolish are blind to the truth. But the end "will still come at the appointed time."

16.2) Daniel 11:36 - 12:3: Unfulfilled Prophecy

This precisely accurate fulfilled prophecy of Daniel 11 now jumps into the future. Its accuracy will no doubt be just as precise.

Daniel 11:36-39 The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods; and he shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done. (37) Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all. (38) But in his place shall he honor the god of fortresses; and a god whom his fathers didn't know shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. (39) He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god: whoever acknowledges him he will increase with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for a price.

In chapter 8 of this book, we carefully examined Daniel 11:36-45. Verses 36 to 39 talk about the king who does as he pleases. This seems to be the man of lawlessness that Paul wrote about in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-6. Next, Daniel 11:40-45 seems to go back and talk about the king of the north and the king of the south. As discussed in chapter 8 of this book, these verses seem to be talking about three different kings.

Those who believe the passage is about two kings say that the king who does as he pleases is the king of the north. And that this is the antichrist. Those who believe the passage is about three kings usually say that the king who does as he pleases is the antichrist, while the king of the north and the king of the south are leaders of Islamic nations who destroy themselves. This allows for the antichrist to come on the scene with the Islamic nations no longer an issue.

The view of this author is there are two end-time antichrists for a total of three kings in the unfulfilled prophecy of Daniel 11. The king who does as he pleases is the first beast. He reigns over every nation, tribe, people, and language for 42 months. The king of the north is the false prophet (Mahdi) who will rule over the middle-east region of the world. And just like the fulfilled part of this prophecy, the king of the south corresponds with Egypt, who will fight with the king of the north.

Daniel 11:40-45 At the time of the end shall the king of the south contend with him; and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass through. (41) He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. (42) He shall stretch forth his hand also on the countries; and the land of Egypt shall not escape. (43) But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. (44) But news out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him; and he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to sweep away many. (45) He shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

The Bible, especially the Old Testament, is predominantly middle-east centric. Of these two antichrists, the false prophet is spoken of far more in the Old Testament than the world ruler. Both, however, are found in Daniel.

The false prophet will reign for the entire seven years. He is the prince of Daniel 7 who sets up the abomination of desolation in the middle of that week. The global ruler begins his global reign after the middle of the seven years, which is after the abomination of desolation. Daniel 11:35-45 can be viewed as being about the first half of the seven years. Then, Daniel 12:1 picks up with Michael taking a stand. This is the war in heaven and happens in the middle of the seven years. Then Daniel 12:1-2 talk about the great tribulation and the resurrection at the end of the seven years.

Daniel 12:1a "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.

Chapter 10 of this book is about the war in heaven and the abomination of desolation, which is in the middle of the seven years. Michael "takes a stand" and fights for the "children of your people." As in says in Revelation 12, Satan is thrown down to the earth. But "woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has gone down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time"

(Revelation 12:12). Right after this war, we have the abomination of desolation and great tribulation. This verse in Daniel refers to the great tribulation as “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.”

After the great tribulation comes the resurrection. I have moved the last sentence in verse 1 and paired it with verse 2. The phrase, “At that time” occurs at the start of verse 1 as well as at the start of this sentence. It’s a transitional phrase that indicates a new sub-topic. “At that time” indicates it’s the time of the end. It’s the next thing that happens at the time of the end. After the tribulation is the resurrection. It’s the next thing that happens.

The Hebrew word in this sentence for “delivered” is more often understood to mean “escape.” At the resurrection, we will “escape” from the grave. Those in the Lamb’s book of life will “escape.” Some will claim that those written in the book of life will be “delivered” from the great tribulation. And the unfortunate placement of this sentence with verse 1 would seem to suggest such. Also, the translation of the Hebrew word as “delivered” instead of “escape” also seems to suggest that we will “escape” from the great tribulation.

However, we know there are “tribulation saints” who are martyred during the great tribulation. They do not escape. Yet their names are in the book of life. Scripture does not teach that we are delivered from persecution and tribulation. But Scripture does teach we will escape from the grave at the resurrection.

Daniel 12:1b - 2 At that time your people shall be delivered [escape], everyone who shall be found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Chapter 12 of this book includes a discussion of this verse in a broader discussion of the resurrection. We learned about how important it is to interpret Scripture using progressive revelation. If you really want to understand how the author and his audience would have understood Scripture, you have to purposefully ignore all Scripture that was written later in time. Then, as you progress forward in what has been written, you interpret each passage in the context of what has already been written. Later Scripture can add additional information. And it can refine our understanding of what was previously written. But it cannot dramatically change what came before to the extent that the original author and his audience would have disagreed.

This verse in Daniel was written in the context of Isaiah 26. Both verses refer to those who “dwell in the dust” (Isaiah 26:19) of the earth. Both verses refer to

the dead as being asleep and awakening. And in that context, Isaiah 26 teaches that not everyone will be resurrected. Isaiah 26:14 says the wicked will not be resurrected.

Isaiah 26:14 They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise; to that end you have visited them with destruction and wiped out all remembrance of them.

Daniel 12:2 says “many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” “Many” means not everyone. This verse should be interpreted in this context of Isaiah 26. Not everyone will be resurrected. But of those who are resurrected, some will be resurrected to everlasting life. Others will be resurrected to shame. And of those resurrected to shame, some will fall into everlasting contempt.

In chapter 12 of this book we proceed to the New Testament, specifically to John 5, Acts 24:15, and Revelation 20. We did a detailed study of the resurrection using this method of progressive revelation. The bottom line is that with progressive revelation, the resurrection is not at all understood to be like we have been traditionally taught.

Is it possible that this generation, for the first time since Daniel, is now able to understand what Daniel could not understand? That’s exactly what Daniel was told. As we will see in the next section, the understanding of this vision was sealed until the time of the end. And this vision includes the resurrection. There is one final verse of unfulfilled prophecy that we need to look at before we move on into this discussion about the sealing of the vision and its understanding. It’s about Christ’s millennial reign.

Daniel 12:3 ESV And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

The wise are those who are raised to everlasting life. The foolish are raised, but they are still under judgment. The wicked will not be resurrected. The wise will “shine like the brightness of the sky above.” They will reign with Christ. During the Messianic age to come, the wise will “turn many to righteousness.” This means that the foolish will still have the opportunity for eternal life by living under the reign of the wise. The foolish will still have the opportunity to learn righteousness. The stars are symbolic of the angels. The wise will have spiritual bodies, like the angels who live in the sky (heavens) above.

16.3) Daniel 12:4 - 12:13: When Will All This Happen?

Daniel 12:3 is about the millennial reign of Christ. This verse concludes the prophecy of future events. But it's not the end of the vision. The vision continues with a discussion about the most obvious question that would arise when given this fantastic vision of the future. When will all this happen? The fantastic climax would have to be the resurrection itself. But we must remember that "all these things" must include the millennial reign of Christ in verse 3. Now let's go through the text verse by verse.

Daniel 12:4 But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run back and forth, and knowledge shall be increased."

The most common interpretation of verse 4 is that in the end times, knowledge and travel will increase. It's true that knowledge has exploded in this generation. And this generation has seen world travel become very routine. But in context, the verse may actually be talking about an increase in the understanding of Bible prophecy, including an understanding about this vision. Daniel is told to "shut up the words," and to "seal the book, even to the time of the end." In other words, understanding of the words of this vision must wait on the time of the end. Until that time, the book is "sealed." This would be like a scroll (book) that is rolled up and wax seals are placed on the scroll so that it should not be opened except by someone authorized to do so. Until that time, the words are locked up inside the scroll. Of course people have been reading the words of this vision since that time. But the understanding of the vision has been sealed.

The verse also says that many will "run back and forth." In context, is this really talking about an increase in travel? Consider these other verses which have same phrase.

2 Chronicles 16:9 For the eyes of Yahweh run back and forth throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein you have done foolishly; for from henceforth you shall have wars.

Jeremiah 5:1 Run you back and forth through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places of it, if you can find a man, if there are any who does justly, who seeks truth; and I will pardon her.

Amos 8:12 They will wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they will run back and forth to seek the word of Yahweh, and will not find it.

As you can tell from these verses, to “run to and fro” (KJV) is a Hebrew phrase that means to search for knowledge. Our verse in Daniel 12:4 says, “Many shall run back and forth, and knowledge shall be increased.” In other words, the running to and fro is the effort that it takes to increase knowledge. It can be thought of as going to and fro in the Scriptures looking for answers. And in the context of this verse, the knowledge that is increased, in the end times, is an understanding about the word of God in the vision itself. In other words, in the end times, the scroll will be understood. (See the scroll with seven seals Revelation 5 and 6. The Lamb of God is the only one worthy to break the seals and open the scroll.) But in Daniel’s time, the words of the scroll were sealed and could not be understood.

Of course, as time came and went, much of this vision has become understandable. The first part of this prophecy was fulfilled starting with the three kings that came after Cyrus. The vision was given in the third year of Cyrus. Thus, as the events were fulfilled over time I’m sure they were understood. The KJV and other translations include an assumed word in verse 4. The words are sealed “even” until the time of the end. I would bet that the KJV translators included this word “even” because they understood that much of the vision has already been fulfilled. But the end time aspect of this vision is not yet fulfilled. So only the end time generation will fully understand this vision. But I believe this is the end time generation. I believe we can almost completely understand the vision today.

But there is a question that is asked and answered in the vision, of which the answer is difficult to understand. It’s the most obvious question to ask given the fantastic and astounding nature of the resurrection. How long will it be before all these things are fulfilled? In other words, when will all this happen? The question is asked by an angel who stands on the side of a river.

Daniel 12:5-6 Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, there stood other two, the one on the brink of the river on this side, and the other on the brink of the river on that side. (6) One said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?

Matthew 24:3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? What is the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Matthew 24:15 "When, therefore, you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

"How long shall it be until the end of these wonders?" In other words, "When will all this happen?" The disciples asked the same question. And Jesus gave a very similar answer. Jesus said, "When you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, let the reader understand." Understand what? The reader of what? It can't be the reader of Jesus because he was speaking, not writing. And it can't be the reader of Matthew because Jesus said the words, not Matthew. Some have claimed that Matthew inserted these words as a commentary. But Mark said the exact same thing. "Let the reader understand" is clearly the words of Jesus. He is saying the reader of Daniel should understand, at least by the time of the abomination of desolation. But what in Daniel should we understand? Is this not a very strong hint that we need to read Daniel, especially where it talks about the abomination, and let Daniel be the background context for the words of Jesus? What in Daniel are we to understand at the time of the abomination? Would it not be the answer to the very same question that was just asked by the disciples?

"What is the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3) The answer was given in Daniel, but Daniel didn't understand the answer. Jesus is saying that when we see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, that we will understand the answer to the very same question. The question was answered in Daniel. But the reader of Daniel did not understand the answer even at the time of Christ.

This passage in Daniel also speaks about the abomination of desolation. It's given as a sign in Daniel. The same sign is given by Jesus, when the disciples asked the very same question. Is this a coincidence? We must use Daniel 12 as a context for the interpretation of Matthew 24. Without understanding of Old Testament context, the New Testament can be grossly misunderstood. Matthew 24 is no exception. These words of Jesus can be badly misinterpreted when taken out of the stated Old Testament context.

Matthew 24:33-36 Even so you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. (34) Most certainly I tell you, this generation will not pass away, until all these things are accomplished. (35) Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. (36) But no one knows of that day and hour, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

In other words, at the time of Christ, no man knew the day or the time when Christ would return. The answer to this question was given in Daniel. However, the words were sealed until the time of the end. The wicked will not understand. But the wise will understand at the time of the end (Daniel 12:10). Now that we are in the time of the end, we can understand the answer to the question which was asked and answered in Daniel.

When Matthew 24 is read outside the context of Daniel 12, the phrase “no man knows the day or the hour” is misinterpreted. The common understanding is that no man will ever know the day or the hour until it happens. But that is a different verb tense. Jesus was saying that know man knew the day or hour at that time. But when we start to see the signs, we can know the day and time of Christ’s return and the resurrection.

Matthew 24:31-36 He will send out his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together his chosen ones from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. (32) “Now from the fig tree learn this parable. When its branch has now become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near. (33) Even so you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. (34) Most certainly I tell you, this generation will not pass away, until all these things are accomplished. (35) Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. (36) But no one knows of that day and hour, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

At the time of Christ, not even the angel knew the day. But learn the lesson of the fig tree, which is Israel. When Israel becomes a nation again, then we know the resurrection is right at the door. As a matter of fact, the generation that is born when Israel is born as a nation will also see the resurrection. That will be the end time generation. They will be able to know the day and time of the resurrection.

When these words of Jesus are interpreted outside the context of Daniel 12, then it can be incorrectly said that no man will ever know day before it happens. But as we will see from Daniel 12:11, the resurrection will be 1290 days after the abomination. According to Daniel’s vision, the wicked will not understand the answer to the question. On the other hand, the wise generation, at the time of the end, will understand the answer to the question asked by both the angel in Daniel’s vision and by the disciples. Christians who take this out of the context of Daniel

12 wind up unknowingly putting themselves into the category of the wicked by saying they will not know the day or the hour.

Why does Jesus include the angels in heaven as not knowing the day or the hour (verse 36 above)? In Daniel, it was an angel who asked the question. The more one connects the dots between these two passages, the more one realizes that Jesus assumed his audience (the disciples) to be familiar with Daniel 12.

The answer to the question of when will the resurrection occur, and when Christ will return, as given in Daniel is:

Daniel 12:7 ESV And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished.

A “time, times, and half a time” is usually translated as 3 ½ years. But this does not answer the question. I believe each “time” is a thousand years. Early Christians and early Jews both believed that from Adam there would be seven thousand years. It’s a week of millennia. “With the Lord, a thousand years is as a day and a day is as a thousand years.” The book of Jubilees has a very similar statement where there is no doubt that God’s days are literally a thousand years.

Let’s go back and review the question itself. “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” It’s not asking how long the vision would last. It’s asking how much time would elapse, from the time of the vision, until everything in the vision has been fulfilled. Thus, in order to understand the answer, we must determine when the vision itself was given. The answer is going to give us the amount of time from Daniel’s vision until everything in the vision is accomplished. And the vision includes the millennial reign of Christ.

So from the time of this vision, it would be three and a half millennia until all these wonders are fulfilled. All these wonders, as stated in the text, includes the wise teaching righteousness during the millennial reign of Christ. So this vision was basically in the middle of the millennial week. But not exactly in the middle. You can’t just divide it by two.

The answer to the question also said, “When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.” (NIV translation). The Hebrew word for “power” occurs initially in Scripture in Genesis at the Garden of

Eden. Eve reached out and grasped the fruit. This word translated “power” is the same Hebrew word and means closed fist. We also reach out and grasp sin. But this “power” must be overcome in all the holy people that God is going to save. This teaching about holiness and righteousness continues throughout the millennium. At the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ, the “power” of the holy people to sin will finally be broken.

The term “time, times, and half a time” is generally understood to be one for time (singular), two for times (plural), and half a time. So we are talking about one millennium, two millennium, and half a millennium. Reverse the order and you have half a millennium from the middle of the week until Christ, followed by two millennia from Christ’s first coming until his second coming, followed by Christ’s millennial reign. This is the answer to the question.

Daniel chapters 2:4 through 7:28 was written in Aramaic. This vision at the end of Daniel was written in Hebrew. In Daniel 7, “time, times and half a time” actually does refer to 3 ½ years. The two occurrence of “time, times, and half a time” actually use different words for “time.” Strong’s definition for the word in Daniel 7:25 is, “a set time, technically a year.” Strong’s definition for the word in Daniel 12:7 includes, “a fixed time or season.” Thus, the word for ‘time’ in Daniel 12 can easily be more of an age than a year.

In Daniel 12:7 it’s talking about half the millennial week. In Daniel 7:25 it’s talking about half a week of years. But we can take a hint from this that there is a parallelism between the week of the great tribulation and the millennial week. Just as the millennial week is not divided exactly in the middle, I don’t believe the week of the great tribulation is divided exactly in the middle.

Daniel 12:8-10 I heard, but I didn't understand: then said I, my lord, what shall be the issue of these things? (9) He said, Go your way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. (10) Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand.

The fulfilled portion of this vision was understood as the events unfolded. The end-times portion of this vision can be understood only by the end-times generation. We are that generation. Those who are wise in this generation can understand what Daniel was not able to understand. But the wicked will continue to be wicked. They will not be expecting Christ to return. They will not be looking

for the signs of his return. And for many, when the New Jerusalem does appear, they will not understand the signs enough to know that it really is the appearance of Jesus Christ.

Daniel 12:11-12 From the time that the continual *burnt offering* shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days. (12) Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred thirty-five days.

Daniel 12:11 tells us that from the abomination is 1290 days. 1290 days until what? By context of Daniel 12:2, which is obviously the climax of the vision, it's 1290 days from the abomination to the resurrection. Then we are told that those who wait for the 1335 days are blessed.

What is going on here? Those who are resurrected do not have to wait. They don't experience time. They "sleep on the dust of the earth," according to verse 2. But those who wait until the end of the 1335 days must be alive because they have to wait. They have to go through the great tribulation. And that tribulation (persecution) will bring about holiness. So they are blessed with holiness. The difference between the 1335 days and the 1290 days is 45 days. We can conclude from this that the rapture (for those who are alive) is 45 days after the resurrection. I believe this is where Paul gets that fact that 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" (2 Thessalonians 4:16-17). In other words, the dead in Christ will rise 45 days before the rapture.

Day 1	Days 2-1289	Day 1290	Days 1291-1334	Day 1335	
Abomination of Desolation	Reign of the Antichrist	Resurrection on the Last Day	Six Bowls of Wrath	The Rapture	The Wedding Banquet

Some will question why the six bowls of wrath are after the resurrection. Many have assumed the six bowls of wrath are simply scattered throughout the second half of the seven years. However, Jesus described the time of the wrath as being a time of sudden destruction.

Luke 17:26-32 As it happened in the days of Noah, even so will it be also in the days of the Son of Man. (27) They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ship, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. (28) Likewise, even as it happened in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; (29) but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from the sky, and destroyed them all. (30) It will be the same way in the day that the Son of Man is revealed. (31) In that day, he who will be on the housetop, and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away. Let him who is in the field likewise not turn back. (32) Remember Lot's wife!

If the bowls of wrath will be happening all during the second half of the seven years, then it doesn't seem like a time where people are "eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." The wrath of God comes suddenly at a time when people are not expecting it to happen. It's not spread out over three and a half years. Also, consider the resurrection and wrath verse in Isaiah 26.

Isaiah 26:17-21 Like a pregnant woman who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, so were we because of you, O LORD; (18) we were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind. We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen. (19) Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead. (20) Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by. (21) For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.

Here we see that the wrath of God is after the resurrection. God's people are told to "hide yourselves" after the resurrection and during the time of the wrath. So it's

after the 1290 days. I believe the six bowls of wrath are during the 45 days between the 1290 and the 1335. Then comes the rapture followed by the wedding banquet. Those resurrected in the first resurrection with spiritual bodies would not be hurt by God's wrath. They will have spiritual bodies.

But what about the first half of the seven years? We know that the two witnesses will prophesy for 1260 days (Revelation 11). After that, they will be killed and lie dead in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 ½ days. Then they will be resurrected. Why 3 ½ days? Why not simply 3 days or 4 days? In Scripture, I think it's obvious that 3 ½ days is half of seven days. We can conclude that after the two witnesses are resurrected, the antichrist will set up the abomination of desolation and the 1290 days will unfold after that.

So I think that what we have is 1260 days, followed by 7 days, followed by 1290 days. Add this up and you get 2557 days. 365.25 days per year times 7 years is 2556.75 days. Round up for leap year and you get 2557 days. In other words, 1260 days, 7 days, and 1290 days is exactly seven years.

Daniel 12:13 But go you your way until the end be; for you shall rest, and shall stand in your lot, at the end of the days.

Daniel rested in the grave. He will be raised up at the end of days, at the time of the resurrection. As it says in verse 2, "those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." They are not in heaven. They are in the dust of the earth. Daniel will continue to sleep until the time of the resurrection. Of course, the natural question is, when will it happen? Only the wise know the day and the time when the resurrection will take place. We are part of the end-times generation. So we can calculate the day and the time. We can be wrong. But the closer we get the more sure we can be of our calculations. And when we see the abomination of desolation, we will know that it's 1290 days later.

Back at the end of section 15.12, we concluded that the seventy weeks of Daniel comes to an end in 2016. The seven-year great tribulation is an additional week of the covenant, which follows the seventy weeks. This computation assumes 2016 and attempts to confirm that date by seeing where it takes us.

We will take a look at the millennial week and compare it with the seven-year week of the covenant. Both are divided in half with a "time, times, and half a time" being one of the halves. But the division is not exactly in the middle. Based on 2016 we will show how the millennial week is divided, and compute this back to the vision in Daniel 12, where Daniel was told how long it would be until all these wonders are fulfilled.

Calculations:

There are 1290 days from the abomination of desolation to the resurrection. Before the 1290 days, the two witnesses prophesy for 1260 days. After these 1260 days, they are killed and lie dead in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 ½ days. Then they come back to life and go up to heaven. Would this make the antichrist mad? Perhaps he sets up the abomination of desolation in response to this event. Why the half-day? Scripture usually gives a whole number of days. This would seem to be half of 7 days. 1260 day, plus 7, plus 1290 days is 2557 days. Seven years is 365.25 days times 7 which is 2556.75 days. Round up for leap year and we get 2557 days. In other words, the seven years is divided in the middle by a seven-day period. But the division is not exactly in the middle. It's in the midst of the seven-years.

We have been saying that the millennial reign of Christ starts with the seven-year reign of the false prophet. The seven years is the first seven years of the millennium. Also, we are working with the assumption that this seventh millennium begins in 2016. Let's work with these two assumptions and see if what kind of confirmation we can get.

My interpretation of the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 is based on the decree of Cyrus as the start of the 62 weeks. From the decree of Cyrus until the birth of Christ is 62 weeks of years, which is 434 years. I also believe the birth of Christ was about 3 BC. This would put the decree of Cyrus as 437 BC. (I do not accept the traditional conversions of Bible king-dates to calendar dates.)

Let's look at a calendar where the year zero is the time of Adam. We can call this the calendar of Adam. The sevens in Scripture are often divided into a four-two-one pattern. Four days God created the heavens and the earth. So four is the number for the heavens and the earth. Two days God created abundant life. Two is the number of life. One day God rested. It's the Sabbath. Christ reigns during the Sabbath of this millennial week as "Lord of the Sabbath." We can also find this four-two-one pattern in the seals, trumpets, and bowls of Revelation.

We are assuming that the Sabbath millennium begins in 2016 AD. And we are going to divide the millennial week into three parts according to a ratio of 1290-to-7-to-1260. In other words, the first half of the millennial week corresponds to the 1290 days the antichrist reigns. The second half of the millennial week corresponds to the 1260 days the two witnesses prophesy.

So what year of Adam is 2016 AD? The start of the seventh millennium would be the year 6000 of Adam. The first coming of Christ would mark the boundary between the four millennial days and the two millennial days.

2016 AD = 6000 of Adam.

0016 AD = 4000 of Adam (Christ is 19 years old.)

4000 – 16 is 3984. If we add 3984 to a Gregorian date, we get the year of Adam.

The decree of Cyrus is 437 BC or -436 AD (There is no year zero).

This is based on Christ's birth being 3 BC and the 62 weeks of Daniel 9.

So the decree of Cyrus would be $3984 - 436 = 3548$ of Adam.

The decree of Cyrus was given in the first year of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1).

This vision, and its question, took place on the third year of Cyrus (Daniel 10:1).

So we need to add 2 years to get the date of this vision.

The answer to the question was that it was a “time, times, and half a time” from the time of the question until everything in the vision is fulfilled.

3548 of Adam + 2 years = 3550 of Adam for the date of this vision.

Now we need to map the seven years of the tribulation with the millennial week. The seven years of tribulation is divided into 1260 days plus 7 days plus 1290 days for a total of 2557 days. The 7000 years is divided into 2557 “big-days.”

How many years would each “big-day” of this millennial week be?

$7000 \text{ years} / 2557 \text{ big-days}$ is $2.73758 \text{ years/big-day}$. In other words, we are thinking of 2.73758 years as being a big-day. After 2557 of these big-days, we have a millennial week.

Now, let's see how many big-days this vision would be from the start of the seven years of the tribulation, if the seven years were mapped onto the 7000 years from Adam.

$3550 \text{ years of Adam} / 2.73758 \text{ years/big-day} = 1296.764 \text{ big-days}$.

The seven years was divided into $1260 + 7 + 1290$ days. We flip it around to be $(1290 + 7) + 1260$ days. We are comparing 1296.764 big-days with 1297 days.

The first half of the seven years is 1260 days, which is the time of the prophecy of the two witnesses. So it's the good half of the seven years.

The second half of the seven years is 1297 days, which is the bad half. When the two witnesses are killed, the world goes down-hill from there.

The first half of the millennial week is the bad half. It's represented by 1297 big-days. It begins with the fall of Adam.

During the first half, most of the world had very little revelation about God.

The second half of the millennial week is represented by the 1260 big-days. It's the good half of the millennial week.

So from the time of the vision, there would be a “time, times, and half a time” (1260 big-days) until the fulfillment of all these things.

Part Three

Revelation from the Islamic Antichrist Perspective

It's not a good idea to dive into Revelation without first understanding Daniel. But now that we have studied Daniel, we can proceed into Revelation. Revelation has more Old Testament allusions than any other New Testament book. Most scholars know about these references to the Old Testament. But every traditional interpretation of Revelation chooses to ignore this Old Testament context. Revelation is packed full of symbols. And most of the symbols can be found in the Old Testament. I believe that no interpretation of Revelation is valid without bringing the meaning of these Old Testament symbols into Revelation. We should not just guess at what a symbol might mean. Let's let Scripture interpret Scripture.

Revelation also has a theme. Each of the seven letters speaks of a reward that is given to those who overcome sin. Then, every part of Revelation, the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls of wrath, all contribute to this theme. The Church is not ready for Christ to return. The Church must overcome all our sinful habits before we are ready to reign with Christ over the nations. Revelation, and the great tribulation is all about what it takes for the Bride to become ready for the wedding banquet. This interpretation of Revelation, therefore, is in harmony with the New Wine System, which says that we must complete our journey of sanctification before we can be glorified with celestial bodies.

This view of Revelation is also from the Islamic antichrist perspective. The legs of iron in Daniel 2 were argued to be the Islamic Caliphate instead of the Roman Empire. This view of Revelation picks up on that idea. There are several riddles in Revelation. Of the seven heads, five have fallen, one is, and one is to come. The beast once was, now is not, but will come again. The answers to these riddles begin to make a lot of sense when the Islamic Caliphate is recognized as being the seventh head. You will find that this interpretation of Revelation brings clarity to every riddle and symbol.

Chapter 17

Introduction to Revelation

Revelation is packed full of symbols that can be found in the Old Testament. How often is the Old Testament used to interpret the meaning of these symbols? There are four traditional interpretations of Revelation: historicist, preterist, idealist (spiritualist), and dispensational futurist.

The historicist view tries to equate the various seals, trumpets, and bowls of wrath with historical events that have occurred since the time of the apostles until the end of the age. History is used to interpret the meaning. The Old Testament is not used. The seven letters to the seven churches in Revelation 1-3 are usually interpreted as representing seven periods in church history. The preterist view takes a similar approach but limits the historical events to those of 70 AD, or sometimes as late as 400 AD. The Old Testament is again not used as the primary motivation for interpretation.

The idealist view does not believe that Revelation speaks about specific events. Revelation is seen as a description of the conflict between good and evil in all generations. Scholars agree that Revelation is packed full of Old Testament allusions. But most scholars, especially those with historicist, preterist, or idealist views, do not believe that the Old Testament should be used in its interpretation. They simply consider it to be the language of which John was familiar.

The dispensational futurist view reads Revelation chronologically and interprets the seals, trumpets, and bowls more literally. These are future events that occur after the pre-tribulation rapture. (The dispensationalists believe in the pre-tribulation rapture.) Since it is assumed that the antichrist will be revealed after the rapture, they assume that the first seal, a man riding on a white horse, is the revealing of the antichrist. With the exception of the beast from Daniel 7, dispensationalists do not generally use the Old Testament all that much either.

All four views have this one big thing in common. None of them allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. Any valid interpretation of Revelation must show how all the symbols that come from the Old Testament fit into the interpretation. And the Old Testament must be used to obtain the meaning of these symbols.

Revelation also has a theme. The theme of Revelation can be found in the letters to the seven churches. Most people seem to look at chapters 4 onward as being independent and unconnected to chapters 1-3. Chapters 1-3 establish the

theme of Revelation. And chapter 22 supports this central theme in conclusion. The theme is that the Bride must make herself ready (Revelation 19:7) for Christ to return. Every single one of the seven letters speaks about the need to overcome sin in order to inherit the kingdom. Each of these letters also speak about knowing what the Spirit is saying to the churches. By context, the Spirit is teaching us to be holy. That's what happens when you are filled with the Holy Spirit. The book of Revelation has a theme of holiness. The theme is saying that Christ will come again, but great tribulation (Revelation 7:14) must come first, because the Bride must make herself ready for Christ to return. Getting ready is all about holiness. It's about overcoming all the sinful habits in our lives. This is also the theme of Matthew 24, which is to watch and be ready for Christ to return, but that great tribulation comes first. Any valid interpretation of Revelation must show how each part of Revelation supports and builds upon this theme.

Revelation 1:3 NIV 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 not only has a theme, it also has a personal reason given for its reading. The first three verses of Revelation give the reason for the reading of Revelation. Revelation 1:3 says that if we read Revelation, and take to heart what is written in it, we will be blessed. No other book of the Bible offers a blessing for reading the book, and taking to heart what is written. The reason given for the blessing is that the time is near. So, every generation is to believe that Christ can return in their lifetime, but that great tribulation will come first. This forces every Christian of every generation to ask the question, "Am I willing to die for Christ?" Thus, Revelation is the only book in the Bible that is really about martyrdom. When we take Revelation seriously, and when we see Revelation as speaking about our own personal futures, that humbling experience gives us a blessing of holiness.

In the context of the coming great tribulation, Jesus said, "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22, 24:13, Mark 13:13). Jesus was always warning about the future great tribulation. If one does not believe that great tribulation is coming, it nullifies much of what Jesus told us. We are to take up our crosses and follow Christ (Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23). In other words, Jesus taught the very same theme as Revelation. When great tribulation is not expected, one tends to miss the very personal and real meaning of what Jesus requires of us. Those who do not take up their cross are not worthy of Christ (Matthew 10:38). So anyone whose theology or personal beliefs is such that it avoids the possibility of the great tribulation and martyrdom is probably not a true

disciple of Christ. The theme of Revelation is to be ready for Christ to return, which means to have overcome all sinful habits and to be ready for martyrdom. Overcoming all sinful habits is the only way to be ready for martyrdom. Those who emotionally cling to the pre-tribulation rapture are probably not ready for martyrdom. This is the blessing of reading Revelation, and taking it to heart. Any valid interpretation of Revelation must be in harmony with its blessing. (See Appendix A for the "Problems with the Pre-tribulation Rapture.")

But if, like the dispensationalists, we say we will skip over great tribulation we destroy this blessing. If we say the great tribulation continues throughout the church age, we destroy this blessing. If we say that Revelation is not a literal part of our personal futures, like the preterist and spiritualist interpretations, then we destroy this blessing. Or if we say the scope of the great tribulation is a middle-east local domain, and we don't live in the middle-east, then we destroy the blessing that is promised in Revelation 1:3. All these are more popular views of Revelation that miss out on what Jesus really meant by, "Take up your cross and follow me."

17.1) Peter's Martyrdom

Martyrdom is an important aspect of the theme of Revelation. The fifth seal, which is about the souls under the altar, is about martyrdom. Revelation 12:11 says, "They overcame him because of the Lamb's blood, and because of the word of their testimony. They didn't love their life, even to death." Revelation 13:7 talks about the antichrist making war against the saints and overcoming them. Then verse 13:10 talks about the saints going into captivity and being killed by the sword. The verse says, "This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints" (NIV). Revelation 17:6 speaks of the woman, "drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus." Revelation 20:4 speaks about the "souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God."

We overcome sin by doing the works of the Father. This brings us up in maturity to the point of truly being willing to die for Christ. Many believe they would die for Christ. But like Peter, when put to the test, they would find that sin will creep in and cause us to lie and deny Christ. Since Revelation is all about overcoming all our sinful habits, to the point of being willing to die for Christ, it would be fitting to go back and look at Peter's story. We need to look at what it took for Peter to mature to the point of becoming a martyr for Christ.

During the Lord's Supper the evening before the crucifixion, Jesus went around the room and washed the disciples' feet. Peter was very reluctant to have his Lord wash his feet.

John 13:6-9 Then he came to Simon Peter. He said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" (7) Jesus answered him, "You don't know what I am doing now, but you will understand later." (8) Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me." (9) Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus was teaching Peter and the other disciples a lesson that they would not understand until after the resurrection. Jesus said, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me." Why was this lesson so important that Peter could not be a true disciple of Jesus unless he learned it? How many people today have also not learned this lesson or taken it to heart, yet consider themselves disciples of Jesus?

Salvation is a free gift, received by grace alone. But discipleship requires lots of work. We can be saved from death, which is to be resurrected to see the kingdom, as a free gift. But then there is the possibility of a second death (Rev. 20:6, 20:14, and 21:8). Those who inherit the kingdom, however, also inherit eternal life. They have worked to overcome sin, and are excluded from the possibility of a second death (Rev. 2:11). Jesus told his disciples, who already believed in him, to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matt. 6:33, Luke 12:31). Those who inherit the kingdom also inherit eternal life. How do we seek the kingdom? We must be a servant and do the works the Father has given for us. We must find our calling and devote our lives to serving Christ.

John 13:12-17 So when he had washed their feet, put his outer garment back on, and sat down again, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" (13) You call me, 'Teacher' and 'Lord.' You say so correctly, for so I am. (14) If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. (16) Most certainly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his lord, neither one who is sent greater than he who sent him. (17) If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

The difference between simply being saved at the resurrection and inheriting the kingdom and eternal life is all about one's maturity in Christ. We must walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6). In the kingdom of heaven, the last shall be first, and the first shall be last (Matthew 19:29-30, 20:16).

Mark 9:35 He sat down, and called the twelve; and he said to them, "If any man wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all."

The wise are servants. Those who will reign as kings and priests in the age to come must first develop a servant's heart in this age. Being a minister for Christ is not about building big churches. It's about loving others and reflecting that love in one's actions. Jesus continues to teach at the Last Supper:

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, just like I have loved you; that you also love one another. (35) By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Notice the condition given in order to become Christ's disciple? We must love one another. Christians can easily become caught up in the things of this world, and their love grows cold. They are still saved in spite of this. But without the supernatural love from Christ being carried out in their life, they won't be resurrected as one of Christ's disciples.

Did Peter possess the love for Christ that is necessary to be one of Christ's disciples at this time?

John 13:37-38 Peter said to him, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." (38) Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for me? Most certainly I tell you, the rooster won't crow until you have denied me three times.

Peter believed that he loved Christ enough to die for him. But as we find out later, Peter had not yet developed the maturity in Christ that is needed in order to be a leader. Everyone who is to be a priest and king in the millennium must possess the maturity and love of Christ in order to be one of Christ's leaders. To be resurrected with a spiritual body, we must be willing and ready to die for Christ.

Matthew 10:37-39 He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me isn't worthy of me. (38) He who doesn't take his cross and

follow after me, isn't worthy of me. (39) He who seeks his life will lose it; and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

Peter believed he was ready to die for Christ, but Jesus knew that Peter was not yet ready to sacrifice his life. Of course later we find that Peter, when put to the test, denied that he even knew Jesus.

This failure really tore at Peter's heart. The next time he was in Jesus' presence was after the resurrection. At their next meeting Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Read this way, as given in most translations, Jesus comes across as being a real jerk. When Peter is at his lowest, Jesus keeps asking Peter if he loves him more than the others. Peter keeps saying yes, but Jesus keeps asking until the point where Peter is grieved because Jesus asked a third time. Some try to apologize for Jesus by pointing out that Peter had denied Jesus three times, so Jesus was asking three times. Yet this still makes Jesus out to be a jerk. In the Greek, however, something entirely different is happening.

In ancient Greek, there are three different words for 'love.' Agape love is unconditional love. Philo love is brotherly love. When Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me," these two types of love were being used in the conversation. In this translation, "affection" is used for philo love and "love" for agape love. With this distinction being made in this translation, you can get the idea of what was really being said.

John 21:14-17 This is now the third time that Jesus was revealed to his disciples, after he had risen from the dead. (15) So when they had eaten their breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." (16) He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." (17) He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you have affection for me?" Peter was grieved because he asked him the third time, "Do you have affection for me?" He said to him, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I have affection for you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

Peter knew that he had failed the test. He had denied Christ because he was afraid for his life. To Peter's credit, he displayed honesty in this conversation with Christ. His love for Jesus was not unconditional, and this realization pained him greatly. Peter's grief over Jesus' repetition of this question is a completely different type of emotion than it would appear to be when read in a translation without the two different types of love. (Most translations do not make this distinction.) Peter was honest in his statement, "Lord, you know everything," and in his lack of unconditional love.

Was Jesus chastising Peter for his lack of love? No, Jesus was gently restoring Peter, and gently revealing the way to bring his love from philo "affection" to agape love.

The way to increase our love for God is to increase our love for our neighbor. When Christ said, "feed my sheep," he was not talking about Peter becoming the pastor of his church. He wanted Peter to adopt a servant's heart toward anyone in need. "Feed my sheep" was a command to exercise the Spiritual gifts that God has given us in love for one another. As our love for Christ increases, our love for our neighbor increases. Consequently, as our love for our neighbor increases, our love for Christ increases.

In the very next verse, Jesus tells Peter that in the future he will love Christ unconditionally, and was going to die for Him in his old age. Normally this is not something that would brighten one's day. But in Peter's case, it was exactly what he needed to hear.

John 21:18-19 Most certainly I tell you, when you were young, you dressed yourself, and walked where you wanted to. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you, and carry you where you don't want to go." (19) Now he said this, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. When he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

This is an example of a servant's heart, and shows the way to be a true disciple of Christ. No man is greater than his master. Because Christ had only a servant's heart, His true disciples must only have a servant's heart. This love requires total devotion to Christ no matter the cost, even if it requires the sacrificing of one's life.

17.2) A List of Old Testament Symbols in Revelation

The symbolism in Revelation from the Old Testament is not just the beast of Daniel 7. The beast is just the most well-known symbol. The symbols, including the beast, are not exactly the same as in the Old Testament. But they are similar enough to rule out coincidence.

- 1) Revelation 1:17, 2:8, and 22:13 speak of Christ being the first and the last. This is found in Isaiah 44:6, and 48:12.
- 2) The seven churches are represented as seven lampstands (Revelation 1:12). Seven golden lampstands come from Zechariah 4:2, 10. The lampstands are also from the furniture of the temple.
- 3) In Revelation 5:6, Christ is described as having seven eyes. This comes from Zechariah 3:9.
- 4) The scroll with the seven seals is found in Daniel 12:4. In Daniel, the number of seals is not mentioned. But we see in Daniel that the sealing of the words is a sealing of understanding. Daniel did not understand the prophecy. But in the end times, the wise will understand. In Revelation 5-6, Jesus breaks the seven seals, so that the wise begin to understand.
- 5) In the first four seals, the four horses of white, red, black, and pale (Revelation 6) can be found in Zechariah 1:8-11, 6:1-8. In Revelation they are single horses with a rider. In Zechariah they are chariots of horses. The symbol is not exactly the same, but close enough to rule out coincidence.
- 6) In the sixth seal, the sun turns black like sackcloth made of goat hair. Sackcloth is for mourning and repentance. Isaiah is a book of poetry. In Isaiah, the sun and moon can have emotions (Isaiah 24:23). The sun and moon can be darkened, or be made brighter, to show emotion in the creation. In Isaiah 13:10, the stars don't give their light, the sun is darkened, and the moon does not give its light. This is a sign of God's coming wrath.
- 7) In the sixth seal, the sky recedes like a scroll and figs drop from the fig tree. This can be found in Isaiah 34:1-4.
- 8) The scroll that is sweet in the mouth and bitter in the stomach (Revelation 10:8-11) can be found in Ezekiel's call to preach (Ezekiel 2:9-3:3). In Ezekiel, it's "sweet as honey in the mouth," just as in Revelation. But Ezekiel doesn't mention that it's bitter in the stomach. However, Ezekiel says that

on both sides of the scroll are words of lament and mourning and woe. Thus we know why it's bitter in the stomach.

- 9) The trumpets themselves are a symbol. In the Old Testament, trumpets announced the presence of God, the Jubilee, a gathering of the people, an announcement of news, a signal that war is finished, and the announcement of a new king.
- 10) Related to the seven thunders of Revelation 10, we find an angel who stands on the land and the sea, who swore by him who lives forever (Revelation 10:5). We can also find this in Daniel 12:7. The difference is that in Daniel 12:7, the angel is over the water of a river.
- 11) Associated with the two witnesses of Revelation 11, we find two olive trees and two lamp stands (Revelation 11:4). These can be found in Zechariah 4:3, 11-14. In Zechariah, it's talking about the building of the temple. And Revelation 11:1-3 also speaks of the temple.
- 12) In Revelation 12, the woman, who brought forth a man-child, and later the rest of her offspring, can be found in Isaiah 66:7-13. The metaphor of the woman about to give birth originates in Isaiah 26:17-19. The description of the woman, "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head," can be found in Joseph's dream (Genesis 37:9).
- 13) The woman was given two wings of an eagle that she might fly to the desert for protection and nourishment. This comes from Deuteronomy 32:10-11.
- 14) Revelation 12:14 speaks of a "time, times, and half a time." This is also found in Daniel 7:25 and 12:7.
- 15) The beast is found in Daniel 7. Notice that in Revelation 13:2, the beast is one creature resembling a leopard, with feet like a bear, and a mouth like a lion. In Daniel 7, these are three separate beasts. The symbol is close enough to rule out coincidence, but not exactly the same. This will be true of all the other symbols in Revelation, which are found in the Old Testament.
- 16) The wraths of Revelation include: (1) water changed to blood (Revelation 16:3, 16:4), (2) frogs (Revelation 16:12-14), (3) sores (Revelation 16:2), (4) hail (Revelation 8:7), (5) locusts (Revelation 9:3), (6) and darkness (Revelation 16:1-10). These are six from the ten plagues on Egypt.

- 17) The firstfruits (Revelation 14:4) are found in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.
- 18) The winepress of God's wrath (Revelation 14:19, 19:15) comes from Joel 3:9-16 and Isaiah 63:2-6.
- 19) The smoke of their torment that goes up forever and ever, in the lake of fire, sulfur, and burning pitch (Revelation 14:10-12) comes from Isaiah 34:8-10.

Any reasonable interpretation of Revelation must show how each and every one of these symbols are consistent with their use in the Old Testament. None of the four major views of Revelation make a serious attempt to do this.

We must interpret Revelation in terms of its theme, which is our personal need to get ready for Christ to return. When we do this, all these Old Testament symbols, found in Revelation, begin to connect. Then all meanings from the Old Testament will fit when applied to their context in Revelation. They all fit when Revelation is viewed as our personal future, under the theme of personal holiness.

Each part of Revelation, such as the seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls of wrath, must have a distinct purpose that builds on the theme of personal holiness. Each part must use these Old Testament symbols in a way that is consistent not only with the overall theme, but also with the purpose of that part. The purpose of the seals is to show the signs that identify the end-time generation. The purpose of the trumpets is to call the Church into holiness, so that the Church will be ready for the wedding banquet and for Christ set up his kingdom. And the purpose of the bowls is God's wrath. They are also a message to the world and to Pharaoh (Satan). God is saying, "Let my people go."

When we bring all these Old Testament symbols into Revelation, and see how they relate to the overall theme and purpose of Revelation, with each distinct part building on that theme, we see how Revelation is one of the most extraordinary pieces of literature ever written.

17.3) An Overview of Revelation

Each part of Revelation, the churches, seals, trumpets, and bowls of wrath, have distinct purposes. Here is a basic outline of Revelation. Revelation is not strictly chronological. But from an overall perspective, Revelation is chronological.

Chapter 1	Introduction and statement of purpose
Chapters 2-3	Theme of Revelation as stated in seven letters to seven churches
Chapters 4-6	Signs of the end-times (baby-boom) generation, as given by the seals.
Chapter 7	Bringing the sealed from 144,000 to a countless number
Chapters 8-9	Trumpet-plagues as a wake-up call for the Church
Chapter 10	A call to preach to the Church
Chapter 11	The building of the temple, which is the Church
Chapter 12	The woman about to give birth to the Church
Chapter 13	The reign of the two antichrists with emphasis on the global ruler, which is the first beast
Chapter 14	A summary of the tribulation period
Chapters 15-16	The bowls of wrath
Chapters 17-18	The destruction of Babylon – a historical perspective. This is a focus on the destruction of Islam and the Mahdi.
Chapter 19	Wedding banquet followed by the defeat of the two antichrists
Chapter 20	The Millennium followed by the Great White Throne Judgment

Verses 21:1-8 The new heavens and the new earth

Verses 21:9 – 22:21 The pre-tribulation appearance of the New Jerusalem.

Sandwiched between the sixth and the seventh trumpets are two whole chapters of Revelation. Chapters 10 and 11 include things like the angel with the little scroll, the measuring of the temple, and the two witnesses. This is also true with the seals and the bowls of wrath. Sandwiched between the sixth and the seventh seals are the 144,000 and the countless number from every nation, tribe, people, and language. Sandwiched between the sixth and the seventh bowls of wrath are two verses (Revelation 16:15-16) that speak of the rapture and Armageddon. These sandwiched portions give us an idea about the purpose of the seals, trumpets, and bowls.

The seals use Old Testament symbolism to show the signs of the end-time generation that will see Christ's return. The four horses (first four seals) are about the world's superpower nations that exist in this generation. The fifth seal is about the gospel being preached to all nations before Christ returns. And the sixth seal is about the appearance of the New Jerusalem. Men are terrified of the day of the Lord. The appearance of the New Jerusalem, I believe, is about six months prior to the start of the seven-year period that includes the great tribulation. The seventh seal is silence in heaven for half an hour. I believe this is a six-month period between the appearance of the New Jerusalem and the preaching of the two witnesses during the first half of the seven-year period.

Sandwiched between the sixth and the seventh seals are the 144,000 and the countless number from every nation, tribe, people, and language. What is this saying about the end-time generation that will see Christ's return? As indicated by the fifth seal, the gospel (good news) about Jesus Christ has been preached to all the nations during this generation. But that gospel has not emphasized the need to overcome sin. If put to the test, most Christians today would fail just as Peter failed. Most Christians today are on the path of wide gate that leads to destruction. We are more concerned about making money, and the problems of every-day life, than we are about living for Christ and overcoming sin.

There are a few, however, who are ready for Christ to return. After the New Jerusalem appears, the 144,000 will see Christ face-to-face in Jerusalem (Rev. 14:1). This is before the seven-year covenant begins. They will receive spiritual bodies and inherit eternal life because they will have overcome sin before Christ's return. But the many will not be ready. Christ will confirm a covenant with many for seven

more years in order for them to get ready. These are seven years of the millennial day of the Lord. Thus, the end-time generation is brought from the few (144,000) to a countless number as a result of going through the great tribulation. They will "come out of the great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14) to receive white robes, a symbol of purity, and stand before the throne of Christ.

Sandwiched between the sixth and the seventh trumpet are chapters 10 and 11. These chapters tell us about the purpose of the trumpet-plagues. In the Old Testament, trumpets announced the presence of God, the jubilee, a gathering of the people, an announcement of news, a signal that war is finished, and the announcement of a new king. Based on the Old Testament symbols, chapter 10 is about the mystery of God. It's also a call to preach to the Church. Chapter 11 is about the building of the Church, symbolized as the building of the temple that occurs as a result of the trumpets. The trumpets are literal plagues similar to the ones God poured out on Egypt. In other words, the shock-and-awe that occurs because of the trumpet-plagues causes the Church to get serious about overcoming sin. And overcoming sin is the theme of Revelation. So, chapter 10 is the call to holiness. Chapter 11 is how that holiness comes about. The seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15) is an announcement that this goal has been accomplished. It says, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. He will reign forever and ever!" In other words, the Church must overcome sin before we are ready to reign with Christ. The trumpets are a call to do just that.

The woman, about to give birth, is about the "desert" of sanctification that the Church must go through before Christ can set up his earthly kingdom. The Bride must overcome sin, as stated in the seven letters, before they can reign with Christ. But this doesn't happen overnight. The time of the trumpet-plagues is a time to get the Bride serious about overcoming sin. The time of the "desert" is the time of sanctification that is needed to actually overcome sin. In other words, it takes time to overcome sin. The time of the "desert" is when the antichrist rules 42 months over every nation, tribe, people, and language. The saints are conquered by the antichrist. But persecution brings holiness. For the world, it's not a time of great tribulation. For the world, it's a time of "eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" (Matt. 24:38). The bowls of wrath are the "sudden destruction" that comes after the reign of the antichrist. The wrath is after the resurrection. Again, these are literal plagues, which are even more like the ones God poured out on Egypt. So, it's really wrath against the world of sin. After the wrath of Christ, which is at the battle of Armageddon, Christ sets up the earthly kingdom.

17.4) God's Mystery in Parables and Symbolism

The first verse of Revelation is, "This is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things which must happen soon." This verse is considered by many scholars to be an allusion to Daniel 2:28, which reads, "There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." The Greek words for this verse in Revelation are very similar to the Greek in the Septuagint, for this verse in Daniel. Notice that, "latter days" becomes "must take place quickly." Verse 1:3 of Revelation amplifies this by saying, "the time is near."

Daniel 2:26-28 The king answered Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation? (27) Daniel answered before the king, and said, The secret which the king has demanded can neither wise men, enchanters, magicians, nor soothsayers, show to the king; (28) but there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head on your bed, are these:

Preterists have used this to say Revelation has already been fulfilled. But Revelation is simply saying that every generation is to believe that Christ can return in their lifetime, but that great tribulation will come first. Daniel was told that he would rest until the time of the end (Daniel 12:13). Therefore, the time of the end is the time of the resurrection. The Old Testament does not teach this expectation of a soon coming of the Messiah. But now that Christ has come, the New Testament gives all generations the hopeful expectation of Christ's soon return.

Not even the disciples were to know the "times or the seasons" of Christ's coming (Acts 1:7). But they were taught to expect Christ to return soon (Matthew 23:10, 16:27-28, 24:34). Revelation 1:1-3 continues with this teaching.

Revelation 1:8b says Christ is the one, "who is, and who was, and who is coming." This verse parallels verse 19, where John is told to "write the things that thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are about to come after these things." The things that John has seen relate to the vision itself. The "things that are" relate to the seven letters to the seven churches. And the things that "come after these things" relate to the events of the end-times, and the fifth kingdom of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

It's important to realize the significance of the letters to the theme. The letters are to the churches. The rest of Revelation is also to the churches. Revelation is to the churches of all generations. But the things that are taught in Revelation are even more important to the generation that actually witnesses all these things.

The next verse (Revelation 1:20) speaks of a mystery. In the Greek, this sentence starts with the word 'mystery' and it's an article. This is considered awkward grammar in Greek, because there is no transitional word from the previous sentence. This seems to have prompted Young's Literal Translation to force a continuation of the previous sentence using a semicolon. There are a number of such solecisms in Revelation, where there seems to be intentional problems with the grammar. The solecisms tend to make the reader pause in his reading, forcing him to closely consider what's being said. Some scholars believe these solecisms are used to indicate an allusion to the Old Testament.

Revelation 1:19-20 Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will happen hereafter; (20) the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands. The seven stars are the angels of the seven assemblies. The seven lampstands are seven assemblies.

The word "mystery" is being used in this verse to say that a symbol is being interpreted. As we have seen, Revelation 1:1 is an allusion to Daniel 2:27-28. These verses also speak of a mystery. Daniel interprets the "mystery" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Likewise, Revelation 1:20 interprets the "mystery" of the seven golden lampstands in verse 12, and the seven stars in verse 16. Thus we see the allusion to Daniel 2:27-28.

This verse is also an allusion to Matthew 13:11, Mark 4:11, and Luke 8:10, where the parables are spoken of as being mysteries. Jesus is saying that the "mystery" of the kingdom of heaven is given to the disciples, but is hidden from the wicked. And this is why Jesus spoke in parables. In all three of these passages, the mystery is hidden from the wicked so that "though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand" (Luke 8:10b). Each of the seven letters to the seven churches says, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Revelation 1:3 also says, "Blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it." Therefore, Revelation as a whole is a similar mystery. It's hidden from the wicked, but those who are wise will hear it and take it to heart. And Revelation uses Old Testament symbolism for the same reason that Jesus

spoke in parables. The mystery of Revelation is hidden from the wicked so that “though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.”

Parables are used to hide the truth from the wicked. But they are also used to show the truth to the righteous. A parable can be used to show righteousness in a fictional person, and then we desire the same righteousness in ourselves. Likewise, a parable can be used to show a sinful nature in a fictional person, and then the righteous person recognizes the same sinful nature in himself. There is one example of this in the Old Testament. In 2 Samuel 12, Nathan tells King David a parable about a rich man who took a much loved lamb from a poor man. David burned with anger at hearing the story. Then David was told he was that rich man. David was made to understand before it was revealed to him that the sin was within himself. Hearing this David repented.

In a very similar way, symbolism is being used in Revelation. The theme of Revelation is that the Bride must make herself ready for Christ to return (Revelation 19:7). Each and every one of the seven letters to the seven churches says, “He who overcomes” will inherit the kingdom, or some description thereof. (Overcoming sin is not about salvation. It’s about inheriting the kingdom.) Today, most Christians don’t understand Revelation. They think they are ready for Christ to return. Most Christians expect to either skip over the great tribulation, or they believe the great tribulation is only figurative or historic. When the trumpet-plagues begin, however, the righteous will repent. But those in the churches whose hearts have been hardened will remain wicked and will deny God’s call to repent.

Each and every one of the seven letters to the seven churches says, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” This confirms that Revelation 1:20 is an allusion to Matthew 13:11, Mark 4:11, and Luke 8:10. Originally, this comes from Isaiah 6, which was Isaiah’s call to preach.

Isaiah 6:8-11a NIV Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here
am I. Send me!”

He said, “Go and tell this people:
“Be ever hearing, but never understanding;
be ever seeing, but never perceiving.”
Make the heart of this people calloused;
make their ears dull
and close their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,

hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed.”

Then I said, “For how long, O Lord?”

Notice that Isaiah asks, “How long?” How long is the gospel to be preached? God only gives a sign. This aspect of the mystery is hidden until the time of the end. We will see the signs and we will know when Christ will return. We will know how long these mysteries will remain hidden from the wicked. So, not even the wise understand how long it will take. But the mystery of God’s timeline will not remain a mystery to the wise of the end-time generation.

17.5) The Mystery of God’s Timeline

Daniel, Jesus, Paul, and John in Revelation all speak about a mystery of God. The disciples asked the question, “When will all this happen” (Matthew 24:3)? Jesus answered and said that no man has known. He gives us a sign. “When, therefore, you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, let the reader understand” (Matthew 24:15).

The last vision in Daniel asks the same question and gives the same answer. The angel above the water was asked, “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders” (Daniel 12:6)? These wonders climaxed with the resurrection and then included the Messianic reign of Christ. The answer given was “a time, times, and half a time.” Daniel didn’t understand but was told that he would not understand. He was told to seal the book until the time of the end. But he was given a sign. From the abomination of desolation, until the resurrection (by context) is 1290 days. Thus, Jesus gives the same answer to the same question. He says that when we see the abomination of desolation that the reader (of Daniel) should understand the answer to the question. Until we see the abomination, it remains a mystery.

Paul talks about this mystery. The mystery of God is about the resurrection. Jesus was raised from the dead; and so shall we. We will get spiritual bodies just like Jesus. Also, part of the mystery is that Gentiles are grafted into Israel, which is the olive tree, and that the Jews were hardened until the full number of Gentiles come into Israel. (1 Corinthians 15:51, Ephesians 1:9-10, 3:1-13, Romans 11:25)

Related to the seven thunders of Revelation 10, we find an angel who stands on the land and the sea, who swore by him who lives forever (Revelation 10:5). We also find this in Daniel 12:7. The angel in Daniel lifts his right hand, and his left

hand towards heaven. The angel in Revelation lifts his right hand toward heaven. This is not exactly the same, but it is close enough to rule out coincidence. Both the angel in Revelation and the angel in Daniel “swear by him who lives forever.”

Revelation 10:2, 5-7 He had in his hand a little open book. He set his right foot on the sea, and his left on the land. ... (5) The angel who I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to the sky, (6) and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there will no longer be delay, (7) but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as he declared to his servants, the prophets.

Daniel 12:5-7 Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, there stood other two, the one on the brink of the river on this side, and the other on the brink of the river on that side. (6) One said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? (7) I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by him who lives forever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

In Daniel, the angel says, “It will be for a time, times and half a time.” This is in response to the question, “How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?” Looking back to verse 2, and forward to verse 13, we see that “these astonishing things” includes the resurrection. The question is, “How long will it be before [the resurrection] takes place?” The answer is, “A time, times, and half a time.” Daniel, of course, does not understand the answer. The angel tells him that the words are sealed until the time of the end. In other words, Daniel is not supposed to understand. It’s a mystery to Daniel. Only the wise at the time of the end will understand. (Refer back to section 16.3 for the reasons why the answer to the question is three and a half millennia. The original question was asked in the middle of the millennial week from Adam through Christ’s millennial reign.)

Compare this vision in Daniel 12 with what happens in Revelation. When the angel shouts, the seven thunders speak. But John is told, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down.” This is almost exactly what Daniel

is told. Daniel is told the words are sealed. John is told to seal the words. So, that which the seven thunders say is probably related to the answer given to Daniel, which is “A time, times, and half a time.” It’s an indication of how long it will be from Daniel’s vision until the resurrection and then the millennial reign.

Until the time of the end, the day of the resurrection is unknown. It’s the mystery of God. But Daniel is given a sign. From the abomination of desolation, there are 1290 days to the resurrection. Once we see the abomination, the wise will be able to compute the days and thus know the date of the resurrection. When we see the abomination, the mystery of God will be over. It will no longer be a mystery for the entire Church. But the wicked will continue to be wicked, and will not understand. This is what Daniel is told in Daniel 12:9-10.

Let’s go back to the original question asked in Daniel 12:6 and later by the disciples in Matthew 24:3. How long will it be before the resurrection? When will all this happen? The angel in Daniel says, “It will be for a time, times and half a time,” which is very cryptic. The angel in Revelation says, “There will be no more delay!” (NIV Revelation 10:6b). The KJV translation of this verse says, “There should be time no longer.”

The idea that time will be no longer sounds a bit strange. That’s why most modern-day translations say, “There will be no more delay.” But the KJV is more literally correct. And there are other Greek words that mean ‘delay.’ The Greek word used here for ‘time’ is ‘chronos.’ It means a space of time, and is distinguished from the Greek word ‘kairos’, which means a fixed or set time. In other words, right now the day and hour of Christ’s return is unknown. So, we are in a ‘chronos’ period of time. When we see the abomination of desolation, the time will be known or fixed. The seventh trumpet is blown when the unknown amount of time (‘chronos’) is no longer, and the time of the resurrection becomes fixed (‘kairos’) and known. At this point in time, the mystery of God is no longer a mystery.

In the days when the seventh trumpet is about to sound, the wise will know the day of the resurrection. This is the mystery of God (Romans 11:25, 16:25, 1 Cor. 15:51, Eph. 1:9-10, Eph. 3:1-13, Col. 1:26-27, 2:2, 4:3, 1 Tim. 3:16, Rev. 10:7). The mystery includes the fact that Gentiles are included in Israel and will be resurrected, and that God will bring to himself a people after his own heart, where God’s law is written on our hearts. Daniel did not understand the mystery of God. He was told to seal the words of the scroll. After the advent of Christ, the mystery of God was better understood, but the timing of the climactic resurrection was not understood (Matthew 24:36, Acts 1:7). But according to Daniel 12:9-10, the

mystery of God, including the timing, will be understood at the time of the end, especially when we see the abomination. There may even be other aspects to this mystery that will be understood as we approach the day of the Lord.

Revelation 10:7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as he declared to his servants, the prophets.

Revelation 11:15 The seventh angel sounded, and great voices in heaven followed, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. He will reign forever and ever!"

Chapter 18

Revelation 4 – John Sees Heaven

Revelation 4:1-3 After these things I looked and saw a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, like a trumpet speaking with me, was one saying, "Come up here, and I will show you the things which must happen after this." (2) Immediately I was in the Spirit. Behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting on the throne (3) that looked like a jasper stone and a sardius. There was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald to look at.

In Revelation 4:1, John is told to “Come up here, and I will show you the things which must happen after this.” This verse, of course, is not the rapture. It’s part of John’s vision and is the start of the events of the end times. Also, it’s probably an allusion to Exodus 19:20. Moses is told to come up to the top of the mountain as God came down to the top of the mountain to meet him. As we will see, Exodus 19 is an allusion to the rapture. But the people are not yet ready for the rapture. Only Moses is called up the mountain. Only John is told to “Come up here.” The people could not go up the mountain. The people are not yet ready for the rapture.

Exodus 19:16-20 It happened on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain, and the sound of an exceedingly loud trumpet; and all the people who were in the camp trembled. (17) Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the lower part of the mountain. (18) Mount Sinai, all it, smoked, because Yahweh descended on it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. (19) When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice. (20) Yahweh came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. Yahweh called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Exodus 19 has many allusions to the rapture. In verse 17, Moses leads the people out of the camp to meet with God. They don’t go up the mountain, because they are not ready. Anyone who even touched the base of the mountain was to be killed. On the top of the mountain there was a thick cloud, and the sound of a trumpet blast. Again, this is an allusion to the rapture. But more precisely, it’s an allusion

to the time just prior to the rapture. In Revelation, the church is not yet ready. The church begins to get ready during the trumpet-plagues. During this time the church is being built. But the church will not be ready until we have first gone through the desert of the great tribulation, during the reign of the antichrist.

For a reference to the desert, see the section titled, "Revelation 12 - The Woman About To Give Birth," in chapter 26 of this book.

In verses 15 and 16 of Exodus 19, Moses tells the people to abstain from sexual relations, and to prepare themselves for the third day. This is the church getting holy. It's about the Bride getting ready for the wedding banquet. Just as the resurrection of Christ was on the third day, the resurrection of the Church is on the third millennial day.

Verse 16 says that on the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning. In Revelation 4:5, John sees "lightning" and he hears "sounds and thunders." This theme is carried over to the seventh trumpet, which is when the building of the church will have been completed. When the seventh trumpet is sounded, voices in heaven say, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. He will reign forever and ever!" In other words, this is what is accomplished during the time of the trumpet-plagues. Then, John sees the Ark of the Covenant in the temple of God in heaven. Also, John sees lightning and hears thunder, just like in Revelation 4:5. This connects the time before the seals are opened, to the time after the seventh trumpet.

The opening of the seals starts a process that concludes with the seventh trumpet. The church is built, and the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Lord. But this doesn't literally happen at the seventh trumpet. The church must first go through the desert of sanctification. Yet it's considered to be accomplished at the seventh trumpet.

Take a look forward at the seventh trumpet.

Revelation 11:15-16, 19 The seventh angel sounded, and great voices in heaven followed, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. He will reign forever and ever!" (16) The twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God's throne, fell on their faces and worshiped God ... (19) God's temple that is in heaven was opened, and the ark of the Lord's covenant was seen in his temple. Lightnings, sounds, thunders, an earthquake, and great hail followed.

At the seventh trumpet John sees the Ark of the Covenant, in the temple of God in heaven. Perhaps there is a literal temple in heaven. But if so, it's only symbolic of the true temple, which is the Church. In the Old Covenant, God's law was written on stone. We get the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, which is right after these events in chapter 19. Under the New Covenant, God's law is written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-33, Hebrews 8:8). But this doesn't happen overnight. It's the process of sanctification. It's all about the Church taking sin seriously. It begins with the opening of the seals. And it's accomplished by the seven trumpet-plagues. So, at the seventh trumpet, John sees the Ark of the Covenant in the temple of God. This is symbolic of the completion of God's law being written in the hearts of Church, which is the temple of God.

We now continue in Revelation chapter 4.

Revelation 4:4-5 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones. On the thrones were twenty-four elders sitting, dressed in white garments, with crowns of gold on their heads. (5) Out of the throne proceed lightnings, sounds, and thunders. There were seven lamps of fire burning before his throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Revelation 4 brings John, in his vision, up to heaven. Around the throne are twenty-four thrones with twenty-four elders. The elders do not seem to be an allusion to an Old Testament passage. Nor do they seem to be a symbol or some kind of type. They seem to be literal. We do know that at least two people, Enoch and Elijah, were taken up into heaven before they died. It's possible that there have been others throughout the centuries since Adam. I think perhaps the twenty-four elders are people who lived here on the earth and then were brought to heaven. But these would be the exceptions to the rule. Everyone else is asleep, as Daniel was told that he would sleep until the day of the resurrection (Daniel 12:13).

Revelation 4:5 mentions seven lamps, which are the "seven Spirits of God." This is also in Revelation 1:4, 3:1 and 5:6. We do not have to go to the Old Testament to find the meaning of the seven Spirits of God. It's found in Revelation itself.

Take a look forward in Revelation chapter 5 at the seven Spirits of God.

Revelation 5:6 I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

The seven eyes comes from Zechariah 3:9, where the Rock (Christ) has seven eyes. This passage is given in the context of Joshua in filthy clothes. But the sins of Joshua are removed. The seven eyes show that God sees the sins of the world. Here we see that Christ “removed the sin of the land [world] in a single day” (Zechariah 3:9) by dying on the cross. In Revelation 5:6, the seven eyes are “the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.” So again, the seven eyes tell us that God sees everything that happens throughout the world including the sins of the world. The seven Spirits of God mean the same thing. God is everywhere, and sees everything. It's not literally saying that God has seven Spirits. It's saying that God is everywhere. The number seven is chosen for obvious reasons. But the number also symbolically connects back to the seven eyes. God is symbolically described as having seven Spirits that cover the world, each of which has an eye to see the world.

After the resurrection, we will have a face-to-face relationship with God (1 Corinthians 13:12). This face-to-face relation with God was lost in the Garden of Eden. “He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life” (Genesis 3:24 ESV). The tree of life is found in Revelation 22:2, 14, and 19. But right now cherubim guard the way back. The cherubim are seen on each side of the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:18-20, 1 Samuel 4:4, Psalm 99:1, Isaiah 37:16), guarding the way back into the holy of holies.

We now continue in Revelation chapter 4.

Revelation 4:6-8 Before the throne was something like a sea of glass, similar to crystal. In the midst of the throne, and around the throne were four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. (7) The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. (8) The four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within. They have no rest day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come!"

In Revelation 4:6-8, we have the description of the four living creatures. By comparing this description with Ezekiel 10, we see that the four living creatures are cherubim. In other words, they are like the cherubim that guard the way back to the Garden of Eden, which is Paradise. It's also called the New Jerusalem. They are in the center and around the throne of God (Revelation 4:6).

Verse 6 also mentions a sea of glass, similar to crystal. This sea of glass can also be found later in Revelation 15:2. Take a look forward in Revelation chapter 15 at the sea of glass.

Revelation 15:1-2 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished. (2) And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire--and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.

In chapter 4 of Revelation there is no one beside the sea of glass. In Revelation 15:2, many people who had conquered the beast are standing beside the sea of glass. This sea of glass is in Paradise. The cherubim guard the way back to the Garden (Paradise) of Eden. In other words, those going through the great tribulation have been able to conquer the beast by overcoming sin and are now in Paradise. This is just before the seven bowls are poured out, which is the seven last plagues. In other words, the Church goes through the great tribulation and overcomes sin. They defeat the beast by being willing to give up their lives. Then they can stand before the throne in Paradise.

As a review, the four living creatures are cherubim. The twenty-four elders are probably people like Elijah and Enoch who were taken to heaven without dying. They had a special relationship with God whereby they overcome all their sinful habits. They walked with God and were taken up to heaven (Paradise) to live.

Both the angels and the twenty-four elders worship Jesus Christ in heaven. They cast their crowns before the throne. The crowns are symbols of their authority to rule. They will reign with Christ over the nations, along with the rest of the Church when they overcome their sins and are made ready to reign.

We now continue in Revelation chapter 4; the last three verses of the chapter.

Revelation 4:9-11 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, (10) the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, (11) "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

As we will see, the seals have prevented the angels and us from knowing the time of the resurrection. It's called the mystery of God. And the cherubim guard the way back to the tree of life, and the face-to-face relationship with God. So, it's fitting that when Christ begins to open the seals of the scroll, that it would be four cherubim who guide John to witness the opening of the first four seals. The opening of the scroll is about revealing God's mystery, which is the timing of resurrection and eternal life. So, it's about the time when we are let back into the Garden (Paradise) of Eden, guarded by the four living creatures (cherubim).

Chapter 19

Revelation 5 – The Seals of the Scroll are Broken

Revelation 5:1-3 I saw, in the right hand of him who sat on the throne, a [scroll] written inside and outside, sealed shut with seven seals. (2) I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to break its seals?" (3) No one in heaven above, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the [scroll], or to look in it.

The opening of the seals of the scroll begins the process of signs which reveal the mystery of God to the end-time baby-boom generation. Symbolically, the scroll records the mystery of God of which the wise will understand at the time of the end. It's the mystery of the timing of the resurrection. The scroll has been sealed so that not even the angels can open the scroll and read what is inside.

We must use the Old Testament to interpret the symbols of Revelation. In Daniel 12, we find a scroll that has been sealed such that Daniel and other wise people of God would not understand until the time of the end. This is the mystery of God. There is writing on both sides of the scroll, indicating that the amount of understanding that is sealed is quite a lot of information. Jesus Christ is able to break the seals of the scroll and to reveal the mystery. But this does not happen until the end-time generation. As the seals of the scroll are broken, the wise of the end-time generation begin to understand the signs of Christ's return. We begin to understand the seasons and the times.

This end-time generation is the baby boom generation that began right after World War II. At that time, Israel became a nation. This is the parable of the fig tree in Matthew 24:32-34. This generation will see the return of Christ.

Matthew 24:32-34 "Now from the fig tree learn this parable. When its branch has now become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near. (33) Even so you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. (34) Most certainly I tell you, this generation will not pass away, until all these things are accomplished.

The scroll of Revelation 5-6 is the scroll of Daniel 12:4-13. Only the wise can understand the signs, and thus understand the words of the scroll. The words of the scroll answer the question, "How long will it be to the end of these wonders?"

Daniel 12:2-3 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (3) Those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the expanse; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

These wonders, by context, include the resurrection of Daniel 12:2 and the wise shining like the stars and teaching those who are not wise (verse 3). So the question is, "How long will it be until the resurrection? Then after that, how long will the wise teach the others during the age to come?"

Daniel 12:4-13 But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the [scroll], even to the time of the end: many shall run back and forth, and knowledge shall be increased." (5) Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, there stood other two, the one on the brink of the river on this side, and the other on the brink of the river on that side. (6) One said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? (7) I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by him who lives forever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. (8) I heard, but I didn't understand: then said I, my lord, what shall be the issue of these things? (9) He said, Go your way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. (10) Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand. (11) From the time that the continual *burnt offering* shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days. (12) Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred thirty-five days. (13) But go you your way until the end be; for you shall rest, and shall stand in your lot, at the end of the days.

Daniel was given the answer to the question. But Daniel did not understand the answer. The answer involves a time, times, and half a time in terms of millennia. At the time of the question, it was in the midst of the millennial week, which is seven thousand years. The half a time was the time from then until Jesus became

an adult. The times (plural) involves two thousand years from that generation until this generation. The final time (singular) is the millennial reign of Christ, when the wise will teach the foolish. The breaking of the power of the holy people involves the foolish overcoming sin and maturing in Christ during Christ's millennial reign under the authority of the wise.

Daniel didn't understand the answer to the question. But a sign was given. From the abomination of desolation until the resurrection (by context) is 1290 days. Then there is an additional 45 days of "waiting" until the rapture. We should be able to recognize this sign because in this very same vision of Daniel 10-12, we have the abomination of 168 BC, which was prophesied in Daniel 11:31. It was a statue of Zeus on the temple mount. So when we see this happen again, we will know that the resurrection will be 1290 days later.

The opening of the seals starts the process of letting the Church know we are the end-time generation. Today, many Christians believe we will see the return of Christ. Combine this expectation with the shock of the trumpet-plagues, and the true Church will emerge and get holy. Back in section 17.4 of this book, which is titled, "God's Mystery in Parables and Symbolism," we discussed how the symbolism of Revelation is used very much like parables. Both are "mysteries" that are being revealed. Both have the purpose of bringing holiness to the Church, as well as hiding God's truths from the wicked. The righteous understand, but not the wicked. Therefore, this process starts with the breaking of the seals. And it concludes with the seventh trumpet.

After the seventh trumpet, no more work can be done (John 9:4). After the seventh trumpet, there will be the "night" when the antichrist rules. During that time, the saints will be turned over to the antichrist. It's a time of the desert for sanctification. At the end of the 1335 days, Jesus returns as a thief in the night.

John 9:4 I must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day. The night is coming, when no one can work.

But for now, let's focus back on the breaking of the seals. Revelation 5 and 6 are about the breaking of the seals of this scroll. In Revelation 5:3, it says that no one in heaven or earth can look inside the scroll. This is analogous to Matthew 24:36 where it says that not even the angels in heaven knew when the day of Christ's return (and the resurrection) would be. It's also seen in Daniel 12:6, because it was an angel who asked the question. But due to the triumph of Christ, he is able to open the scroll so that we will begin to understand the signs of the times and how they are related to the prophecies.

Revelation 5:3 No one in heaven above, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look in it.

Matthew 24:36 But no one knows of that day and hour, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

We now continue in Revelation chapter 5.

Revelation 5:4-5 And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look in it. (5) One of the elders said to me, "Don't weep. Behold, the Lion who is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome; he who opens the [scroll] and its seven seals."

Why is Christ alone able to break the seals and open the scroll? Verse 5 says it's because he has overcome. He has overcome sin. Of course Christ never sinned. So he didn't have to overcome sinful habits. But Christ's death on the cross allows us to overcome sin. Without Christ's death, even if we were to stop sinning, we would still be guilty of past sins. Christ has overcome sin. This also means that Christ was tempted to sin and overcame all temptations.

Because Christ overcame sin, we who are in Christ can overcome all our sinful habits. This alone is the reason we will be able to reign with Christ when he sets up his earthly kingdom. The rulers of the world will be righteous rulers because they are no longer under the bondage of sin and Satan. Therefore, for the first time in history, the nations will be ruled by totally righteous rulers.

At the time of Christ's first coming, Israel was not ready to reign with Christ. Israel was not ready to overcome sin. So Christ had to leave until the gospel of the kingdom could spread around the world. In time, there would be enough of Christ's followers to reign over the world with some followers from every nation, tribe, people and language of the globe. We are in that end-times generation. Christ will return in this baby-boom generation. Since Christ is head of the Church, he alone is able to open the seals of the scroll which begin to reveal this truth to the wise of this generation. Again, only the wise end-time generation will be able to understand the answer to the question that is written on the scroll.

We now continue in Revelation chapter 5.

Revelation 5:6-7 I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. (7) Then

he came, and he took it out of the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

In Revelation 5:6, Christ is described as having seven eyes. The seven eyes comes from Zechariah 3:9, where the Rock (Christ) has seven eyes. This passage is given in the context of Joshua in filthy clothes. But the sins of Joshua are removed. The seven eyes show that God sees the sins of the world. Here we see that Christ “removed the sin of the land in a single day” (Zechariah 3:9).

Zechariah 3:9-10 For, behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes: behold, I will engrave its engraving,' says Yahweh of Armies, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. (10) In that day,' says Yahweh of Armies, 'you will invite every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree.' "

Zechariah 4:9-10 "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house. His hands shall also finish it; and you will know that Yahweh of Armies has sent me to you. (10) Indeed, who despises the day of small things? For these seven shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. These are the eyes of Yahweh, which run back and forth through the whole earth."

In order for the resurrection to happen, Christ had to die on the cross. The crucifixion happened in a single day. In Revelation, this is mentioned in the context of the opening of the scroll, which is the revealing of the mystery of God. The "Lion who is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome; he who opens the [scroll] and its seven seals." (Revelation 5:5). He is the "Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (Revelation 5:6). In other words, for the mystery of God to be revealed, Christ had to die on the cross. And much of that mystery was revealed to the New Testament writers.

Zechariah 3:10 goes on to say, "In that day, ... you will invite every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree." In a small way, this could apply to those who found a new way of living after accepting Christ as their Savior. But in a much greater way, this verse speaks of the peace that will come to the world after the resurrection. From this viewpoint, "in that day" would refer to the day of the Lord. So Christ removes the sin of the land in a single day. But its final fulfillment is not under the millennial day in which Christ reigns.

Also, don't miss the symbolism of the fig tree. Towards the start of this chapter is a quote of Matthew 24:32-34. Jesus tells us to learn the parable of the fig tree. The fig tree is Israel. And Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. Israel will reign over the nations "in that day." So every man and his neighbor in the entire global world will be under the fig tree of Israel's reign.

We can now see why Christ is symbolically described as having seven eyes. It's a reference back to Zechariah. But why are the eyes "seven spirits of God, sent into all the earth?" As we will see, the first four seals point us back to Zechariah 6. Zechariah 1:10, and 6:7 tells us these four horses go throughout the earth. They speak of the state of the world during the end-time generation.

The seven eyes of Christ tell us that Christ keeps close watch over the kingdoms of the earth. We can also see this in the "seven horns" of the same verse (Revelation 5:6). The "seven horns" of Christ in some ways equate to the seven horns of the beast, given later on in Revelation. The seven horns of the beast speak of seven kingdoms which at one time or another have ruled over Jerusalem. These kingdoms are the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, Roman, and the Islamic Caliphate Empires. The fact that Christ also has seven horns shows that Christ has also ruled over these kingdoms and has protected the world even through Satan has been the ruler of this world. This can be seen back in Daniel 10 where Michael protected the rulers of these empires.

We now continue in Revelation chapter 5.

Revelation 5:8-10 Now when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (9) They sang a new song, saying, "You are worthy to take the [scroll], and to open its seals: for you were killed, and bought us for God with your blood, out of every tribe, language, people, and nation, (10) and made us kings and priests to our God, and we will reign on earth."

There are a couple of important points in this verse (above). Verse 8 mentions the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders falling down before the Lamb. But Christ did not have to die for the four living creatures (angels). Christ died for us. So this verse must mean that the twenty-four elders sing this new song. This verse seems to confirm that the twenty-four elders are men who once lived on the earth. Christ died for them as Christ died for us all. We will be made kings and priests to reign with Christ. We "will reign on earth," not in heaven, over the nations.

But when will all this happen? That's the mystery of God. As it turns out, the disciples also wanted to know when all these things will happen. Matthew 24 begins with a question asked by the disciples. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3 NIV). Daniel was told, "Go your way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). Both the disciples and Daniel wanted to know when the "end" would occur.

Daniel 12:13 gives us the definition of the "end." It's the time of the resurrection, when Daniel himself will be resurrected. This verse is in immediate context of the 1290 days. The end is the end of the 1290 days. The "time of the end," I believe, is the generation that will see the resurrection. The wise (righteous) of that generation will understand the answer to the question of Daniel 12:6, about the timing of the resurrection. But before that time, the words are "sealed."

Daniel was told that only the wise will understand. Only the wise will know when all these things will happen. But Daniel was given the sign of the abomination of desolation. Jesus also tells the disciples that no man currently knows when the end will come. And Jesus also gives the disciples the same sign saying, "When, therefore, you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, let the reader understand" (Matthew 24:15). The holy place is the temple mount. When we see a statue standing in the holy place, then the wise will understand the answer to the question given in Daniel. The wise will be able to add 1290 days to the calendar date, and know the day of the resurrection. That's what Jesus meant by "let the reader [of Daniel] understand."

"No one knows the day or [time]." According to Strong's Concordance, the Greek word for "knows" (eido) is "used only in certain past tenses." The word can also be translated as "understand." Daniel did not "understand" the answer to the question. But the wise will understand, especially when they see the abomination of desolation. Young translates it as "No one hath known." This Greek word cannot place restrictions on whether or not one will know in the future. Here are some other places in the gospels where the same Greek word is used in the negative to say that someone does not know something: Matt. 20:22, 22:29, 26:70, 26:72, 26:74, Mark 4:13, 9:6, 10:38, 12:24, 14:68, 14:71, Luke 9:55, 23:34, John 1:26, 2:9, 4:22, 4:32, 7:28, 9:12, 9:21, 9:25, 9:29, 9:30, 10:5, 12:35, 13:7, 14:5, 15:15, 19:10, 20:2, 20:9, 20:13, 20:14, 21:4.

None of these verses imply that they would never know. In many cases, later they did know. For example, in Mark 4:13, we read, “And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable?” Did Jesus mean that the disciples would never understand the parable? People who insist that no man will ever know the day or the hour are unknowingly placing themselves in the category of the wicked because they don't understand the context of the passage.

We now continue in Revelation chapter 5; the last four verses of the chapter.

Revelation 5:11-14 I saw, and I heard something like a voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousands of ten thousands, and thousands of thousands; (12) saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who has been killed to receive the power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing!" (13) I heard every created thing which is in heaven, on the earth, under the earth, on the sea, and everything in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb be the blessing, the honor, the glory, and the dominion, forever and ever! Amen!" (14) The four living creatures said, "Amen!" The elders fell down and worshiped.

These verses remind us of some very well-known verses in Romans.

Romans 8:18-25 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be revealed toward us. (19) For the creation waits with eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. (20) For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but because of him who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of decay into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. (23) Not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for adoption, the redemption of our body. (24) For we were saved in hope, but hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for that which he sees? (25) But if we hope for that which we don't see, we wait for it with patience.

19.1) The End Must Be Soon

Jesus said, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14 NIV). Today is the first time in history when it’s even possible for the gospel to be preached to all nations within our generation. Depending on how it’s measured, one could say this has already been accomplished. So, the end must be soon. Are the words of the scroll being unsealed so the wise can understand?

Matthew 24:14 This Good News of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

The following table gives two very clear verses indicating this is the end-time generation. No other generation in history can claim verses that are this clear-cut.

<p>Matthew 24:14 NIV</p>	<p>And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and <u>then the end will come</u>.</p>
<p>Luke 21:24 NIV</p>	<p>They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles <u>until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled</u>.</p>

In Luke 21:24, we see that Jerusalem was to be trampled on by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled. This trampling began in 70 AD. The trampling stopped in 1967. Today, Jews are again in control of Jerusalem. Some will point out that these Jews are not Christians. But the Jews of 70 AD were not Christians either. This verse is clear evidence that we are the end-time generation.

There have been many times in history when Christians thought that Christ would return in their lifetimes. Martin Luther worried that Christ would return before he would be able to finish translating the Scriptures into German. And the Protestant Reformation brought about a lot of date-setting speculation. In the year 1000 AD, many people thought the world was coming to an end because of postmillennialism, as it was then understood.

Scripture, I believe, teaches all generations to believe that Christ will return in their lifetimes. But today's generation has these two specific verses of Scripture, which read in very straightforward and clear ways, point to today's generation as being the generation that will see Christ return. No other generation in history can claim such clear verses. But even if I am wrong, Scripture still teaches all generations to believe that Christ will return in their lifetimes.

In addition to these two clear verses of Scripture, there are other signs, which are in agreement, but are arguably not as unique to this generation. First of all, Matthew 24:6 speaks of "wars and rumors of wars." The twentieth century has often been characterized as a century of war. Also, the reporting of war (rumors of war) has been, because of television, like no other century. The twentieth century has also seen many famines and plagues (Luke 21:11). AIDS is a good example. And the twentieth century has seen a constant increase in earthquakes (Matthew 24:7). The actual number of earthquakes has not increased. But the number of high-magnitude earthquakes capable of great damage has steadily increased. History's deadliest tsunami, on Dec. 26, 2004, caused almost 300,000 people in 11 countries to be killed. It was caused by a 9.0 earthquake off the coast of Indonesia. It left 1.5 million people homeless.

Matthew 24:6-8 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you aren't troubled, for all this must happen, but the end is not yet. (7) For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be famines, plagues, and earthquakes in various places. (8) But all these things are the beginning of birth pains.

Many people incorrectly believe the seals are judgments, like the trumpets and the bowls. Instead, the seals are signs related to the opening of the scroll of Daniel 12. The seals are not judgments. They show signs of the end-time generation that will see the coming of Christ. They are signs of the beginning of the birth pains. They are signs of the generation that "will not pass away until all these things take place." To show this, consider the parallelism between the seals and the early signs of Matthew 24.

1st seal – Rev. 6:2 And behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow. A crown was given to him, and he came forth conquering, and to conquer.

Matthew 24:6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you aren't troubled, for all this must happen, but the end is not yet.

<p>2nd seal – Rev. 6:4 Another came forth, a red horse. To him who sat on it was given power to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another. There was given to him a great sword.</p>	<p>Matthew 24:7a For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.</p>
<p>3rd seal – Rev. 6:5 And behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a balance in his hand.</p>	<p>(No corresponding verse in Matthew 24)</p>
<p>4th seal – Rev. 6:8 And behold, a pale horse, and he who sat on it, his name was Death. Hades followed with him. Authority over one fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword, with famine, with death, and by the wild animals of the earth was given to him.</p>	<p>Matthew 24:7b and there will be famines, plagues, and earthquakes in various places.</p> <p>Luke 21:11a There will be great earthquakes, famines, and plagues in various places.</p>
<p>5th seal – (Rev. 6:9-11) Persecution of the Church. The souls of the martyrs under the altar.</p>	<p>Matthew 24:8-9 But all these things are the beginning of birth pains. (9) Then they will deliver you up to oppression, and will kill you. You will be hated by all of the nations for my name's sake.</p>
<p>6th seal – Rev. 6:12-14 I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became as blood. (13) The stars of the sky fell to the earth, like a fig tree dropping its unripe figs when it is shaken by a great wind. (14) The sky was removed like a scroll when it is rolled up. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places.</p>	<p>Matthew 24:29 But immediately after the [tribulation] of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.</p>

19.2) The Four-Two-One Pattern of the Creation

In Scripture, four is the number of the heavens and the earth. The heavens and the earth were created in the first four days. There are four corners of the earth (Revelation 7:1, 20:8). There are four quarters of the earth (Isaiah 11:12). There are four quarters of the heavens (Jeremiah 49:36). The four winds are about all the heavens and the earth (Jeremiah 49:36, Ezekiel 37:9, Daniel 7:2, 8:8, 11:4, Zechariah 2:6, Matthew 24:31, Mark 13:27, Revelation 7:1).

The first four days of the Creation are associated with the heavens and the earth. Then, two days of the creation are associated with abundant life. Finally, there is one day that is set aside for rest. The seven seals, trumpet, and bowls of Revelation are all patterned in the same way. They are patterned after the Creation.

The seven seals are all about the end-time generation that will see Christ's return. It's the generation of Matthew 24:34, that will not pass away until all the signs of Matthew 24 take place. The four horses are also about the state of the whole world. Like the first four days of the Creation, the four horses are foundational. As we will see, the four horses are all about the signs in the world right after World War II. This about the foundation, or birth, of the end-time generation.

The fifth seal is about being willing to die for Christ so that the Christ can be preached throughout the world. The sixth seal is about the appearance of the New Jerusalem, which is Paradise. Contained therein is the tree of life and the key to eternal life. Those who lose their lives for Christ's sake will find eternal life (Matthew 10:39, 16:25). The fifth and sixth days of the Creation were all about abundant life. The fifth and sixth seal is all about the end-time generation taking up their cross to follow Christ, and thus finding eternal life when the New Jerusalem appears. The problem is that very few, at first, will find this narrow gate that leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:14).

Sandwiched between the sixth and the seventh seal is information about the few (144,000) who find this narrow gate when the New Jerusalem appears. Christ will confirm a covenant with the many for seven more years. During this time, there will be a wakeup call for the Church. During this time, the many will learn they must overcome sin in order to inherit eternal life. So after the 144,000 we find the countless number go through the great tribulation and in so doing will find the narrow gate that leads to eternal life.

The 144,000 and the countless number tell us the purpose behind the seven seals. The seals reveal the signs of the end-time generation in order that they may

overcome sin and inherit eternal life. This little sandwich of purpose sets the seventh seal off from the six. Likewise, the seventh day of the Creation is set aside for rest. When the seventh seal is opened, there is silence in heaven for half an hour (Rev. 8:1). This silence can be seen as a rest. I believe this "half-hour" is a six-month period between the appearing of the New Jerusalem and the 1260-day period in which the two witnesses will prophesy.

The seven trumpets follow the same four-two-one pattern. The purpose of the trumpets is a wake-up call for the "many" in the Church who will not as yet have overcome sin when the New Jerusalem appears. Like the first four days of the Creation, the first four trumpets are associated with the heavens and the earth. But instead of creation, it's destruction. In association with the next two days of the Creation, the fifth and sixth trumpets focus on people instead of the heavens and the earth. But instead of creation, it's pain and death.

Sandwiched between the sixth and the seventh trumpet is information about the purpose of the trumpet-plagues. The angel with the little scroll is about a call to preach to the Church. Closely associated with this are the seven thunders. This is about the mystery of God that is revealed during the end-time generation. This insert also involves the two witnesses and their call to preach for 1260 days. During this time the temple is built. This happens literally but is figuratively about the building of the Church. In other words, the Church is given a wake-up call to overcome sin.

The angel with the little scroll and the prophecy of the two witnesses tell us the purpose behind the seven trumpets. The trumpets are a wakeup call for the Church in order that we may overcome sin and inherit eternal life. This little sandwich of purpose sets the seventh trumpet off from the six. Likewise, the seventh day of the Creation is set aside for rest. When the seventh trumpet is blown, there is a declaration of what this wakeup-call has accomplished. It's a celebration. The kingdom of Christ is established as a result of the Bride's genuine desire to make herself ready. But there still must be time for the overcoming of sin. People generally do not overcome sin immediately. The seventh trumpet is given in the past tense to show the absolute certainty of its being accomplished because the Bride has finally become determined to make herself ready (white robes) which is to overcome sin. Thus, it's a time of rest and rejoicing.

The seven bowls of wrath follow the same four-two-one pattern. All the bowls of wrath take place after the 42-month reign of the antichrist over every nation, tribe, people, and language. During the time that the antichrist rules, the Church

goes through the great tribulation. After this time, the New Jerusalem re-appears and the Lord takes vengeance on the antichrist and world for giving the Bride great tribulation, and for the evil that has occurred against God's people throughout all generations. This vengeance is the seven bowls of wrath. The first six bowls occur after the last-day resurrection but before the rapture. Sandwiched between the sixth and the seventh bowl is the rapture (Revelation 16:15) and the gathering of the armies of the world for Armageddon (Revelation 16:16). The Bride, including those resurrected in Christ, is caught-up in the rapture. The Bride has made herself ready (Revelation 19:7) by overcoming sin. We all go to the New Jerusalem for the wedding banquet. Then we all return with Christ, who defeats the armies of the world at Armageddon. This is the seventh bowl of wrath.

Why is it important to recognize the connection to the Creation in the seals, trumpets, and bowl of wrath? The first point to remember is that God is in control. Even the great tribulation serves God's purpose. When Adam sinned, we lost our face-to-face relationship with Christ. We lost eternal life. These were lost because of sin. But through the blood of Christ, we have the opportunity to put our faith in Christ in order to overcome sin. This will bring us back to the face-to-face relationship with Christ, and back to the eternal life, that was lost by Adam during the story of the Creation.

The second point to remember is that because God created, the heavens and the earth still belong to God. When the New Jerusalem appears, the world will strongly object to any suggestion that the world is owned by Christ and those who dwell in the New Jerusalem. No doubt the antichrist will blaspheme Christ and those who dwell in heaven (Revelation 13:6) with this claim of ownership being one of his primary points. But in fact, Christ and those who dwell in the New Jerusalem were instrumental in the formation of the earth. The whole earth, therefore, belongs to Christ. When Jesus said the meek will inherit the earth, he had the authority to say this because he owns the earth. He owns the earth because he is the Creator of the earth (Colossians 1:15-16).

Chapter 20

Revelation 6 – The Six Seals of the Scroll

20.1) The Four Horses of the Apocalypse

Revelation 6:1-8 I saw that the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying, as with a voice of thunder, "Come and see!" (2) And behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow. A crown was given to him, and he came forth conquering, and to conquer. (3) When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come!" (4) Another came forth, a red horse. To him who sat on it was given power to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another. There was given to him a great sword. (5) When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come and see!" And behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a balance in his hand. (6) I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A choenix of wheat for a denarius, and three choenix of barley for a denarius! Don't damage the oil and the wine!" (7) When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see!" (8) And behold, a pale horse, and he who sat on it, his name was Death. Hades followed with him. Authority over one fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword, with famine, with death, and by the wild animals of the earth was given to him.

The four horses of white, red, black, and pale (Revelation 6:1-8) can be found in Zechariah 1:8-11, 6:1-8. In Revelation they are single horses with a rider. In Zechariah they are chariots of horses. The chariots of horses go out in the four directions: west, east, north, and south (Zechariah 6:1-8). All go out all at the same time, to see the state of the world. In other words, what are the signs of the world that are observed by these four horses?

Zechariah 6:1-7 NIV I looked up again—and there before me were four chariots coming out from between two mountains - mountains of bronze! (2) The first chariot had red horses, the second black, (3) the third white, and the fourth dappled - all of them powerful. (4) I asked the angel who was speaking to me, "What are these, my lord?" (5) The angel answered me, "These are

the four spirits of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world. (6) The one with the black horses is going toward the north country, the one with the white horses toward the west, and the one with the dappled horses toward the south.” (7) When the powerful horses went out, they were straining to go throughout the earth. And he said, “Go throughout the earth!” So they went throughout the earth.

The white horse goes west. The red horse goes east. The black horse goes north. And the pale horse goes south. Directions are given from Jerusalem.

Zech. 6:6	Zech. 6:1-7, Rev. 6:1-8	Revelation 6:1-7	Signs of the generation	After WWII
West	White	Conqueror bent on conquest	Atomic Bomb	United States (The West)
East	Red	Power to take peace from the earth	Atomic Bomb	People’s Republic of China (The East)
North	Black	Holding a pair of scales in his hands	Bad Economy	USSR
South	Pale	Death and Hades. Kill by sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts	Wars, famine, AIDS, wild beasts	Africa / The World

Right after World War II, the world changed. The United Nations was formed. Israel became a nation in 1948. The United States (West) became a world

superpower. The People's Republic of China (East) came into power in October of 1949, right after World War II. The USSR also became a world superpower right after World War II. Russia is directly north of Jerusalem.

At the end of World War II, these three nations developed the atomic bomb. This is the "conqueror bent on conquest" (Revelation 6:2 – white horse) in the West, and the "power to take peace from the earth" (Revelation 6:4 – red horse) in the East. For the first time in history, our knowledge had reached the point where we can destroy the entire world. This knowledge is forcing us to move towards a one-world government. At the same time, our knowledge is bringing the world into a global economy. Our technology and global economy have brought about many world changes since World War II.

To the North was the USSR. The Soviet Union is known for failing because of its poor communist economy. Poor economy is described in association with the black horse (Revelation 6:5-6). The pair of scales, associated with the third horse, indicates trade (economy). A quart of wheat for a day's wages and three quarts of barley for a day's wages is extremely poor economy. Oil and wine were the cash crops in Biblical times.

The direction of the fourth horse is south. To the south of Jerusalem is Egypt. This rider is on a pale horse. South in the Bible is Egypt, which is symbolic of the world, and Pharaoh is symbolic of the antichrist. This does not mean the antichrist will come from Egypt.

The fourth horse is the kingdom of the antichrist. "Death; and Hades [are] following with 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" (Revelation 6:8). What better description is there of Africa? There are constant wars in Africa. Africa has been known for people dying in famine during this generation. AIDS originated in Africa and is now epidemic in Africa. And Africa is known for wild beasts. These four plagues, especially including AIDS, could easily wind up taking a fourth of the world's population.

This United Nations government rules all the nations of the world, but does not have its own geographical nation. The UN is a government, but it has not had the military power needed to enforce its "resolutions." More and more, however, that is changing. The militaries of the world are shifting to the United Nations. The UN was formed right after World War II. We have been under a one-world government for the entire baby-boom generation. But its power has been only slowly increasing, like the slow boiling of water with a frog in the pot.

So, the four horses are symbolic of the three superpowers and the UN, which rules the world during the end-time generation. They show a view of the entire world, as the four chariots of horses go out in four different directions. They show a time when knowledge reaches the point of mankind being able to destroy the world. So, the knowledge and fear of weapons of mass destruction is forcing us into a one-world government under the rule of the antichrist. The knowledge increases since World War II have been unbelievable. And it is at time when the global economy has brought the world together.

20.2) The Fifth Seal is about Missions

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. (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?" (11) 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.

"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" (Matthew 24:14 NIV). Can the great commission be achieved during our baby-boom generation? People who study the various people-groups believe that it can be done. Successful mission activity during this baby-boom generation has been like no other generation in history. For reasons previously stated, I believe that the success of missions will climax during the time of the trumpets. Has the gospel already been preached in every nation? By some measures it has already happened. But during the time of the trumpets we will see people from every "nation, tribe, people, and language" (Revelation 7:9) coming to know Jesus Christ. We must all ask the question, "Am I willing to die for Christ?" Am I willing to be a martyr? This is the fifth seal.

Does the fifth seal suggest that the dead are not asleep? This is often argued as such. But does the fifth seal literally take place? Do these souls literally speak from under the altar? Are the four horses and four riders literal? The seals are simply poetic ways of describing events leading up to the Christ's appearance. This sixth seal is the same. It describes the actual appearance of Christ. But I doubt the sun and moon will literally turn dark and the sky roll up like a scroll. As we will see, these are simply images that John is drawing from Isaiah in order to make his points. Remember that Isaiah is a book of poetry and should be read as such.

20.3) The Sixth Seal is about the Appearance of Christ and the New Jerusalem

Revelation 6:12-17 I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became as blood. (13) The stars of the sky fell to the earth, like a fig tree dropping its unripe figs when it is shaken by a great wind. (14) The sky was removed like a scroll when it is rolled up. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (15) The kings of the earth, the princes, the commanding officers, the rich, the strong, and every slave and free person, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. (16) They told 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, (17) for the great day of his wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

Matthew 24:29 says that immediately after the Tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. This is a quote from Isaiah. Is it literal? Will the moon be darkened just before Christ returns? Isaiah is a book of poetry. When Isaiah speaks of the sun and moon being darkened (Isaiah 13:10), for example, he is not speaking literally. In Isaiah 24:23, the sun and the moon are given emotions. So, this is simply a way of speaking about worldwide changes through poetry. The moon shining like the sun, and the sun seven times brighter (Isaiah 30:26 NIV) speaks of a time of joy, when the "Lord binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted."

Joel picks up on this in Joel 2:31, with the sun being darkened, and the moon turning to blood. But Joel says this happens "before" the day of the Lord begins. So, what at first seemed figurative now seems more literal. It's possible that poetry turns into actual signs. This can be the literal signs of the blood-red moons we see during a total lunar eclipse. But it's also true that John is simply alluding back to Isaiah to make his point that the world will be terrified when Christ returns.

The sixth seal speaks of the sky being rolled up like a scroll. It also says the stars are like the leaves of fig trees when a strong wind blows. This can be found in Isaiah 34:1-4. There can be no doubt that John was referring to this passage in Isaiah. This helps us understand what John is saying. Christ will be "enraged at the nations" when He returns. As we will see, Christ will return to stop the surrounding nations from attacking Israel, attempting to "wipe Israel of the face of the map," after Israel is no longer strong and able to defend herself.

Isaiah 34:1-4 ESV Draw near, O nations, to hear, and give attention, O peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. (2) For the LORD is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host [armies]; he has devoted them to destruction, has given them over for slaughter. (3) Their slain shall be cast out, and the stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood. (4) All the host [armies] of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.

This passage in Isaiah seems to be speaking of two major aspects of the great tribulation. First, Isaiah describes Armageddon. God himself destroys the armies of the nations as they attack Jerusalem. “The stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood.” This, we believe, happens at the end of the great tribulation. Second, Isaiah describes the war in heaven that we believe will happen in the middle of the seven years. Does this mean that the war in heaven and Armageddon both happen immediately when the sixth seal is opened? No, I believe the sixth seal sets in motion the start of these events. In the sixth seal, John writes, “Hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath has come; and who is able to stand?” The sixth seal marks the start of the great day of Christ’s wrath. It’s the time when the world realizes Christ has appeared, and they are terrified.

Verse 14 of the sixth seal says, “Every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” Is this to be taken literally? Or is this also an allusion to Old Testament Scripture which must be considered in our interpretation? Perhaps it’s literal but at the same time we are given an assurance that God is our refuge.

Psalms 46:1-3 ESV To the choirmaster. Of the Sons of Korah. According to Alamoth. A Song. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (2) Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, (3) though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah

I believe John is saying that those who trust in the Lord should not be afraid even though the rest of the world will be terrified when Christ appears with the New Jerusalem. Many Christians will be caught up in fear of the world. But John is saying to trust in the Lord and to not be afraid.

When the sixth seal is opened, there will be a great earthquake and Israel will be shaken. Compare the sixth seal with how Gog is defeated in Ezekiel 38. In the sixth seal, the world is shaken. “Every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” It says the “kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hide in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.” Now read it in Ezekiel 38.

Ezekiel 38:18-20 It shall happen in that day, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, says the Lord Yahweh, that my wrath shall come up into my nostrils. (19) For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; (20) so that the fish of the sea, and the birds of the sky, and the animals of the field, and all creeping things who creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the surface of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.

Notice that Ezekiel 38:20 speaks of the Lord's "presence." God shows up and the world is terrified. Ezekiel 38:18 says, "My wrath shall come up into my nostrils." In the sixth seal of Revelation (quoted above), the world is terrified saying "hide us ... from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath has come; and who is able to stand?" Notice the similar language in Luke 21:24-26.

Luke 21:24-26 They will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (25) There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars; and on the earth anxiety of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the waves; (26) men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world: for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Jews were taken as prisoners to all the nations. This was the second dispersion. The time of the Gentiles began when Herod the Great died. After Herod died, the Roman Empire began stationing a Roman governor in Jerusalem. The trampling of Jerusalem in the time of the Gentiles continued until the Six Day War. This end-times baby-boom generation, beginning after World War II, and becoming adult around the time of the Six Day War, marks the end of the time of the Gentiles. After the final seven weeks of

Daniel's vision are over, Christ will appear in the New Jerusalem and the world will be terrified. As we read in Ezekiel 38, Christ's "presence" will return just in time to stop the Islamic nations, led by the Islamic Antichrist, from destroying Israel.

So, the six seals are all about the end-time generation that will see the resurrection (Daniel 12:2) and the return of Christ. The breaking of the six seals allows for the understanding of God's mystery. It's about a time when the wise will fully understand the answer. We will know the day and the time of the resurrection. But the wicked and the foolish will not understand.

The sixth seal of Revelation involve signs in the sky. I believe this sixth seal involves the appearing of the New Jerusalem. This is associated with the blood-red moon from Joel. There are two things that happen before the coming day of the Lord. Elijah comes (Malachi 4:5). And the blood-red moon comes (Joel 2:31).

I believe the blood-red moon is a lunar eclipse. The moon turns dark red, and doesn't give its light, during a full lunar eclipse. A lunar eclipse must occur during a full-moon. Sometimes, there is another lunar eclipse six months (moons) later. There are cases where there are as many as four blood-red moons in a row. On very rare cases, this occurs during the Jewish calendar months of Nisan and Tishri. These, of course are the most holy months on the Jewish calendar. They mark the beginning of the civil calendar and the beginning of the religious calendar. Pastor Mark Biltz, a Messianic Jew, discovered that four future lunar eclipses will occur on Jewish festivals, each six months apart.

- 1) Passover, April 15, 2014
- 2) The Feast of Tabernacles, October 8, 2014
- 3) Passover, April 4, 2015 and
- 4) The Feast of Tabernacles, September 28, 2015

Pastor Mark Biltz did some further study and found these four lunar eclipses, occurring on the full moons of four succeeding Passovers and Feasts of Tabernacles, happened only twice during the 20th century. The first was in 1949-1950, the year after Israel became a nation. The second happened in 1967-1968 the year Jerusalem was no longer being trampled upon by the Gentiles. Before that, you have to go all the way back to 1493, the year after Columbus discovered America. After these coming four, it will not happen again anytime during this 21st century. Remember that these four signs would happen before the day of the Lord. The last of these would be perhaps a year before the appearance of the New Jerusalem.

Chapter 21

Revelation 7 – 144,000 and the Countless Number

Revelation 7:1-8 After this, I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth, or on the sea, or on any tree. (2) I saw another angel ascend from the sunrise, having the seal of the living God. He cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to harm the earth and the sea, (3) saying, "Don't harm the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, until we have sealed the bondservants of our God on their foreheads!" (4) I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel: (5) of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand, of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, (6) of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, (7) of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, (8) of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

What does it mean to be sealed? Is it only Jews who are sealed? We must first take a few detours in Scripture in order to answer these questions.

Modern-day Jews are just from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and some Levi. That's because the Jews who returned from Babylon were originally from the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel (or Ephraim) had already been conquered and scattered by Assyria. They never returned. Their bloodlines are today scattered around the world, with their Hebrew culture long lost. Think about James 1:1:

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are in the Dispersion: Greetings.

James 1:1 NIV James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

This letter from James was written to the churches. Yet he addresses it to the twelve tribes. I think James sees the twelve tribes as being the Church, which is

Israel. (Gentile believers are grafted into Israel.) The twelve tribes were dispersed. The Greek word used in this verse is *diaspora*. The same Greek word was used by Peter to address the Church.

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the chosen ones who are living as foreigners in the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

This Greek word was also used by John in his gospel in reference to his people, the Jews. It's a word that is strongly associated with the Jews being scattered among the nations.

John 7:35 The Jews therefore said among themselves, "Where will this man go that we won't find him? Will he go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?"

John 7:35 NIV The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?"

Peter and James make use of this word at the very start of their letters, in their greetings to the Church. James takes it one step further and associates it with the twelve tribes. The Church does not replace Israel. But there is no doubt that Gentile believers are grafted into the vine of Israel. The 144,000, therefore, are not just Jews. The 12,000 from Judah and the 12,000 from Benjamin are probably Jews. But the rest of the tribes given in Revelation 7 must be Gentiles believers who will have overcome sin by the time the New Jerusalem appears.

Skipping forward to Revelation 14, we read more about the 144,000. The 144,000 are firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Revelation 14:1-5 I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a number, one hundred forty-four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. (2) I heard a sound from heaven, like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of a great thunder. The sound which I heard was like that of harpists playing on their harps. (3) They sing a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand, those who had been redeemed out of the earth. (4) These are those who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are those who follow the Lamb wherever he

goes. These were redeemed by Jesus from among men, the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. (5) In their mouth was found no lie, for they are blameless.

Notice all the emphasis on holiness? The 144,000 are ready for Christ to return prior to the appearance of the New Jerusalem. The Greek word used here for "virgins" takes the very unusual approach of being in the masculine form. It was the custom of that time for counts of people to include only the men. The women and children were not included in the count. Therefore, it's my belief that there will also be 144,000 women who are redeemed from the earth at this time as well as 144,000 men. They will all be "firstfruits" to God and the Lamb.

What does it mean to be "firstfruits"? Why is it to God and to the Lamb? If firstfruits simply means salvation, then it would not make sense. Many have been saved before the end-times. Revelation is a book that's packed with symbolism. We must interpret the symbolism based on prior uses of the same symbol:

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 But now Christ has been raised from the dead. He became the firstfruits of those who are asleep. (21) For since death came by man, the resurrection of the dead also came by man. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. (23) But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then those who are Christ's, at his coming.

The resurrection of Christ was the firstfruits. His actual resurrection (on the third day) was on the feast of firstfruits, during the Passover week. Therefore, what is the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb? When we follow the symbolism, the 144,000 are first, after the Lamb, to receive a spiritual body. OK, so when does it happen? Let's look back at a verse in this chapter of Revelation.

Revelation 7:3 ESV "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

The 144,000 are sealed, according to this verse, before harm to the land, sea, or trees. This would be a reference to the first two trumpet-plagues. Thus, 144,000 get spiritual bodies (firstfruits) prior to the trumpet-plagues. The trumpet-plagues will be during the time that the two witnesses prophesy for 1260 days.

At the appointed time, when the entire seventy weeks of Daniel 9 are completed, the New Jerusalem will appear. But only a few will be ready for Christ to return. Therefore, Christ will confirm a covenant with the many for another

seven years (Daniel 9:27). It will be a time of great awakening in the Church, where people from every nation, tribe, people, and language will embrace true holiness through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. During these seven-years a great number of people will come into the olive tree of Israel. The two witnesses will prophesy during the first half of these seven-years. But the 144,000 will be ready ahead of time.

Revelation 3:10-13 Because you kept my command to endure, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, which is to come on the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. (11) I am coming quickly! Hold firmly that which you have, so that no one takes your crown. (12) He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will go out from there no more. I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name. (13) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

I believe those who are spiritually ready for Christ to return will get their spiritual bodies prior to this "hour of testing." This is not the rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. But it could be considered to be a partial rapture. I also believe the New Jerusalem will appear in Earth orbit. Everyone will see it. Those who receive their spiritual bodies will be able to go into the New Jerusalem, where rooms have been prepared for us:

John 14:2-3 ESV In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

The following verse also indicates that not all will go through the tribulation:

Luke 21:34-36 "So be careful, or your hearts will be loaded down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day will come on you suddenly. (35) For it will come like a snare on all those who dwell on the surface of all the earth. (36) Therefore be watchful all the time, praying that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will happen, and to stand before the Son of Man."

We are saved by the blood of Jesus. That's a free gift. No amount effort or work on our part is required. But those who are saved are asked by Jesus to "seek first

the kingdom and his righteousness.” Salvation is a free gift. But to seek the kingdom requires lots of work. Only those who seek the kingdom can inherit the kingdom. This is central to the New Wine System.

There are three different kinds of Christians. There is the “foolish” group who do not overcome sin. And there are the “wicked” in the church who are really enemies of Christ. The wicked servants and the tares grow in the church along with true believers. But they will be separated out because of the persecution of the great tribulation. Then there is the “wise” group who overcomes sin.

Revelation is not about salvation. Revelation is about overcoming sin and inheriting the kingdom. Each of the seven letters ends with a reward for those who overcome sin. And some of the letters explicitly mention works as being sufficient or insufficient. Salvation is not about works. But inheriting the kingdom is very much about works.

We now continue in Revelation chapter 7.

Revelation 7:9-12 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. (10) They cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation be to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (11) All the angels were standing around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before his throne, and worshiped God, (12) saying, "Amen! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might, be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Earlier, the 144,000 were sealed. We learned from Revelation 14 that the 144,000 stood with Christ on Mount Zion. Now there is a countless number standing before Christ in front of the throne in heaven. When the New Jerusalem first appears, only 144,000 are ready to see Christ. At the end of the tribulation there is a countless number from every nation, tribe, people, and language. The white robes indicate purity. They have overcome all the sinful habits in their lives and have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. Is there any question that a countless number must go through the great tribulation? Let's read on and find out.

We continue in Revelation chapter 7; the last five verses of the chapter.

Revelation 7:13-17 One of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and from where did they come?" (14) I told him, "My lord, you know." He said to me, "These are those who came out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes, and made them white in the Lamb's blood. (15) Therefore they are before the throne of God, they serve him day and night in his temple. He who sits on the throne will spread his tabernacle over them. (16) They will never be hungry, neither thirsty any more; neither will the sun beat on them, nor any heat; (17) for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shepherds them, and leads them to springs of waters of life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

In order to come out of the great tribulation, you have to have been in the great tribulation. So this is after the great tribulation period.

Today, most of the Church is not ready for the rapture. We are taught that salvation and inheriting the kingdom are one and the same. We know we are saved. So we believe we have already inherited the kingdom. Therefore, we fail to seek the kingdom and his righteousness. Most Christians are not ready for Christ to return.

But 144,000 will be ready. Then the 144,000 will visit and teach around the world in order to lead the rest of the Church into righteousness (at least those in the churches who are willing). This will include people from every nation, tribe, people, and language. This is a countless number who come out of the great tribulation at the post-tribulation the rapture.

After the seven-year covenant, which is after the great tribulation and the resurrection, the countless number will go to the New Jerusalem, in orbit around the earth, for the wedding banquet. We will return with Christ for Armageddon. Then during the millennium, we will reign with Christ as priests and kings, in order to lead the nations into righteousness. We will rule the nations under the literal governmental rule of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Chapter 22

Revelation 8-9 – The Trumpet-Plagues

Revelation 8:1-3 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. (2) I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. (3) Another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer. Much incense was given to him, that he should add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne.

The trumpet-plagues take place during the time when the two witnesses will prophesy for 1260 days. The trumpet-plagues are specifically held back until the 144,000 are sealed (Revelation 7:3). After the time of the two witnesses and the trumpet-plagues is the 42-month reign of the antichrist, which is when the antichrist will have complete his rule over every tribe, people, language, and nation.

In the Old Testament, trumpets were used to announce the presence of God (Exodus 19:16-19, 20:18), the surrounding of Jericho (Joshua 6:4-20), the gathering of the people (Judges 3:27, 6:34), the announcement of news (1 Samuel 13:3, 2 Samuel 6:15, 2 Samuel 20:1), the signal that war is finished (2 Samuel 2:28, 2 Samuel 18:16, 20:22), and the announcement of a new king (1 Kings 1:34, 39, 41, 2 Kings 9:13). The seven trumpets do all these things. The seven trumpets are the wake-up call to the Church; that they must overcome sin. They clearly tell the Church that the pre-tribulation rapture did not happen, and that the time of the tribulation will have begun. The seven trumpets are a warning that Satan, the enemy, is about to have complete rule over the entire world.

During the time of the trumpets, there is time for more witnessing. In chapter 10, we see symbolism that equates to a call to preach. In chapter 11, we read about the two witnesses who prophesy during this time. So, during the time leading up to the complete rule of the antichrist, the Church is still witnessing and new believers are being harvested for Christ. In Revelation 11:13, we see that the Jews in Jerusalem turn to Christ. This is after the time when the two witnesses prophesy. But during the 42-month reign of the antichrist, no more work of the harvest can be done.

John 9:4 I must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day. The night is coming, when no one can work.

The seven seals have four horses, which are about the "four winds" of the world during the end-time generation. Then there are two more seals about the end-time generation, then a "parenthesis," and then the final seal. Likewise, there are four trumpets that are about destruction to the earth itself. Then there are two "woes" against man, then a "parenthesis," and then the final trumpet. The seals, trumpets, and bowls all have this four-two-(parenthesis)-one pattern. The final trumpet leads us right up to the "night," when the antichrist rules. The "night" is the third woe.

Revelation 8:13 I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe! Woe! Woe for those who dwell on the earth, because of the other voices of the trumpets of the three angels, who are yet to sound!"

Revelation 9:12 The first woe is past. Behold, there are still two woes coming after this.

Revelation 11:14 The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe comes quickly.

Revelation 12:12b Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has gone down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time."

That's a bit confusing, so let's look at more details about the woes. Just remember that the fifth and sixth trumpets are the first two woes, and the "night" is the third woe. After the first four trumpet-plagues against the earth, we are introduced to the three woes (Revelation 8:13). This verse clearly identifies the last three trumpets as the three woes. Then, after the fifth trumpet we are told the first woe has passed (Revelation 9:12). After the sixth trumpet, and after the "parenthesis" between the sixth and seventh trumpet, we are told that the second woe is past (Revelation 11:14). So, the fifth trumpet is the first woe, and the sixth trumpet is the second woe. But the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15-19) does not mention a woe. The third woe is not mentioned until verse 12 of chapter 12! And here we read that the "devil has come down to you, having great wrath." So again, the seven trumpets are during those final 1260 days that the two witnesses prophesy, which leads up to the "night," when Satan and the antichrist rule over every tribe, people, language, and nation. The seven trumpets warn us about the "night." The third woe is that "night" when Satan and the antichrist rule.

Revelation 8:4-6 The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. (5) The

angel took the censer, and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it on the earth. There followed thunders, sounds, lightnings, and an earthquake. (6) The seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

As each of the seven angels blow the seven trumpets, God's plagues are poured out on the earth. The first four trumpets signal plagues against the earth, but not directly against man. The fifth and sixth trumpets signal plagues directly against man. Again, we have our four-two-(parenthesis)-one pattern. Each of the seven trumpets can be compared, in order, with the seven days of the Creation. But instead of God creating, there is destruction.

- 1) The first trumpet is a plague of fire. On the first day of the Creation, God said, "Let there be light." Fire and light go together.
- 2) The second trumpet is a plague against the sea. On the second day of the Creation, God formed the sea by separating the waters under the sky from the waters in the sky. The second trumpet thus signals destruction against the sea that God created on the second day.
- 3) The third trumpet is a plague against rivers and springs of water. On the third day of the Creation, God made the rivers and springs of water when he separated the land from the sea. The third trumpet thus signals destruction against the rivers and springs of water that God created on the third day.
- 4) The fourth trumpet is a plague against the heavenly bodies. On the fourth day of the Creation, God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth" (Genesis 1:14-15). The fourth trumpet thus signals destruction against the heavenly bodies that God created on the fourth day.

Revelation 8:7 The first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. One third of the earth was burnt up, and one third of the trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

Revelation 8:8-9 The second angel sounded, and something like a great burning mountain was thrown into the sea. One third of the

sea became blood, (9) and one third of the living creatures which were in the sea died. One third of the ships were destroyed.

Revelation 8:10-11 The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from the sky, burning like a torch, and it fell on one third of the rivers, and on the springs of the waters. (11) The name of the star is called "Wormwood." One third of the waters became wormwood. Many people died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

Revelation 8:12 The fourth angel sounded, and one third of the sun was struck, and one third of the moon, and one third of the stars; so that one third of them would be darkened, and the day wouldn't shine for one third of it, and the night in the same way.

The first four trumpets are plagues against the earth. In each case, the plague is against a third of the Creation. The fifth and sixth trumpets are against Man.

- 5) In the fifth trumpet the Abyss (Hell) is opened. Hell is the final death for those who do not have forgiveness by the blood of Jesus Christ. On the fifth day of the Creation, God created the animal life in the sea and the birds of the air. This life is in direct contrast to the death of Hell. Flying locusts were probably included in this day of the Creation, since this is the day that birds were created. Locusts are used to torture men, but not to kill them. The death of men is saved for the sixth trumpet, since God created Man in the sixth day.

Revelation 9:1-12 The fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from the sky which had fallen to the earth. The key to the pit of the abyss was given to him. (2) He opened the pit of the abyss, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke from a burning furnace. The sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke from the pit. (3) Then out of the smoke came forth locusts on the earth, and power was given to them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. (4) They were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those people who don't have God's seal on their foreheads. (5) They were given power not to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion, when it strikes a person. (6) In those days people will seek death, and will in no way find it. They will desire to die, and death will flee from them. (7) The

shapes of the locusts were like horses prepared for war. On their heads were something like golden crowns, and their faces were like people's faces. (8) They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like those of lions. (9) They had breastplates, like breastplates of iron. The sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, or of many horses rushing to war. (10) They have tails like those of scorpions, and stings. In their tails they have power to harm men for five months. (11) They have over them as king the angel of the abyss. His name in Hebrew is "Abaddon," but in Greek, he has the name "Apollyon." (12) The first woe is past. Behold, there are still two woes coming after this.

- 6) In the sixth trumpet, a third of mankind is killed (Revelation 9:13-21). As the first four trumpets were sounded, the plagues are against a third of the Creation. Now the plague is against a third of mankind. On the sixth day of the Creation, God created Man. The sixth trumpet thus signals the destruction of a third of mankind.

Revelation 9:13-21 The sixth angel sounded. I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, (14) saying to the sixth angel who had one trumpet, "Free the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates!" (15) The four angels were freed who had been prepared for that hour and day and month and year, so that they might kill one third of mankind. (16) The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million. I heard the number of them. (17) Thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those who sat on them, having breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of lions. Out of their mouths proceed fire, smoke, and sulfur. (18) By these three plagues were one third of mankind killed: by the fire, the smoke, and the sulfur, which proceeded out of their mouths. (19) For the power of the horses is in their mouths, and in their tails. For their tails are like serpents, and have heads, and with them they harm. (20) The rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, didn't repent of the works of their hands, that they wouldn't worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. (21) They didn't repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their sexual immorality, nor of their thefts.

The parallels to God's Creation put emphasis on the fact that these are warnings from God. People will say that God loves the world and a God of love and would not do these terrible things. But God also loves the Church, and God wants his Church to repent. The trumpet-plagues are a warning of God's coming wrath. They are a measure of that wrath, given as a warning. The first five trumpet-plagues also have parallels to some of plagues on Egypt.

1) The first trumpet is a plague of hail and fire. The seventh plague on Egypt was a plague of hail (Exodus 9:22-25). This trumpet causes a third of the trees to be burned up. This plague on Egypt beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree.

In this trumpet, the fire is mingled with blood. In Revelation 15:2, the sea of glass is mingled with fire. The same Greek words are used. In Revelation 4:6 we saw a sea of glass before the throne. As people come to the Lord and overcome sin by the blood of Christ, during the trumpet-plagues, they stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire. And in Revelation 15:2, the sea of glass is full of people.

This is a wake-up call for the Bride. God made a covenant with Noah that He would not destroy the earth with water. But nothing was said about fire. God was willing to destroy His Creation with the Great Flood because of sin. Here, God is destroying a third of His Creation, with fire, as a wake-up call for the Bride to overcome sin.

2) The second trumpet turns a third of the sea into blood. In the first plague on Egypt, water was turned into blood (Exodus 7:20). This trumpet causes a third of the living creatures in the sea to die. This plague on Egypt caused the fish in the Nile to die (Exodus 7:21).

3) The third trumpet is similar to the second. Both are about water. But in the third trumpet, the rivers and springs turn bitter. When the Nile in Egypt turned into blood, people had to dig along the banks of the Nile to get drinking water (Exodus 7:24). Likewise, with the third trumpet, many people die from drinking the bitter water.

4) The fourth trumpet darkens the sun, moon, and the stars. A third of the day is without light, and a third of the night is without light. The ninth plague on Egypt was darkness (Exodus 10:21-23).

5) In the fifth trumpet, locusts are given the power of scorpions. The eighth plague on Egypt was locusts (Exodus 10:12-15).

The trumpets are a wake-up call for the Church, and the trumpets announce that Satan and the antichrist are about to have complete rule over the entire world.

The seven trumpets occur during the prophecy of the two witnesses. They prophesy for 1260 days. The two witnesses “have power over the waters, to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire” (Revelation 11:6b). In other words, the world relates the trumpet-plagues with these two witnesses. At the end of the 1260 days, they are killed and the world celebrates by exchanging presents (Revelation 11:10). But after three and a half days, they are raised up as the whole world watches.

The trumpets are all about building the Church. The seventh trumpet signals the fulfillment of this goal. The Church is built as the Church becomes serious about overcoming sin. Those who truly know Christ are led by the Spirit to overcome sin. This fact is given in each of the seven letters to the seven churches. The Greek word used for “overcome” can mean to conquer, prevail, or get the victory. This word is used in Revelation 5:5 in speaking about the victory of Jesus so that he could open the seven seals. And we can be victorious over sin by the blood of Jesus (Revelation 12:11). In Revelation 15:2, John sees the sea of glass mingled with fire. As people come to the Lord and overcome sin by the blood of Christ, during the trumpet-plagues, they stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire (Revelation 15:2). The same Greek word for overcome is used in this verse. Revelation 15:2 is before the bowls of wrath. All Christians will have this victory before God’s wrath is poured out. The Church will be victorious as the trumpets are sounded. The trumpets are a signal for the battle over sin to be fought and for victory to be won. Revelation 21:7 NIV concludes with, “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son.”

An allusion to the seven trumpets can be found in Joshua 6. The Lord tells Joshua to march around the city of Jericho for seven days. An armed guard led the way. Seven priests carried trumpets and marched ahead of the Ark of the Covenant. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times with the priests blowing the trumpets. The walls of the city collapsed and the victory was won.

Joshua 6:2-5 Yahweh said to Joshua, "Behold, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the mighty men of valor. (3) All your men of war shall march around the city, going around the city once. You shall do this six days. (4) Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark [of the covenant]. On the seventh day, you shall march around the city seven times, and

the priests shall blow the trumpets. (5) It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall go up every man straight before him."

The victory at Jericho required the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant carried the Ten Commandments. Obedience to God's laws is required for spiritual victory. When the seventh trumpet is sounded, John sees the Ark of the Covenant in the temple of God in heaven. Under the New Covenant, God's law is written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-33, Hebrews 8:8). But this doesn't happen overnight in the believer. It's the process of sanctification. It's all about the Church taking sin seriously. It begins with the opening of the seals. And it's accomplished by the seven trumpet-plagues. So, at the seventh trumpet John sees the Ark of the Covenant in the temple of God. This is symbolic of the completion of God's law being written in the hearts of Church, which is the temple of God.

When the seventh trumpet is sounded, voices in heaven say, "The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. He will reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15). In other words, this is what is accomplished during the time of the trumpet-plagues. The conquering of the kingdom of the world is the victory. The walls of the city will collapse. The Church is built, and the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Lord. But this doesn't literally happen at the seventh trumpet. The Church must first go through the desert of sanctification. Yet it's considered accomplished at the seventh trumpet.

Chapter 23

Revelation 9 – The Three Woes

Revelation 8:13 I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe! Woe! Woe for those who dwell on the earth, because of the other voices of the trumpets of the three angels, who are yet to sound!"

All three woes are against those who dwell on the earth. The fifth trumpet is the first woe. The sixth trumpet is the second woe. And the seventh trumpet leads us right up to the "night," which is the third woe. For this first woe, a fallen angel (demon) is allowed to release a bunch of demons (locusts) to torment sinful men. For the second woe, there are four angels who have been bound and are then released. So, these four angels are also probably fallen angels, or demons. They are released and allowed to start a big war, a war that kills a third of the population of mankind. For the third woe, Satan himself is thrown down to the earth (Revelation 12:12), having great wrath. So, the fifth and sixth trumpets, which are the first and second woes, are a warning of the greatest tribulation of all time, the third woe, the worldwide rule by Satan and the antichrist.

The fifth trumpet is the woe of demons. In Revelation 9:1, a star falls from the heaven to the earth. This would be an angel, probably a fallen angel. Stars are symbolic of angels (Revelation 1:20). A fallen angel is a demon. This fallen angel (demon) is given the key to the Abyss, which is the bottomless pit. In the Greek and in the KJV it's the bottomless pit. In other translations it's the Abyss. In Revelation 11:7 and 17:8, the beast (antichrist) comes from the Abyss. In Revelation 20:1-3, another angel locks up Satan in the Abyss for a thousand years.

The fallen angel (demon) is allowed to open up the Abyss and let out of bunch of demons. These demons are seen as locusts in John's vision. The angel opens the bottomless pit (Abyss) and fire and smoke rise from it like smoke from a gigantic furnace. There is enough smoke to darken the sun and the sky. This sounds very much like volcanic activity. Smoke from a volcano can darken the sun and the sky. The Greek word used here for pit means a hole in the ground. A volcano is a hole in the ground that leads all the way to the center of the earth. From that perspective, it's bottomless. If you could survive at the center of the earth, you would be weightless. There would be no "down." So, a volcano can be thought of as a bottomless pit. And the center of the earth is full of melted lava, which can be thought of as fire.

The seven trumpets are a wake-up call for the Bride. The Church must overcome sin. But most people will continue to rebel against God by continuing in unrepentant sin. So, God allows demons to torment those who have not been sealed with the seal of God on their foreheads. The 144,000 are sealed at the start of the seven-year period. They are sealed before any of the trumpets (Revelation 7:3). The first four trumpets are unmistakable. Hopefully many Christians will see them and repent and overcome sin by faith in Jesus. But all over the world, those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads are tormented by these demons for five months. They are not killed. But verse 6 tells us that many will seek death over this torment. The Church must learn that those who continue to sin do not know Christ, (1 John 3:4-10, 5:18-19) and thus are subject to God's wrath.

The sixth trumpet is the woe of war. Four angels have been bound at the great river Euphrates. Four is symbolic of the whole world. This woe of war is World War III. A third of mankind is killed. The four angels are probably fallen angels because they are bound until this time. They go out and deceive men to bring war.

The armies of this war are numbered at two hundred million. I would assume that this is a total number of all the armies involved. Still, for there to be two hundred million soldiers, China and most of the Far East would seem to be involved. The great river Euphrates separates the Far East from the Middle East and the West. The four angels are bound at the Euphrates. It would seem that they go out to the east, west, north and south to bring the East, Middle East, and the West against each other in war.

The vision of the sixth trumpet includes horses. This is not an army on horseback. The horses are symbolic. The first four seals have four horses, and they are symbolic. Refer back to the comments on the four horses of Revelation 6. The four horses of the seals represent the United States (west - white horse), China (east - fiery red horse), the USSR or Russia (north - black horse), and the United Nations (south - pale horse). So, four angels, probably fallen angels, are released from the Euphrates to go out to the east, west, north, and south, and to bring about World War III. Those who sit on the horses in World War III have breastplates of fiery red. (The breastplates were also hyacinth blue and sulfur yellow.) In the seals, the fiery red horse represents China, which is east of the Euphrates.

This war seems to be primarily between the United States and China, but probably includes other nations as well. Out of their mouths come fire, smoke, and brimstone. Their mouths represent their command of the machinery of war. The fire, smoke, and brimstone (sulfur) are the firepower of modern weapons of

war. The Greek word used here for brimstone means sulfur. Sulfur is used to make gunpowder. A third of the people in the world are killed with these weapons. Today, a third of the world's population is two billion people. That's more people than in China and in the United States combined.

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with fire and brimstone (Genesis 19:24). These two cities were destroyed because of sin. The trumpets are a wake-up call to the Bride. The end-time generation, which is the baby-boom generation, was born right after World War II. World War III is the last wake-up call that's given to this end-time generation. But World War III is not Armageddon. World War III is only a wake-up call. Armageddon happens after the resurrection and the rapture. But many in the world will probably perceive this war as being Armageddon. The world believes that after Armageddon is the reign of peace. This could lead them to think the antichrist is a messiah.

Genesis 19:24-28 Then Yahweh rained on Sodom and on Gomorrah sulfur and fire from Yahweh out of the sky. (25) He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew on the ground. (26) But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. (27) Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before Yahweh. (28) He looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and looked, and saw that the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace.

Revelation 9:17-18 ESV And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. (18) By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths.

Does China put together an army of two hundred million? Or does this number consist of the armies of many nations, including China? With the "heads of lions" symbolism, a symbol of the United States, in verse 17, I would say the two hundred million include people who are from many nations. Also, four angels are released. The number four is symbolic of the world and the nations of the world. (Four beasts, four horses, four winds, the first four days of the Creation, etc.) I think this army of two hundred million is from many nations. If two hundred million soldiers kill two billion people, it would average ten people being killed for every soldier.

This war at the sixth trumpet is towards the end of the 1260-day prophecy of the two witnesses. Perhaps this war, where a third of mankind is killed, is the war that pushes the world into accepting a one-world government. "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 1 Thessalonians 5:3). After World War III, the world will want a one-world government. They will be crying, "Peace and safety." But the sudden destruction that will come are the bowls of wrath and Armageddon. Soon after World War III the antichrist gains global control. But the antichrist will not maintain everlasting peace.

The sixth trumpet is the final warning to repent. These plagues in the sixth trumpet are the three plagues of fire, smoke, and brimstone (sulfur). But Revelation 9:20-21 says that the rest of mankind, who are not killed by these plagues, do not repent. This is right before the abomination of desolation, toward the end of the 1260-day prophecy of the two witnesses. During the 42-month reign of the antichrist, I think no one will be able to come into the vine of Christ. Satan will have complete authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation (Revelation 13:5-7). This is the time of the night, when no one can work (John 9:4). No harvest of believers is possible during the "night," so the sixth trumpet is the last warning. But the people who have gone through the first five trumpets without repenting will apparently not repent after the plague of World War III.

Revelation 9:20-21 The rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, didn't repent of the works of their hands, that they wouldn't worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. (21) They didn't repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their sexual immorality, nor of their thefts.

Verse 20 says they do not repent from worshipping the works of their hands. This is the love of money, which is the root of all evil (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13, 1 Timothy 6:10, Hebrews 13:5). This verse also says the people worship idols of "gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood." The worship of money, and the things it can buy, is the idol worship of today. This is symbolized as the worship of "gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood." In Daniel 2, the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream had the head of Babylon. The whole statue is prophetic Babylon. In Daniel 5:23, Daniel tells Belshazzar that he worships the "gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone." I think this is close enough that it's not a coincidence. The world worships idols in both ancient Babylon and in modern-day times. The world is following the West in culture, in economics, and in sinful living.

Chapter 24

Revelation 10 – The Call to Preach

Revelation 10:1-8 I saw a mighty angel coming down out of the sky, clothed with a cloud. A rainbow was on his head. His face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. (2) He had in his hand a little open book. He set his right foot on the sea, and his left on the land. (3) He cried with a loud voice, as a lion roars. When he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. (4) When the seven thunders sounded, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from the sky saying, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders said, and don't write them." (5) The angel who I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to the sky, (6) and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there will no longer be delay, (7) but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as he declared to his servants, the prophets. (8) The voice which I heard from heaven, again speaking with me, said, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land."

When we are first introduced to the angel in Revelation 10:2, we learn that he has a little scroll that lay open in his hand. This scroll no doubt relates to the scroll in Daniel. In verse 8, we learn more about the scroll. John is told to take the scroll and eat it. The scroll is sweet as honey in the mouth, but would turn the stomach bitter (or sour). This scroll can also be found in Ezekiel's call to preach (Ezekiel 2:9-3:3). In Ezekiel, it's "sweet as honey in the mouth," just as in Revelation. But Ezekiel doesn't mention that it's bitter in the stomach. Ezekiel says that on both sides of the scroll are words of lament and mourning and woe. Thus we know why it's bitter in the stomach.

Ezekiel 2:9 - 3:3 When I looked, behold, a hand was put forth to me; and, behold, a scroll of a book was therein; (2:10) He spread it before me: and it was written within and without; and there were written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe. (3:1) He said to me, Son of man, eat that which you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel. (3:2) So I opened my mouth, and

he caused me to eat the scroll. (3:3) He said to me, Son of man, cause your belly to eat, and fill your bowels with this scroll that I give you. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

Revelation 10:9-11 I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little [scroll]. He said to me, "Take it, and eat it up. It will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." (10) I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up. It was as sweet as honey in my mouth. When I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. (11) They told me, "You must prophesy again over many peoples, nations, languages, and kings."

The Mystery of God climaxes with the resurrection. That's sweet in the mouth. But the bitter truth is the theme of Revelation. According to the seven letters to the seven churches, the Church must overcome sin in order to inherit the kingdom. That's a truth that's hard to swallow, and thus it's bitter in the stomach. These are words of "lament, mourning, and woe." In Ezekiel's call to preach, he is told to preach to Israel. He is not told to preach to "peoples of obscure speech and difficult language, whose words you cannot understand" (Ezekiel 3:6). He is told to preach to Israel. "But the house of Israel is not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate." (Ezekiel 3:7). This is the way it is with most Christians today.

When John ate the scroll, he was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings." Ezekiel was told to prophesy to Israel. To prophesy is to say God's word. It's not necessarily to tell the future. Today, we know enough about God's mystery to know that Israel includes Gentiles from many "nations, languages, and kings." God is saying that the message given to Ezekiel is the same message that the Church today needs to hear today. And it may take the wake-up call of the trumpets before the Church will take that message seriously. Today, some of the Church believes that they will skip over the trumpets. Others believe the trumpets are symbolic of things in history. Others believe that the trumpets won't really happen. But if the trumpets were to really begin to happen, people who call themselves Christians will either take God's wake-up call seriously, or they will leave the Church. And many church leaders will probably try to deny that God is behind the trumpet-plagues, even though they are in the Bible. The trumpet-plagues are all about the accomplishment of God's mystery. The Mystery of God is that all God's people will make themselves ready for Christ to return. Then the mystery will climax with the resurrection.

Chapter 25

Revelation 11 – The Building of the Temple

25.1) The Temple is Symbolic of the Church

Revelation 11 is about the building of the temple, which is the Church. I believe the physical temple will be rebuilt. But what's important to realize is what the building of the temple symbolizes. The temple represents the Church. Before moving on to Revelation 11, let's look at the articles of furniture in temple to see that the Church is symbolized in the temple furniture.

The first thing you come to as you pass through the gate and enter the courtyard is the altar of burnt offerings. Beyond the altar is a laver and beyond that is the actual tabernacle tent. Animals were sacrificed on the altar as a substitute for the punishment of sin. The death of creatures from God's creation, however, could only be a temporary substitute for the death that results from sin. Animal sacrifice was only a shadow of that which was to come. The sacrificial Lamb of God is Jesus Christ. He is the real and permanent substitute for our sins. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Jesus Christ took the wages of sin in the sacrifice of his own life, so that we could be given back eternal life. Without his sacrifice, even the Jews of the Old Testament could not have received forgiveness.

When you accept Christ as your Lord and receive the gift of Christ's death to replace the death you are due, God cleanses you from all sin and makes you righteous. The second article of furniture you come to as you enter the tabernacle gate symbolizes this. Between the altar and the tabernacle tent is a laver or basin. It contains water and is used by the officiating priests. After your sins are cleansed away at the laver, you can enter the "tent of meeting," or the tabernacle.

The tabernacle itself is divided into two rooms. The first room you come to is called the holy place and is twice as big as the second room. The smaller room is the holy of holies. See section 25.3 below for reasons why the resurrection of the Church is on "The Third Day." This is why the first room is twice as big as the second room. The age of grace is two millennia; Christ's reign is one millennium.

The first room, the holy place, contains three pieces of furniture. The right side of the room contains the table of the bread of the Presence. This table contains unleavened bread, eaten by the priests every Sabbath in the holy place. The table contains dishes for the bread, pans or spoons for incense, and jugs or jars with cups for wine. Incense is symbolic of prayer (Revelation 5:8, 8:3-5). The table with the

bread and the wine, along with prayer, reminds us of the Lord's Supper. In today's Church, all believers are priests and should remember our Lord Jesus Christ often with the bread, the wine, and prayer. When two or more are gathered in His name, He is in the midst. The table of the bread of the Presence is thus symbolic of the Lord's Supper and of Christ's Presence as we remember Him.

The left side of this room contains the lampstand made of pure gold. The golden lampstand contains seven golden lamps. Revelation starts out with John seeing a vision of seven golden lampstands. The lampstand of pure gold with the seven golden lamps is symbolic of the Church. The Church is the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16).

The fifth item of furniture in the holy place is the altar of incense. It occupies the space at the middle of the veil, which separates the holy place from the holy of holies. It is not in the holy of holies; it is placed just outside of that room. Upon the altar of incense, no sacrifice offering is made. Only incense is burned. Incense is burned twice a day: morning and evening. Incense is symbolic of prayer (Revelation 5:8, 8:3-5).

Incense is burned on the altar twice a day: morning and evening. Every Christian should take the hint and meet the Lord in prayer twice a day, morning and evening. Today, we do not need a tabernacle. If you are a Christian, you are a priest of God. You can enter the holy place and meet with God in prayer. The altar of incense is very close to the holy of holies, but not quite in there. We are not in the face-to-face presence of God, but we can talk with God. When we talk with God, it is like speaking through a curtain. God hears us and we can hear Him.

The Church is resurrected on the third millennial day. The third millennial day is the thousand-year reign of Christ. I refer to the first two millennial days as the age of grace. Just as the age of grace is twice as long as Christ' millennial reign, the holy place is twice as long as the holy of holies.

Jewish priests could not enter the holy of holies at will. Only the high priest could enter the holy of holies, and then only once a year. He had to wash himself completely before entering. Jews believe that God dwells in the holy of holies. Entering the holy of holies is entering into the very presence of God. Today, in the age of grace, Christians are priests of God. We can enter the holy place but cannot enter the holy of holies. Only Christ, the high priest, has done that. Only Christ, the high priest has seen God (John 3:13). When the millennial day of the Lord comes, Jesus will return and the Church will enter into the very presence of God. We will be with God, face to face, in all of His glory (Revelation 7:9).

When Christ died, he not only paid the price for us to have eternal life; he also paid the price for us to have a face-to-face relationship with God. Christ has defeated death, but death is temporarily still with us. After Christ's second coming, the Church will no longer experience death. The price was paid almost two thousand years ago. Just as we are still experiencing death, we still do not have a face-to-face relationship with God. We still cannot enter the holy of holies. When Christ died, the veil between the holy place and the holy of holies was split.

Matthew 27:50-53 Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit. (51) Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. The earth quaked and the rocks were split. (52) The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; (53) and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they entered into the holy city and appeared to many.

These two things happened at the same time. The splitting of the veil tells us the death of Christ purchased a face-to-face relationship with God. The opening of the tombs and many holy people coming to life tells us the death of Christ purchased eternal life for holy people who trust in Christ. People are still dying today. So, these were signs of what would happen. We cannot yet enter the holy of holies. And the Church as a whole will not until after the resurrection.

The holy of holies contains two pieces of furniture: the two cherubim and the Ark of the Covenant. The cherubim guard the way back to the tree of life and the face-to-face presence that Adam had with God (Genesis 3:24). The two cherubim stand on either side of the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:22, Leviticus 16:2).

The new covenant is recorded in Jeremiah 31:31 and Hebrews 8:8. In it God said, "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. ... For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." The price of the new covenant was the blood of Jesus Christ. The Ark of the Covenant contains the stone tablets, written by God himself, containing the Laws that must be followed to be in the face-to-face presence of God. Since we are slaves to sin, no one can live a life without breaking these laws. Christ therefore paid the price, and now the Law is written on our hearts. God remembers our sins no more. We are no longer slaves to sin. We can, and must, choose to overcome sin and obey the law written on our hearts. Thus, we can and will have a face-to-face relationship with God.

25.2) The Third Day

In Revelation 11:1, John is told to “measure God's temple, and the altar, and those who worship in it.” We have begun to do so by seeing the articles of furniture in the temple and how they represent the Church. We have also seen that the room of the holies is twice as big as the room for the holies of holies. The age of grace is twice as long as Christ’s millennial reign. In other words, just as the resurrection of Christ was on the third day, the resurrection of the Church is on the third millennial day. Currently, we are symbolically in the holies. When Christ returns, we will be able to enter the holies of holies and see Christ face to face.

One day during the ministry of Jesus, well before His final entry into Jerusalem, the Pharisees tried to frighten Jesus, saying that Herod wanted to kill Him.

Luke 13:31-32 On that same day, some Pharisees came, saying to him, "Get out of here, and go away, for Herod wants to kill you."
 (32) He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I complete my mission.

Jesus calls Herod a fox and then tells him something he cannot possibly understand! We have a hard time understanding it today! The context of the passage is the death of Jesus, but it is said well before his death. The two days of driving out demons and healing people can and does refer to the two days Jesus was dead. His death paid the price to drive out demons and to heal people. On the third day he "reached his goal" by being raised from the dead.

But, was this really the “goal” of Jesus? The “goal” of Jesus is the redemption of His Church! Also, why did Jesus say "today and tomorrow" when he clearly was not to be crucified at that time? And did Jesus really drive out demons and perform healings while he was in the grave?

The answer is easy if the days of which Jesus speaks are the thousand year 'days' of God's plan. For two thousand-year 'days,' demons have been driven out and people have been healed in the name of Jesus. On the third 'day,' his Church is resurrected! The age of grace is two days, or two thousand years. After Jesus speaks about "today, tomorrow, and the third day," Christ goes on to say:

Luke 13:33-35 Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the next day, for it can't be that a prophet perish outside of Jerusalem. (34) "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that kills the prophets, and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted

to gather your children together, like a hen gathers her own brood under her wings, and you refused! (35) Behold, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' "

This verse is in the same context. It's part of his response to the statement that Herod wants to kill him. Is the focus of Jesus on his own resurrection, on the third day? Or is the focus of Jesus on the resurrection of Israel? There is a very similar verse in Matthew 23:37-38. Jesus is saying that Jerusalem will not see him again until they say these words. But here it's being addressed to the religious leaders, those who "sit on the seat of Moses" (Matthew 23:2). Matthew's account makes it clear that the people had already said these words when Jesus rode in on a donkey (Matthew 21:9). The words are from Psalm 118:26. For the Jews to say these words about Jesus would be to say that Jesus is the Messiah.

Like Jesus, Paul also agonizes over the fact that the Jewish people, his own people, rejected Jesus as the Messiah (Romans 9-11). In Romans 11:25, Paul predicts that the Jews would come back into the vine after the full number of Gentiles had come into the vine of Christ (or the vine of true Israel). I think it's clear from these verses that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (those who sit on the seat of Moses) will come back into the vine in the last days. The "goal" of Jesus is not his own resurrection. The "goal" of Jesus is the resurrection of true Israel, which is the Church, on the third day. Consider the words of Hosea:

Hosea 6:1-3 "Come, and let us return to Yahweh; for he has torn us to pieces, and he will heal us; he has injured us, and he will bind up our wounds. (2) After two days he will revive us. On the third day he will raise us up, and we will live before him. (3) Let us acknowledge Yahweh. Let us press on to know Yahweh. As surely as the sun rises, Yahweh will appear. He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain that waters the earth."

This verse is certainly about the crucifixion. But interpreted literally, it's also about Israel, and not just about Christ himself. So, on the third day the Church (true Israel) is resurrected and we begin to "live in his presence." The resurrection of Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection of true Israel (1 Corinthians 15:20). Both are on the third day.

This chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, is Paul's most in-depth discussion about the resurrection. In that chapter, in 1 Corinthians 15:22-26, Paul gives us a chronology of events. Here is that chronology:

1 Corinthians 15:22-26 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. (23) But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then those who are Christ's, at his coming. (24) Then the end comes, when he will deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when he will have abolished all rule and all authority and power. (25) For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

- 1) Christ's resurrection
- 2) When He comes, the resurrection of those who belong to him.
- 3) Then the end comes, when he hands the kingdom over to the Father. At this point he has destroyed earthly governments. This is stated as all “dominion, authority, and power.” So this can also include the chaining of Satan.
- 4) Next he must reign until all his enemies are put under his feet.
- 5) The last enemy is death.

Thus, Christ must reign during the millennium until death is finally destroyed. Does this not outline the third-day resurrection of true Israel quite nicely? Look back at what Paul said to start this discussion.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

Where in the Scriptures does it say that the Messiah would be raised on the third day? We looked at Hosea 6:1-3 (quoted above). That’s the closest verse in the Old Testament that could be applied to the resurrection of the Messiah on the third day. But you have to “reinterpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament” in order to come to this conclusion. Is that what Paul was doing? Perhaps a better way of looking at this is to see that the birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus are very similar to that of true Israel. For example, in Matthew 2:15, Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1 saying, “Out of Egypt I called my son.” Was Matthew denying that Hosea 11:1 was talking about Israel historically coming out of Egypt? Or was Matthew seeing that Israel’s history is patterned after Christ? The government killing the baby-boys of Israel marked the birth of Moses. Could this be seen as a prophecy of Herod the Great killing baby boys when Christ was born? The history of one is a prophecy of the other.

Paul knew that Old Testament Scripture taught that Israel would be raised on the third day. He also knew that Christ was raised on the third day. Again, Paul said, “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” But the Scriptures never explicitly says the Messiah would be raised on the third day. And we know of no Jewish tradition indicating that the Messiah would be raised on the third day. The best explanation of why Paul said this is that Paul, knowing that Christ was raised on the third day, understood that the two are linked. One is the prophecy of the other.

Let’s look at some other Old-Testament passages that speak of the third day.

- 1) Abraham was spared the task of sacrificing Isaac on the third day (Genesis 22:4) of their travel to Moriah, which is the Temple Mount (2nd Chronicles 3:1).
- 2) Exodus 19:10-11 - Compare with Luke 13:32-33
- 3) Exodus 19:14-16 - Compare with 6th seal and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (rapture)
- 4) As Joseph prophesied, the cupbearer was restored to his position and the chief baker was hanged, on the third day (Genesis 40:20-22). The third day is a day of judgment (2nd Peter 3:7).
- 5) Leviticus 7:17-18 - God's sacrifice is only good till the third day. After the third day, it's too late. After Christ returns, it's too late to inherit the kingdom.
- 6) Numbers 19:11-12, Numbers 31:19 - If you are purified on the third day, you will be pure the day when Christ reigns as "Lord of the Sabbath." Both are actually the same millennial day.
- 7) 2 Kings 20:5
- 8) Ezra 6:15

Matthew 20:18-19 - This verse is of course about the three 24-hour days of the crucifixion. Notice that He is turned over to the Gentiles. Jerusalem was turned over to the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Luke 21:24). The parallelism holds. Jesus was turned over to the Gentiles until the third day. Israel is turned over to the Gentiles until the third millennial day.

John 2:1-2 The third day, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. (2) Jesus also was invited, with his disciples, to the marriage.

Let's look back to Hosea 6:1-3. In the context of this passage, Israel is unrepentant. After a few verses of judgment for Israel's unrepentant nature, the Scripture goes on to say, "For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (NIV Hosea 6:6). Here, we find the very scripture Jesus quoted to the Pharisees when he declared himself "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:7-8). I believe this title refers to Christ's millennial reign. Christ reigns in the seventh millennium. God wants a clean heart, not ritual. The ritual was only given as a pointer to Christ. This same unrepentant nature shown by Hosea was still present in the time of Jesus. Because of Israel's unrepentant nature, God has "torn [Israel] to pieces." But Israel is raised back up two (millennial) days later.

25.3) The Symbolic Building of the Temple

Now let's move onto Revelation 11, which is also sandwiched between the sixth and the seventh trumpet. The first thing we find in this chapter is John being told to measure the temple, and to count the worshipers there. The reading of this is very natural and literal sounding. Personally, I believe the physical temple will be rebuilt. In 2 Thessalonians 2:4 Paul tells us that the man of lawlessness will set himself up in the temple proclaiming himself to be God. The physical temple was still standing when Paul wrote this. So, it would be only natural for the church at Thessalonica to interpret this as the literal and physical temple. I believe the physical temple will be rebuilt. But what's important to realize is what the building of the temple symbolizes. The temple represents the Church. The body of the believer is the temple of God (John 2:19-21, 1st Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19, Ephesians 2:19-22, Revelation 3:12, 7:15). Even in Old Testament times, the physical temple has always been a symbol for the Church, which is Israel. (Gentile believers are grafted into Israel.) As we saw in section 25.1, the furniture shows how the temple is symbolic of the Church. As the temple is built, so is the Church.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 Flee sexual immorality! "Every sin that a man does is outside the body," but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. (19) Or don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God? You are not your own, (20) for you were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

John is told to measure the temple, and to count the worshipers there (Revelation 11:1). The counting of the worshippers reminds us of Ezekiel 8-9. Ezekiel is given a vision where he is able to see the leaders of Israel in the way that God saw them. They did many detestable things in secret. Then in Ezekiel 9, the angel is told to put a mark on the forehead of the people in Jerusalem “who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it” (NIV Ezekiel 9:4). In other words, those who would swallow the scroll, that’s bitter in the stomach, are God’s people. They receive a mark on their foreheads. Those without the mark are slaughtered.

In Revelation 9:4, we see that because of this mark on their forehead, God’s people are protected from the trumpet-plagues. The purpose of the trumpet-plagues is not to slander unbelievers. The purpose of the trumpet-plagues is to build the Church, symbolized by the temple. The shock-and-awe effect the trumpet-plagues will have on the Church will cause each one of us to get serious about overcoming sin. Those who won’t get serious about overcoming sin will probably deny that God is behind the trumpet-plagues, and will effectively separate themselves from the Church. John is told to count the worshipers at the temple. During this time, that number will dramatically increase.

The outer courtyard of the temple is called the Gentile courtyard. Revelation 11:2 says that during the 42 months, the outer courtyard is given over to the Gentiles. The verse also says the Gentiles will trample on the holy city for these 42 months. In Luke 21:24, we read that Jerusalem was to be trampled on by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled. Trampling upon (or controlling) Jerusalem by Gentiles had been going on throughout that generation. Rome placed a governor in Jerusalem after the death of Herod the Great. Luke 21:20 is about the armies surrounding Jerusalem and the desolation of Jerusalem that would come.

This happened in 70 AD. But in 1967, the Jews regained control of Jerusalem. So, old Jerusalem was no longer trampled on by the Gentiles, and old Jerusalem was no longer desolate. The loss to the Jews of 70 AD was restored. Some will argue that this cannot be a fulfillment of prophecy because the Jews are not Christian. But neither were they Christian in 70 AD. Being a Gentile simply means you are not a Jew. Nothing is being said by this verse about the salvation (or lack thereof) of those who control Jerusalem. The restoration of Israel to Jews in 1967 is not the restoration of true Israel to Jerusalem that will occur when Christ returns. But we can view the events in Israel as a sign. It’s a sign that had to take place before the fulfillment of Matthew 23:39 and Romans 11:25.

Revelation 11:1-2 NIV I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. (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.

Luke 21:24 They will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Today, the Gentiles are not trampling on Jerusalem. But Revelation 11:2 tells us that Gentiles will trample on Jerusalem for another 42 months. To follow the symbolism, that means Jerusalem will be controlled by Gentiles during the 42 months. In order for this to be true, the month prior to the 42 months must be a time when Jerusalem is not being trampled on by the Gentiles. Today, Jerusalem is not being trampled on by the Gentiles. So in one sense, the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled. But in another sense, the time of the Gentiles is not completely over. There is still another 42-months before it's completely fulfilled. During the 42-month reign of the antichrist, he rules over every nation, tribe, people, and language. This all-inclusive description must include Jerusalem. So, the antichrist rules Jerusalem during these 42 months. And the antichrist rules Jerusalem only during these 42 months, as per Revelation 11:2. After the 42-month reign of the antichrist the time of the Gentiles will be completely fulfilled.

Revelation 11:3-4 I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." (4) These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands, standing before the Lord of the earth.

The two witnesses prophesy for 1260 days (Revelation 11:3). These 1260 days precede the 42 months. 1260 days are followed by three and a half days, which is half of seven. The two witnesses lie dead for these three and a half days. Then, after the abomination of desolation there are 1290 days (Daniel 12:11). The temple is built during the 1260 days. Then after the 1260 days, after the temple is built, it's turned over to the antichrist for 42 months.

Zechariah 4:1-14 The angel who talked with me came again, and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. (2) He said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I have seen, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon; there are seven pipes to each of the lamps, which

are on the top of it; (3) and two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl, and the other on the left side of it." (4) I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, "What are these, my lord?" (5) Then the angel who talked with me answered me, "Don't you know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." (6) Then he answered and spoke to me, saying, "This is the word of Yahweh to Zerubbabel, saying, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says Yahweh of Armies. (7) Who are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you are a plain; and he will bring out the capstone with shouts of 'Grace, grace, to it!' " (8) Moreover the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, (9) "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house. His hands shall also finish it; and you will know that Yahweh of Armies has sent me to you. (10) Indeed, who despises the day of small things? For these seven shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. These are the eyes of Yahweh, which run back and forth through the whole earth." (11) Then I asked him, "What are these two olive trees on the right side of the lampstand and on the left side of it?" (12) I asked him the second time, "What are these two olive branches, which are beside the two golden spouts, that pour the golden oil out of themselves?" (13) He answered me, "Don't you know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." (14) Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

The 1260-day period is the time of the trumpets. The two witnesses are two olive trees and two lampstands that stand before the Lord (Revelation 11:4). Symbolically, this is tied back to Zechariah 4:1-14. This chapter of Zechariah is about the building of Zerubbabel's temple. Zechariah 4:14 also says that these two are anointed to stand before the Lord of all the earth. So, the two witnesses help to build the symbolic temple. As lampstands they are the light of the world. As olive trees they preach to the Church, which is Israel. The Church, symbolized by the temple, as well as the physical temple itself, is built during these 1260 days.

Zerubbabel is told that his hands have laid the foundation, and that his hands will complete it. And of course that was the case. But I think this also speaks about the end-time generation that will see the return of Christ. The plumb line of Zerubbabel is related to the seven eyes of the Lord, which go throughout the earth (Zechariah 4:10). The plumb line, in the hands of Zerubbabel, relates to the start

of building the temple. We also saw the seven eyes in Revelation 5:6. They are seven spirits sent throughout the world. This was all about Christ opening the seven seals. The four horses of Revelation 6 relate to the four in Zechariah 1:10 and 6:7. They go throughout the earth to see the state of the world at the start of the end-time generation. From our study of the seals, we know the seals are about the signs that began to be revealed at the start of World War II. Zerubbabel, who laid the foundation of the temple, was told that he would see it completed. Likewise, the baby-boom generation will see the completion of the temple, which is symbolic of the Church. We will also see the completion of the physical temple. But the physical temple is only a symbol of the true temple, which is the Church.

Zerubbabel is told, “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6). The Church is built by God’s Spirit. Zechariah 4:7 says, “What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground.” This speaks of the enormous task to bring people from every nation, tribe, people, and language to know the Lord in this generation.

After the ground is leveled, the capstone is placed. The capstone is brought out to shouts of ‘God bless it! God bless it!’ (Zechariah 4:7). “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone” (Psalm 118:22, Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:11, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11, 1st Peter 2:7). Christ is the capstone. As Christ began to open the seven seals, the construction of the temple began. This was seen symbolically as Israel became a nation right after World War II. It was the start of the physical temple. But the real building happens during the trumpet-plagues. That’s when the Church really gets serious about the overcoming of sin.

Revelation 11:5-7 If anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies. If anyone desires to harm them, he must be killed in this way. (6) These have the power to shut up the sky, that it may not rain during the days of their prophecy. They have power over the waters, to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire. (7) When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them.

25.4) The Last of the Believers

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile (Romans 10:12, Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11). So, there is no reason for a pre-tribulation rapture. The whole church will go through the great tribulation (Revelation 7:14). But Scripture does indicate the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will be the last to come back into the vine of Israel (Romans 11:25-26).

Romans 11:25 For I don't desire you to be ignorant, brothers, of this mystery, so that you won't be wise in your own conceits, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Jesus told the religious leaders in Jerusalem, “You will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Matthew 23:37-39). This is an acknowledgement that Jesus is the Messiah (Psalm 118:26). The Jewish people in Jerusalem had already said these exact words when Jesus rode in on a donkey (Matthew 21:9). But in Matthew 23, Jesus was addressing the teachers of the law who sit on the seat of Moses (Matthew 23:2). So, Jesus is saying that the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem must someday acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ. They will be the last of the Bride of Christ, because the full number of Gentiles will have already come into the vine of Israel (Romans 11:25-26).

Romans 11:24-26 For if you were cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more will these, which are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? (25) For I don't desire you to be ignorant, brothers, of this mystery, so that you won't be wise in your own conceits, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, (26) and so all Israel will be saved. Even as it is written, "There will come out of Zion the Deliverer, and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

The story of the two witnesses, perhaps, gives us some details as to how this will come about. At the end of the 1260 days (Revelation 11:7), the two witnesses will be in Jerusalem (verse 8). The beast has them killed, and for three and a half days, people from every nation, tribe, people, and language will celebrate their deaths, even exchanging gifts. They “will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial” (verse 9). We can assume this is done by worldwide news coverage such as CNN.

Verse 10 says the world will celebrate their deaths, because “these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.” Most likely the world’s hatred of the two witnesses will be due to the trumpet-plagues and the New Jerusalem in orbit around the earth. Verse 6 says, “They have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.” The trumpet-plagues start with turning water into blood. So, the world celebrates when the antichrist manages to kill them. But after three and a half days, they are raised to life for all to see (verse 12). Then they are called up into heaven.

Revelation 11:8-12 Their dead bodies will be in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. (9) From among the peoples, tribes, languages, and nations people will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not allow their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. (10) Those who dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and they will be glad. They will give gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. (11) After the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood on their feet. Great fear fell on those who saw them. (12) I heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" They went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies saw them.

That very hour, there is an earthquake in Jerusalem (verse 13). “Seven thousand people are killed in the earthquake, and the survivors are terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven” (NIV verse 13). The Greek word used here for ‘survivors’ is the word that’s translated ‘remnant.’ The KJV translates it as ‘remnant.’ The number seven thousand is also interesting because it was the number of the remnant left in Elijah’s day (1 Kings 19:18, Romans 11:4). The remnant would include Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.

It would seem that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem give glory to God as a result of the preaching of these two witnesses. No doubt these two witnesses are preaching Jesus as the Messiah. So apparently, this is the fulfillment of Romans 11:25-26 and Matthew 23:37-39. The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” And they will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, before Jesus returns. The Jews in Jerusalem then become the last to be added to the vine of Israel. They are the last of the symbolic building of the temple.

Revelation 11:13-19 In that day there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified, and gave glory to the God of heaven. (14) The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe comes quickly. (15) The seventh angel sounded, and great voices in heaven followed, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. He will reign forever and ever!" (16) The twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God's throne, fell on their faces and worshiped God, (17) saying: "We give you thanks, Lord God, the Almighty, the one who is and who was; because you have taken your great power, and reigned. (18) The nations were angry, and your wrath came, as did the time for the dead to be judged, and to give your bondservants the prophets, their reward, as well as to the saints, and those who fear your name, to the small and the great; and to destroy those who destroy the earth." (19) God's temple that is in heaven was opened, and the ark of the Lord's covenant was seen in his temple. Lightnings, sounds, thunders, an earthquake, and great hail followed.

After the last believer is added to the Church, the seventh trumpet is blown. Loud voices in heaven say, "The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. He will reign forever and ever" (verse 15). It's my belief that the 42-month reign of the beast is after the seventh trumpet. And the literal kingdom of the Christ, where Christ reigns on earth, doesn't begin until after those 42-months. The seventh trumpet is a statement of what has been accomplished by all seven trumpets. The symbolic temple has been completely built, so Christ will be able to reign forever. But first, the Church must be handed over to the antichrist for a time, times, and half a time, to mature in the desert.

Some people believe verse 15 indicates that seventh trumpet is after the great tribulation. But look at verse 14 which says, "The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe comes quickly." In other words, it's not over yet. The first and the second woes were the fifth and sixth trumpets. The third woe is the 42-month reign of the antichrist. Remember that the trumpets are a wake-up call for the Church. The first four speak of harm to the Creation, as in harm to the land, sea, trees, and the heavenly bodies. The fifth and sixth trumpets are against the people of the earth. As discussed back in chapter 22 of this book, here are the three woes.

Revelation 8:13 I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe! Woe! Woe for those who dwell on the earth, because of the other voices of the trumpets of the three angels, who are yet to sound!"

Revelation 9:12 The first woe is past. Behold, there are still two woes coming after this.

Revelation 11:14 The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe comes quickly.

Revelation 12:12b Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has gone down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time."

In verse 19 we see that the temple in heaven is opened, and that the Ark of the Covenant is seen in the temple. This means that God's law is written on the hearts of the Church. When the Church finally overcomes all their sinful habits, they will at last be following God's law that is already in our hearts.

So again, the seventh trumpet is an announcement of what has been accomplished by the seven trumpets. The seven trumpets represent a wake-up call for the Church to overcome sin. The last of the seven trumpets announces all that has been accomplished by this wake-up call. The last of the believers to be grafted back into Israel are the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. But more time is needed before Christ can set up his kingdom. The Church needs to spend some time in the desert in order to overcome sinful habits. Only then will the Bride of Christ be ready to reign with Christ. Those who reign with Christ cannot themselves be continuing to sin. This time in the desert is the 42-month reign of the antichrist. It's the third woe, which is said to be coming after the time of the seventh trumpet.

The desert is the time of sanctification. We must complete our sanctification before we can be glorified with spiritual bodies and dwell with Christ in the New Jerusalem. This next chapter is about the woman who is about to give birth. The birth is the resurrection after the great tribulation. This next chapter gives us more information about the need for the Church to go through the desert of sanctification before the resurrection.

Chapter 26

Revelation 12 – The Woman About to Give Birth

Revelation 12 is one of the hardest chapters in Revelation to properly interpret. This chapter is packed with symbolism. It's an obvious allegory. So, the first task in understanding the vision is to identify and research all the major symbols in the chapter. Then, as it turns out, the woman in labor is a recurring symbol that originates in Isaiah. After that, the minor symbols will be studied during a verse-by-verse commentary. We must be careful to let Scripture interpret Scripture.

The major symbols in Revelation 12 are: 1) the woman; 2) the male child; 3) the dragon or serpent; 4) the desert or wilderness; 5) 1260 days; 6) time, times, and half a time; and 7) water or flood.

1) The woman is Israel. And Israel is the Church. Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. Israel is all who believe in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to overcome sin. The head of the woman has twelve stars. Twelve is symbolic of Israel, the twelve tribes of Israel. Stars are angels. It's like the seven stars of the seven churches (Revelation 1:20). The woman has children. One child is Jesus Christ himself, who was born to Israel of the virgin Mary. (See verse 5.) The other children are indicated in verse 17. They are the ones "who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Keeping the commandments of God is overcoming sin. In other words, the children of the woman are all who overcome sin and profess the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin. Thus, the woman is Israel, and Israel is the Church.

2) The male child is Jesus Christ. (See verse 5). Jesus Christ will rule all the nations with an iron rod. (See Revelation 2:26-27, which quotes Psalm 2:8-9.)

3) The dragon or serpent is Satan or the Devil (verse 9). Also Revelation 20:2, states that the dragon or serpent is Satan or the Devil.

4) The Greek word used for desert or wilderness is G2048:

Of uncertain affinity; lonesome, that is, (by implication) waste (usually as a noun, G5561 being implied): — desert, desolate, solitary, wilderness.

The wilderness (desert) represents the journey of sanctification. It represents the sanctification process of overcoming sin. Also, strongly associated with the wilderness is the number forty. Moses was in the wilderness forty years before God

appeared to him in the burning bush near Mount Sinai (Acts 7:30). Moses had to go through this sanctification process before God could do his mighty works through Moses. Moses was forty years old when he entered the desert (Acts 7:23).

Israel wandered in the wilderness forty years before they could enter the Promised Land. They had to do this because of sin. Forty is symbolic of cleansing, the process of sanctification. The rain of the great flood lasted forty days and forty nights because of sin. The Creation must be cleansed from sin. Forty is symbolic of the cleansing, sanctification, or purification that must take place in the believer. Just as the temple is sanctified, so must the believer, for the body of the believer is the temple of God. The believer must overcome sin to be eternally saved.

So, Israel wandered in the wilderness forty years before entering the Promised Land. But God said of that generation, "They shall never enter my rest." (Hebrews 3, Psalm 95:7-11) That generation remained sinful. But the end-time generation of Israel will overcome sin and enter God's rest. The real promised land is the millennial reign of Christ. But to enter that rest, we must go through the wilderness. We must individually overcome sin by going through the wilderness.

God's rest is the promised land. God's rest is the Sabbath. The seventh millennial day is God's Sabbath, where Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath. Israel has been going through the wilderness throughout the six millennia that lead up to God's rest on the Sabbath. Those who overcome sin, by faith in Jesus, will enter that Sabbath, God's rest.

Jesus fasted in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan (Matthew 4:1-17). Jesus shows that temptation can be overcome even in the desert. After that, Jesus preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This was the same message that was preached by John the Baptist. So, the primary message of John, and the first message of Jesus, was to overcome sin. This is the journey through the wilderness. John lived in the wilderness until he began to preach (Luke 1:8), and then the people went in to the wilderness to hear him preach (Luke 7:24). John was the one spoken of by Isaiah, "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him'" (Isaiah 40:3, Matthew 3:1-3). Again, the wilderness is about overcoming sin, to prepare the way for Jesus in our lives. Jesus cannot live in us if we continue to sin (1 John 3:9, 5:18).

Jesus multiplied five loaves and two fish to feed the people. This was done in the desert (Matthew 14:15). We can learn from this that Jesus feeds us in the desert. In verses 6 and 14 of Revelation 12, the woman is fed in the desert. It's like the manna that came from heaven (John 6:31-35, 6:49-51, Revelation 2:17). Jesus is

the bread of life. The manna came down from heaven in the desert. Jesus can feed us in the desert as we are cleansed. Israel followed God in the desert. God led them through the desert as a fire by night, and as a cloud by the day (Exodus 13:21-22). If we eat the manna, the Bread of Life, following the footsteps of Jesus (1 John 1:7, 2:6), then we can walk through the desert and enter into eternal salvation, into the promised land.

5) 1260 days is symbolic of the first half of the seven-year period, and of the building of the temple. Refer back to my comments on Revelation 11 to see why the two witnesses prophesy during the days when the temple is rebuilt.

6) A time, times, and half a time is symbolic of the second half of the tribulation. In Daniel 7:25, a time, times and half a time refers to the second half of seven years.

7) Water or flood is a reference to the great flood. But in these verses, the great flood is used in an analogy.

As stated in point one above, the woman is Israel. This is understood from Old Testament Scripture. We always interpret the symbols of Revelation using previous Scripture. The head of the woman has a crown of twelve stars. Twelve is symbolic of Israel, the twelve tribes of Israel. Stars are angels. It's like the seven stars of the seven churches (Revelation 1:20). The woman is clothed with the sun, and the moon is under her feet. This comes from Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9-10. In the dream the sun and the moon and eleven stars bow down to him. The dream was about his father, mother, and his eleven brothers bowing down to him, which was fulfilled years later after Joseph became a ruler in Egypt.

In Scripture, Egypt is symbolic of the world. Joseph ruled over Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh. When Christ returns, Israel will rule over the nations, second only to Christ the King of Kings. But we must remember that Israel is the Church. Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. Israel is all who believe in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to overcome sin. Those who overcome sin, by faith in Jesus Christ, will rule over the nations (Revelation 2:26-27) with Christ.

The woman is in labor. She is about to give birth. Catholics believe the woman is Mary. It's true that Mary gave birth to Jesus. But Mary did not give birth to the "rest of her offspring" (Revelation 12:17). Of course the Catholics might argue we are all children of Mary. But this cannot be asserted based on other verses of Scripture. The imagery of the woman in labor occurs throughout Scripture, beginning in Isaiah. We must go to the earliest occurrence of the woman in labor in order to understand the true meaning of this symbol.

Isaiah 26:17-21 ESV Like a pregnant woman who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, so were we because of you, O LORD; (18) we were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind. We [Israel] have accomplished no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen. (19) Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.

(20) Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by. (21) For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.

As we can see, the woman in labor is strongly associated with the resurrection. Verse 19 says, "The earth will give birth to the dead." When we are resurrected, we will be "born again" because we will have new bodies. Who is the firstfruits of the resurrection? Who was the first to get a spiritual body as a result of being resurrected? Jesus was resurrected on the third day. Likewise, we will be resurrected on the third millennial day since the time of Christ. The woman in labor is a symbol for the resurrection. After the resurrection, Israel will reign over the nations. The woman is Israel. The next occurrence of this symbol is towards the end of Isaiah.

Isaiah 66:7-9 "Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son. (8) Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children. (9) Shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth?" says the LORD; "shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb?" says your God.

This verse in Isaiah is not talking about the nation of Israel becoming a nation again. The re-gathering of the Jews in Israel today is simply a precursor to the time of the resurrection. That's because this verse in Isaiah 66 is a continuation of the symbolism of the woman in labor. The woman in labor is a symbol of the resurrection. "The earth will give birth to the dead." We will be "born again," with new bodies, at the time of the resurrection.

Notice the similarities between this verse in Isaiah 66 and the woman of Revelation 12. Before the woman was in labor she gave birth (verse 7). Before the labor pains came she delivered a son. This Son was Jesus Christ at his resurrection. Jesus' resurrection was the firstfruits of the harvest (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Verse 8 goes on to talk about the rest of her offspring, which is the holy nation of Israel at the time of the resurrection. The symbolic birth pains of the woman occurs during the time leading up to the resurrection.

The symbolism continues in the Old Testament with a discussion of Ephraim. This name, Ephraim, refers to the northern kingdom of Israel which was scattered to the nations but never returned. God is saying that for many of them, their sins are kept in store. They will not be ransomed. This means they will not be resurrected. Those who know the truth of God, but deliberately reject God, will not be resurrected.

Hosea 13:12-14 ESV The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is kept in store. (13) The pangs of childbirth come for him, but he is an unwise son, for at the right time he does not present himself at the opening of the womb. (14) Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death? O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes.

The symbolism of woman about to give birth continues in the New Testament. Jesus makes reference to the birth pains of the woman in the Olivetti discourse. This is a reference to the time leading up to the resurrection and the wrath of God which follows. (See the wrath, after the resurrection, discussed in the original verse in Isaiah 26:17-21, quoted above.)

Matthew 24:8 But all these things are the beginning of birth pains.

Mark 13:8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places. There will be famines and troubles. These things are the beginning of birth pains.

Paul refers to the symbol when talking about the rapture. The "peace and safety" occurs under the global reign of the antichrist. The sudden destruction is the wrath of God which occurs after the resurrection.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 For when they are saying, "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction will come on them, like birth pains on a pregnant woman; and they will in no way escape.

The biggest use of this symbol is without doubt Revelation 12. Now that we understand the origin and previous uses of this symbol, we can better understand the woman, about to give birth, in Revelation 12. We have also obtained the definitions of the major symbols in this chapter. So now we can proceed to look at the symbolism of Revelation 12 verse by verse.

12:1) The woman is Israel. And Israel is the Church. Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. Israel is all who believe on Jesus to overcome sin. The head of the woman has a crown of twelve stars. The woman is clothed with the sun, and the moon is under her feet. As we have already seen, this comes from Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9-10. Thus, verse 1 of this chapter in Revelation helps us establish that the woman is Israel.

Revelation 12:1 A great sign was seen in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

12:2) The woman cries out in labor and in pain to give birth. As we shall see, the woman gives birth to Christ, and also to the rest of her offspring who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (verse 17). Christ is raised from the dead on the third day. The Church will also be raised from the dead on the third millennial day.

Revelation 12:2 She was with child. She cried out in pain, laboring to give birth.

12:3) The dragon is Satan. The seven heads and the ten horns represent the antichrist and his kingdom (Revelation 13:1). From our study of Daniel 7, we know the ten horns represent ten kingdoms, or regions of the world, during the reign of the antichrist. From our study of Revelation 17, we know the seven heads represents seven kingdoms, over the course of history, which have ruled over Israel and Jerusalem. The seven kingdoms are the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, Roman, and Islamic Caliphate empires. The seven crowns represent Satan's rule over these seven kingdoms. Even though Michael protects these kings, we know that Jesus refers to Satan at the prince of this world (John 12:31, 16:11). The spirit of the antichrist has been with us all along (1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3, 2 John 1:7).

Revelation 12:3 Another sign was seen in heaven. Behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven crowns.

12:4) The stars are angels. A third of the stars are fallen angels. The tail throws them down to the earth because they followed Satan. Thus they followed his tail. Satan wanted to kill Jesus as soon as He was born. Satan can only attempt to do this by the spirit of antichrist. An antichrist is anyone who does not acknowledge Jesus Christ. (See the verses about the antichrist in John's letters, referenced above.) Herod the Great certainly fits the description of an antichrist. The beast is an antichrist that is ruler of the world. By this definition, Herod was not a beast, but he was an antichrist. Herod tried to have the baby Jesus killed.

Revelation 12:4 His tail drew one third of the stars of the sky, and threw them to the earth. The dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

12:5) The male child is Jesus Christ. He will rule all nations with an iron rod (Revelation 2:26-27). And as we saw in verse 12:1 above, Israel will rule with Him. These verses in Revelation 2:26-27 say that we who overcome sin will rule with Christ. These verses also say Christ will rule with a rod of iron. Likewise, in this verse of Revelation 12, the male child will rule with a rod of iron. Revelation 2:26-27 contains a quote from Psalm 2:6-10. Christ is the Son of God. Israel, with Christ, also becomes the son of God. So, all the offspring of the woman will rule the nations with Christ. After Jesus paid the price for Israel to rule, He was caught up to God and His throne. Christ is now ruling from His throne. But He will return to rule on earth with Israel, on King David's throne.

Revelation 12:5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. Her child was caught up to God, and to his throne.

Psalms 2:6-10 "Yet I have set my King on my holy hill of Zion." (7) I will tell of the decree. Yahweh said to me, "You are my son. Today I have become your father." (8) Ask of me, and I will give the nations for your inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. (9) You shall break them with a rod of iron. You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (10) Now therefore be wise, you kings. Be instructed, you judges of the earth.

Revelation 2:26-27 He who overcomes, and he who keeps my works to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations. (27) He will rule them with a rod of iron, shattering them like clay pots; as I also have received of my Father:

Revelation 19:15 Out of his mouth proceeds a sharp, double-edged sword, that with it he should strike the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

12:6) The woman does not literally flee into a desert. The wilderness (desert) represents the journey to salvation. It represents the sanctification process of overcoming sin. The woman is fed by Jesus who is the manna from heaven. 1260 days is the first half of the seven years of tribulation. It's also symbolic of the building of the temple. As the woman is fed by Jesus, as Israel overcomes sin, the temple of God is built. The temples of God are the bodies of the believers. Israel is the temple of God.

Revelation 12:6 The woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that there they may nourish her one thousand two hundred sixty days.

12:7-9) Daniel 10 tells us about Michael fighting Satan. Michael's war with Satan has been throughout the six millennia. Michael protects the rulers of the world from Satan, so that Satan doesn't completely overtake them. But this changes when Michael "takes a stand" (Daniel 12:1). From Daniel 12:1-3 we see that Michael is the Restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2:7. Michael takes a stand and throws Satan out of heaven. This war is in the middle of the seven-year covenant. This middle is between the 1260 days of verse 6 and the time, times, and half a time of verse 14. But woe to the people of the earth (verse 12), during the second half, because Satan has been thrown down to the earth. This is the third woe. Satan will be able to completely overcome the ruler, who is the beast, the final antichrist. Satan will give him power to move to the top and rule every nation, tribe, people, and language. And Satan will rule him. So, in the middle of the seven years, Satan is thrown down to the earth and rules through the antichrist. Thus, the second half of the seven years is the time of great tribulation against Christ's followers.

Revelation 12:7-9 There was war in the sky. Michael and his angels made war on the dragon. The dragon and his angels made war. (8) They didn't prevail, neither was a place found for him any more in heaven. (9) The great dragon was thrown down, the old serpent, he who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Daniel 12:1 "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who shall be found written in the book.

12:10-12) These verses amplify the whole vision of Revelation 12. The woman is Israel, and she must overcome sin. Satan is cast down to earth, and in the process Israel overcomes sin. Israel overcomes sin by the blood of the Lamb, and by the testimony of Jesus Christ. (See also verse 17) It's by faith in Jesus Christ that we can be victorious over sin and Satan. But the great tribulation has to come for many to wake up and know that we must overcome sin before we can reign with Christ over the nations. The Devil is cast down to earth, and the world is allowed to fall into complete evil. This becomes great tribulation for the Church, not the world. For the world, it's a time when people are eating, drinking, and giving in marriage (Matthew 24:38). For the Church, it's a time of persecution and great tribulation. For this to happen, Michael the Restrainer is removed from protecting the rulers of the world, and begins protecting God's people, who are to be the new rulers of the world. To overcome sin, you must be willing to take up your cross and follow Jesus. You can't love your own life more than the desire to overcome sin, and to share this testimony with others.

Revelation 12:10-12 I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now is come the salvation, the power, and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ; for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. (11) They overcame him because of the Lamb's blood, and because of the word of their testimony. They didn't love their life, even to death. (12) Therefore rejoice, heavens, and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has gone down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time."

12:13-14) The dragon is mad, and pursues the woman. The woman is Israel, so the dragon is pursuing the people who have the testimony of Jesus Christ, to overcome sin. But the woman hides in the wilderness. She is protected by God. The wilderness (desert) represents the journey of sanctification unto salvation. It represents the sanctification process of overcoming sin. The woman is fed in the desert by Jesus, the manna from heaven. The time, times, and half a time are the 42 months (3 ½ years) which is the second half of the seven-year covenant that Christ has with the Church (Israel) to overcome sin.

Revelation 12:13-14 When the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. (14) Two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, so that she might be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

The wings of the eagle represent the care that God has for his people as they overcome sin in the desert.

Deuteronomy 32:10-12 He found him in a desert land, in the waste howling wilderness. He surrounded him. He cared for him. He kept him as the apple of his eye. (11) As an eagle that stirs up her nest, that flutters over her young, he spread abroad his wings, he took them, he bore them on his feathers. (12) Yahweh alone led him. There was no foreign god with him.

12:15) Water or flood is a reference to the great flood. But in these verses, the great flood is used in an analogy.

Revelation 12:15 The serpent spewed water out of his mouth after the woman like a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream.

The Greek word used in this verse is for being carried away by the flood.

From G4215 and a derivative of G5409; river borne, that is, overwhelmed by a stream: — carried away of the flood.

We must overcome sin, but Satan tries to overcome us. And Satan does this with temptation. The woman is in the desert, a necessary place to go for cleansing and to overcome sin. We must go through the desert before we can enter the promised land. But Satan wants to spew water on the woman in the desert. And water is very tempting in the desert. Satan tries to entice us with things we might desire. This is like the water of life (Jesus), but it's really the water of death (Satan). The water of the great flood brought death. Satan spews the water out of his mouth. This means that Satan uses words to tempt us. Satan can't directly harm us, but he can tempt us with words that come out of his mouth. The words are designed to bring death, just as the great flood brought death to sinners.

12:16) The earth helps the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the flood. With the great flood analogy, God blew a wind over the earth and the waters receded (Genesis 8:1). But how does this fit with the woman overcoming sin?

What does the earth do for Israel? Let's read this verse and relate it back to the original source of the symbol, in Isaiah, of woman about to give birth.

Revelation 12:16 The earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon spewed out of his mouth.

Isaiah 26:17-19 ESV Like a pregnant woman who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, so were we because of you, O LORD; (18) we were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind. We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen. (19) Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.

The woman in Isaiah 26:17-19 is Israel. It's the same in this vision of Revelation 12. The woman cannot give birth to the believers. Israel has not brought salvation. They have not overcome sin. But the woman does give birth to Jesus Christ. And by faith in Him, we can overcome sin. The earth will give birth to her dead! Thus, the earth opens its mouth, like the woman who cries out in pain. The earth opens its mouth and swallows up the flood of temptations. The earth opens its mouth, like the woman in the pain of childbearing, and earth gives birth to her dead.

12:17) The woman gives birth to Jesus Christ. He lived a life without sin. He overcame the temptations from Satan in the desert. He did so while fasting in the desert for 40 days. We can follow His example and overcome sin, just as Jesus overcame the temptation to sin. We can have a new birth, be born again, and have eternal life. But we must obey the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. The commandments of God are the Ten Commandments, including the fourth commandment. Jesus emphasized obeying the commandments not only in action, but in our hearts as well. The cup must be clean on the inside, and then it will be clean on the outside. So, we must obey the Ten Commandments in our hearts as well as our actions. And we must also do all that we know Christ is leading us to do. We must have the testimony of Jesus. We must profess him as our Savior. Then we will be born again at the resurrection. We will be children of Israel.

Revelation 12:17 The dragon grew angry with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep God's commandments and hold Jesus' testimony.

Chapter 27

Revelation 13 – The Reign of Two Beasts

Revelation 13:1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads. On his horns were ten crowns, and on his heads, blasphemous names.

This chapter of Revelation describes two beasts. One comes up out of the sea. The other out of the land. First of all we must ask, “What is the symbolism of a beast?” As a review, in Daniel 4 we learned that Nebuchadnezzar was given the mind of an animal for seven periods of time. After the seven periods of time Nebuchadnezzar repented and gave glory to God. A beast is a world ruler who does not acknowledge the authority of God over him. He is against God, or Christ, and is thus an antichrist. Nebuchadnezzar repents of being an antichrist. In chapter 5 of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson Belshazzar did not repent. Belshazzar saw the writing on the wall from God and was killed that very night.

In Daniel 7, we learn about four beasts. Daniel 7:3 tells us the four beasts come up out of the sea. In verse 17 we are told these are four kings which will rise up out of the earth. Here in Revelation 13 there are two beasts. The first comes out of the sea and the second comes out of the earth (Revelation 13:11). In Daniel there does not seem to be a lot of difference between coming up out of the sea and coming up out of the earth. All four beasts are described as doing both. However, in Revelation 13, John does seem to make a distinction between these two beasts. The first comes from the sea and the second comes from the earth.

One clue could be in Revelation 17. Verse 1 tells us about the “great prostitute who sits on many waters.” Then in verse 15 we learn that, “The waters which you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages.” The sea itself covers the globe. Think of the sea and you think of far-off places. When you think of coming up out of the earth, it could be something closer to home.

John is making a distinction between the sea and the earth that was not made in Daniel. John uses the terminology of Daniel in that the beasts come out of the sea and the earth. But the beast from the sea would be a more of a global ruler, whereas the beast from the land would be more of a local ruler. Since the Bible is middle-east centric, the antichrist that comes out of the earth would be more of a local middle-east ruler. I believe the beast that comes from the sea will be a global one-world antichrist ruler, whereas the beast that comes from the land will be the Mahdi and will reign over all the Islamic nations that surround Israel.

I've been using the term 'beast' and 'antichrist' interchangeably as is commonly done. The 'beast' is the symbol that we get from Daniel. It means a king (ruler) or his kingdom. The word 'antichrist' is not found in Revelation. It is only found in 1 John and 2 John. We should note that John also wrote Revelation. The word 'antichrist' means 'against Christ'. In 1 John and 2 John, antichrists are already with us. There are many antichrists. Anyone who is against Christ is an antichrist. Everyone who takes the mark of the beast is an antichrist because he is agreeing and uniting with the beast (ruler) in his blasphemies against Christ. Thus, both the beasts in Revelation are in fact antichrists. But the individuals who take the mark of the beast are not themselves beasts because they are not kings.

27.1) Ten Horns and Seven Heads

The first beast has ten horns and seven heads. Looking forward to Revelation 17, we find that the ten horns are ten kings, or kingdoms of the world. The ten horns are also found in Daniel 7, which is about the four beasts. These ten kingdoms all exist at the same time (for an hour). Their purpose is to give power and authority to the first beast, who will rule the world. These ten kingdoms will overcome the Christians of the world. But Christ will overcome the ten kingdoms.

Revelation 17:12-14 The ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour. (13) These have one mind, and they give their power and authority to the beast. (14) These will war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings. They also will overcome who are with him, called and chosen and faithful."

Daniel 7:23-24 Thus he said, The fourth animal shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be diverse from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. (24) As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings.

In Daniel 7, we learned that the four beasts are modern-day kingdoms. The first beast is a lion, and represents the United States and England. The second beast is a bear, and represents Russia and the old Soviet Union. The third beast is a leopard, and represents the European Union. The fourth beast is the United Nations. All four beasts can be seen in the Middle East Quartet. The Quartet are these four

world powers working together to influence Israel. The group was established in 2002, in Madrid. Tony Blair, from England, is the Quartet's current Special Envoy.

The United Nations is the fourth beast of the Quartet. It rules the world with resolutions and has done so since right after World War II. These resolutions have become more and more powerful during the course the baby-boom generation. The ten kings will come out of the fourth beast, which is the United Nations. Eventually, the world will be organized into ten global regions. We see them today as trade agreements. For example, NAFTA is all of North America. The European Union covers Europe. Shortly after these ten global regions are formed, the first beast antichrist will be given power to rule over these ten kingdoms.

The first beast has ten horns and seven heads. On the ten horns are ten crowns. Compare this with the description of Satan given earlier in Revelation 12.

Revelation 12:3 Another sign was seen in heaven. Behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven crowns.

The description of the dragon puts more emphasis on the seven heads, whereas the description of the first beast puts more emphasis on the ten horns. With the dragon, the crowns are on the seven heads, whereas with the first beast, the crowns are on the ten horns. With the dragon, the seven heads are mentioned first, whereas with the first beast the ten horns are mentioned first.

The ten horns are all end-time kingdoms. The seven heads, on the other hand, are historical kingdoms. These are kingdoms which have ruled over Jerusalem and/or Israel in the Middle East. We will see more about the historical seven heads in Revelation chapter 17. The beast of Revelation is about the end-time ruler and government. But Satan has ruled over the course of many centuries. And Satan's goal has been to rule over Jerusalem and Israel. With Satan, the emphasis is put on the historical seven heads. With the first beast, the emphasis is put on the ten horns of end-time kingdoms.

But we must remember that the power of the beast comes from Satan. Satan rules through the beast, making the beast be an antichrist. So Satan rules over the ten kings. Thus, Satan also has ten horns.

We should also take a peek forward to Revelation 17 regarding the seven heads and the ten horns of the beast. In Revelation 17, the seven historical heads are first.

Revelation 17:3 He carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet-colored animal, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 17:7 The angel said to me, "Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

In these verses, there is no mention of the crowns on either the heads or the horns. But the seven heads are mentioned first. Thus, more emphasis is being placed on the seven historical heads. Revelation 17 talks a lot more about the seven heads than about the ten horns. As we will see, that chapter is about Mystery Babylon, which is about Islam. It's about the end-time world religion, predominantly in the Middle East. Since Mystery Babylon dates back to the original Babylon, more emphasis is being placed on the historical aspect of the seven heads. This chapter, on the other hand, is more about the end-time global government of the first beast and less about the more regional Middle East government of the second beast.

The seven heads are not just historical in nature. They represent historical kingdoms which have ruled over Israel. These kingdoms all had their own religions and foreign gods. The seven heads are about religions that compete with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Thus, the seven horns are about competing false religions, including Islam. The ten horns are more about the antichrist world government of the end times. From this perspective, the ten horns can be viewed as related to the first beast whereas the seven heads are related to the second beast.

27.2) Like a Leopard, Bear, and Lion

Revelation 13:2 The beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

The first beast "was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion." These three animals are the same as the first three beasts of Daniel 7. The lion is the West, including the United States. The bear is Russia and the old Soviet Union. The leopard is the European Union.

The mouth is like a lion. This equates what the antichrist will say with what the United States and England are today saying. The world is being united under the banner of democracy. But the rich people of the world control that democracy.

The whole world is following the culture and government of the United States. The first beast antichrist may even come from the United States.

The first beast has feet like those of a bear. The rhetoric of the first beast may be that of democracy. But his actions will be like that of the Old Soviet Union and communism. The antichrist will be in favor of big government, with government supposedly solving all of man's problems.

The first beast will look like a leopard. The European Union is the model for the ten regions of the world. Each region will probably have a common currency. Each region will probably have individual states but will be a federation of those states, with most of the power residing in each of the ten federations.

Revelation 13:3 also says, "The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority." This brings us back to the previous chapter about the woman about to give birth. In the middle of the seven years, there is a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fight the demonic forces. Michael is victorious and Satan is thrown down to the earth.

27.3) The Seven Heads and the Fatal Wound that is Healed

Revelation 13:3-4 One of his heads looked like it had been wounded fatally. His fatal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled at the beast. (4) They worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

At this point in time, the two witnesses will be killed and the New Jerusalem will disappear. The world will believe the forces of the beast have defeated Christ in the New Jerusalem. They will celebrate by exchanging gifts. But it will be demonic forces which allow the antichrist to make war with Michael and his angels. Thus, the world will worship Satan. And they will worship the antichrist because of the authority and power that he is given.

Verse 3 tells us that one of the seven heads looked like it had been fatally wounded. But the wound is healed, giving more reason for the world to worship the antichrist. What is this about?

Looking forward to chapter 17 of Revelation, we are given several clues about the seven heads. We will examine those verses in more detail when we get to that chapter. But for now, we need to take a quick look.

Revelation 17:9-11 Here is the mind that has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits. (10) They are seven kings. Five have fallen, the one is, the other has not yet come. When he comes, he must continue a little while. (11) The beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goes to destruction.

The seven mountains are not the Seven Hills of Rome. The Greek word used really means ‘mountains.’ There is another Greek word for ‘hills’ that could have been used if these are really hills. In the Old Testament, mountains can mean kingdoms. The seven heads are seven kingdoms. Verse 10 says the seven heads are seven kings. The seven mountains are the same as the seven kings or kingdoms.

The seven heads represent historical kingdoms because five have fallen, one is, and one will come. These seven have controlled Israel and Jerusalem. From the time of John, the five that have fallen are the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylon, Medo-Persian, and the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great, which was divided into four kingdoms. The one that “is” would be the Roman Empire. The one that would come is the Islamic Caliphate. The eighth is a revival of the Islamic Caliphate. But it also says the beast once was, now is not, but will come again.

Revelation 17:8 The beast that you saw was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go into destruction. Those who dwell on the earth and whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel when they see that the beast was, and is not, and shall be present.

Note that the beast, that once was, will return. When he does return, he will come up out of the abyss. The early church believed Nero would return to be the end-time antichrist. Could they have been right? His name, along with his title “Caesar Neron” adds up to 666 in the Greek. What if Nero were to somehow return and somehow possess a man to become the antichrist. Nero had already died when John wrote Revelation. Perhaps Nero is the one who once was, now is not, but will come again. If so, the world would wonder at this miracle and will worship Satan because of his power. Read the verse in Revelation 13 again.

Revelation 13:3-4 One of his heads looked like it had been wounded fatally. His fatal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled at the beast. (4) They worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

27.4) The Blasphemy of the Antichrist

Revelation 13:5-7 A mouth speaking great things and blasphemy was given to him. Authority to make war for forty-two months was given to him. (6) He opened his mouth for blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his dwelling, those who dwell in heaven. (7) It was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. Authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation was given to him.

Chapters 4 and 5 of this book cover the reasons why the New Jerusalem will appear at the start of the great tribulation. Chapter 34 of this book, on Revelation 21:9-22, will cover this appearance in more detail. This verse here in Revelation 13 says that the antichrist will open “his mouth for blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his dwelling, those who dwell in heaven.” The pre-tribulation appearance of the New Jerusalem helps explain this verse.

In Greek and Hebrew, the word for ‘sky’ and ‘heaven’ is the same word. If you look up into the sky or space you are looking at heaven. If a world leader today were to blaspheme God’s dwelling, or those who live in heaven, it would come across as very foolish. This blasphemy makes a lot more sense with the appearance of the New Jerusalem, and with the world being terrified. The world will follow the antichrist in blaspheming the New Jerusalem and those who live in it.

I believe the very appearance of the New Jerusalem will spur on the one world government. People will be afraid of it and will push to form a world unity that will stand up against this alien invasion. After all, the two witnesses will surely talk about the kingdom of Christ that is to come. “Authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation [is] given to him.” This will also bring about a hatred of Christians. This is especially true for those who stand firm and agree with the two witnesses. So the world government, under the authority of the first beast, will “make war with the saints, and overcome them.”

Thus, the great tribulation lasts “forty-two months.” “Authority to make war for forty-two months was given to him.” The great tribulation is tribulation for the saints. It’s a great tribulation for those who side with the two witnesses and believe in Christ Jesus for the overcoming of all our sinful habits. Verse 7 refers to believers as saints. The word ‘saint’ means holy one. Great tribulation will bring holiness to those in the Church who will remain faithful to Jesus Christ in the New Jerusalem. These saints (holy ones) who put their faith in Christ to overcome sin will rule the world as kings and priests with Christ when he sets up his kingdom.

27.5) To Be Blotted from the Book of Life

Revelation 13:8-10 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been killed. (9) If anyone has an ear, let him hear. (10) If anyone has captivity, he will go into captivity. If anyone [kills] with the sword, he must be killed. Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints.

There is a little confusion in verse 10. The KJV translates it as, “He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.” The NIV translates it as, “If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed.” This sounds rather redundant. The ESV is very similar. Young’s Literal translates it as, “If any one by sword doth kill, it behoveth him by sword to be killed.”

The NIV and the ESV seem to go against the more literal reading of the Greek to make the verse say those who are killed seem to be destined to be killed. But I think the more literal translation is correct. Verse 7 says, “It was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.” War would seem to imply two sides to the battle. But those who hopelessly fight will be defeated.

The overall meaning of verse 10, therefore, is that of defeat. The saints will be overcome by the antichrist and the world government that is to come. This means the saints must have endurance. The verse says, “Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints.” I think the New Jerusalem will not be seen during these forty-two month of great tribulation against the saints. So it will be a time of endurance and faith. It will be a time of hope and belief that Christ will appear again after the forty-two months which are given to the antichrist. Jesus said, “He who endures to the end will be saved” (Matthew 10:22, 24:13, Mark 13:13).

There is also a translation issue in verse 8. The ESV translates it as, “whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life.” The KJV translates it as, “whose names are not written in the book of life ... from the foundation of the world.” The NIV translates it as, “whose names have not been written in the book of life ... from the creation of the world.” Young’s Literal translates it as, “whose names have not been written in the scroll of the life ... from the foundation of the world.”

Those who believe in a predestination of salvation tend to believe that only those who are elected to be saved had their names written in the book of life before the creation of the world. Both the Old Testament and Revelation speak about the

possibility of names being blotted out of this book. But the belief is that no names are ever blotted.

Those who do not believe in a predestination of salvation tend to believe names are written in the book of life when one becomes saved. This presents a difficulty with this verse for them. The verse seems to indicate the names were written before the creation of the world.

The New Wine System takes a slightly different approach. I prefer to translate the verse as, “everyone whose name has not been continually written from the foundation of the world.” This is a very literal translation of the Greek. The idea is that everyone’s name was written before the creation of the world. But when one deliberately and knowingly rejects Jesus Christ as their Savior, their name is blotted out. Thus, those who are saved are those whose names have been continually written, and have not been blotted out. For more information about this verse, refer to section 7.5 of my book, *New Wine for the End Times*.

Hebrews 10:26-27 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more a sacrifice for sins, (27) but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which will devour the adversaries.

Those who deliberately and knowingly reject Christ’s salvation will be blotted from the book of life. In other words, those who side with the antichrist, against Christ, will lose their salvation. There is no longer a sacrifice for them. The two witnesses will preach that Jesus is the way (road), the truth, and the life. It’s only through Jesus that we can be saved from sin and death. It’s only through Jesus that we can be resurrected. Those who are blotted from the Lamb’s book of life will not be given life. They will not be resurrected.

Verse 9 says, “If anyone has an ear, let him hear.” Each of the seven letters to the seven churches says something along the lines of, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” Jesus often said the same thing during his ministry. Even Christ’s lost sheep hear his voice. Those whose names have not been blotted from Christ’s book of life still hear Christ’s voice. But when you harden yourself to hearing Christ’s voice, and you deliberately and knowingly reject Christ’s salvation, you are blotted from the book of life. Those who are blotted no longer hear Christ’s voice. Those who side with (worship) the antichrist to blaspheme Christ, and take the mark of the beast, will be blotted from under heaven. They will not be resurrected. But they will come to life and be thrown into the lake of fire.

Let's read that verse again in a traditional translation. "All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been killed" (Revelation 13:8.) Because they don't understand the Old Testament teaching about the book of life, most people get the cause and effect of this verse backwards. They assume that their name is written in the book of life because they are believers. They believe "once saved always saved" even though Paul taught we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Then they conclude that because their name is in the book of life, they will not be one of those who worship the beast. But actually, what the verse is saying, is that those who do worship the beast will be blotted from the book of life.

What happens when they are tested in the great tribulation? In the letter to the church of Philadelphia, Christ says, "Because you kept my command to endure, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, which is to come on the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (Revelation 3:10). In other words, those who endure to overcome all their sinful habits will not be tested. The 144,000 will not be tested. But most of the Church will be tested. Many have been taught the pre-tribulation rapture and given the belief that they will not be tested in the great tribulation. Others have been taught that there will not be a literal antichrist or a great tribulation. But they will be terrified to learn that they really will be tested in the great tribulation.

Christ teaches us to take up our cross and follow him. Christ was ready to die, and in fact was crucified on the cross. We must also be ready to die for Christ. Those who deny Christ before men will themselves be denied by Christ before the Father (Matthew 10:33). Peter thought that he would never deny Christ. "Peter said to him, 'Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you.' All of the disciples also said likewise" (Matthew 26:35). Peter thought he was ready. But he was not. We must be willing to lose our heads by the sword rather than deny Christ.

Some will think they can take the mark of the beast and then be forgiven. They will reason that they are not worshipping the beast in their heart, just on the outside. But what you do in front of men is because of your heart. They are taught their names are in the book of life so they will not really worship the antichrist. But anyone who takes the mark of the beast will be blotted from the book of life. They will lose their salvation. Jesus said, "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22, 24:13, Mark 13:13). Jesus also said, "Whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33).

27.6) The Second Beast

Revelation 13:11-14 I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke like a dragon. (12) He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. He makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. (13) He performs great signs, even making fire come down out of the sky to the earth in the sight of people. (14) He deceives my own people who dwell on the earth because of the signs he was granted to do in front of the beast; saying to those who dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast who had the sword wound and lived.

In Revelation 16:13, 19:20, and 20:10 we find out this second beast is also called the false prophet. So we begin to think of the second beast as a side-kick of the antichrist who is a global ruler. We must not miss the fact that he is introduced to us as a beast. The symbolism of the beast, from Daniel, indicates the false prophet is himself a world ruler who is against Christ. I believe the false prophet will be the Mahdi of the Muslims.

The Mahdi will be the head of the Islamic Caliphate. A Caliph is one who follows or replaces Muhammad. He is both the religious leader and the governmental leader of all Muslims. Under Islam, and the teaching of Muhammad, you cannot separate church and state. Sharia law requires that the government be headed by and controlled by Islamic law. The ultimate form of Sharia law is to have a Caliph who is the ruler of all Muslims and the government. What is a good term for a government ruler who also heads a false religion? It's a beast who is also a false prophet. I believe the Mahdi will head the Islamic countries of the Middle East region of the world.

This second beast “had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke like a dragon.” The two horns are probably the Sunni and the Shia. The Mahdi will unite the entire Islamic world, which means uniting the Sunni and the Shia. For centuries there has been a battle between the Sunni and the Shia as to who will rule the Islamic world and establish the Islamic Caliphate.

The two horns are like a lamb, but he speaks like a dragon. This means there will be much effort to portray the Mahdi as being peaceful and attractive to Christianity. But he will in fact be speaking for Satan. Islam is a religion that is explicitly against Christ. So it's a religion that speaks for Satan. It teaches that Christ did not die on the cross. And that Christ was not the Son of God. There is

no room for compromise on these two teachings. In Islam, anyone who believes that Christ died for our sins, or that Christ is the Son of God, commits their greatest of all sins. Any religion that teaches these things is moving in the spirit of antichrist (1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3, 2 John 1:7) and is speaking for Satan.

In these four verses we find out the false prophet will perform many signs and wonders to convince the world that Islam is true, and to convince the world to worship the first beast. Again, the world will worship the first beast by coming against Christ and those who dwell in the New Jerusalem. It will be very difficult to take a middle ground. Everyone will be forced to side with either Christ or with the antichrist.

One of these signs is apparently that the first beast will be wounded by the sword and then be healed. He will be brought back from the dead. I discussed this issue earlier in this chapter. Verse 3 tells us that one of the seven heads looked like it had been fatally wounded. But the wound is healed causing the world to marvel at the beast. Looking forward to chapter 17 of Revelation, I theorized that the beast could be Nero coming out of the abyss. No doubt the world will marvel at Nero coming back from the dead. Perhaps Satan performs this miracle through the false prophet. But all three will go to their destruction. In Revelation 19:20, the first beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire. In Revelation 20:10, Satan is also thrown into the lake of fire. This is the destruction of their souls. For these three, the destruction is the harshest and takes the longest.

27.7) The Mark of the Beast and the Number of his Name

Revelation 13:15-18 It was given to him to give breath to it, to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause as many as wouldn't worship the image of the beast to be killed. (16) He causes all, the small and the great, the rich and the poor, and the free and the slave, to be given marks on their right hands, or on their foreheads; (17) and that no one would be able to buy or to sell, unless he has that mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name. (18) Here is wisdom. He who has understanding, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. His number is six hundred sixty-six.

Verse 14 says the world will make an image of the beast. Back in chapter 10 of this book we discussed the war in heaven and the abomination of desolation. We learned that the abomination will be a stone structure or a statue on the Temple

Mount. In 168 BC the first abomination of desolation, in Daniel 11:31, was a statue of Zeus on the Temple Mount. We also know that the abomination will be set up right at the beginning of the great tribulation. It only makes sense that the abomination of desolation is this image of the beast.

Much has been said about the mark of the beast. Books have been written that the mark of the beast could be a computer chip implanted under the skin. The reasoning is that the computer chip will be used for electronic fund transfers. But how can a chip for a bank transactions cause one to lose their salvation? The mark must be a declaration of the loyalty to the antichrist. It must be a public declaration against Jesus Christ in the New Jerusalem. This is especially true in the context of the book of life just a few verses back.

With the false prophet being the Mahdi, it also makes sense that the mark is a public declaration of loyalty to the teachings of Mohammed. In the teaching of Mohammed, those who do not accept Islam become second-class citizens. I don't believe this verse says people without the mark will not be able to buy food. Almost all modern-day businesses buy and sell goods and services. People without the mark will not be able to own businesses. They will not be able to own stores which buy from distributors and sell to the consumer.

This is a full implementation of Sharia law. Does this mean that Sharia law will be fully implemented world-wide? It will certainly begin in the Middle-East, which is the region of the world where the false prophet will rule. But there will probably be efforts to implement it globally. Even today we are seeing Sharia law gain ground.

Is the mark of the beast the same as the name of the beast or the number of his name? The verse says you must have one of these in order to buy or sell. So it's quite possible that globally there will be alternatives to being a Muslim in order to own a business. I believe that having the name of the beast is the same as having the authority of the beast. The number of his name could be a number given on the basis of that authority. In other words, the government will be able to authorize the ownership of businesses. Numbers will be given for the legal ownership of businesses.

Verse 18 begins with, "Here is wisdom." In other words, this is a riddle for the wise who understand Scripture. "He who has understanding, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. His number is six hundred sixty-six." The preterist view of Revelation is that the Roman Emperor Nero (ruling 54–68) is the first beast of Revelation 13.

In both ancient Hebrew and in ancient Greek, every letter of the alphabet has numerical values. Numbers could be represented by spelling the words out, or by giving the letters whose corresponding numeric values add up to the desired value. Thus, any name has a number. In the Greek, the name Jesus adds up to 888. There seems to be an obvious connection between 666 and 888. However, this is based on our decimal number system, which didn't exist at the time Revelation was written. The number 666 can be written with three letters, one for six, one for sixty, and one for six hundred. But there are not corresponding letters for eight, eighty, or eight hundred.

In Hebrew "Caesar Nero" is "Nron Qsr" (pronounced "Nerōn Kaisar".) It adds up to 666 using Hebrew letters. In Latin his name is "Nro Qsr" (pronounced "Nerō Kaisar".) When transliterated into Hebrew, this name also adds up to 666. (Information was obtained from the Wikipedia article on the "Number of the Beast.") In that same article we read:

In the Nero Redivivus legend, a belief that Nero returns to life is noted that "After Nero's suicide in AD 68, there was a widespread belief, especially in the eastern provinces, that he was not dead and somehow would return (Suetonius, LVII; Tacitus, Histories II.8; Dio, LXVI.19.3). Suetonius (XL) relates how court astrologers had predicted Nero's fall but that he would have power in the east. At least three false claimants did present themselves as Nero redivivus (resurrected)." It has also been suggested that Nero's return to power would be through emperor Domitian, whose style of rulership resembled that of Nero and who put the people of Asia (Lydia) under heavy taxation.

Does this mean that the end-times antichrist will also have a name that adds up to 666? Or could this prophecy be fulfilled simply by the return of Nero? Earlier in this chapter we examined the verse in Revelation 17 about the beast who once was, now is not, but will come again. He comes out of the abyss but goes to his destruction. Perhaps the early Church had this verse in mind in believing that Nero will return. If Nero does return, then there would be no requirement for his modern-day name to also add to 666. Should we necessarily apply a modern-day name to the rules of an ancient alphabet? But it's still possible. J.R. Church once pointed out that the names "William Jefferson Clinton" and "Hillary Rodham Clinton" both independently add up to 666 when transliterated into Hebrew.

But what about the fact that the world will wonder about the fatal wound that is healed? Apparently, the antichrist is killed and comes back to life. The antichrist might claim to be a reincarnation of Nero. But I don't think that would bring about the wonder that seems to be described. A better possibility might be that the world ruler is killed. Then later he comes back to life. He would have to be dead for more than just a couple of hours for it to be a great wonder. The soul would have completely departed from the body. Perhaps after coming back to life again he has the soul of Nero instead of his original soul. This would explain why the world marvels at this event. At the same time, Nero would be coming out of the abyss to rule the world again.

Note that some of the early Church believed Nero would come back through the emperor Domitian. It seems that the early Church realized Satan does not have the power of resurrection, which would mean getting a new body. They seemed to think that Nero could come back in the body of someone else, especially in the body of another world ruler. I tend to avoid quickly dismissing the opinions of the early Church with regard to Revelation. They lived in a time when the Church would have still been influenced by the teaching of John himself.

Let's bring Revelation 13 back to God's purpose. Revelation 13:7 says that during a period of 42 months the beast will conquer the saints. We find this also in Daniel 7:25, where the saints are handed over to the beast for a "time, times, and half a time." Why does God allow his saints to be conquered?

The 42 months comes after the time of the trumpets. The time of the trumpets is when the symbolic temple is built. (The building of the physical temple will probably parallel the building of the symbolic temple.) The 42 months is a time when the saints are handed over to the beast. Consequently, it can't be a time when the symbolic temple is built. After the time of the trumpets, the man of lawlessness will set himself up in the physical temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The Jews would not willingly allow this today. So, this would mark the start of the 42 months when the Gentiles will again trample Jerusalem. During the time of the trumpets there is an urgency, as well as today, to spread the gospel. It's a limited time of the harvest. But then there will be a time when no more work of the harvest can be done (John 9:4). That will be the 42-month reign of the beast.

John 9:4 I must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day. The night is coming, when no one can work.

When a new believer accepts Jesus, usually there must be a time of sanctification (Acts 26:18, Romans 15:16, 1st Corinthians 1:2, 6:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Timothy 2:21, Hebrews 2:11). The Greek word for sanctify is ‘hagiazō,’ and means to “set apart” or to “make holy.” Sanctification involves the believer overcoming sin by faith in Christ. But it’s not auto-magic. We must fight our sinful natures. The theme of Revelation, as given in each of the seven letters to the seven churches, is that we must overcome sin in order to inherit the kingdom. The Holy Spirit does the greater work as we do his good works. But we must be involved in the sanctification process and strive to overcome sin.

The time of the trumpets is a time when the Church will grow into every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 7:9). It’s a time when all the Church will get serious about overcoming sin. But after the last believer has come into the vine of Israel, there must be a time of sanctification. There must be a time when the Church goes through the desert before entering the Promised Land. This is a time when no more work of the harvest can be done (John 9:4). All believers will be in the vine of Israel. But not all believers will be ready for Christ to return (Revelation 19:7). Until every believer is in the vine, Christians should boldly preach the gospel even if we lose our lives. But when we see the ‘abomination of desolation’, we are to ‘flee to the mountains’ (Matthew 24:15-25). There will be no more work of the harvest to be done after the abomination of desolation. The great tribulation can sound scary. But we know that we are on the winning side.

Romans 8:28-30 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. (29) For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (30) Whom he predestined, those he also called. Whom he called, those he also justified. Whom he justified, those he also glorified.

The 42-month reign of the beast, which is the great tribulation, is included in the “all things” that work for the good of those who love him. It’s a time when the entire Church will be “conformed to the likeness of his Son.”

Chapter 28

Revelation 14 – A Summary of the Tribulation

Revelation chapter 14 is a brief summary of the seven-year period. It's given in seven parts. The seven parts are: (1) the sealing of the 144,000, (2) the time of the trumpets when the message to overcome sin is preached to the Church, (3) the start of the fall of Babylon, (4) the warning not to worship the beast or take the mark of the beast, (5) the "night," when no more work can be done, (6) the harvest of Christians (rapture), (7) and the harvest of sinners (Armageddon.)

28.1) Part 1 - Revelation 14:1-5

Revelation 14:1-5 I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a number, one hundred forty-four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. (2) I heard a sound from heaven, like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of a great thunder. The sound which I heard was like that of harpists playing on their harps. (3) They sing a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand, those who had been redeemed out of the earth. (4) These are those who were not defiled with women, for they are [male] virgins. These are those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed by Jesus from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb. (5) In their mouth was found no lie, for they are blameless.

Part 1 of this summary is the sealing of the 144,000. These five verses give us all the details about the 144,000. Understanding of these details is important in understanding of how the seven years of tribulation begins. Basically, the 144,000 are people of the Church who are given immortal bodies around the start of the seven years of tribulation for the Church. They will be important in teaching the Church about holiness.

The 144,000 are firstfruits to God and to Christ (verse 4).

Christ's resurrection was on the feast of firstfruits. This feast was always on the first day after the Sabbath (Leviticus 23:4-11) during the Passover week. (The Passover week is the feast of unleavened bread.) There is always a Sabbath on the

first day of the feast of unleavened bread, which is the day after Passover. Christ was crucified on Passover. Then he arose on the first day after the Sabbath. The point here is that Christ's resurrection was on the feast of firstfruits.

In 1 Corinthians 15, the chapter where Paul talks about the resurrection and immortal bodies, Paul says that the resurrection of Christ is the firstfruits.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 But now Christ has been raised from the dead. He became the first fruits of those who are asleep. (21) For since death came by man, the resurrection of the dead also came by man. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. (23) But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then those who are Christ's, at his coming.

At the feast of firstfruits, they would harvest the first of the barley crop and offer it as a wave offering to the Lord. After that, comes the rest of the harvest.

Christ is the firstfruits of the harvest. The harvest is the work of bringing people into the knowledge of salvation, through Christ (Matthew 9:37-38, John 4:35). It's also the angels who harvest the wheat and the tares at the end of the age (Matthew 13:24-30, 21:34, 21:41). So, the harvest is the resurrection of the righteous in Christ and the rapture. It's the gathering of the elect.

If Christ is the firstfruits, then who are the 144,000? The Scripture tells us that the 144,000 are firstfruits to God and to Christ! They get their immortal bodies first, before the rest of the Bride!

The 144,000 are first because they have overcome sin. No lie is found on their mouth. They are blameless. They will be here during the trumpets as a witness to the rest of the Church that you must overcome sin in order to be saved. (As stated by each of the seven letters to the seven churches.)

The 144,000 are firstfruits. Then the next harvest is the rapture at the time of Armageddon, after the seven-year period. It's the harvest given in Part 6 of this summary, below.

The 144,000 receive their immortal bodies at the start of the seven-year period. This is probably about six months after the New Jerusalem appears in orbit around the earth. Christ appears, at the appointed time of the end, but the Church is not ready. Most of the Church still believes that it's impossible to completely overcome all your sinful habits. Thus, Christ confirms a "covenant with many" for seven more years (Daniel 9:27). The 144,000, who are the few, will have overcome sin before Christ appears. They will meet with Christ face-to-face "standing on Mount

Zion." This means they all meet in Jerusalem, probably in the City of David. Thus, these elect are gathered to Jerusalem. After that, I believe they will be active in telling the rest of the Church about their meeting with Christ, and about the need to overcome sin so that the rest of the Church can also be harvested.

The 144,000 are "those who were not defiled with women, for they are [male] virgins" (verse 4). This is the only place in the New Testament where the male form of the Greek word for "virgins" is used. And it explicitly says they were not defiled with women. Are women excluded from the 144,000? As stated in my commentary on the sealing of the 144,000 in Revelation 7, I believe that perhaps 144,000 women are redeemed from the earth as well as the 144,000 men.

28.2) Part 2 - Revelation 14:6-7

Revelation 14:6-7 I saw an angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal Good News to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation, tribe, language, and people. (7) He said with a loud voice, "Fear the Lord, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and the springs of waters!"

Part 2 of this summary is about the time of the trumpets, when the message to overcome sin is preached to the Church. The trumpets are a wake-up call for the Church to overcome sin. The trumpets are patterned primarily after the Creation. This message to overcome sin is the everlasting gospel. This gospel is preached to every nation, tribe, language, and people.

I don't believe that every nation, tribe, language, and people will all hear the gospel before the New Jerusalem appears. In Matthew 24:14, the gospel is preached to every nation, and then the end comes. But that's not to say it's preached to every nation, tribe, language, and people before the end. The appearance of the New Jerusalem, the preaching of the two witnesses, and the ministry of the 144,000 will be very effective in preaching to every nation, tribe, language, and people. And the massive number of people who put their trust in Christ to overcome sin as a result of God's wake-up call will also be preaching to every nation, tribe, language, and people. After the 144,000 are sealed in Revelation 7:4-8, we read about the countless number, before the throne of the Lamb, from every nation, tribe, people, and language. This will be the result of the preaching that takes place during this time.

The trumpets are patterned primarily after the Creation. They are a wake-up call to obey the Creator. In these verses, the angel says to worship Him who "made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." The earth is the target of the first trumpet. The sea is the target of the second trumpet. The "springs of water" is the target of the third trumpet. And the heavens, which are the sun, moon, and stars, are a target of the fourth trumpet.

The two witnesses and the 144,000 will certainly be preaching the Gospel to the nations. But the verse seems to indicate that an angel will be preaching. Will angels literally be flying around in the air and in a loud voice proclaiming the Gospel? It's more likely that the New Jerusalem and the angels will be helping the two witnesses proclaim the Gospel to every nation, tribe, language, and people. We know they will prophesy for 1260 days. What will they be saying? They will be preaching the Gospel, of course. They will be telling the world that if we worship Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit can be a Helper who will help us to overcome all our sinful habits, and thus be saved from sin and death. They will be saying you can and must completely stop sinning in order to inherit eternal life.

Perhaps they will be on TV. But CNN and the other networks are not going to be willing to broadcast the two witnesses every day for 1260 days. But how can they preach the Gospel to every nation, tribe, people, and language without the use of world-wide Television? Could it be the angels will help by broadcasting a world-wide radio and television signal of the two witnesses preaching and teaching? And with the presence of the New Jerusalem, everyone who has ears to hear will want to tune in and hear what the two witnesses will have to say.

28.3) Part 3 - Revelation 14:8

Revelation 14:8 Another, a second angel, followed, saying, "Babylon the great has fallen, which has made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her sexual immorality."

Part 3 of this summary is about the fall of Babylon. I don't think Babylon is actually destroyed until Armageddon, which is after the sixth bowl of wrath. Chapters 17 and 18 of Revelation are about the complete and final destruction of Babylon. This is more of the warning that will come to all nations about the coming fall of Islam.

Scripture often refers to events that are still to come in the past tense. We were saved. We are being saved. And we will be saved. The journey or path we are on has a foregone conclusion of salvation. Likewise, Babylon has fallen. This means the fall of Babylon is a foregone conclusion. In Hebrew future events that

are sure to come about can be spoken of in the past tense. “By his stripes we were healed” (Isaiah 53:5). This was written about 900 years before Christ was born, well before he received his “stripes.” Likewise, Babylon has fallen (past tense).

The best way to view the fall of Babylon is from the teaching of the statue in Daniel 2. The head of the statue is gold, so the whole statue is prophetic Babylon. The feet of the statue symbolize the end-time kingdom of the antichrist. A stone, which is Christ, destroys the whole statue by crushing the feet (Daniel 2:34-35).

The kingdom of the antichrist is not destroyed until Armageddon at the end of the great tribulation. The antichrist will bring the world to ruin. And the bowls of wrath will bring about the fall of the religious kingdom of the antichrist, which is Babylon. Chapters 17 and 18 contain the details about the fall of Babylon. And its complete destruction is when Christ (the Stone) strikes the kingdom of the antichrist. But I think the destruction of Babylon becomes a foregone conclusion when the world turns control over to the antichrist. World War III is probably one of the major instigators of the world saying, "peace and safety." Read 1st Thessalonians 5:3-5. After the world says, "peace and safety," sudden destruction comes on them. They are in the "night." The primary meaning of these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5:3-5 is that the night is darkness and wickedness. But I think the night is also the time when the antichrist rules over every nation, tribe, people, and language for 42 months. The "night" is a time when no one can work (John 9:4). But Christ will come as a "thief in the night," to gather the elect.

The sixth trumpet is about a war where one third of mankind is killed. (See my comments on the sixth trumpet.) It would seem to be World War III, before the antichrist rules every nation, tribe, people, and language. So, this is the start of the fall of Babylon, but not its complete destruction.

In Isaiah 21, we read these words about the fall of Babylon. Right before this verse in Isaiah 21, the Lord asks Isaiah to post a lookout (symbolically). Compare what the lookout says in Isaiah with the second angel in Revelation.

Isaiah 21:8-9 NIV And the lookout shouted, "Day after day, my lord, I stand on the watchtower; every night I stay at my post. (9) Look, here comes a man in a chariot with a team of horses. And he gives back the answer: "Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground!"

Revelation 14:8 NIV A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."

28.4) Part 4 - Revelation 14:9-12

Revelation 14:9-12 Another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead, or on his hand, (10) he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger. He will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. (11) The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. They have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name. (12) Here is the patience of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

Part 4 of this summary is the warning not to worship the beast or take the mark of the beast. This mark, and this world-wide law to worship the statue, are probably given right at the beginning of the "night," when the antichrist rules over every nation, tribe, people, and language for 42 months.

As a side note, these four verses are, in my opinion, the biggest argument against one of the doctrines of Jehovah's Witnesses. Chapter 9 of their widely printed and studied book, titled "You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth," is on this issue. Chapter 9 says that God will not torment the unsaved. They use Jeremiah 7:31 to say that God never had the "idea of roasting people in fire." Of course the verse in Jeremiah is about the people of Israel who were literally sacrificing their children in fire. God is saying that He did not command them to do so. They go on to say that "God is Love," and that such a God would not torment people in fire.

They do a word study of Sheol (Hebrew) and Hades (Greek). This word study is actually quite good. Also the Greek word Gehenna is studied. This is the place outside of Jerusalem where the people of Israel sacrificed their children in fire. These are all very reasonable arguments that the dead are not conscious in Heaven or Hell. Also, Jesus, Paul, and Old Testament writers speak of the dead being asleep, meaning unaware of anything. (Job 3:13, Psalm 13:3, Jeremiah 51:39,57, Matthew 9:24, John 11:11-14, Acts 7:60, 13:36, 1st Corinthians 11:30, 15:6, 15:18, 15:20, 1st Thessalonians 4:13-15, 5:10)

All these verses and word studies make a valid argument that the dead are unaware of anything for the time up till the great white throne and the resurrection of the dead in Revelation 20:11-15. The lake of fire is the second death (verse

20:14). Do all the arguments for the dead being unaware apply after they come back to life, are judged, and then go to the second death? This is something that most Jehovah's Witnesses have not considered.

The Jehovah's Witnesses say that, "When Jesus was on earth jailers were at times called 'tormentors.'" They quote Matthew 18:34 for this. The idea is that the dead are "locked up" out of existence, so they are jailed but not really tormented. But the wicked man who was delivered to his the jailer in Matthew 18:34 was not tormented with fire and brimstone. He was locked up until he could pay for all that he owed. He was still in existence, and therefore was tormented by the fact that he was in jail and not free. The Jehovah's Witnesses say:

Since those who are thrown into the "lake of fire" go into "second death" from which there is no resurrection, they are, so to speak, jailed forever in death. They remain in death as though in the custody of jailers for all eternity. The wicked, of course, are not literally tormented because, as we have seen, when a person is dead he is completely out of existence. He is not conscious of anything. (Second half of paragraph 18, chapter 9, "You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth")

The Jehovah's Witnesses simply apply all the arguments of Scripture about the first death to the second death. But these verses in Revelation 14:9-12 would seem to completely defy this teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses. (These verses are not mentioned in their chapter 9, titled "What Kind of Place is Hell.")

If the wicked are out of existence after the second death, how can they be in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb? The wicked man who was delivered to his jailer in Matthew 18:34 was not tormented with fire and brimstone. Why are the wicked tormented with burning sulfur (or fire and brimstone)? If they are not tormented, why does smoke rise from their torment? If they are asleep, why does this verse say they have "no rest day or night?" How can they have "no rest day or night" if they are out of existence?

The major meaning of Revelation 14:9-12 is a warning that if you receive the mark of the beast, or worship the image, that you will be tortured with fire and brimstone. These verses cannot be interpreted in any other way. But does this mean they will be tortured forever and ever? The verse says, "The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever." I take this to mean two things. First, they will not be resurrected. Secondly, the evidence of their eternal deaths will continue

forever. The smoke is evidence of the fact that they were tormented, and that they will not be resurrected. Compare Revelation 14:9-12 with Isaiah 34:8-10:

Isaiah 34:8-10 ESV For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. (9) And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into sulfur; her land shall become burning pitch. (10) Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.

Revelation 14:10-12 He also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger. He will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. (11) The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. They have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name. (12) Here is the patience of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

The verses in Revelation speak of torment, whereas the verses in Isaiah only speak about the evidence of death and destruction. But we should not interpret the verses in Revelation without considering these original verses in Isaiah. When we consider this Old Testament context, it would seem that the smoke of the torment is talking about the evidence of their torment and destruction.

In other words, I don't believe they are literally tormented forever. But they are tormented for some amount of time, probably depending upon judgments received at the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-12). In Matthew 10:28, Jesus tells us, "Don't be afraid of those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." I believe that Gehenna is the lake of fire after the great white throne judgment. So the soul can be destroyed in Gehenna. It may take a long while, and during the destruction of the soul there will be great torment. But I don't think the torment lasts forever. Perhaps, as the soul is being slowly destroyed, the torment decreases over time as the soul becomes less and less self-aware.

Another point that needs to be made is that this torment is not for everyone who dies having never heard about Christ. It's not even for those who die without making a profession of faith in Christ. The torment is for those who take the mark of the beast and worship the beast and his image. It's for those who deliberately and knowingly become enemies of Christ. Think about it. The New Jerusalem will

be in orbit around the earth. The antichrist will blaspheme Christ and those who live in heaven, which is the New Jerusalem. The two witnesses will be preaching to the world. The 144,000 will also be preaching to the churches. The choice becomes clear.

Are you going to side with the antichrist, or are you going to side with Christ? Those who take the mark of the beast are deliberately taking an oath of allegiance for the antichrist and against Christ. In the past, some saw Christ's miracles but said, they were the work of "Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons" (Matthew 12:24). Jesus warned them that this sin was unpardonable (Matthew 12:32). If you deliberately and knowingly become Christ's enemy, you forfeit the work of salvation that Christ paid on the cross. If you become an enemy of Christ, you will not be resurrected. Instead, your soul will be destroyed over a period of time through torment in the lake of fire.

28.5) Part 5 - Revelation 14:13

Revelation 14:13 I heard the voice from heaven saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."

Part 5 of this summary is the "night," when no more work can be done. This will be a time of great persecution for the saints who have overcome sin. This is the great tribulation for the true Church. Many will be killed. But their work is over. In the "night," no work can be done. All who have turned to Christ will have done so by this time. The saints who are killed will not have to go through more persecution. And they will be resurrected on the last day. So, they are blessed to be allowed to rest until the resurrection.

28.6) Part 6 - Revelation 14:14-16

Revelation 14:14-16 I looked, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud one sitting like a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. (15) Another angel came out from the temple, crying with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Send forth your sickle, and reap; for the hour to reap has come; for the harvest of the earth is ripe!" (16) He who sat on the cloud thrust his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

Part 6 of this summary is the harvest of those who are in Christ Jesus. The one sitting on the cloud is "like a son of man." He has a crown of gold on his head. This one must be Jesus Christ. Jesus is sitting on a cloud as he harvests the earth. At the resurrection, on the last day, the dead in Christ are raised. Those in Christ receive immortal bodies on that last day. Then 45 days later, at the rapture, Jesus comes in a cloud (Matthew 24:30, 26:64, 1st Thessalonians 4:17, Revelation 1:7).

Notice that verses 14-16 are about the harvest of those in Christ. No mention is made of grapes or the winepress. Verses 17-20 are from "another angel." Verses 17-20 are about the winepress of God's wrath. These two parts should not be confused, and are not the same.

To some degree, there is a little overlap in the timing between the harvest of those in Christ, and the harvest of wrath (below). The resurrection is on the "last day." Those in Christ, who are alive at the time, will be changed to have immortal bodies. During the 45 days that follow, we have the first six bowls of wrath. After the 45 days, we have the rapture. The rapture, of course, relates to the harvest of those in Christ. After the rapture comes Armageddon. This is the seventh bowl of wrath.

But the event which most directly equates to the harvest of those in Christ is the resurrection on the last day. Those in the heart of the earth are harvested from the earth. And those who are alive also receive immortal bodies. Jesus Christ and the 144,000 are the firstfruits of the harvest. The resurrection is the harvest of the Bride of Christ. But the Church is also the firstfruits (2 Thess. 2:13, James 1:18). Later, during the millennial reign, many in the nations will be harvested to receive immortal bodies.

The event that most directly equates to the harvest of wrath (below) is the seventh bowl of wrath and Armageddon. Those who take the mark of the beast are killed.

28.7) Part 7 - Revelation 14:17-20

Revelation 14:17-20 Another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven. He also had a sharp sickle. (18) Another angel came out from the altar, he who has power over fire, and he called with a great voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Send forth your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for the earth's grapes are fully ripe!" (19) The angel thrust his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and

threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. (20) The winepress was trodden outside of the city, and blood came out from the winepress, even to the bridles of the horses, as far as one thousand six hundred stadia.

Part 7 of this summary is the harvest of sinners (Armageddon). After the rapture is the wrath of God during Armageddon. A great multitude of people is killed. Armageddon is when the nations of the world surround Jerusalem. Armageddon is in the valley of Megiddo, outside the city. This is where we get 180 miles of blood, parts of which are as deep as the horses' bridles. See Zechariah 12-14 for an account of Armageddon.

The winepress of God's wrath comes from Joel 3:9-16. Here we have a clear description of Armageddon. Joel 2:31 says it's during the Day of the Lord. The sun is darkened, and the moon turns to blood. This is the same sign as given in the sixth seal. It's the sign given in Matthew 24:29, after the Great Tribulation and just before the return of Christ in Matthew 24:30-31.

I believe this sign happens twice. The New Jerusalem appears. But the Bride is not ready. The Bride has not yet overcome sin. Only a few, the 144,000, are ready for Christ to appear. So Christ confirms a "covenant with many," for seven more years. After the seven years, the New Jerusalem appears again. So the signs in the heavens happen twice. The second occurrence is at the time of Armageddon, at the end of the seven years. Christ returns and pours out his wrath on all his enemies who have taken the mark of the beast and worshiped the beast and his image.

The winepress of God's wrath can also be found in Isaiah 63:2-6.

Chapter 29

Revelation 15-16 – The Seven Bowls of Wrath

Chapter 15 of Revelation is a preamble to the bowls of wrath in chapter 16. There is a common misconception (in my opinion) that the bowls of wrath occur during the 42-month reign of the antichrist. But I believe the wrath of God is after the 42-month reign. In Matthew 24, we read about the days of Noah and the sudden destruction that will come. The sudden destruction must be after the great tribulation. What is happening before the sudden destruction?

Matthew 24:37-39 "As the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (38) For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ship, (39) and they didn't know until the flood came, and took them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

The great tribulation is not tribulation for the world. It's great tribulation for God's people who are persecuted and put to death. For the world, it's a time of "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." In Luke 17:28, these days are also described as being like the days of Lot. "They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, and they built." This does not seem to be a time when the bowls of wrath are being poured out. As Jesus said, it's "sudden destruction." I believe the bowls of wrath are poured out during the 45 days between the 1290 days and the 1335 days of Daniel 12:11.

The 42-month reign of the antichrist is the 1290 days from the abomination of desolation. Then we have the resurrection. In other words, from the abomination there are 1290 days until the resurrection (by the context of Daniel 12:2). But those who are still alive must wait another 45 days before the rapture. After the resurrection, everyone, including those still alive, will have spiritual bodies. They will not be harmed by the bowls of wrath. The rapture would seem to be after the sixth bowl of wrath but before Armageddon.

Revelation 16:15-16 NIV "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." (16) Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

In Revelation 4:6, we read about a sea of glass before the throne of God. In this preamble to the bowls of wrath, we read about the sea of glass again. This time the sea of glass is mixed with fire. The sea also has those who overcame the beast, his image, and the number of his name. They are all standing on the sea of glass.

The point is that God has accomplished his goal. The empty sea of glass has become full of his people who have gone through the tribulation and have overcome the beast. In Revelation 12:11, it says "They overcame him because of the Lamb's blood, and because of the word of their testimony. They didn't love their life, even to death."

Revelation 15:1-8 I saw another great and marvelous sign in the sky: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them God's wrath is finished. (2) I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who overcame the beast, his image, and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. (3) They sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God, the Almighty! Righteous and true are your ways, you King of the nations. (4) Who wouldn't fear you, Lord, and glorify your name? For you only are holy. For all the nations will come and worship before you. For your righteous acts have been revealed." (5) After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. (6) The seven angels who had the seven plagues came out, clothed with pure, bright linen, and wearing golden sashes around their breasts. (7) One of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. (8) The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power. No one was able to enter into the temple, until the seven plagues of the seven angels would be finished.

Those standing on the sea of glass sing the song of Moses. The song of Moses can be found in Exodus 15. But it's not the same words. The point is that the celebration of these people is of a similar nature to the celebration of Moses' people. The people of Moses were delivered from Pharaoh. The song of Moses is in celebration of the fact that Pharaoh's army was destroyed in the Red Sea. This song in Revelation is in celebration of God's people being delivered from the two

beasts of Revelation. The song also celebrates the fact that Christ's kingdom will replace the kingdom of the antichrists. Christ will be "King of the nations." All the nations will come and worship before Christ the King of Kings.

We should also note the connection between this song of Moses and the song sung by the 144,000 on Mount Zion. The song of the 144,000 was a song that nobody else could learn. They are given spiritual bodies at the beginning of the tribulation because they will have overcome sin before Christ returns. But here at the end of the tribulation, we have a countless number standing before the throne of God. They are given spiritual bodies after the great tribulation, on the last day of the 1290 days, at the time of the resurrection. Thus, the countless number have their own song which is in celebration of being delivered from the two antichrists.

In chapter 22 of this book we looked at the trumpet-plagues. The trumpet-plagues are similar to the bowls of wrath. But the bowls of wrath are more severe. The trumpet-plagues are a wake-up call to the Church and a warning to the world. The bowls of wrath happen after the resurrection. They are "seven last plagues, for in them God's wrath is finished." Thus, the bowls of wrath is the wrath of God, on the Day of the Lord, spoken of in the Old Testament.

In chapter 22 we examined the parallelism between the trumpet-plagues and the seven days of the Creation. The trumpet-plagues is a reminder that God is the Creator. The trumpet-plagues also have a parallelism to the plagues on Egypt. As it turns out, the bowls of wrath have an even stronger parallelism to the plagues on Egypt. The new song that is sung by the countless number is symbolically equated to the song of Moses, which was in celebration of being delivered from Pharaoh. Combine this fact with the strong parallelism between the plagues on Egypt and the bowls of wrath. We can see that the Exodus, and God's delivery of Israel from Pharaoh and Egypt, was a type and precursor for God's delivery of his people from Satan and the antichrists. God is saying, "Let my people go." God is delivering his people from the slavery of sin. And God's wrath is poured out on those who enslaved his people Israel. (Gentile believers are grafted into Israel.)

Dispensationalists argue for the pre-tribulation rapture because after the rapture verse (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) Paul says, "For God didn't appoint us to wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). They argue this under the assumption that the bowls of wrath will happen during the 42 month reign of the antichrist instead of after the post-tribulation last-day resurrection. But when we consider the strong parallelism between God's wrath and the plagues on Egypt, we must point out that Israel was

still in Egypt while the plagues were being poured out. God protected Israel in the midst of his wrath. The first six bowls of wrath will be after the resurrection but before the rapture. God's people will have already obtained salvation and eternal-life spiritual bodies during these six bowls. Consider this verse in Isaiah:

Isaiah 26:19-21 ESV Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead. Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by. (21) For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.

After the resurrection is the wrath of God, poured out on the world. When God returns, the dead are raised. Then the wrath of God is poured out on the world. Notice that God's people are told to go into their houses and shut the doors while the wrath is poured out. The rapture is not until after the sixth bowl of wrath.

Obviously God will not pour out his wrath on those he has raised. That being the case, he is not going to pour out his wrath on any who might still be alive who have not intentionally become one of his enemies. Most of the world will have taken the mark of the beast. This explicitly declares one as an enemy of God by joining the antichrist in his blasphemy of God and of those who live in heaven, which is the New Jerusalem in orbit around the earth.

We can now look at the first six bowls of wrath and the parallelism to the plagues on Egypt. Pharaoh is symbolic of Satan (Ezekiel 31) and Egypt is symbolic of the world and slavery to sin. God's wrath is poured out on a world of sin ruled by Satan. The ten plagues are listed below for reference (Exodus 7 to 11).

- 1) plague of water changed to blood
- 2) plague of frogs
- 3) plague of gnats
- 4) plague of flies
- 5) plague on the livestock
- 6) plague of boils
- 7) plague of hail
- 8) plague of locust
- 9) plague of darkness
- 10) death of the firstborn

- 1) The first bowl is a plague of ugly and painful sores (Revelation 16:2). The sixth plague on Egypt was sores.
- 2) The second bowl is a plague of turning the water of the sea into blood (Revelation 16:3). The first plague on Egypt was changing water into blood.
- 3) The third bowl is a plague of turning the water of rivers and springs into blood (Revelation 16:4). The first plague on Egypt was changing water into blood.
- 4) The fourth bowl is a plague on the sun, and on people who are scorched with fire by the sun (Revelation 16:8-9). This plague does not have a corresponding plague on Egypt. It seems to be here to indicate that the bowls of wrath are also patterned after the Creation, just as the trumpets are patterned after the Creation. On the fourth day of the Creation, the sun, moon, and stars were created.
- 5) The fifth bowl is a plague of darkness (Revelation 16:10-11). The ninth plague on Egypt was a plague of darkness. The darkness covered Egypt for three days. No one could even see anyone else or leave his house. There was light, however, in places where the Israelites lived.
- 6) In the sixth bowl, the three evil spirits looked like frogs (Revelation 16:12-14). The second plague on Egypt was a plague of frogs.

Revelation 16:1-2 I heard a loud voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God on the earth!" (2) The first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth, and it became a harmful and evil sore on the people who had the mark of the beast, and who worshiped his image.

This first bowl is against people who have the mark of the beast and worship the image. The sixth plague on Egypt was sores. Contrast this with the fifth trumpet, where the plague is on everyone who does not have the seal of God on their foreheads (Revelation 9:4). Remember that the trumpets are a wake-up call for the Church. Anyone who considers himself to be a Christian, but does not have the seal of God, needs to get right with God by repenting and overcoming sin. But during the bowls of wrath, the people who have taken the mark of the beast are forever separated from God. They no longer have a chance to get right with God.

Revelation 16:3 The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man. Every living thing in the sea died.

This second bowl is against the sea. The water of the sea turns to blood. The first plague on Egypt was changing water into blood. This blood is described as being like a dead man. This wrath is final. Those who have received the mark of the beast are like dead men. The wages of their sin is death, and they have not believed on Christ to overcome sin. So, they have a final death sentence.

Revelation 16:4-7 The third poured out his bowl into the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. (5) I heard the angel of the waters saying, "You are righteous, who are and who were, you Holy One, because you have judged these things. (6) For they poured out the blood of the saints and the prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. They deserve this." (7) I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments."

This third bowl is against the rivers and springs of water. The first plague on Egypt was changing water into blood. Here we have the angel of the water agreeing with God that the judgments are just. He compares the water turning to blood with the blood of the saints. This is God's revenge for the killing of God's people. The trumpets were a warning, not a final judgment or revenge. Now the bowls of wrath are a final judgment and revenge; no longer a chance to repent.

Revelation 16:8-9 The fourth poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was given to him to scorch men with fire. (9) People were scorched with great heat, and people blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues. They didn't repent and give him glory.

This fourth bowl is against the sun, created on the fourth day. This bowl causes scorching heat from the sun. God is the Creator, and He is righteous in all that He does. Yet the people do not repent. They curse God. At this point sin has so overtaken everyone with the mark that they could never come to repentance. God is not sending out His Holy Spirit to draw people to Himself. Sin completely blinds them to the truth. They know that God is doing these plagues, but they refuse to repent. They just curse God. How foolish it is to curse your own Creator.

Revelation 16:10-11 The fifth poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was darkened. They gnawed their tongues because of the pain, (11) and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores. They didn't repent of their works.

The fifth bowl brings darkness. The ninth plague on Egypt was a plague of darkness. Again, the people with the mark of the beast curse God. The world will know that all the plagues, from the first plague of sores to this plague of darkness, are from God. Yet they refuse to repent. They just curse God. No one turns to Christ during this time. Here we see that the plague of the sores has not gone away. This is the fifth plague, yet the sores from the first plague have not gone away. The fourth plague was scorching heat from the sun. In this plague, apparently the sun disappears and there is darkness. In Exodus 10:21-23, the darkness that fell on Egypt was a darkness that could be felt. No one could see anyone else. It lasted three days. This will be a time of terror, when no one will be able to do anything. Everyone will be literally blind, like the blindness of their sins. But the children of God will be able to see. In Exodus 10:23, the Israelites had light during the three days. God will protect His people. They will be able to literally see, because they are free of the sins that blind. The three days are probably symbolic of the three days and three nights that Christ was in the earth. Christ paid the price so that we can overcome sin and come into the light. But the world remains in darkness.

Revelation 16:12-14 The sixth poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates. Its water was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the sunrise. (13) I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, something like frogs; (14) for they are spirits of demons, performing signs; which go forth to the kings of the whole inhabited earth, to gather them together for the war of that great day of God, the Almighty.

The sixth bowl is against the Euphrates River. The three evil spirits look like frogs. The second plague on Egypt was a plague of frogs. During the plagues of the trumpets, the world had the two witnesses to blame. They celebrated by exchanging gifts when the two witnesses were killed. But for the bowls of wrath, the world has no one to blame except God. After the plagues of sores, blood, heat, and darkness, the world is furious at God. Satan (the dragon), the antichrist (first beast), and the false prophet (second beast) all encourage the nations to fight back. But how can you fight God? In their fury and anger, the world prepares to march against Jerusalem. The spirits that come out of the mouths of Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet perform miraculous signs. This unholy trinity will perform miraculous signs that will convince the world that they will be victorious over God Himself, by marching against Jerusalem. And the world is eager to believe this lie.

This unholy trinity is a counterfeit for the Holy Trinity. Satan wants to be God and is always counterfeiting God. Satan (the dragon) is a counterfeit for God the Father. The antichrist (the first beast) is a counterfeit for Christ. The world is enticed to worship the first beast and his image. The false prophet (the second beast) is a counterfeit for the Holy Spirit. The false prophet entices the world to worship Satan and the image of the antichrist, just as the Holy Spirit draws people to the Father and to his Son Jesus Christ.

The great river Euphrates is dried up, so that the way for the kings of the east is prepared. This is similar to the sixth trumpet (Revelation 9:13-19), where four angels are released at the great river Euphrates to go out and bring the world into World War III. But the sixth trumpet war is a counterfeit Armageddon. The sixth trumpet is before the abomination of desolation, and before the antichrist (first beast) rules over every nation, tribe, people, and language for 42 months. World War III will convince the world that a one-world government is required for peace. But it won't be a lasting peace, as it will be when Christ is King of Kings. This war at the end of the great tribulation is the real Armageddon.

When armies from the east or north have attacked Jerusalem, they come from the north. That's because to the east of Jerusalem is the Dead Sea, and it's a huge climb up the mountains to reach Jerusalem from that direction. The Dead Sea is the lowest physical point on the earth, well below sea level. And all the land to the east of Jerusalem is dry desert. So, armies of the past have followed the Euphrates River from the east to wind up north of Jerusalem. Then they go south through the valley of Megiddo. The valley of Megiddo is where we get the name Armageddon. So attacks on Jerusalem are from the north through Megiddo.

Revelation 16:15-16 NIV "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." (16) Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

At this point we have the rapture. This is the thief in the night. Christ returns to steal his Bride during the night when no one can work (John 9:4). The rapture is after the sixth bowl of wrath, and before the armies of the world are gathered around Jerusalem for the battle of Armageddon. Even today, the world thinks of Armageddon as something like World War III. But Armageddon is the armies of the world gathered against Jerusalem as Christ returns to Jerusalem to set his feet on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4).

Revelation 16:17-21 The seventh poured out his bowl into the air. A loud voice came forth out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" (18) There were lightnings, sounds, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men on the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. (19) The great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. (20) Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. (21) Great hailstones, about the weight of a talent, came down out of the sky on people. People blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for this plague is exceedingly severe.

The seventh bowl is Armageddon. How can we know? First, verse 16 mentions Armageddon. Second, the seven bowls of wrath are the “seven last plagues, for in them God's wrath is finished” (verse 15:1). So there can be no more wrath after this. Third, the great city is divided into three parts. This is similar to what we read when Christ's feet stand on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4). The Mount of Olives is “split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south” (verse 4, quoted below).

In verse 16:20, we read that every island fled away and the mountains were not found. I do not believe this is literal. In Isaiah 66:19, we read that after Armageddon, people will be sent to "islands afar off, who have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations.” In other words, islands and mountains will still be around after Armageddon. In the Old Testament, a mountain can be symbolic of a nation. This verse is simply saying that the nations will lose their power. Christ will defeat the armies of all the nations.

Zechariah 14:1-9 NIV A day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. (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. (3) Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. (4) On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. (5) You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as

you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. (6) On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. (7) It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime—a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light. (8) On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter. (9) The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.

Verse 5 of Zechariah 14 says, “Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.” The “holy ones” can also be translated as “saints”, which means “holy ones.” Thus, we will be caught up in the rapture after the sixth bowl of wrath. After that, we will have the wedding banquet. Then we will return with Christ and Christ will fight against the nations who gather against Jerusalem.

Chapter 19 of Revelation gives us more detail about Armageddon. The armies of all the nations are gathered to fight against Jerusalem while we are having the wedding banquet. The nations will know that the six bowls of wrath are coming from Christ and the New Jerusalem. They won’t be able to directly attack the New Jerusalem. But they will know that Christ will return to Old Jerusalem. It will probably take several months for the nations to gather all the armies of the world. Again, chapter 19 of Revelation is about Armageddon. In verses 6-9 of chapter 19 we read about the wedding banquet. So again, we have the six bowls of wrath, followed by the rapture and the wedding banquet. Then we all return with Christ and Christ fights the nations at Armageddon.

The seventh bowl of wrath includes the destruction of Babylon. In verse 16:19, we read, “Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.” Babylon is the world-wide religious system of Islam that will come. Its destruction is detailed in the next two chapters of Revelation. Then chapter 19 of Revelation will be more about Armageddon. Just remember that the destruction of Babylon happens when Christ destroys the armies of the nations at Armageddon, which is after the wedding banquet. The destruction of the kingdom of Babylon is the destruction of the second beast and his kingdom. The destruction at Armageddon is the destruction of the first beast and his kingdom.

Chapter 30

Revelation 17-18 – Mystery Babylon Destroyed

Revelation 17:1-2 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here. I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters, (2) with whom the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality, and those who dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her sexual immorality."

Revelation 17 and 18 is about the judgment of the great prostitute. We must first identify the great prostitute. We are told the prostitute sits on many waters. Skipping down to verse 15, we read, "The waters which you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages." Does the prostitute literally commit sexual immorality? No, in the Bible prostitution is a figure of speech for idol worship. In Ezekiel 16, Israel was said to be a prostitute because she worshiped other gods. In other words, the great prostitute is a false religion.

Some believe the prostitute is the worship of money. Others believe Mystery Babylon is the old Roman Empire. Some have suggested Mystery Babylon is the United States. I believe the false prophet is the Islamic Mahdi. This would make the false religion of the prostitute be Islam. Rulers of the world will embrace Islam. The people of the earth will be made drunken with the power of this false religion.

What does it mean to be drunk with a false religion? Think about the Islamic terrorists of today. Do they act rationally? They kill in the name of Allah. They believe they are rational. But because of the lies of Satan they act irrationally. To be drunk is to act without reason. Thus they are drunk because they worship a false religion and they are acting on the basis of that religion.

Revelation 17:3-5 He carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet-colored animal, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. (4) The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of the sexual immorality of the earth. (5) And on her forehead a name was written, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

The woman is taken to a wilderness or a desert. Literally speaking, the desert could be that of Mecca and Saudi Arabia. But figuratively speaking, the desert is the time of the great tribulation for the Church. It's not a time for the harvest. It's a time when no more work can be done.

The woman is dressed in purple and scarlet, and is decked with gold and precious stones and pearls. This reminds us of the rich Islamic countries of today. I say rich because the rulers are rich and not the people. They are rich with the money of oil. We've seen pictures of cars, owned by the princes of Saudi Arabia, covered entirely in diamonds.

There is a name written on the prostitutes' forehead. The name is rather long. Or it can be thought of as having several characteristics. First of all, the name is a mystery. This means that there is wisdom in studying the Scripture to learn the meaning of the name.

The name is Babylon the Great. This brings us back to chapter 13 of this book. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of the statue. The head was gold, the chest was silver, the thighs were bronze, and the legs were iron. The feet and toes were iron and clay. The whole statute is destroyed when Jesus returns and sets up his kingdom. Since the head is Babylon, the whole statue is Babylon. When the feet are destroyed, Babylon is destroyed. We also learned how Israel would return to the land after 70 years of Babylonian captivity. God promised to destroy Babylon when Israel returns. But Israel had not yet overcome sin. So God's promise to destroy Babylon was put on hold until Israel could overcome sin. That's the mystery. The legs of iron is Islam. When Islam is destroyed God will have fulfilled his promise to destroy Babylon. But this cannot occur until Israel overcomes sin. Remember that we the Church are grafted into Israel. We must all overcome all our sinful habits before Babylon can be destroyed.

The name on her forehead is also the "mother of prostitutes". In the ancient world Babylon was the center of idol worship. It was the primary false religion of that day. It was the center of Satan's kingdom. Today, Islam is the center of Satan's kingdom. This makes Islam be the mother of prostitutes. John spoke of the spirit of antichrist already being in this world. The spirit of antichrist is that which comes against God or Jesus Christ. As we will see, there were a series of kingdoms, starting with Egypt, which came against God and thus had the spirit of antichrist. Islam comes against the very core of Christianity by teaching that Christ did not die for our sins and that Christ is not the Son of God. Islam is the last kingdom in this series of seven. A revived Islamic Caliphate will be the eighth head of the beast.

The name on her forehead is also the “abominations of the earth”. The prostitution is the false religion itself. It’s the idol worship. The abominations are the terrible things that are done in the name of those false religions. In ancient times children were sacrificed in the name of those false religions. This was an abomination. Throughout the history of Islam, nations have been conquered in the name of Allah and people have been killed for failing to convert to Islam. This is also an abomination. God does not force people to convert by the threat of death.

Revelation 17:6 NIV I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.

Earlier we talked about Islamic terrorism and how it causes irrational behavior. Here we see these Muslims are drunk with the blood of Christians and most probably Jews. Throughout Islam’s long history, nations were conquered in the name of Allah. Today, Islam is again being advanced by the sword.

30.1) Once Was, Now is Not, Will Come Again

Revelation 17:7-8 NIV Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. (8) The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come.

We covered a lot of this verse back in chapter 27 of this book. That was the chapter on Revelation 13. Revelation 13 introduced the beast with ten horns and seven heads. Here it is reversed. There are seven heads and ten horns. This chapter of Revelation puts more emphasis on the heads than it does the horns. This chapter is about Babylon, and the historic sequence of kingdoms from Egypt to the Islamic Caliphate. This chapter is about the Middle East reign of the false prophet and a historical perspective of Bible prophecy. That’s why the seven heads are first.

The beast once was, is not, but will come again. Notice that the beast “will come up out of the Abyss.” In chapter 27 we learned how this could be talking about the return of Nero. The inhabitants of the world will be astonished that the world leader is killed and then sometime later comes back to life. I think that when he comes back to life he will have the soul of Nero, out of the Abyss.

In chapter 27 we also talked about the names written in the book of life from the creation of the world. Everyone's name was written from the creation of the world. But you can lose your salvation if you join the spirit of antichrist and blaspheme Christ when he appears in the New Jerusalem. Those who are astonished at the antichrist coming back to life will have a tendency to worship the beast and take the mark of the beast. Their names will be blotted from the book of life and they will lose their salvation. They will not be resurrected.

Revelation 17:9-11 ESV "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. (10) They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. (11) The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

The mind with wisdom goes back to wisdom from God and the understanding of Scripture. The woman sits on seven hills. Many have attributed the seven hills to the Seven Hills of Rome. The Greek word used here for 'hills' really means 'mountains.' There is another Greek word they can be translated as hills. There are several translations which use the word 'mountains.' This translation apparently used 'hills' because of the belief that it is talking about Rome.

In the Old Testament, the word 'mountain' is often used to mean 'kingdom.' The verse says they are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. This strongly implies a historical sequence of kingdoms. So the Seven Hills of Rome really does not work. The seven heads are not two different things. It's an historical sequence of kingdoms which have controlled Israel. The woman, therefore, sits on seven mountains which are seven historical kingdoms.

Many of us have assumed that the sequence of kings should start with Nebuchadnezzar. This would force us to name specific kings, instead of kingdoms, which seemed most likely to be types for the antichrist. But such lists were only conjecture and did not come across as convincing. But the sequence of kingdoms which controlled Israel actually goes back to Egypt. The sequence that makes perfect sense is: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greek, Roman, and the Islamic Caliphate. The five that had fallen, at the time of John, were the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek Empires. The one that was at the time of John was the Roman Empire. And the one that would come later is the Islamic Caliphate.

The beast that once was, now is not, but will come again is the end-times antichrist. Let's assume he is Nero. He is an eighth king. But he belongs to the seven. More specifically he belongs to Rome. But it's not a revived Roman Empire. It's a revived Islamic Caliphate. So the eighth king belongs to both the sixth and the seventh head.

Many have tried to make sense of this verse without including the Islamic Caliphate, which also controlled Jerusalem for many years. Some have said that the seventh head that would come is a revived Roman Empire. If so, then what is the eighth? You could argue the eighth head is the man while the seventh head is the government. But this does not fit the pattern of Scripture. In ancient times, the king is always considered indistinguishable from the kingdom. This little mystery becomes clear when we allow the Islamic Caliphate to be the seventh kingdom, which is a kingdom which must remain for a little while.

30.2) The Seventh Head with the Fatal Wound

Is the Islamic Caliphate really a kingdom that controlled Jerusalem? There were times when Christians took control of Jerusalem back. But the majority of the time, from 640 AD until 1967, Jerusalem was controlled by Muslims. Yes, the Muslim Caliphate shifted over those centuries. But Jerusalem was still predominantly under Muslim control. The Muslim Caliphate is similar to the Christian (Catholic) pope. There were times when we had more than one pope. But the religious Catholic belief is that you can only have one pope. The same is true for the Islamic Caliphate.

Israel became a nation in 1948. But they did not control Old Jerusalem until 1967. Old Jerusalem is a part of what today is called the West Bank. Before 1967, the West Bank was a part of the country of Jordan. It's called the West Bank because Jordan extended across the Jordan River. The West Bank was that part of the country of Jordan. The modern city of Jerusalem is in the nation of Israel. But the Old city of Jerusalem was across the border inside Jordan, inside the West Bank.

Prior to 1967, the area that we call Gaza was part of Egypt. And the area we call the Golan Heights was part of Syria. These three areas are collectively known as the "occupied territories." In 1967, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt joined forces in a war with Israel. This war is called the Six Day War because Israel defeated these three armies in six days. After these six days, Israel controlled the Golan Heights, the West Bank, Gaza, and much of Egypt. After the war, Israel gave the land in Egypt back, except for Gaza.

The so-called two-state solution is for Israel to give up the occupied territories. But they would not be returned to Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. They would become a “Palestinian state.” Palestine was never a state. But they want to make it become a state. Obama has stated that he wants that state to include Old Jerusalem, which would be considered unacceptable by Israel.

Hamas is in Gaza, launching rockets at Israel. But the rockets are mostly low-tech rockets. The only thing that holds back the level of technology for these rocket is Israel’s (and Egypt’s) blockade of the ports of Gaza. If a two-state solution were put in place, Gaza would get free access to ships coming in with high-tech rockets to destroy Israel.

Hezbollah is in Lebanon, and they sometimes attack Israel with higher-tech rockets from the north. They are supplied by Iran. If there was a two-state solution, Hezbollah would simply move into the West Bank. They would be able to attack Israel with rockets from an extremely close range. Remember that the size of Israel today, including the occupied territories, is no larger than New Jersey.

The ten horns are kings, or kingdoms during the great tribulation. The seven heads also are kings. But unlike the ten horns, the seven heads are kingdoms of the past. We know that because “five have fallen, one is, and one will come.” This must be a progression of kingdoms which have controlled Jerusalem and/or Israel. What kingdom controlled Jerusalem after Rome? The only possible answer is Islam, or the Islamic Caliphate.

The verses say the final beast is an eighth head. But the beast only has seven heads. It says the eighth belongs to the seven. So the eighth must be a revival of one of the seven. Remember that the seven heads all controlled Jerusalem and/or Israel. That’s very important. Since Jerusalem is today controlled by Israel, the seventh head has a fatal wound. It is dead.

Israel is a major problem for the Islamic nations of the middle-east. Israel is right in the middle of Islamic nations. And from their perspective, Israel is land that used to be Islamic. They believe that land which used to be Islamic, but is no longer Islamic, must be recovered at all costs. That’s because they believe the entire world will someday be Islamic. Any land that becomes non-Islamic goes against this most fundamental Islamic belief. That’s why, from their perspective, Israel must be “pushed into the sea.” There can be no compromise.

Revelation 13 tells us that one of the seven heads has a fatal wound which is healed. But remember that the seven heads are seven historical kingdoms. For one to be healed from a mortal wound must mean that one is revived. Back in chapter

27 of this book I argued that the fatal wound is literally the antichrist being killed by the sword and then coming back to life with perhaps the soul of Nero, coming up out of the Abyss. When you read chapter 13 of Revelation, this seems to be the strong unavoidable conclusion. The antichrist will be mortally wounded and then his fatal wound will be healed. Chapter 13 of Revelation focuses on the world ruler who known as the beast. On the other hand, chapter 17 focuses on mystery Babylon and the seven historical heads. The seven heads are seven historical kingdoms. They are not literal heads of a man. Therefore, I think there is dual meaning in the head being healed, especially since the wound is only mentioned in chapter 13. The seventh historical head comes alive again. The heads are kingdoms of the past. One of these kingdoms comes alive again.

Revelation 13:3-7 One of his heads looked like it had been wounded fatally. His fatal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled at the beast. (4) They worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (5) A mouth speaking great things and blasphemy was given to him. Authority to make war for forty-two months was given to him. (6) He opened his mouth for blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his dwelling, those who dwell in heaven. (7) It was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. Authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation was given to him.

We must also remember that the heads are not just any kingdom. They are kingdoms which have controlled Jerusalem and/or Israel in the past. This means the Islamic Caliphate will be revived **and**, will control Jerusalem. We know from this verse that the beast will control every nation, tribe, people and language for 42 months. That would have to include Jerusalem. So the control of Jerusalem by Islam is the healing of the mortal wound. Of course after the 42 months, Jesus will conquer the beast and the false prophet at Armageddon.

Here is what Jesus said. The armies of Rome surrounded Jerusalem in 70 AD. This was when the Jews were scattered to the nations for a second time. Jerusalem was "tramped on by the Gentiles" from that time until 1967. Trampling underfoot means Jerusalem is controlled. The Romans controlled Jerusalem even at the time of Christ. So this trampling continued until 1967. But Jerusalem did not become desolate until 70 AD.

Luke 21:20-27 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand. (21) Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let those who are in the midst of her depart. Let those who are in the country not enter therein. (22) For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. (23) Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who nurse infants in those days! For there will be great distress in the land, and wrath to this people. (24) They will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (25) There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars; and on the earth anxiety of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the waves; (26) men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world: for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (27) Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

So Jerusalem was trampled on by the Gentiles until 1967. Some people argue that this trampling is still going on because Israel does not control the temple mount. But Israel has simply allowed the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf to control the temple mount. Israel could reverse that decision at any time. And the issue is whether or not Gentiles control the old city of Jerusalem as a whole. Today, Israel controls Jerusalem. But that fatal head wound will be healed for 42 months. Jerusalem will be trampled again for 42 months:

Revelation 11:1-2 ESV Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, (2) but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

The word "nations" is the same as "gentiles". It's the same word in the Greek. Note that for the gentiles (nations) will trample on Jerusalem 42 months. This means that the month prior to these 42 months, the gentiles are not trampling on Jerusalem. So we can expect the Muslims to once again trample on Jerusalem for 42 months. The fatal wound of the historic seventh head will be healed for the 42-month reign of the antichrist.

30.3) The Ten Kings

Revelation 17:12-14 And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. (13) These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. (14) They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

The woman is the one-world religion of Islam. The beast is the one-world government of the United Nations. The ten horns are ten regions of the world. Today we see their beginnings as world trade centers such as the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The European Union is the model for the ten regions of the world. Each region will probably have a common currency. Each region will probably have individual states but will be a federation of those states. Most of the power will reside in each of the ten federations. This is the coming one world government.

The beast receives power and authority from ten kings, who come into power for "one hour." The authority and power of the entire world goes to the United Nations. The UN, in turn, will give that authority and power to the beast. The beast uses Islam to make the people of the world desolate and naked. But while this happens, during this "one hour," the Islamic people of the world will martyr many Christians and Jews.

After this "one hour", Christ will come to the earth and set foot on the Mount of Olives. The ten kings will make war on the Lamb. In other words, they will march on Jerusalem to fight against Christ. But the Lamb will conquer the ten kings of the world and all their armies. The beast and the false prophet will be thrown alive into the lake of fire. Then Christ will set up his kingdom.

Verse 14 says those who will reign with Christ "are called and chosen and faithful." The Church is grafted into Israel. We who are chosen as firstfruits of the harvest will overcome all our sinful habits before reigning with Christ. We will bring righteousness to the nations. The remainder of the harvest of salvation is in the nations. Those in the nations who will eventually overcome sin through faith and belief in Christ Jesus will also eventually inherit eternal life.

30.4) The Waters are the People of the World

Revelation 17:15-17 He said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages. (16) The ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the prostitute, and will make her desolate, and will make her naked, and will eat her flesh, and will burn her utterly with fire. (17) For God has put in their hearts to do what he has in mind, and to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished.

The waters are all the peoples of the global earth. The prostitute is the religion of Islam. This false religion will cover the globe. The rulers of the world will hate Islam. They will use Islam to control the people. But they will hate Islam itself. The government will make the people of the world naked. This is talking about poverty. Many will be very hungry. Many will die and their bodies burned.

Verse 17 makes it clear that God has put this into their hearts. This is done so that "the words of God should be accomplished." Does this mean that all this horror will happen just to fulfill Bible prophecy? That's not the meaning of this verse. God removes the restraints of Michael to accomplish God's purpose in his chosen people. God's chosen people will undergo great tribulation in order to bring about holiness. All of God's chosen people must overcome all our sinful habits before we are ready to reign with Christ and rule the world.

30.5) The Woman is the Great City

Revelation 17:18 The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."

We have already learned that the woman represents Islam. With that in mind, what is the great city? And why does it rule over the kings of the earth? The holy city that is associated with Islam is Mecca. But, as we will find out, the city is a port city. Jeddah is the port city that services Mecca. Muslims come from all over the world to the port city of Jeddah on their pilgrimage to Mecca. It takes a little over an hour to drive from Jeddah to Mecca.

In the Middle Ages, there was a constant struggle between the Pope and various kings. Likewise, when Islam becomes a one-world religion, the rulers of Islam will have power over even the ten kings of the earth.

Revelation 18:1-3 After these things, I saw another angel coming down out of the sky, having great authority. The earth was illuminated with his glory. (2) He cried with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and she has become a habitation of demons, a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird! (3) For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her sexual immorality, the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from the abundance of her luxury."

What other religion, in its radical form, calls for the death of Jews and Christians? The sexual immorality spoken of is the worship of a false god. Islam is the worship of a false god. Thus becoming a Muslim is considered idol worship by God. The Bible figuratively considers idol worship to be prostitution or sexual immorality (Ezekiel 16).

Some have said that Allah is a false god because the name Allah derives from the name of an Aramaic moon-god that predated Islam. They also point to the crescent moon symbol of Islam. Critics of this view point out that every language has a word for “god” and that Allah in Arabic simply means “god.” Arab-speaking Christians and Arab Jews that predated Muhammad referred to God as Allah. The critics also point out that the crescent moon in the symbol of Islam is to show the importance of using the lunar Islamic calendar in determining the date of Ramadan. And they point to a verse in the Koran which says not to worship the sun or the moon but to worship Allah who created them.

Does Islam really worship another god? The real test is whether or not Islam produces Judeo-Christian values. Some will argue that moderate Islam is truly a religion of peace. But are moderate Muslims publicly and forcefully critical of radical Muslims? Or do they know deep down that Muhammad himself was a radical Muslim? Islam is all about imitating Muhammad. And if you truly imitate Muhammad, you become a radical Muslim. Radical Islam has always forced people to convert, or to pay a harsh tax. If they do not, they are beheaded by the sword. Eventually, people convert or die. Radical Islam is for the killing of Jews and Christians. Can Radical Islam possibly be the same religion as that of Jews and Christians? Can Radical Islam really be worshiping the same god? Radical Muslims all refer to Israel as the “little Satan” and the West as the “big Satan.” And they don’t distinguish these countries from the Jewish and Christian religions. So Radical Muslims themselves do not believe we worship the same god. And their

reason seems to be the same. They believe we really worship Satan, and we believe they really worship Satan.

Revelation 18:4-7 I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, that you have no participation in her sins, and that you don't receive of her plagues, (5) for her sins have reached to the sky, and God has remembered her iniquities. (6) Return to her just as she returned, and repay her double as she did, and according to her works. In the cup which she mixed, mix to her double. (7) However much she glorified herself, and grew wanton, so much give her of torment and mourning. For she says in her heart, 'I sit a queen, and am no widow, and will in no way see mourning.'

Radical Islam fights against Israel and refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist. Missiles are launched from Gaza by Hamas and from Lebanon by Hezbollah. A two-state solution would only bring these missiles closer to Israel and would allow the radical Muslims to bring in bigger and better missiles without having to smuggle them in. But the rulers of this world constantly push for a two-state solution. The politicians of this world don't understand that there is no solution for peace. But the elite of this world actually do understand. The only possible solution is for one side or the other to be "pushed into the sea." They reason that it's far easier to push Israel into the sea than to push all of radical Islam into the sea. But Israel has nukes. The elite of this world know they are never going to have a real one-world government, with them in charge, as long as Israel has nuclear weapons.

The elite of this world conspire with radical Muslims. The elite of this world see Islam as a means to control the people. But the elite kings of this world will themselves wind up being controlled by radical Islam. I believe that's why Revelation depicts the end times as having two beasts, which is two antichrist kings.

Israel is caught in the middle between radical Islam and the elite of this world. It doesn't look good for the survivability of Israel, especially after they are forced to give up their nuclear weapons. Ezekiel 38 is about the time when the Islamic nations that surround Israel will unite to try and destroy Israel. But God is not going to allow Israel to be pushed into the sea. In Ezekiel 38, God himself steps in and defends Israel. The world will be told that they cannot destroy Israel. Jesus Christ appears to save Israel from being pushed into the sea. At this point, the anger of the elect of this world turns against Jesus Christ, and those who live in the New Jerusalem (heaven). At the end of the seven-year tribulation for the Church,

Jesus Christ will come down to the earth and will destroy Babylon, which is to destroy Islam. Mecca and Jeddah will be destroyed.

God warns his people to renounce Islam and come to Jesus Christ.

Revelation 18:8-11 Therefore in one day her plagues will come: death, mourning, and famine; and she will be utterly burned with fire; for the Lord God who has judged her is strong. (9) The kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived wantonly with her, will weep and wail over her, when they look at the smoke of her burning, (10) standing far away for the fear of her torment, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For your judgment has come in one hour.' (11) The merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise any more;

The destruction of Babylon comes when Christ returns at the time of Armageddon. I think it's possible that Christ lays waste to Mecca and Jeddah even before going to Jerusalem to fight at Armageddon.

Revelation 18:12-17 merchandise of gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, fine linen, purple, silk, scarlet, all expensive wood, every vessel of ivory, every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble; (13) and cinnamon, incense, perfume, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat, sheep, horses, chariots, and people's bodies and souls. (14) The fruits which your soul lusted after have been lost to you, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous have perished from you, and you will find them no more at all. (15) The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, will stand far away for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning; (16) saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, she who was dressed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls! (17) For in an hour such great riches are made desolate.' Every shipmaster, and everyone who sails anywhere, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea, stood far away,

In "one hour" Mecca and Jeddah will become desolate.

Revelation 18:18-20 and cried out as they looked at the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like the great city?' (19) They cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe,

woe, the great city, in which all who had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her great wealth! For in one hour is she made desolate. (20) "Rejoice over her, O heaven, you saints, apostles, and prophets; for God has judged your judgment on her."

The entire world will be making pilgrimages to Mecca. They will want to prove their allegiance as the power of the antichrist grows. Everyone will be fearful that they will not be considered to be in true allegiance with the government against Christ Jesus. Praying five times a day, prostrated towards Mecca, and trips to Mecca will be the main ways for the people of the world to visibly show their allegiance. This will allow Jeddah and Mecca to become exceedingly rich. All of Islam will become radical, because in Mecca will be found the blood of the saints.

Revelation 18:21-24 A mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down, and will be found no more at all. (22) The voice of harpists, minstrels, flute players, and trumpeters will be heard no more at all in you. No craftsman, of whatever craft, will be found any more at all in you. The sound of a mill will be heard no more at all in you. (23) The light of a lamp will shine no more at all in you. The voice of the bridegroom and of the bride will be heard no more at all in you; for your merchants were the princes of the earth; for with your sorcery all the nations were deceived. (24) In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on the earth."

Chapter 31

Revelation 19 – Armageddon

The empire of the second beast, which is the false prophet of Islam, is destroyed. Christ can now move onto the first beast and his global government.

Revelation 19:1-4 After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation, power, and glory belong to our God: (2) for true and righteous are his judgments. For he has judged the great prostitute, who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality, and he has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." (3) A second said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke goes up forever and ever." (4) The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne, saying, "Amen! Hallelujah!"

John uses the imagery from Isaiah 34:8-10, "Her smoke goes up forever and ever." This imagery also occurs in Revelation 14:11. This was covered in section 28.4 of this book. For those who take the mark of the beast, "the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever."

Revelation 14:10-12 He also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger. He will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. (11) The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. They have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name. (12) Here is the patience of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

Revelation 19:20 The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet who worked the signs in his sight, with which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

Revelation 20:10 The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are also. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

After Armageddon, the first beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire. After the millennium, the devil is thrown into the lake of fire along with the beast and the false prophet. This lake burns with sulfur (Revelation 14:10, 19:20, 20:10, 21:8, and Isaiah 34:9). In Isaiah 34:8-10 we see that all of Edom becomes burning pitch and sulfur. Could this be the lake of fire to which John was alluding? Edom was the region along the border of Israel and Jordan, south of the Dead Sea, and north of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Isaiah 34:8-10 ESV For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. (9) And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into sulfur; her land shall become burning pitch. (10) Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.

31.1) The Bride Has Made Herself Ready

And now, back to Revelation 19. The whole purpose of the great tribulation is for the Church to overcome sin. Now that we have reached the time of Armageddon, the Bride has made herself ready. This means the Church has overcome sin.

Revelation 19:5-9 A voice came forth from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, the small and the great!" (6) I heard something like the voice of a great multitude, and like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of mighty thunders, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns!" (7) Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory to him. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready." (8) It was given to her that she would array herself in bright, pure, fine linen: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (9) He said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" He said to me, "These are true words of God."

The idea of being invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb brings us back to the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). Five wise virgins were allowed into the wedding banquet. The five foolish virgins were excluded. All ten were believers because they were all waiting for the bridegroom to come. All ten had fallen asleep while waiting. All ten had some oil in their lamps. But the five foolish virgins did not have enough.

Jesus says to the five foolish virgins, “Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.” Does this mean the five foolish virgins will go to hell? No, it simply means they have not developed a discipleship relationship with Jesus Christ so that they overcome all the sinful habits in their lives. You can’t get into the wedding banquet without first overcoming all your sinful habits. If you don’t overcome all your sinful habits, then you won’t be a part of the Bride who makes herself ready for the wedding banquet.

Revelation 19:8 says, “The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” The word “saint” means holy one. The fine linen represents righteousness. We become holy by doing the works of the Father. These are the “righteous acts of the saints.” As we do the righteous acts of the saints, the Holy Spirit fills us in order to help us do the Father’s will. The Holy Spirit changes us on the inside and we overcome all our sinful habits. We are being changed to be like Christ. Only those who become like Christ in this manner will be ready for the wedding banquet.

Matthew 25:1-13 "Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. (2) Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. (3) Those who were foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them, (4) but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. (5) Now while the bridegroom delayed, they all slumbered and slept. (6) But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold! The bridegroom is coming! Come out to meet him!' (7) Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. (8) The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' (9) But the wise answered, saying, 'What if there isn't enough for us and you? You go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' (10) While they went away to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. (11) Afterward the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' (12) But he answered, 'Most certainly I tell you, I don't know you.' (13) Watch therefore, for you don't know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

We should also consider the parable of the wedding banquet (Matthew 22:1-13). The ten virgins compared the wise with the foolish. The foolish have not lost their salvation. They will live in the nations. They still have the opportunity to mature in Christ. The wedding banquet, on the other hand, is about the wicked.

In telling the parable, Jesus is speaking to the common person. Those who were originally invited to the wedding banquet are the rich and proud rulers of the world. They refuse to come. The king “destroyed those murderers and burned their city.” These, of course are the wicked. But there is one other person in the parable who is determined to be wicked and is destroyed. He comes to the wedding banquet without wedding clothes.

Matthew 22:1-13 Jesus answered and spoke again in parables to them, saying, (2) "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king, who made a marriage feast for his son, (3) and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast, but they would not come. (4) Again he sent out other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, "Behold, I have made ready my dinner. My cattle and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the marriage feast!" ' (5) But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his merchandise, (6) and the rest grabbed his servants, and treated them shamefully, and killed them. (7) When the king heard that, he was angry, and sent his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. (8) "Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited weren't worthy. (9) Go therefore to the intersections of the highways, and as many as you may find, invite to the marriage feast.' (10) Those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together as many as they found, both bad and good. The wedding was filled with guests. (11) But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who didn't have on wedding clothing, (12) and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here not wearing wedding clothing?' He was speechless. (13) Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and throw him into the outer darkness; there is where the weeping and grinding of teeth will be.'

This parable primarily focuses on the rich and proud of the world who don't care to come to the wedding of God's own Son. This parable is not talking about the Bride. It's talking about those in the nations. The rich and the proud are destroyed. The man without wedding clothes is also destroyed. To come to the wedding banquet without wedding clothes would have been a sign of great disrespect. Those who are in contempt of the Father or his Son are considered wicked and are destroyed. Basically they are against Christ. To be against Christ is antichrist.

31.2) Jesus Christ Coming on a White Horse

Revelation 19:10-16 I fell down before his feet to worship him. He said to me, "Look! Don't do it! I am a fellow bondservant with you and with your brothers who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy." (11) I saw the heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it is called Faithful and True. In righteousness he judges and makes war. (12) His eyes are a flame of fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has names written and a name written which no one knows but he himself. (13) He is clothed in a garment sprinkled with blood. His name is called "The Word of God." (14) The armies which are in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in white, pure, fine linen. (15) Out of his mouth proceeds a sharp, double-edged sword, that with it he should strike the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty. (16) He has on his garment and on his thigh a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

The first beast will rule for 1290 days. From the abomination of desolation is 1290 days (Daniel 12:11). By context, I think this is 1290 days until the resurrection (Daniel 12:2). I believe the resurrection is on the last day of these 1290 days. Those in Christ who are still alive would receive their spiritual bodies at that time. Then we would all wait another 45 days as the six bowls of God's wrath are poured out. Then comes the rapture. We are all gathered to meet the Lord in the air. After that comes the wedding banquet in the New Jerusalem. After the wedding banquet, we all return with Christ, figuratively on white horses, as he fights the armies of the world at Armageddon.

In this passage Jesus figuratively sits on a white horse. White stands for purity. Jesus is called Faithful and True. Jesus is called "Faithful" because no one doubts the victory of Jesus. He will be the "King of kings and Lord of lords" when he conquers the one-world government of the antichrist. Jesus is called "True" because he will rule in truth. This is in comparison to the antichrist and his government which constantly lies to the people. "In righteousness [Jesus] judges and make war" against the nations of the world.

Verse 15 says, "He will rule them with an iron rod." Back in Revelation 12:5 we read about the woman (Israel) who "gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to

rule all the nations with a rod of iron. Her child was caught up to God, and to his throne.” Back in one of the letters to the seven churches, we read:

Revelation 2:25-29 Nevertheless, hold that which you have firmly until I come. (26) He who overcomes, and he who keeps my works to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations. (27) He will rule them with a rod of iron, shattering them like clay pots; as I also have received of my Father: (28) and I will give him the morning star. (29) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

The “rod of iron” imagery tells us something about how Jesus will be ruling the nations. We must find the symbols of Revelation in the Old Testament to get a better idea of what’s being said. Ruling the nations with a “rod of iron” comes from Psalm 2. Jesus will in fact rule the nations strictly. Today, the people of the nations are used to living in sin with no consequences from their rulers. The rulers themselves live in sin. But under the righteous rule of Jesus Christ, the government will in fact legislate morality. “Let us break their chains,” they say, “and throw off their fetters” (Psalm 2:3 NIV). The people of the nations will not like this legislation against sin. But Jesus, sitting in the New Jerusalem, will just laugh. Then he will speak to the nations in anger. Here is the entire Psalm 2.

Psalms 2:1-12 Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot a vain thing? (2) The kings of the earth take a stand, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh, and against his Anointed, saying, (3) “Let’s break their bonds apart, and cast their cords from us.” (4) He who sits in the heavens will laugh. The Lord will have them in derision. (5) Then he will speak to them in his anger, and terrify them in his wrath: (6) “Yet I have set my King on my holy hill of Zion.” (7) I will tell of the decree. Yahweh said to me, “You are my son. Today I have become your father. (8) Ask of me, and I will give the nations for your inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. (9) You shall break them with a rod of iron. You shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” (10) Now therefore be wise, you kings. Be instructed, you judges of the earth. (11) Serve Yahweh with fear, and rejoice with trembling. (12) Give sincere homage, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all those who take refuge in him.

Back in that letter to the seven churches, in Revelation 2:25-29 (quoted above), we find out that we who overcome all our sinful habits will reign with Christ over the nations. Verses 26-27 say, “He who overcomes, and he who keeps my works to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations. He will rule them with a rod of iron, shattering them like clay pots; as I also have received of my Father.” Thus he, who overcomes, will also reign with an iron rod. We will rule with Christ and carry out Christ’s instructions in the rule of the nations. That rule includes the “shattering of them like clay pots.” Back in Psalm 2:9 we read, “You shall break them with a rod of iron. You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” The harsh rules of legislating morality is like the potter remaking his vessel. We, as rulers, will become like a father to the nations from the aspect that a father disciplines his children. I think that’s a reflection of Psalm 2:8 which says, “Yahweh said to me, ‘You are my son. Today I have become your father.’” Just as Christ is the son of God in obedience to the Father, we who overcome sin will be like fathers to the nations and will help them to overcome sin.

In Revelation 19:13 we read, “His name is called ‘The Word of God.’” Here John is giving us an allusion back to his own Gospel. In John 1:1-3,14, we read:

John 1:1-3,14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through him. Without him was not anything made that has been made. ...

(14) The Word became flesh, and lived among us. We saw his glory, such glory as of the one and only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

31.3) Armageddon

Revelation 19:17-19 I saw an angel standing in the sun. He cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the sky, "Come! Be gathered together to the great supper of God, (18) that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, and small and great." (19) I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him who sat on the horse, and against his army.

This is the battle of Armageddon. Notice that the battle of Armageddon is not a world war, like World War I and World War II, where the armies of the world are attacking each other. The false Armageddon was back in Revelation 9:13-21. It was the sixth trumpet-plague. The sixth trumpet is World War III and the people of world will think it is Armageddon. World War III will help propel the world into a one-world government, thinking that World War III is the last war and equating it with Armageddon. Revelation 19:17-19 is the real Armageddon. This is when the nations of the world gather against Jerusalem to fight against Jesus Christ and his army from the New Jerusalem (heaven).

The imagery that John describes about Armageddon comes from Ezekiel 39.

Ezekiel 39:1-8 ESV "And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. (2) And I will turn you about and drive you forward, and bring you up from the uttermost parts of the north, and lead you against the mountains of Israel. (3) Then I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand. (4) You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. (5) You shall fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. (6) I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the LORD. (7) "And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. (8) Behold, it is coming and it will be brought about, declares the Lord GOD. That is the day of which I have spoken.

Notice that after this battle the holy name of the Lord will never be profaned again. Thus, this battle in Ezekiel has to be the last battle. This has to be the time when Christ sets up his earthly reign. This battle in Ezekiel has to be the time when both the beast and the false prophet are finally defeated. Ezekiel 38, however, can be an entirely different battle. Both battles in Ezekiel are against Gog, from the land of Magog. Ezekiel 38 is pre-tribulation. It's against the Islamic nations that surround Jerusalem. Gog, from the land of Magog, would be the false prophet, which is the second beast. Ezekiel 39, on the other hand, would be post-tribulation. It would be against both antichrists, where both the beast and the false prophet are defeated.

Let's skip down a few verses in Ezekiel 39 and read more about the birds who feast on the armies of the world who attack Jesus Christ at Armageddon. Again, compare these verses to Revelation 19:17-19 (quoted above).

Ezekiel 39:17-21 You, son of man, thus says the Lord Yahweh: Speak to the birds of every sort, and to every animal of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. (18) You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. (19) You shall eat fat until you be full, and drink blood until you be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. (20) You shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, says the Lord Yahweh. (21) I will set my glory among the nations; and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them.

We know the outcome of this final battle. The beast and the false prophet are thrown alive into the lake of fire. The rest of the armies who attack Jesus Christ are killed. “All the birds are filled with their flesh.”

Revelation 19:20-21 The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet who worked the signs in his sight, with which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. (21) The rest were killed with the sword of him who sat on the horse, the sword which came forth out of his mouth. All the birds were filled with their flesh.

After Armageddon, the first beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire. After the millennium, the devil is thrown into the lake of fire along with the beast and the false prophet. This lake burns with sulfur (Revelation 14:10, 19:20, 20:10, 21:8, and Isaiah 34:9). In Isaiah 34:8-10 we see that all of Edom becomes burning pitch and sulfur. (Isaiah 34:8-10 was quoted at the start of this chapter and is quoted again below.) Could this be the lake of fire to which John was alluding? Edom was the region along the border of Israel and Jordan, south of the Dead Sea, and north of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Isaiah 34:8-10 ESV For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. (9) And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into sulfur; her land shall become burning pitch. (10) Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.

The two beasts (antichrists) are thrown alive into the lake of fire. This suggests that the lake is literal, perhaps as described of Edom in Isaiah. Back at the beginning of this chapter of Revelation, we read about the destruction of the prostitute, which is Islam. Let's read those verses again.

Revelation 19:1-4 After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation, power, and glory belong to our God: (2) for true and righteous are his judgments. For he has judged the great prostitute, who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality, and he has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." (3) A second said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke goes up forever and ever." (4) The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne, saying, "Amen! Hallelujah!"

Again, the fact that "her smoke goes up forever and ever" comes from Isaiah 34:8-10. The false prophet (leader of Islam) is destroyed alongside the destruction of the antichrist after Armageddon.

The rapture, it would seem, happens after the six bowls of wrath. Then Babylon (Islam) is destroyed (Revelation 16:19). The "Great City" of Jeddah and Mecca is destroyed in "one hour." "The kings of the earth ... will weep and wail over her, when they look at the smoke of her burning" (Revelation 18:9). "Her smoke goes up forever and ever" (Revelation 19:3). After the destruction of Babylon, it would seem, comes the wedding banquet, followed by Armageddon. Finally, the beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire.

Chapter 32

Revelation 20 –Amillennialism

The interpretations of Revelation chapter 20 generally divides into two major camps of eschatology. Is there a literal thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ here on the earth? Or is the kingdom of heaven strictly a spiritual kingdom that is underway here and now? This question becomes a pivot-point between reading the Bible literally and fulfilled in the future, or more figurative and allegorical. Figurative interpretations are from the preterist (past-fulfillment) hermeneutic.

This chapter will take a look at the allegorical interpretation of Revelation 20. This corresponds with the preterist (past-fulfillment) view of Bible prophecy. Then, the next chapter will look at the dispensational view of Revelation 20. After that, chapter 34 will look at the New Wine System view of Revelation 20. The New Wine System, of course, takes the literal and futurist view of Revelation 20. But the New Wine System is significantly different from the dispensational view.

Revelation 20:1-8 I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. (2) He seized the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited earth, and bound him for a thousand years, (3) and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were finished. After this, he must be freed for a short time. (4) I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as didn't worship the beast nor his image, and didn't receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand. They lived, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (5) The rest of the dead didn't live until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over these, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him one thousand years. (7) And after the thousand years, Satan will be released from his prison, (8) and he will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

32.1) Problems with Amillennialism

The word “amillennial” means “no millennium.” Amillennialism is the belief that the thousand years spoken of in Revelation 20 is not a literal thousand years, but is figurative. It’s an arbitrary amount of time, as in the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10). But the amillennial position goes much deeper than simply whether or not the thousand years in Revelation 20 is a literal thousand years. Amillennialism views the thousand years not only as an arbitrary amount of time, but also as a time that is right now currently underway. Amillennialism views the figurative thousand years as the time between the two advents of Christ. Premillennialism views the thousand years as a time of Christ’s earthly reign, after He returns, and before the new heavens and the new earth. These are two fundamentally different ways to interpret Revelation 20.

Many amillennialists will immediately begin debate against the premillennial position by focusing on the fact that no other Scripture mentions a literal thousand years. But even if the premillennialists were to hypothetically allow for the thousand years to be an arbitrary amount of time, the issue of whether or not it’s a present or future time would remain unchanged. The amillennialist must start with the assertion that it’s an arbitrary amount of time, because more than a thousand years have passed since the first advent. The premillennialist, who believes the thousand years to be in the future, does not have this problem. Augustine was the first to write about amillennialism. He believed the thousand years might in fact be literal. Back then a thousand years had not yet passed. So he believed that it could be literal. But he also said it could be figurative. It was not until 1000 AD that the literal thousand years of Augustine was rejected.

The issues of amillennialism go much deeper than the interpretation of Revelation 20. The biggest issue is the interpretation of the term, “kingdom of heaven,” which was used extensively by Jesus. What was meant by this term? The amillennialists hold that Christ was never talking about the earthly rule that the Jews believed about the Messiah when he returns. Amillennialism holds that the “kingdom of heaven” is always a spiritual kingdom. Traditional dispensationalists believe the kingdom of heaven is entirely future. Then there is the historic premillennialism, which is often defined by the writings of the late George E. Ladd. He was well-known for his books on the kingdom of heaven. Ladd believes the kingdom of heaven is here and now in our hearts, and yet literally and naturally in the future when Christ returns. Ladd did not claim to be a dispensationalist. But after Ladd, the newer progressive dispensationalism picked up on Ladd’s views. The New Wine System agrees with Ladd on the kingdom of heaven (or God).

Many amillennialists will try to debate against premillennialism by showing all the spiritual-kingdom uses of the term. But this does not invalidate Ladd's futuristic view of the kingdom being here and now but not yet. On the other hand, if there is any use of the term "kingdom of heaven", or "kingdom of God", that indicates a future earthly reign of Christ, it would invalidate amillennialism.

In other words, will Christ literally reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Tim. 6:15, Rev. 17:14, 19:16) here on the earth, after he returns? The religious teaching of Christ's day was that the Messiah would in fact set up such an earthly kingdom. No one disputes the fact that an earthly reign of the Messiah is what the disciples had grown up being taught. And no one disputes the fact that Christ did not at that time set up an earthly kingdom. The real question is whether or not Christ taught that no such kingdom is to ever be set up in the future. Later on, I will discuss the kingdom of heaven in more detail.

Revelation 20 is about the first resurrection, which is followed by a thousand years. At the start of the thousand years, Satan is chained. He is thrown into the Abyss. It is locked and sealed over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years are over. Also at the start of the thousand years, John sees the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus. They come to life and reign with Christ for the thousand years. John sees thrones on which they sit to judge. At the end of the thousand years, Satan is released and he goes out again to deceive the nations. A countless number of people turn against God and march across the breadth of the earth and surround the camp of God's people, the city that God loves. They are destroyed and then the "rest of the dead ... come to life." Then we have the great white throne judgment. The premillennial position is that all this happens after Christ returns.

The amillennial position is to say that the first resurrection is not physical but spiritual. The unbeliever is spiritually dead. When he finds Christ, he is made spiritually alive. This is seen as the first resurrection. The coming to life of the beheaded souls is seen as their conversion experience before they died. Then the second resurrection is the physical resurrection when Christ returns. Satan is chained, thrown into the Abyss, with it locked and sealed over him. But he can still tempt the people of the nations. He just doesn't have as much power as he had before the crucifixion. And the city that God loves is not Jerusalem, but the worldwide city of believers. They don't really march across the breath of the earth. And there is no actual city. They just hunt down and persecute Christians all over the world. Most premillennialists find this view of Revelation 20 hard to swallow.

32.2) The Last Enemy is Death

1 Corinthians 15 is about the resurrection of the dead. Paul is preaching as a Pharisee against the teachings of the Sadducees.

1 Corinthians 15:12-13 Now if Christ is preached, that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? (13) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised.

But Paul goes on to say that there is a chronological order to those who are resurrected. Christ was resurrected first. But is this an order of only two events? Or does Paul's order extend to more resurrections?

1 Corinthians 15:22-26 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. (23) But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then those who are Christ's, at his coming. (24) Then the end comes, when he will deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when he will have abolished all rule and all authority and power. (25) For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

Verse 23 shows us that Paul is giving us a chronological order of events, which reflect the order in which people will receive their spiritual bodies. The chronology even makes a distinction between the resurrection of those who belong to him, and the end that will come. When we read these verses in a natural (chronological) reading, we get the following timeline:

- 1) Christ's resurrection
- 2) When He comes, the resurrection of those who belong to him.
- 3) Then the end comes, when he hands the kingdom over to the Father. At this point in time he has destroyed earthly governments. This is stated as all "dominion, authority, and power." So this can also include the chaining of Satan.
- 4) Next he must reign until all his enemies are put under his feet.
- 5) The last enemy is death.

So Christ must reign during the millennium until death is finally destroyed. Again, Paul is outlining a chronological order to those who are resurrected and/or receive their spiritual bodies. It's "each in his own turn." It's not just Christ and then everyone else.

To interpret these verses the amillennial way, the reigning of verse 25 must be going on right now. The "for" in verse 25 is seen by amillennialists as a "recap" that takes verse 25 out of the natural chronological order of events and brings the start of Christ's reign (in this context) back to Christ's resurrection. But the Greek word "gar" is a very common word (1041 occurrences) that is simply a tie-word to the previous sentence. In this chapter alone, "gar" is used in verses 2, 9, 16, 21, 22, 25, 27, 32, 24, 41, 52, and 53. These are not recaps or summaries. It's just a word that connects the sentence to what's just been said. It doesn't indicate an end of a chronological listing of events. This word ties the reign of Christ to the previous sentence, which is about Christ destroying all dominion, authority, and power.

The word "gar" is usually translated as "for." But William D. Mounce ("Basics of Biblical Greek") indicates that it can also be translated as "then." Verse 32, for example, quotes the saying, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." The "gar" in this verse could have a sense of one thing happening after another as an effect happening after its cause. Perhaps it could be translated as, "Let us eat and drink, then tomorrow we die." That's not to say that "gar" has a strong sense of chronological events. The Greek word "eita" in verse 24 does strongly mean "then." And the word "gar" in verse 24 doesn't strongly mean "then." But by the same token, the word "gar" would not be used to break out of a chronological sequence of events. It would just add a sense of cause and effect from the destruction to the reign.

The reign of Christ is closely connected, by the word "gar", to the destruction of all dominions, authority, and power. The word "gar" establishes a cause and effect between the two. Christ reigns because he destroys all dominion, authority, and power. And the destruction is strongly connected with the "end." The Greek word "eita" in verse 24 does strongly indicate that the "end" and the destruction both happen chronologically after the resurrection of those who belong to Christ.

The reign of Christ is strongly connected, by the word "gar", to the destruction and the "end." So it follows that the reign of Christ is after the "end." Also we should note that generally speaking, when a reign is put into the same context as conquering, the conquering generally comes first. A king reigns because he has conquered other dominions, authorities, and powers.

Christ reigns until all enemies are put under him. The last enemy is distinguished as death. If interpreted the amillennial way, the last enemy would be destroyed on the same day as all the dominions, authorities, and powers. So those enemies would also be last. But Paul is saying that death is the last enemy. And death is being finally overcome during this reign. The last enemy is not dominions, authorities, and powers. The reign of Christ is listed as last in the chronology. And Paul gives the purpose of this reign. This purpose of this reign is associated with something that is "last". The fact that the "last enemy" is called "last" shows that Paul was continuing his chronological listing of events. The dominions, authorities, and powers are also enemies, but they are not the "last" enemies.

Many amillennialists will point to verses 54-55 to say that death is conquered at Christ's second coming, therefore the last enemy is conquered at Christ's second coming. This verse says, "Death is swallowed up in victory." And, "Death, is your sting? Hades, where is your sting?" But Paul here is speaking only of those resurrected "who are Christ's, at his coming" (verse 23). In other words, when each of us, in our turn, receives spiritual bodies, then this quote from Hosea 13:14 can be applied to us.

By contrast the verse, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (verse 32), which was quoted from Isaiah 22:13, might be something that anyone with a corruptible body might say. Since Jesus was resurrected, the sting of death is gone for him. When we are resurrected, the sting of death will be gone for us. But verses 50-55 do not say that all people are changed in this way at the same time. No, it's "each in his own turn" (verse 23).

1 Corinthians 15:54-55 But when this corruptible will have put on incorruption, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then what is written will happen: "Death is swallowed up in victory."
(55) "Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory?"

Until after the second death of Revelation 20:14, death will not have been forever destroyed. So the last enemy will not have been destroyed. And as long as the last enemy has not been destroyed, death can still happen. Revelation 20 tells us that a whole lot of death will happen when Satan is released after the thousand years are over. And Paul tells us that Christ reigns until death is finally destroyed.

32.3) The Binding of Satan

Does Scripture really teach that Satan’s power was limited after the crucifixion? Revelation 20:2-3 says he is thrown into the Abyss. It is locked and sealed over him.

Revelation 20:2-3 He seized the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited earth, and bound him for a thousand years, (3) and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were finished. After this, he must be freed for a short time.

This is very strong language that does not seem to indicate a partial restriction of Satan’s powers. Compare this with 1 Peter 5:8-9:

1 Peter 5:8-9 Be sober and self-controlled. Be watchful. Your adversary the devil, walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (9) Withstand him steadfast in your faith, knowing that your brothers who are in the world are undergoing the same sufferings.

Revelation 20 says Satan was bound so that Satan can no longer deceive the nations. Compare this to 2 Corinthians 4:4:

2 Corinthians 4:4 in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Good News of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn on them.

Ephesians 2:1-2 You were made alive when you were dead in transgressions and sins, (2) in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the children of disobedience;

A present-day binding of Satan is simply not compatible with the rest of New Testament Scripture. Do amillennialists have another verse that they use to argue Satan was bound? Yes, they use Matthew 12:29. But as we will see, this is taking the verse out of context. Here is the verse:

Matthew 12:29 Or how can one enter into the house of the strong man, and plunder his goods, unless he first bind the strong man? Then he will plunder his house.

This is the only verse, other than Revelation 20:2-3, which amillennialists use to try and support their claim that Satan has been bound. Is there any mention of the crucifixion in the context of this verse? No, the context is about Christ healing a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute. Jesus is simply saying that the demon in the man had to be cast out before the man could be healed. Jesus is not saying that Satan was bound so that he could no longer deceive the nations.

In order to see this, we need to walk through the context of the passage to see that Jesus was talking about healing and casting out demons. The following walk-through of Matthew 12:25-38 makes it clear that Matthew 12:29 is about the need to cast Satan or a demon out of the man before he could be healed. You will also see some of the New Wine System, with regard to the unpardonable sin, within this walk-through.

As we will see, this passage of Scripture is talking about the unpardonable sin. The Holy Spirit is performing miracles that prove God's presence in Jesus. The Pharisees know this is God's power, before their very eyes. Yet they deny the work of the Holy Spirit. They deny God's miracles. The untrained people see that God is doing these miracles. However, the trained Pharisees' love for their own power is greater than any desire to see God's work, even when it's undeniably in front of their eyes.

Matthew 12:25-27 Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. (26) If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? (27) If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.

With these verses, Jesus begins his arguments against the unpardonable claim of the Pharisees. Satan cannot drive out Satan. Jesus is being sarcastic when he asks, "By whom do your children cast them out?" The Pharisees had not been casting out demons.

Who are the "children" of the Pharisees? Why will these "children" be their judges? When or where will this judging take place? Perhaps out of confusion, the NIV translates "your sons" as "your people." But most translations stick with the word given in the Greek. Jesus asks, "By whom do your children cast them out?"

The "children" of the Pharisees are their students. In many cases, their literal sons probably carried on in their father's footsteps, and become the next generation

of Pharisees. Their sons would naturally put great faith in their teachings. Yet, the Pharisees denied that Jesus is the Messiah. Some would commit the unpardonable sin. Others might simply sin by remaining silent. At least in silence, they would not be committing the unpardonable sin. In the age to come, when Christ returns, some of their students will be their judges. For example, Paul was a Pharisee. He was one of their students. Those with an [agape] love for Christ cannot remain silent. In the age to come, those who will have matured in Christ, doing the will and works of the Father, will be the priests and kings over those who remained silent.

Matthew 12:28 But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.

Take careful note of this verse. Jesus is saying that it's the Holy Spirit that casts out the demons. Not He Himself. This will be important when we look at the verse on the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

Also, if the Holy Spirit is casting out these demons, it's proof that the presence of Jesus is the presence of the Kingdom of God. This goes back to the claim that Jesus is the Messiah. If the kingdom of God had come upon them, it was because the Messiah had come. So again, the claim that Jesus is the Messiah challenged the authority of the Pharisees.

Matthew 12:29 Or how can one enter into the house of the strong man, and plunder his goods, unless he first bind the strong man? Then he will plunder his house.

What (or who) is the “strong man’s house?” Who is the “strong man?” How does this parable relate to the healing of the blind man, with the demon? How does this parable argue against the idea that Satan could drive out Satan?

Amillennialists, since Augustine, have used this verse to explain, in Revelation 20, how Satan could currently be chained, so that he could deceive the nations no more. Such an explanation is necessary for them to say that the future and literal reign of Christ will not take place. They say that Christ chained Satan at the cross. However, nothing in the context of this verse is about the cross. This verse is in the context of the healing of the blind and mute man, who had a demon.

The strong man’s house is the body of the blind and mute man. The strong man is Satan, or the demon inside the man. The demon had to be bound before Christ could heal the physical problems of the man’s house. Christ is arguing that Satan would not bind himself.

Matthew 12:30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who doesn't gather with me, scatters.

This is the bottom line. There are only two groups here. Everyone must make a decision to be either for or against Christ. The miracles Jesus performed produced this division in the ones who saw the miracles. Seeing the miracles forces everyone to decide for themselves. Eventually, everyone must decide to be with Christ or against Christ.

Many will stay in the middle during their entire lifetime. However, eventually God's miracles will force everyone to be either for or against Christ. If this doesn't happen now, it will happen in the age to come. In the age to come, when Christ returns, the kingdom will be undeniably everywhere. Everyone will be forced to be on Christ's side, or against him. Those who decide to be against Christ, in the face of undeniable proof, will be committing the unpardonable sin.

Matthew 12:31-32 *ESV* Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. (32) And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Remember our important verse? Verse 28 tells us that it's the Holy Spirit that does the miracles. It was not Jesus himself. When the Pharisees said it was by the power of Beelzebul, they were attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Beelzebul. Saying a word against the Son of Man can be forgiven. But seeing the miracles, and still denying God's power is unpardonable.

Notice that Jesus is warning about this sin in the present age, and in the age to come. The age to come is when the Messiah literally rules the world. They knew that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus was saying that even when He literally rules, in the future, that this sin will be unpardonable.

Some may think that the age to come might be the Church Age. However, Mark 10:30 and Luke 18:30 clearly place the age to come as the time of eternal life. The age to come is the millennial reign of Christ.

If actual miracles are not enough, then it's impossible to bring the person into repentance. These Pharisees were more concerned about their selfish power than to publicly recognize the Messiah, even in the face of this proof. And they knew that healing on the Sabbath proves Jesus to be Lord of the Sabbath.

Matthew 12:33 "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good, or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by its fruit.

Here Jesus continues to argue against what the Pharisees had said. Jesus had been doing good works in healing the people. How can this good fruit come from a bad tree?

Matthew 12:34-37 You offspring of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. (35) The good man out of his good treasure brings out good things, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings out evil things. (36) I tell you that every idle word that men speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. (37) For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Does this mean that Christ will weigh all our good words against all our bad words? Is Jesus saying that if our good words outweigh our bad words, then we are saved? What happened to salvation by grace alone?

Or can we interpret this verse more in line of the context of verse 30? Because of the miracles of God, everyone will eventually decide for themselves to be with Christ, or to be against Christ. If they are against Christ, they will deny the undeniable works of God, and come up with something crazy like the miracles are the works of Satan. Thus, everyone will be judged by their words. Their words reflect what is in their hearts. Their words reflect their decision to be for or against Christ. For those who have not yet heard about Christ, or for those who have not been forced to make that decision, death is not the end of the journey towards salvation. They will still be judged by their words for or against Christ.

Matthew 12:38 Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you."

Why would the Pharisees say such a thing when they had just seen this miracle, a miracle so undeniable that they had said it was the work of Beelzebul? Could it be they are fearful of being wrong? Could it be they are in denial? Could it be they are afraid? People can always find some way to explain away any kind of proof that God may give. Here, they were trying to convince themselves that Jesus is not the Lord of the Sabbath, because the signs were somehow not great enough. If Jesus had done an even greater sign, they would have still attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Beelzebul.

This concludes this walk-through of Matthew 12:25-38. It should be clear that in this context Matthew 12:19 is only about casting Satan or a demon out of the man before he can be healed. To say this verse is about the binding of Satan after the crucifixion is to completely take this verse out of context. Jesus healed this man before the cross. This verse is talking about casting the demon out of a specific man and not out of the nations. So this verse should not be used to justify the claim that Satan was chained or bound at the cross, that he could no longer deceive the nations.

Amillennialists always are quick to point out that nowhere else in Scripture does it say that Christ will have an earthly reign for a thousand years. This is true. Revelation 20 is the only place that says the Messianic Age is to be a thousand years. However, Scripture is full of teachings that there will be a Messianic Age. So what do amillennialists do? They say that Satan was bound at the crucifixion. Where is that taught elsewhere in Scripture? Scripture teaches just the opposite. The amillennial system simply is not compatible with the rest of Scripture. Amillennialists should consider the New Wine System as an alternative.

Many amillennialists have rejected dispensational premillennialism because it's rather clear from Scripture that Israel is the Church. This is fundamental to covenant theology, which goes hand-in-hand with amillennialism. But the Church does not replace Israel as covenant theology argues. We are grafted into Israel. This means our purpose in reigning with Christ is the same as Israel's purpose of reigning with Christ, over the nations, during his millennial reign.

Amillennialists tend to object to the idea that sin would remain in the world after Christ returns. Amillennialists view Christ's return as bringing this world of sin to an end with the wrath of God. But what if the Messianic reign of Christ is climactic in God's redemptive plan? What if people from every nation, tribe, people, and language are just the tip of the iceberg of those who God intends to save by faith in Jesus Christ? What if Israel (which is the Church) is the only the firstfruits of the entire harvest (Rom. 8:23, 2 Thess. 2:13, James 1:18)? This is the New Wine System, as presented in my book, "New Wine for the End Times."

32.4) Natural Interpretation

Literal interpretation is when you restrict the interpretation to the definitions of the words, and the grammar used in the sentences. Natural interpretation is when you allow for idioms, symbolism, figurative speech, and anything else that comes to mind when you hear the words. For example, when we read that someone

is at the end of his rope, does it mean that he is literally holding onto the end of a rope? If a foreigner comes from China and hears these words, unless he has really studied American idioms, he will have no idea what is meant. Unfortunately, it's not important what pops into our own minds when we hear the words. What's important is what would have popped into the minds of audiences of the time of its writing. Fortunately, we have primarily the Old Testament, and secondarily other texts outside of Scripture to help us understand what would have popped into their heads when they read the words.

When words like "Sodom" are used in Revelation, we don't have to assume that it's really the ancient city of Sodom. That's natural interpretation. Sodom was a city that was clearly destroyed by God's wrath. This thought immediately comes to mind. No text is ever going to be a hundred percent literal. (Especially when the text itself says it's figurative, as it does in the case of the text referencing Sodom and Egypt.) It's like showing cards with pictures and saying the first thing that comes to your mind. It's like saying the first word that comes to your mind when you hear a word. Natural interpretation is not a mathematical-like literal examination of the word definitions and the grammar. (Of course those are important.) Any natural interpretation can include symbolism. "The Lamb of God" is symbolism, but because of all the prior teaching of Scripture, Christ quickly comes to mind when we hear these words.

Ancient Jewish and Christian Chiliasm taught that the history from Adam is unfolding in seven thousand-year days, as in a millennial week. Revelation should be interpreted in this context. We must understand ancient Jewish and Christian Chiliasm in order to understand what thoughts would naturally have come to mind when the words of Revelation were read. Christ is "Lord of the Sabbath" of this millennial week.

Revelation was not intended to be a hard-to-understand text that only highly educated scholars could understand. In Revelation 1:3 we read, "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." In other words, there were some who were blessed by reading the book, and there were others who were also to be blessed by just hearing it read. Probably most of them didn't even know how to read. John intended Revelation to be understood by the masses. The amillennial interpretation of Revelation 20 is very hard to understand. It's something the masses would have not understood. But the Chiliast interpretation of Revelation 20 is easy to understand. It has a natural interpretation that comes to mind quickly.

Most scholarly amillennialists today know about early Jewish Chiliasm. They use it to attack Christian millennialism, saying that people like Barnabas, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr were unduly influenced by it. But knowing that Jewish Chiliasm existed prior to the writing of Revelation, would the author of Revelation have written such a hard-to-understand description of a spiritual resurrection that would so easily be confused with Jewish Chiliasm? The amillennial position is in direct contradiction to what would have been naturally understood in that time and culture. The author of Revelation would have never picked words that have this natural interpretation, if his true meaning is in direct contradiction to the very natural meaning.

Natural interpretation doesn't include complicated and hard-to-understand interpretations, given the knowledge and cultural background of the reader. Since the word "resurrection" is most often used in Scripture to mean the physical resurrection, and since that word was used right after words like "beheaded" and "souls", the natural interpretation is that of a physical resurrection. It takes a lot of explaining for anyone to see Revelation 20's more complicated amillennial interpretation. So it's not natural. Satan is chained for a thousand years. He is thrown into the Abyss, with it locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years are over. With this much detail about the chaining of Satan, the natural interpretation is not that Satan is simply restrained a little bit more than he was before the crucifixion. When a countless number of people turn against God and march across the breath of the earth and surround the camp of God's people, the city that God loves, the natural interpretation is not one that doesn't include an actual city. The masses of less educated people who were to hear the book read would never have understood it in the amillennial way. They would have understood it as a literal reign of Christ after the resurrection on the last day. And Revelation 1:3 makes it clear that Revelation was written for the blessing of the masses.

Now there may be lots of stuff in Revelation that on first impression leaves people scratching their heads. This is where more in-depth symbolism is used that may require some study. But Revelation was not written to mislead the masses. The less-obvious portions of Revelation should not lead us to reject the natural words that have easy-to-understand natural meanings. To John, who really knew the Old Testament Scripture, I would venture to suggest that all of Revelation was very natural to him. Revelation is not so hard to understand once you see how it fits with the Old Testament. We should start with the natural interpretations, and then dig into the Old Testament for the meaning of the more difficult symbols.

32.5) Problems with Allegorical Interpretations of Prophecy

The first and most important question that must be asked when interpreting Bible prophecy is, “What are your rules of interpretation?” “What are your hermeneutics?” Is your objective to determine what the author was meaning to say? There is no question that authors of Scripture would sometimes use symbolism. John the Baptist called Christ the “Lamb of God.” John was not saying that Christ is literally an animal. Jesus spoke in parables, and it was clear that he was doing so. But what if the natural reading of an author’s words reads like it could easily be literal? What if, given the culture and time of the author, it would be hard to believe that the author was saying anything other than its “historical and grammatical” interpretation? Do we have the license to say that the author’s words are “figurative,” and do not say what the author himself would have understood?

Consider the words of Zechariah 14. Verse one begins with a statement of victory in battle:

Zechariah 14:1 NIV A day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided among you.

Then we have a description of Jerusalem being attacked by “all nations.” The women are being raped. Jerusalem is falling. Yet, at the last moment, the feet of God stand on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4), and there is victory. Zechariah goes on to describe this victory. In verses 12-15, we read of the panic that the Lord strikes into the invading armies. We read of their eyes rotting in their sockets and their tongues rotting in their mouths. And we read of all the wealth that is collected from all the nations who attacked Jerusalem.

Yet, this passage is often attributed to 70 AD, when Jerusalem was surrounded by Rome, and Jerusalem was destroyed. There was no military victory for Jerusalem. There was only defeat. There was no gathering of plunder from the nations that attacked Jerusalem. So how can anyone reasonably apply Zechariah 14 to 70 AD? It’s done by the use of allegorical interpretation. Did Zechariah himself believe this battle would end in defeat or in victory? There is no question that Zechariah himself was doing his best to describe a victory for Jerusalem. But allegorical interpretation is used to reverse this victory and basically say that Zechariah’s was using “figurative language,” and that the actual fulfillment was the opposite of what he literally was saying.

Using allegorical interpretation, how do they deal with this victory? They would simply say this gathering of plunder is representative of the victories the church would have during the centuries that followed 70 AD. By calling upon

allegorical interpretation and “figurative language,” there is always some way to make the words say what you want them to say. But anyone who is truly honest in wanting to know what Zechariah himself would have understood, would never apply this prophecy to 70 AD.

So why do otherwise conservative Bible scholars reverse the meaning of Scripture like this? It’s because they have problems fitting this apparently literal prophecy with the book of Hebrews. The book of Hebrews teaches that Christ was the one sacrifice, and that animal sacrifice is no longer needed nor wanted by God. Everything that the book of Hebrews says, as understood by that author, is true. And the literal interpretation of Zechariah 14 is that all the nations will be forced to worship at the Feast of Tabernacles (verses 16-19) after Christ returns. That Old Testament feast included animal sacrifice. It was a part of the old covenant. But is this reason to effectively reverse the intended meaning of Zechariah, as he understood it? Such apparent contradiction is not a reason to reverse the interpretation of Scripture. Such apparent contradiction is only a sign that we should reexamine our understanding of what all authors of Scripture meant to say. Harmony can be found in Scripture without, in effect, changing the meaning of Scripture.

In other words, we should interpret the New Testament in the context of the Old Testament instead of trying to re-interpret the Old Testament in the light of what we believe the New Testament is saying. One would seriously doubt that the Hebrew audience of that day would have accepted the book of Hebrews as being from God if it effectively forced Zechariah into an interpretation that even Zechariah would have rejected.

32.6) The History of Allegorical Interpretation

It may be helpful to examine some of the history of allegorical interpretation. Until the time of Constantine, Alexandria was second only to Rome in the Roman Empire. Alexandria was named after Alexander the Great, and it was known for its great library, and for all its high learning, philosophy, and Greek culture. The allegorical interpretation of Bible Scripture dates back to Alexandria.

Philo (15 BC – 50 AD) was Jewish (not Christian) and lived in Alexandria, along with many other Jews. Philo learned about allegorical interpretation from the Greeks, who did this in order to make their ancient Greek myths be more relevant to their everyday lives. Philo wanted to prove, through allegorical interpretation, that Jewish culture was not inferior to Greek culture. So Philo interpreted Moses

as a philosopher who was the source of all later philosophy. Allegorical interpretation made the ancient Greek myths seem important to their culture. Philo wanted to find this same deep level of interpretation in the writings of Moses. Scripture started to have meaning well beyond the simple historical accounts of Moses.

Around A.D. 200, Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD) followed Philo's lead. He taught that God gave the Law to the Jews and that God gave philosophy to the Greeks. Both were for the purpose of leading people to Christ. God's Word (*Logos*) was the source of both. This fit right in with the Doctrine of *Logos*, which was a Greek doctrine. The *Logos* is that which accounts for the design in the Creation. In this Greek doctrine, the *Logos* is the source of all knowledge, especially about religion. John was probably influenced with this Greek doctrine when he wrote John 1:1.

Clement taught that the *Logos* was Jesus before becoming a man, and that the *Logos* is the Son of God. The Holy Spirit attracts men to Christ when they seek true knowledge. Such knowledge was the true *gnosis*. This is not to be confused with the false *gnosis* of the heretics, which claimed secret knowledge, and did not stay with the knowledge given by the Scriptures. The Doctrine of *Logos* gave Clement a tool to unite Christianity with Greek philosophy. Clement believed that the truth in Scripture is often hidden, and could only be found by the use of allegorical interpretation. But this was the deeper meaning (*gnosis*). Clement did not deny the literal, historical meaning of what the authors of Scripture had said. But the emphasis was on allegorical interpretation to find "spiritual" knowledge (*gnosis*).

When the persecutions of Emperor Septimius Severus came, Clement left Alexandria. A young boy, Origen (185-254), wanted to join his father and be martyred during these persecutions. But his mother hid his clothes so that he would have had to go out naked. Thus he did not join the martyrs. After Clement left Alexandria, his work was given to the young scholar, who for the next thirty years ran the school at Alexandria.

Origen was one of the most influential men of the early church. He developed Philo and Clement's methods of allegorical interpretation. He believed there are three levels of allegorical interpretation, which corresponded to three aspects of man. These were the literal, moral, and spiritual meanings and corresponded to the body, soul, and spirit of a man. The body was the least important, and the spirit was the most important. If an author of Scripture, such as Moses, was writing

about a literal historical event, then the literal event is least important, just as the body is least important. The soul (*psyche*) and the spirit (*pneuma*) are two different things in the Greek. The moral meaning of a Scripture corresponded to the soul (*psyche*) of a man. The spiritual meaning of a Scripture corresponded to the spirit (*pneuma*) of man. And these meanings could only be discovered by the use of allegorical interpretation. Even the historical Jesus was less important than as the *Logos* of Christ available for believers in the church and in the sacraments.

Some Old Testament Scripture is obviously shadows of Jesus. Origen found shadows of Jesus all through the Old Testament, not just in the more obvious Messianic prophecies. New Testament text symbolized the sanctification of the soul, or the church, and showed the progress in our journey to the Kingdom of Heaven. While others devalued the Old Testament as being Jewish, Origen held it to be the inspired word of God. But the valued truth within was not about the Jews and ancient Israel. It was spiritual knowledge. This helped the church in wanting to keep the Old Testament as Scripture, because the followers of Marcion wanted to reject it. So without allegorical interpretation, the early church might have rejected the Old Testament entirely as being God's word. Rather than defending each story, Origen could just say they had not read deeply enough to see the true meaning (knowledge).

32.7) Crossing the Line Into Error

The problem, here, is that the early church had doubts about the Old Testament being God's Word (*Logos*), without error. They didn't like what was being said. So instead of changing their views to conform to God's Word, they used allegorical interpretation to alter the literal meaning that was intended by the authors.

There is nothing wrong with allegorical interpretation in and of itself. Paul used allegorical interpretation in Gal. 4:21-31. But Paul was not trying to change the meaning of the original Old Testament passage. Paul was simply using the passage as a vehicle to illustrate his point about two covenants. Paul was not trying to say or imply that the author of Genesis (Moses) had two covenants in mind when he wrote about the slave woman and the free woman. Nor was Paul trying to say that the Holy Spirit intended to say this between the lines. It was simply an allegory in the New Testament which in no way altered the meaning of the Old Testament.

Matthew uses allegorical interpretation in Matt. 2:14-15 when he quotes, “Out of Egypt I called my son,” from Hosea 11:1. Hosea was clearly talking about the nation of Israel being called out of Egypt, which was an historical event, not a future prophecy. But the Messiah comes from Israel, and you can argue that Christ’s name is Israel. Therefore this is an allegorical interpretation. There is nothing wrong with allegorical interpretation in and of itself as long as it does not change or deny the natural and historical meaning of the original text.

I also think there is truth and value to the idea that Jesus is the *Logos*. I don’t doubt that John used the Greek Doctrine of *Logos* in making his point. And I do believe that God’s Word has deeper meaning (*gnosis*) that can be discovered with allegorical interpretation. I think Clement may have been right about the three levels of allegorical interpretation. And I have no doubt that Origen was right about the Old Testament being full of shadows of Christ. I think it may be possible to find shadows of Christ in every Old Testament story. The Scripture is the *Logos*, and Christ is everywhere in the *Logos*. But when these methods of allegorical interpretation in any way take away from, or deny, the literal meaning that was intended by the original author, then we have crossed the line into error.

Next, we need to take a close look at 2 Peter 3:7-10, which amillennialists consider to be a very strong proof-text for their position.

32.8) With the Lord a Day is Like a Thousand Years

2 Peter 3:8-9 NIV 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. (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.

The Lord’s days are like a thousand years. Then we read:

2 Peter 3:10 NIV 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.

Since the Lord’s days are like a thousand years, then the Day of the Lord (in the very next verse) is also like a thousand years. The term “Day of the Lord” is a common term from the Old Testament. Is this day always a literal 24-hour day? Or can it be just a few days? Or does this Old Testament concept refer to a long period of time? The Old Testament seems to portray the Day of the Lord as being

a short time of wrath followed by a long age during which the Lord rules. For example, Isaiah 27 is about a short time of God's wrath. God will punish Israel's enemies. Then, in chapter 28, God talks about a time of peace when God will bless Israel. Both are referred to as the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is a long period of time, which begins with God's wrath on the nations who attack Jerusalem. This can also be seen clearly in Zechariah 14.

Joel 2-3 is about the "dreadful" Day of the Lord (or the Day of Yahweh). The day includes a long period of time when God will dwell in Zion, the holy hill of Jerusalem.

Joel 2:11 Yahweh thunders his voice before his army; for his forces are very great; for he is strong who obeys his command; for the day of Yahweh is great and very awesome, and who can endure it?

Joel 2:30-32 I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, fire, and pillars of smoke. (31) The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Yahweh comes. (32) It will happen that whoever will call on the name of Yahweh shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as Yahweh has said, and among the remnant, those whom Yahweh calls.

Joel 3:12-18 "Let the nations arouse themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the surrounding nations. (13) Put in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the winepress is full, the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great." (14) Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of Yahweh is near, in the valley of decision. (15) The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. (16) Yahweh will roar from Zion, and thunder from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth will shake; but Yahweh will be a refuge to his people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel. (17) "So you will know that I am Yahweh, your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain. Then Jerusalem will be holy, and no strangers will pass through her any more. (18) It will happen in that day, that the mountains will drop down sweet wine, the hills will flow with milk, all the brooks of Judah will flow with waters, and a fountain will come forth from the house of Yahweh, and will water the valley of Shittim.

We can also find similar evidence about the Day of the Lord in the New Testament. In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he spoke of the Day of the Lord coming as a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2). Did Paul and his audience interpret this day to be the 24-hour day during which the rapture happens? After all, he had just spoken about the rapture two verses earlier. When people are saying "peace and safety" (verse 3), sudden destruction will come. No doubt this is the sudden destruction of God's wrath that we read about in the Old Testament. But is the Day of the Lord limited to a short time of sudden destruction?

In Paul's second letter to the same church, we find that a problem had developed and Paul needed to correct it. A prophecy, report, or letter had been going around stating that the Day of the Lord had already come (2 Thessalonians 2:2). And this was in specific relation to our being gathered to Him, which would be the rapture (verse 1). If the Day of the Lord only relates strictly to the day of the rapture itself, then the prophecy, report, or letter would have made no sense. Just wait one day and everyone would know the rapture had not happened. Therefore, the Day of the Lord must be much longer than the one day during which the rapture occurs. If not, Paul would have simply laughed at it and said we have not yet been caught up in the rapture.

Instead, Paul had to give a sign which must happen before the Day of the Lord would come (verse 3). The man of lawlessness must be revealed before the Day of the Lord can come. This letter or rumor had made people believe the rapture was imminent. Paul was arguing against the Doctrine of Imminence. Since the Day of the Lord was understood to be the age to come, the false rumor or letter was saying that the age to come had already come. Thus, the rapture would happen at any moment now. Paul corrected this error. And the correction itself proves the Day of the Lord, while beginning with God's wrath, is really the entire age to come. So let's look at the verse in 2 Peter 3 again.

2 Peter 3:8-9 NIV 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. (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.

(Verse 10 NIV) 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.

Replace “Day of the Lord” with “The Age to Come.” It would read: “But the ‘age to come’ will come like a thief (with sudden destruction.) [Then] the heavens will be disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire.” Nobody would have assumed that the heavens and earth would be destroyed before the Messianic age that was to come. The heavens and the earth are destroyed after the Day of the Lord, which is the age to come.

Of course at this point most amillennialists are rolling their eyes. The traditional amillennial interpretation of this verse is that God sees time very differently from man, and what can seem like a long time to us can be a short time to God. So God’s promises are not slow in coming from God’s perspective, but they can be slow in coming from our perspective. And of course this interpretation is true. But it could also be true that God uses literal thousand-year days to help us understand his eternal nature.

Peter switched the words around. A day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day. Does this mean that God’s time is also short as well as long? Does it mean that during a 24-hour day, God does so much that it could seem like a thousand years to him? That’s generally the amillennial interpretation. But that would not fit the context. The context is the scoffers and the issue that God’s promises can seem to take a long time. Saying that God’s time is also short does nothing to help the context.

But if Peter is being literal about God’s days, then he is simply switching the words around for emphasis. He starts out with emphasis saying, “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends.” Then he equates a day with a thousand years. And then he switches it around saying the same thing with the order reversed. If $A = B$, then $B = A$. In other words, one of God’s days are like a thousand of man’s years, and a thousand of man’s years are like one of God’s days. It’s just reversed for emphasis. This fits the context better. But if it’s reverse for emphasis, then it also comes across as more literal.

Many amillennialists will argue that I’m just using “Jewish fables” in my interpretation of Scripture. Ancient Jews believed in a millennial week that started with Adam. History would last seven thousand years. When amillennialists claim that I’m just using “Jewish fables,” and that I’m not sticking with Scripture, I can reply that I came to this belief purely from studying Scripture. And I had never been introduced to the idea that all God’s days are a thousand years. Years later I was excited to learn that many of the earliest church fathers also believed in the millennial week. The belief system back then was called Chiliasm. (This word is

Greek for a thousand, whereas millennium is Latin for a thousand.) The early church (Chiliasm) started the millennial week with Adam. And they would often justify their belief with Peter's words, "With the Lord a day is as a thousand years."

It's amazing how many people we know of who were Chiliasts, who made it through the pages of history, and had close connections to John himself. Irenaeus was definitely a Chiliast who wrote a lot about the subject. He was a student of Polycarp, who was a student of John. We don't know enough about Polycarp to know whether or not he was a Chiliast. But, according to Irenaeus, Papias was a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp. And Papias was a Chiliast. If the students of John were Chiliasts, then this is evidence that John himself interpreted his own words as a Chiliast. If we knew for a fact that John himself was a Chiliast, it would destroy amillennialism.

There was also a heretic named Cerinthius who was a Chiliast. And we know that he was an enemy of John. Some people believe that 1 John 5 was written specifically to oppose the teaching of Cerinthius. Cerinthius taught that Jesus and Christ were not the same. He taught that Jesus was not the Son of Man until he was baptized. And he taught that the Christ left Jesus before the crucifixion. (This is Gnosticism.) But 1 John 5 teaches against this heresy. Verse one says, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Then starting with verse six we read, "This is the one who came by water and blood - Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement." There is some disagreement here, but the water is probably Christ's baptism and the blood is the crucifixion. John is arguing against Cerinthius' position that Jesus was not the Christ before his baptism or at his crucifixion.

The specific teaching of anyone in history, outside the Scripture, is not in and of itself relevant. The issue is that people who had close connections to John himself were Chiliasts. Of course as Chiliasts, they could have picked up some Jewish teachings from sources other than John. But if they were Chiliasts of some kind, then it almost proves that John was a Chiliast of some kind, especially if an enemy of John was also a Chiliast of some kind. Obviously they would have discussed the issues of Revelation 20 with John, in relationship to Chiliasm. But suppose that John's disciples never asked him about Revelation 20, and that they came up with these beliefs from so-called "Jewish fables." Would John's disciples have adopted a teaching that was taught by John's enemy? If John's enemy was teaching it, then either John himself was also teaching it, or John's disciples would

have never adopted it. Since John's enemy Cerinthius was also a Chiliast, it seems highly unlikely that John's friends would have been Chiliasts unless John himself had not also taught it. If their beliefs of Chiliasm were totally off base with regard to Revelation 20, then they would have abandoned the belief entirely. The details of what they believed are not relevant, and making the details relevant would be to go outside Scripture for doctrine. All that is being shown here is evidence that this group of friends, and enemies, all of whom knew John, had a common type of belief system. That common type of belief system is Chiliasm. And Chiliasm (like premillennialism) is so far on the other end of the hermeneutical spectrum from amillennialism, that it would be impossible for John to have been amillennial.

32.9) Jewish and Christian Chiliasm

Setting Revelation 20 aside for now, it seems to me that the only way to answer the question is to ask whether or not there was a pre-disposition to associating a literal thousand years with one of God's days. Remember that John and Peter were both Jews. So in the Jewish community of that time, if someone said, "A day of the Lord is like a thousand years," would those rabbis have interpreted the thousand years as being literal or figurative?

Without examining evidence outside of Scripture, the most natural interpretation of Revelation 20 is along the lines of premillennialism. But it can be interpreted as amillennial. Likewise, without examining evidence outside of Scripture, the most natural interpretation of 2 Peter 3 could be argued to be along the lines of amillennialism. But it can be interpreted as premillennial.

These two verses of Scripture are the only two verses that can arguably be speaking of a literal thousand years. Is the thousand years one of God's days? Since both have been interpreted both ways, we should go outside the Scripture to find evidence of their presupposition. **This is not to say that anything outside of Scripture is itself proof of a theological issue.** We use Scripture itself to determine our doctrine. But when it's unclear which way two different verses are to be interpreted, we must examine evidence of culture and other writings from the time of the writing. (And not from centuries later.) Anything that was written after the writing of Revelation should be from people who had very close ties to John himself. We are not interested in the opinions of others. All we want to know is the opinions of John and Peter.

The basic belief of Chiliasm is the millennial week. The writings that we have today of most early Christian Chiliasts didn't get into the details. But Irenaeus

did. He equated the seventh day of the millennial week with the thousand years of Revelation 20. Justin Martyr also directly equates the seventh day with the thousand years of Revelation 20. Also Augustine, in his arguments against Chiliasm, understood the teaching as directly equating the seventh day with the thousand years of Revelation 20. We can easily identify Chiliasm because of the similarities to Jewish Chiliasm, where it was believed that, "With the Lord a day is a thousand years." Most Christian Chiliasts quoted this verse in 2 Peter 3 in the context of thousand-year days of Chiliasm. This saying is always associated with the millennial week, in both Christian and Jewish Chiliasm.

Since Christian Chiliasm is similar to Jewish Chiliasm, it's obvious that Jewish Chiliasm influenced Christian Chiliasm. The basic question is whether or not John was speaking about the seventh-day aspect of Jewish Chiliasm when he wrote Revelation 20. Since Jewish Chiliasm did influence Christian Chiliasm, we will start with the Jewish quotes, and then move onto the Christian Chiliasm quotes.

The Christian quotes will include Irenaeus, Barnabas, and Justin Martyr. I will also quote Augustine himself to show the belief system of Chiliasts, and how that belief system directly relates to the thousand years of Revelation 20.

The first Jewish ancient-text evidence for this is in the Book of Jubilees, chapter 4. Adam lived to be 930 years old. His age is being compared with a thousand years as a day. The fact that he did not live to be a thousand is given as the reason why he did not physically die on the day he ate the fruit. For Genesis 2:17 states that on the day Adam would eat of it he would surely die. Most scholars today interpret this as a spiritual death. But the writer of the Book of Jubilees interpreted it as a physical death. He explains this verse by literally equating a day with a thousand years. Later on, we will find this same usage of Genesis 2:17 in Justin Martyr's discussion of the millennial week and the thousand years of Revelation 20. It's obvious that Justin Martyr got this idea from Jubilees.

(Book of Jubilees, 4:29-31a) And at the close of the nineteenth jubilee, in the seventh week in the sixth year [930 A.M.] thereof, Adam died, and all his sons buried him in the land of his creation, and he was the first to be buried in the earth. And he lacked seventy years of one thousand years; for one thousand years are as one day in the testimony of the heavens and therefore was it written concerning the tree of knowledge: 'On the day that ye eat thereof ye shall die.' For this reason he did not complete the years of this day; for he died during it.

The second Jewish ancient-text evidence for this is the Talmud Sanhedrin, Folio 97a. Here we find the millennial week itself. Here we see that the days of Psalm 90:4 are being interpreted as a literal thousand years. Also the days of Hosea 6:2 are being interpreted as a literal thousand years. Bottom line is that there was a strong association at that time with God's days being a literal thousand years.

It has been taught: R. Nehorai said: in the generation when Messiah comes, young men will insult the old, and old men will stand before the young [to give them honour]; daughters will rise up against their mothers, and daughters-in-law against their mothers-in-law. The people shall be dog-faced, and a son will not be abashed in his father's presence.

It has been taught, R. Nehemiah said: in the generation of Messiah's coming impudence will increase, esteem be perverted, the vine yield its fruit, yet shall wine be dear, and the Kingdom will be converted to heresy with none to rebuke them. This supports R. Isaac, who said: The son of David will not come until the whole world is converted to the belief of the heretics. Raba said: What verse [proves this]? it is all turned white: he is clean.

Our Rabbis taught: For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself of his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left: the son of David will not come until denunciators are in abundance. Another interpretation [of their power is gone]: until scholars are few. Another interpretation: until the [last] perutah has gone from the purse. Yet another interpretation: until the redemption is despaired of, for it is written, there is none shut up or left, as — were it possible [to say so] — Israel had neither Supporter nor Helper. Even as R. Zera, who, whenever he chanced upon scholars engaged thereon [I.e., in calculating the time of the Messiah's coming], would say to them: I beg of you, do not postpone it, for it has been taught: Three come unawares: Messiah, a found article and a scorpion.

R. Kattina said: Six thousand years shall the world exist, and one [thousand, the seventh], it shall be desolate, as it is written, And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. Abaye said: it will be desolate two [thousand], as it is said, After two days will he revive us: in the third day, he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

It has been taught in accordance with R. Kattina: Just as the seventh year is one year of release in seven, so is the world: one thousand years out of seven shall be fallow, as it is written, And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day,' and it is further said, A Psalm and song for the Sabbath day, meaning the day that is altogether Sabbath — and it is also said, For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.

The Tanna debe Eliyyahu teaches: The world is to exist six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation; two thousand years the Torah flourished; and the next two thousand years is the Messianic era.

Peter was Jewish. John was Jewish. When Peter wrote that a day of the Lord is as a thousand years, he no doubt thought of these days as being literal thousand-year periods of time. If Peter's verse is interpreted literally, then we must also apply this interpretation to Revelation 20. It becomes the case of Scripture interpreting Scripture. If the thief in the night, and the destruction of the heavens and the earth in 2 Peter 3:10 covers a literal thousand years, then Revelation 20 must be interpreted literally, with the thousand years being the Day of the Lord.

Ok, now for the Christian Chiliast quotes. First, here are some quotes from Irenaeus (disciple of Polycarp, who was the disciple of John):

Here is what Irenaeus said about his teacher Polycarp:

I could describe the very place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught; his going out and coming in; the whole tenor of his life; his personal appearance; how he would speak of the conversations he had held with John and with others who had seen the Lord. How did he make mention of their words and of whatever he had heard from them respecting the Lord.

Irenaeus: (AD. 120-202)

These men, therefore, ought to learn [what really is the state of the case], and go back to the true number of the name, that they be not reckoned among false prophets. But, knowing the sure number declared by Scripture, that is, six hundred sixty and six, let them await, in the first place, the division of the kingdom into ten; then, in the next place, when these kings are reigning, and beginning to set their affairs in order, and advance their kingdom, [let them learn]

to acknowledge that he who shall come claiming the kingdom for himself, and shall terrify those men of whom we have been speaking, having a name containing the aforesaid number, is truly the abomination of desolation. This, too, the apostle affirms: "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them." And Jeremiah does not merely point out his sudden coming, but he even indicates the tribe from which he shall come, where he says, "We shall hear the voice of his swift horses from Dan; the whole earth shall be moved by the voice of the neighing of his galloping horses: he shall also come and devour the earth, and the fulness thereof, the city also, and they that dwell therein." This, too, is the reason that this tribe is not reckoned in the Apocalypse along with those which are saved

[And at the conclusion to the chapter:]

But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." [Irenaeus: Against Heresies, Book V, XXX]

All this is a very literal interpretation of Bible prophecy. Notice that Irenaeus did not view the kingdom of God as being present-age. It is to be brought in by Christ. Notice the mention of the "hallowed seventh day." This terminology only comes from the literal idea that a day is a thousand years, and a thousand years is a day. The seventh day is the seventh millennium. Also notice that this was written after the temple was destroyed. So Irenaeus literally believed in a restored temple. He literally believed that the Antichrist would "sit in the temple at Jerusalem." Irenaeus believed in a literal Antichrist who will rule the earth during the Great Tribulation for 3 1/2 years and then Christ would return and set up a kingdom for a thousand years.

For what are the hundred-fold [rewards] in this word, the entertainments given to the poor, and the suppers for which a return is made? These are [to take place] in the times of the kingdom, that is, upon the seventh day, which has been sanctified, in which God rested from all the works which He created, which is the true Sabbath of the righteous, which they shall not be engaged in any earthly occupation; but shall have a table at hand prepared for them by God, supplying them with all sorts of dishes. [Irenaeus: Against Heresies, Book V, XXXII]

This quote from Irenaeus would go against the idea that the Kingdom of Heaven is here and now:

For this reason, when about to undergo His sufferings, that He might declare to Abraham and those with him the glad tidings of the inheritance being thrown open, [Christ], after He had given thanks while holding the cup, and had drunk of it, and given it to the disciples, said to them: "Drink ye all of it: this is My blood of the new covenant, which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of this vine, until that day when I will drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Thus, then, He will Himself renew the inheritance of the earth, and will re-organize the mystery of the glory of [His] sons; as David says, "He who hath renewed the face of the earth." He promised to drink of the fruit of the vine with His disciples, thus indicating both these points: the inheritance of the earth in which the new fruit of the vine is drunk, and the resurrection of His disciples in the flesh. For the new flesh which rises again is the same which also received the new cup. And He cannot by any means be understood as drinking of the fruit of the vine when settled down with his [disciples] above in a super-celestial place; nor, again, are they who drink it devoid of flesh, for to drink of that which flows from the vine pertains to flesh, and not spirit. [Irenaeus: Against Heresies, Book V, XXXIII]

Irenaeus believed that the kingdom is after the coming of the Antichrist. He did not believe in "allegorizing" prophecy:

If, however, any shall endeavour to allegorize [prophecies] of this kind, they shall not be found consistent with themselves in all

points, and shall be confuted by the teaching of the very expressions [in question]. For example: "When the cities" of the Gentiles "shall be desolate, so that they be not inhabited, and the houses so that there shall be no men in them and the land shall be left desolate." "For, behold," says Isaiah, "the day of the Lord cometh past remedy, full of fury and wrath, to lay waste the city of the earth, and to root sinners out of it." And again he says, "Let him be taken away, that he behold not the glory of God." And when these things are done, he says, "God will remove men far away, and those that are left shall multiply in the earth." "And they shall build houses, and shall inhabit them themselves: and plant vineyards, and eat of them themselves." For all these and other words were unquestionably spoken in reference to the resurrection of the just, which takes place after the coming of Antichrist, and the destruction of all nations under his rule; in [the times of] which [resurrection] the righteous shall reign in the earth, waxing stronger by the sight of the Lord: and through Him they shall become accustomed to partake in the glory of God the Father, and shall enjoy in the kingdom intercourse and communion with the holy angels, and union with spiritual beings; and [with respect to] those whom the Lord shall find in the flesh, awaiting Him from heaven, and who have suffered tribulation, as well as escaped the hands of the Wicked one. [Irenaeus: Against Heresies, Book V, XXXV]

Irenaeus has earlier established that the kingdom is after the resurrection. And now he will establish that new heavens and the new earth are after the kingdom age. This quote, in the context of the seventh day, directly references Revelation 20.

Now all these things being such as they are, cannot be understood in reference to super-celestial matters; "for God," it is said, "will show to the whole earth that is under heaven thy glory." But in the times of the kingdom, the earth has been called again by Christ [to its pristine condition], and Jerusalem rebuilt after the pattern of the Jerusalem above, of which the prophet Isaiah says, "Behold, I have depicted thy walls upon my hands, and thou art always in my sight," And the apostle, too, writing to the Galatians, says in like manner, "But the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." He does not say this with any thought of an erratic Aeon, or of any other power which departed from the Pleroma, or of

Prunicus, but of the Jerusalem which has been delineated on [God's] hands. And in the Apocalypse John saw this new [Jerusalem] descending upon the new earth. For after the times of the kingdom, he says, "I saw a great white throne, and Him who sat upon it, from whose face the earth fled away, and the heavens; and there was no more place for them." [Irenaeus: Against Heresies, Book V, XXXV]

Irenaeus, student of Polycarp, student of John himself, was a literalist. He read Revelation 20 in a literal way, and saw the thousand years as a time after the return of Christ. Today, we call this premillennialism.

Irenaeus would quote Barnabas (AD 100). Here is Barnabas on the millennial week.

Chapter XV.-The False and the True Sabbath.

Further, also, it is written concerning the Sabbath in the Decalogue which [the Lord] spoke, face to face, to Moses on Mount Sinai, "And sanctify ye the Sabbath of the Lord with clean hands and a pure heart. "And He says in another place, "If my sons keep the Sabbath, then will I cause my mercy to rest upon them. "The Sabbath is mentioned at the beginning of the creation [thus]: "And God made in six days the works of His hands, and made an end on the seventh day, and rested on it, and sanctified it. "Attend, my children, to the meaning of this expression, "He finished in six days." This implieth that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years, for a day is with Him a thousand years. And He Himself testifieth, saying, "Behold, to-day will be as a thousand years. "Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, all things will be finished. "And He rested on the seventh day." This meaneth: when His Son, coming [again], shall destroy the time of the wicked man, and judge the ungodly, and change the sun, and the moon, and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the seventh day. Moreover, He says, "Thou shalt sanctify it with pure hands and a pure heart." If, therefore, any one can now sanctify the day which God hath sanctified, except he is pure in heart in all things, we are deceived. Behold, therefore: certainly then one properly resting sanctifies it, when we ourselves, having received the promise, wickedness no longer existing, and all things having been

made new by the Lord, shall be able to work righteousness. Then we shall be able to sanctify it, having been first sanctified ourselves. Further, He says to them, "Your new moons and your Sabbath I cannot endure." Ye perceive how He speaks: Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to Me, but that is which I have made, [namely this,] when, giving rest to all things, I shall make a beginning of the eighth day, that is, a beginning of another world. Wherefore, also, we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead. And when He had manifested Himself, He ascended into the heavens.

Next will be Justin Martyr (110-165 AD). Justin directly equates the thousand years with (A) The thousand years from the Book of Jubilees, (B) The thousand years from "With the Lord a Day is as a thousand years", and (C) John's Revelation. Justin also quoted a lot of Isaiah and directly said that Isaiah was talking about a thousand years.

By the way, this was written to a Jew, and in the very next chapter, Justin says that the promises given to the Jews had been transferred to the Christians.

Justin Martyr, The Dialog of Justin:

Chapter LXXX.-The Opinion of Justin with Regard to the Reign of a Thousand Years. Several Catholics Reject It.

And Trypho to this replied, "I remarked to you sir, that you are very anxious to be safe in all respects, since you cling to the Scriptures. But tell me, do you really admit that this place, Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt; and do you expect your people to be gathered together, and made joyful with Christ and the patriarchs, and the prophets, both the men of our nation, and other proselytes who joined them before your Christ came? or have you given way, and admitted this in order to have the appearance of worsting us in the controversies? "

Then I answered, "I am not so miserable a fellow, Trypho, as to say one thing and think another. I admitted to you formerly, that I and many others are of this opinion, and [believe] that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise. Moreover, I pointed out to you that some who are called Christians, but are godless, impious heretics, teach doctrines that are in every way blasphemous,

atheistical, and foolish. But that you may know that I do not say this before you alone, I shall draw up a statement, so far as I can, of all the arguments which have passed between us; in which I shall record myself as admitting the very same things which I admit to you. For I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines [delivered] by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this [truth], and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians, even as one, if he would rightly consider it, would not admit that the Sadducees, or similar sects of Genistae, Meristae, Galilaeans, Hellenists, Pharisees, Baptists, are Jews (do not hear me impatiently when I tell you what I think), but are [only] called Jews and children of Abraham, worshipping God with the lips, as God Himself declared, but the heart was far from Him. But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.

Chapter LXXXI.-He Endeavours to Prove This Opinion from Isaiah and the Apocalypse.

"For Isaiah spake thus concerning this space of a thousand years: `For there shall be the new heaven and the new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, or come into their heart; but they shall find joy and gladness in it, which things I create. For, Behold, I make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and My people a joy; and I shall rejoice over Jerusalem, and be glad over My people. And the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, or the voice of crying. And there shall be no more there a person of immature years, or an old man who shall not fulfil his days. For the young man shall be an hundred years old; but the sinner who dies an hundred years old, he shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and shall themselves inhabit them; and they shall plant vines, and shall themselves eat the produce of them, and drink the wine. They shall not build, and others inhabit; they shall not plant, and others eat.

For according to the days of the tree of life shall be the days of my people; the works of their toil shall abound. Mine elect shall not toil fruitlessly, or beget children to be cursed; for they shall be a seed righteous and blessed by the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will hear; while they are still speaking, I shall say, What is it? Then shall the wolves and the lambs feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent [shall eat] earth as bread. They shall not hurt or maltreat each other on the holy mountain, saith the Lord.' Now we have understood that the expression used among these words, 'According to the days of the tree [of life] shall be the days of my people; the works of their toil shall abound' obscurely predicts a thousand years. For as Adam was told that in the day he ate of the tree he would die, we know that he did not complete a thousand years. We have perceived, moreover, that the expression, 'The day of the Lord is as a thousand years,' is connected with this subject. And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place. Just as our Lord also said, 'They shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be equal to the angels, the children of the God of the resurrection.'

Papias was a Chiliast, and "a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp." We don't have so much on him as we do Barnabas, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr. But here is a quote from a church historian that shows Papias was a Chiliast.

Schoedel writes about Papias (*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, v. 5, p. 140):

According to Irenaeus, our earliest witness, Papias was "a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp, a man of primitive times," who wrote a volume in "five books" (*haer.* 5.33.4; quoted by Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.1). Eusebius already doubted the reality of a connection between Papias and the apostle John on the grounds that Papias himself in the preface to his book distinguished the apostle John from John the presbyter and seems to have had significant contact only with John the presbyter and a certain Aristion (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.3-7). Eusebius' skepticism was no doubt

prompted by his distaste - perhaps a recently acquired distaste (Grant 1974) - for Papias' chiliasm and his feeling that such a theology qualified Papias for the distinction of being "a man of exceedingly small intelligence" (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.13). Nevertheless Eusebius' analysis of the preface is probably correct; and his further point that Papias' chiliasm put him to the same camp as the Revelation of John is surely relevant. It is notable that Eusebius, in spite of his desire to discredit Papias, still places him as early as the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98-117); and although later dates (e.g., A.D. 130-140) have often been suggested by modern scholars, Bartlet's date for Papias' literary activity of about A.D. 100 has recently gained support (Schoedel 1967: 91-92; Kortner 1983: 89-94, 167-72, 225-26).

Another good person to quote about the Chiliast belief system is Augustine himself. He is writing a bit later, but he is quite familiar with the Chiliast belief system and defines it well in order to argue against it. This quote shows that Augustine understood Chiliasm, and had once believed it himself. This quote shows that Chiliasm directly relates to the thousand years of Revelation 20.

Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XX:

Chapter 7.-What is Written in the Revelation of John Regarding the Two Resurrections, and the Thousand Years, and What May Reasonably Be Held on These Points.

The evangelist John has spoken of these two resurrections in the book which is called the Apocalypse, but in such a way that some Christians do not understand the first of the two, and so construe the passage into ridiculous fancies. For the Apostle John says in the foresaid book, "And I saw an angel come down from heaven. . . . 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." Those who, on the strength of this passage, have suspected that the first resurrection is future and bodily, have been moved, among other things, specially by the number of a thousand years, as if it were a fit thing that the saints should thus enjoy a kind of Sabbath-rest during that period, a holy leisure after the labors of the six thousand years since man was created, and was on account of his

great sin dismissed from the blessedness of paradise into the woes of this mortal life, so that thus, as it is written, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," there should follow on the completion of six thousand years, as of six days, a kind of seventh-day Sabbath in the succeeding thousand years; and that it is for this purpose the saints rise, viz., to celebrate this Sabbath. And, this opinion would not be objectionable, if it were believed that the joys of the saints in that Sabbath shall be spiritual, and consequent on the presence of God; for I myself, too, once held this opinion. But, as they assert that those who then rise again shall enjoy the leisure of immoderate carnal banquets, furnished with an amount of meat and drink such as not only to shock the feeling of the temperate, but even to surpass the measure of credulity itself, such assertions can be believed only by the carnal. They who do believe them are called by the spiritual Chiliasts, which we may literally reproduce by the name Millenarians. It were a tedious process to refute these opinions point by point: we prefer proceeding to show how that passage of Scripture should be understood.

Bottom line is that there is strong evidence, that in ancient Jewish culture, there was a strong presupposition to associating one of God's days with a literal thousand years. Knowing this was a part of their upbringing, we should interpret Revelation 20 and 2 Peter 3 naturally and not allegorically.

32.10) The Believer's Authority Over the Nations

The seven letters to the seven churches each promise a reward, related to salvation, to those who overcome. In other words, all who believe and trust in Christ get these rewards. All true Christians get these rewards. Notice that to receive these rewards one must overcome sin and keep Christ's works to the end. It's not just a matter of intellectual belief. It's a real commitment. It's a life that leads to a complete overcoming of all sinful habits. This reward reads as follows:

Revelation 2:26-27 He who overcomes, and he who keeps my works to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations. (27) He will rule them with a rod of iron, shattering them like clay pots; as I also have received of my Father:

Those of us who overcome all our sinful habits will rule over the nations. So who are the nations over which we will rule? Some amillennialists have said that this verse is talking about ruling the nations currently – not after Christ returns. But the verse says, “to the end.” In other words, we must “overcome” and do Christ’s will “to the end.” Only then do we receive authority over the nations. Also, all the other rewards in these seven letters are things we get after Christ returns, or after we die. Some may argue that Christians rule from heaven after they die. But this is not supported elsewhere by Scripture. Unless you are Catholic and believe in the Catholic tradition of sainthood, there is no evidence of dead saints ruling from heaven. Who are the nations over which we will rule after Christ returns?

To get around this, many amillennialists will claim that this verse is talking about the destruction of the nations when Christ returns. The KJV uses the word ‘power’ instead of ‘authority’. And it uses the words ‘iron rod’ instead of ‘iron scepter.’ Thus they see Christ as destroying the nations with an iron rod by “dashing them to pieces like pottery.” But will we personally be destroying the nations with an iron rod? Is this really our reward for overcoming sin? If so, I think I would decline that reward. I don’t want to be personally involved in killing sinners. The Judgment of the nations is reserved for Christ. Christ will not be giving us the ‘power’ and task of personally destroying the nations.

Christ will “rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery.” This is a quote of Psalm 2:9. The context here is Psalm 2:6-12. David (or Christ) is being promised that the nations will be his inheritance and possession. It’s talking about rule, not destruction. Another verse, Psalm 31:12, also uses this imagery of broken pottery. It’s talking about breaking one’s spirit of wickedness. It’s not talking about physical destruction.

Psalms 2:6-9 "Yet I have set my King on my holy hill of Zion."

(7) I will tell of the decree. Yahweh said to me, "You are my son. Today I have become your father. (8) Ask of me, and I will give the nations for your inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. (9) You shall break them with a rod of iron. You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

In the discussion of this verse, some amillennialists make reference to Revelation 19:15, which speaks of Christ ruling with an iron scepter (or rod). This is in context of Armageddon, where they claim that everyone on the earth is killed. True, all those in this battle are killed. But is everyone in the world killed? The context of this battle remains as being just the battle, except for possibly verse 18, which says,

“all people, free and slave, small and great.” The Greek words for ‘all’, ‘free’, ‘slave’, ‘small’, and ‘great’ are adjectives. Only adjectives are given in the Greek. In English, it’s like the movie title, “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.” No noun is given. In these cases, the translator usually adds the word ‘people’ or ‘men’. But in this case, adding the noun tends to shift the context to the entire world. If we leave the word ‘people’ or ‘men’ out, like it’s done in the Greek, then the context tends to remain with the battle. In other words, a better translation of verse 18 would be, “so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of [them] all, free and slave, small and great.” Kings, generals, mighty men, horses, and riders, by context, are all at this battle. The context of the unsupplied noun should also remain in the same context. Revelation 19 does not teach that everyone in all the nations is destroyed.

There is another verse in Revelation that speaks of Christ ruling with an iron scepter. This verse does not indicate the destruction of the nations. The male child is born a King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16). As Revelation 12:5 says, He rules from his throne.

Revelation 12:5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. Her child was caught up to God, and to his throne.

It’s also helpful to point out that the word ‘rule’ in these verses is literally ‘Shepherd.’ It’s the same Greek word as in Matthew 2:6, where Matthew is quoting Micah 2:52 about a ruler who will come from Bethlehem and will Shepherd the people of Israel. Does a Shepherd destroy his sheep? Jesus will ‘Shepherd’ the nations with an iron scepter. Does this mean he will destroy his sheep?

So Revelation 2:26-27 is in agreement with the natural chronological view of 1 Corinthians 15:22-26. When Christ returns “those who belong to him” are resurrected and receive spiritual bodies. They are given authority to rule over the nations. But for the nations, there is still the possibility of sin and death. The last enemy is not destroyed until after the reign of Christ. And Christ shares this reign with those who are in him and who completely overcome sin.

32.11) Natural Kingdom and Spiritual Kingdom Verses

It’s not too hard to search through the New Testament and find all the verses that refer to the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven occurs 31 times in Matthew, and does not occur in any other New Testament book. The kingdom of God occurs 4 times in Matthew, 14 times in

Mark, 31 times in Luke, 2 times in John, 6 times in Acts, and 8 times in Paul's letters. Paul also refers to the kingdom of Christ once in Ephesians. There doesn't seem to be any difference in meaning between the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Christ. All three terms mean the same thing.

The Jews were expecting to see a natural kingdom when the Messiah came. They were expecting Israel to be that natural kingdom. When Scripture uses one of these three terms, is it talking about the type of natural kingdom that everyone was expecting? Or do these verses instead speak of a spiritual kingdom of heaven that is not of this world? Amillennialists make lists of these verses and observe that more of them are teaching about a spiritual kingdom. So they conclude that Christ was teaching against the natural kingdom that everyone had expected. But is it an either-or situation? Could Christ have been teaching about a spiritual kingdom that is in place now, without teaching against the natural kingdom that is still to come? Perhaps the natural kingdom the disciples were expecting is still to take place. Perhaps in teaching about the spiritual kingdom of heaven, Jesus was teaching about how we must be born again before we can enter that future natural kingdom (John 3:3).

Can the kingdom of heaven be both spiritual and natural? Can the natural be a fulfillment of the spiritual?

When Jesus died on the cross, he paid the price so that the spiritual kingdom can come (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). So spiritually, the kingdom has been won and Christ sits on the throne in heaven. Spiritually, it's a done deal. But naturally, Satan is still prince of this world. Sin still rules the world. The kingdom exists literally only in our hearts and in heaven. Something can be spiritually true, but not yet naturally true, when from God's perspective it's a done deal. Yet from our natural perspective, it's still to be fulfilled in the future.

Salvation works in the same way. The kingdom of heaven is very much like salvation. Christ brought a reconciliation between God and man at the cross. Because of this, we were saved (justification) when we first became believers. We are continuing to be saved (sanctification) as we do the works of the Father and overcome all the sinful habits in our lives. We will be saved (glorification) when we receive our spiritual bodies when Christ returns. All three can be found in Scripture. Spiritually, we are saved. It's a done deal. But naturally we are still waiting on immortal bodies. In a literal sense, we are to be saved from death. So in a literal sense, we are not yet saved. But when we have immortal bodies, we will

be saved from sin and death. Likewise, the kingdom of heaven is here-and-now spiritually. It became a done deal at the cross. But naturally it's not yet here.

John 3:3 is a good verse to see both aspects of the kingdom of heaven in one verse. "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." Here is that word "see." No one can "see" the kingdom without being born again. Luke 17:20-21 says that no one can observe the kingdom in our hearts. But as we will see, Jesus was not just talking about a spiritual birth. He is primarily talking about being physically born again into a spiritual body.

We must interpret Scripture in the way the audience would have understood. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and would have understood the kingdom to be the Messianic reign. When Nicodemus didn't understand how he could go back into his mother's womb, Jesus said, "You are Israel's teacher, and do you not understand these things?" Jesus was being kind to Nicodemus. He wasn't being sarcastic. Jesus was speaking of Scripture about being born again, of which Nicodemus was not aware. Jesus was talking about the earth giving birth to her dead (Isaiah 26:16-21). In other words, at the resurrection we will literally be "born again."

Later on, this idea of "born again" was applied to salvation in all three stages. We are "new creatures." Spiritually, this is true. But we won't be naturally born again until the resurrection. When Christ returns, we will be "born" into new spiritual bodies. The metaphor from Isaiah of the pregnant woman and her birth pains was continued after this when talking about the resurrection (Matt. 24:8, John 3:3-10, 16:19-24, Rom. 8:22, Gal. 4:19, 1 Thess. 5:3, Rev 12:2).

Verses 5 and 6 say, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." So you have to have a spiritual body in order to enter the natural kingdom of God. And you have to be spiritually born again in order for the kingdom of heaven to be in your hearts. The Holy Spirit is spiritually in us now. This is a promise of that which is to come. The Holy Spirit will give us spiritual bodies when Christ returns. Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Verse 8 says, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." Taken literally, if you have to have a spiritual body you can literally "come and go like the wind, so that no one can tell from where it is you are going." Jesus demonstrated this after His resurrection with his spiritual body when he would appear in the middle of locked rooms. So naturally, this is a description

of spiritual bodies. But spiritually, this verse can be interpreted to mean that the Holy Spirit leads us in ways that others don't understand.

Verse 12 says, "I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?" The earthly things are about the natural kingdom of heaven that will come, and the natural "born again" event that will take place when the earth gives birth to the dead. The heavenly things are the spiritual aspects of what it takes to walk the path of salvation.

So the kingdom of heaven is both earthly and heavenly in this one verse.

32.12) My Kingdom is Not of This World

When Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, he said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Jesus was not going to build up an army against Rome. Amillennialists are quick to point out all the verses that teach the kingdom of heaven is here and now. His ability to drive out demons was proof that the kingdom of heaven had come (Matt. 12:28, Mark 1:15, Luke 10:9-11, 11:20). Christ is currently sitting on his throne in heaven (Matt. 28:18, Acts 2:33, Heb. 12:2).

Currently, the kingdom of heaven is not in the world. It's in heaven and it's in our hearts (Luke 17:20-21). But when speaking to Pontius Pilate, did Jesus say that his kingdom would never, in the future, be of this world? While speaking to Pilate, was Jesus addressing the issue of the end-times, as he did in the Olivetti Discourse? He uses a present tense verb when speaking to Pilate. Jesus was simply assuring Pilate that no army would be attacking him. His kingdom was not of this world, at that time. To apply this statement to the end times is taking it out of context, as well as changing the verb tense. At the seventh trumpet of Revelation, the angel clearly states, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). Was not Jesus praying for this very thing when he prayed, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10)?

32.13) The Kingdom of Heaven Parables

Jesus used many parables to speak about the nature of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus was not going to usher in a literal kingdom of heaven at that time (Luke 17:20-21). His purpose was to teach how we must become new creatures before we will be able to enter the kingdom of heaven (John 3:3). Jesus was constantly talking about the kingdom of heaven with parables. These parables taught us how our

hearts must be changed before we can enter the kingdom of heaven. Do any of these vast numbers of verses deny a literal kingdom of heaven after the resurrection?

In Luke 21:29-31, Jesus told his parable about the second coming. He said when we see all these things happening, we are to know the kingdom of God is near. In other words, Jesus is saying the very thing amillennialists must deny. The kingdom of God is currently not of this world (John 18:36). But after the resurrection, the kingdom of heaven will come. Luke 21:29-31 makes this clear in speaking of a future kingdom that has not yet come. Today we have a spiritual kingdom of heaven in our hearts. So the only kingdom of heaven that will come in the future must be a natural and literal kingdom of heaven. In other words, Jesus never taught the disciples that their belief was incorrect. They were right that the kingdom of heaven would come as a natural and literal kingdom. The only issue that he was trying to correct was the issue of when it would happen, and of the need for our hearts to be ready. At the time, they were not ready to rule the world.

Of course the disciples were always hopeful that Jesus would go ahead and set up a natural kingdom. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples ask Jesus when it would happen (Acts 1:6-7). Jesus replied saying that it was not for them to know the times or dates in which it will happen. Again, Jesus does not deny that it will happen. The disciples were not to know the day or the hour of Christ's return. But after Christ returns, there will be a natural kingdom of heaven. At the Lord's Supper, Jesus vowed not to drink wine again until he drinks it with us in the Father's kingdom. In other words, that will be the victory celebration after the resurrection. It's the wedding feast spoken of in Matthew 25:1-12 and Revelation 19:7. Today, the kingdom of heaven is not of this world (John 18:36). But at that unknown time, it will be.

Christ's kingdom will never end (Luke 1:32, Heb. 1:8). Some amillennialists, including Calvin, have criticized millennialism by pointing this out, saying that millennialists limit the kingdom to a thousand years. But no millennialist today would believe it's limited. After the thousand years, we have the final judgment, and then the new heavens and the new earth. The kingdom just continues right on into eternity.

32.14) The Promise to David and Mary

This promise to Mary in Luke 1:32 not only tells us that Christ's kingdom is eternal, it also tells us that it's a fulfillment of God's covenant with David. Today,

Christ sits on his throne in heaven. So today, this is a partial fulfillment of that covenant. But we must interpret Scripture in the way the author and his readers would interpret Scripture. David sat on an earthly throne. And God’s promise to Mary reads very much like an earthly rule. It’s stated as being a rule over the house of Jacob. Would not Mary have interpreted this promise as an earthly rule? Would not David have interpreted this covenant as an earthly rule? After all he was sitting on an earthly throne. And he was promised that his son would continue to sit on his throne forever (2 Samuel 7:11b-16, 2 Chronicles 21:7, Psalms 89:3-4, Jeremiah 33:20-21). We can spiritualize this promise. But it’s not what David and later Mary would have understood. So it’s not a good exegesis of Scripture. When the Lord’s Prayer is answered, for his kingdom of heaven to become the kingdom of earth, then the promise to David and Mary will be kept in the way they would have understood it to be.

Also, Isaiah specifically saw the covenant with David as being an earthly kingdom, because he said the “government will be on his shoulders.” He said the increase of this government would have no end. Isaiah said Christ would reign on David’s throne. Did David have a throne in heaven? Isaiah said Christ would reign over David’s kingdom. Was David’s kingdom in heaven? All this is in a very familiar Christmas verse (Isaiah 9:6-7). Isaiah made this very clear. It’s a natural rule. But amillennialists take great liberty in making Isaiah say something that I’m sure Isaiah did not intend to say. And no New Testament verse denies that there will be a literal earthly kingdom after Christ returns, just as Isaiah describes.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born. To us a son is given; and the government will be on his shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (7) Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, on the throne of David, and on his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from that time on, even forever. The zeal of Yahweh of Armies will perform this.

32.15) Twelve Thrones for the Twelve Disciples

An obvious aspect of a natural earthly kingdom is natural rule and authority. In Matthew 19:23-30, Jesus speaks of the difficulty for rich men to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is talking about how worldly possessions will prevent the change in hearts that are necessary in order to enter the kingdom (John 3:3). The disciples respond saying that they have left everything in order to follow Jesus.

He then tells them that “at the renewal of all things,” each of them will sit on a throne and will rule the twelve tribes of Israel. Is this a natural rule? Given the fact that the disciples were expecting a natural kingdom of heaven, would not they interpret this as a natural kingdom? Yet this natural kingdom is not a kingdom that is currently of this world (John 18:36). It’s a natural kingdom that comes into the world “at the renewal of all things.” Interpreting this verse the way the disciples would have surely interpreted it, the disciples will get literal thrones from which to rule a natural kingdom. By combining Matthew’s account of this and Mark’s account of this, it becomes even clearer (Mark 10:23). Mark’s account does not mention the twelve thrones. But Mark’s account makes it clear that the eternal life that’s promised is in “the age to come.” So the twelve thrones are also in “the age to come.” We should always interpret Scripture based on the culture of the time, and in the way the audience would have naturally understood the speaker.

32.16) Elijah Will Restore All Things

Matthew 17:10-13 His disciples asked him, saying, "Then why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" (11) Jesus answered them, "Elijah indeed **comes first**, and **will restore all things**, (12) but I tell you that Elijah has come already, and they didn't recognize him, but did to him whatever they wanted to. Even so the Son of Man will also suffer by them." (13) Then the disciples understood that he spoke to them of John the Baptizer.

Amillennialists might argue that the disciples are currently ruling on twelve thrones from heaven. But this to be “at the renewal of all things.” After seeing Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples asked Jesus about Elijah. Was not Elijah to come first? Jesus explained that John the Baptist was Elijah. Yet Jesus also said, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things” (Matt. 17:11). The phrase, “will restore all things” contains a future-tense verb. Elijah had already come, but had not restored all things. Yet Elijah will come, and will restore all things. There are two comings of Christ, and also two comings of Elijah. When all things are restored, the disciples will sit on thrones and rule Israel. In the very next verse, Jesus goes on to say, “But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (Matthew 19:30). The disciples were willing to be last by giving up all they had to follow Christ. So they will be first in the future kingdom of heaven.

Chapter 33

Revelation 20 ---- Dispensationalism

The interpretations of Revelation chapter 20 generally divides into two major camps of eschatology. Is there a literal thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ here on the earth? This question becomes a pivot-point between reading the Bible literally and fulfilled in the future, or more figurative and allegorical. Literal interpretations are from the futurist hermeneutic.

This chapter will take a look at the dispensational interpretation of Revelation 20. Also, a growing minority of futurists are not dispensationalists. They are historical premillennialists after the late George Ladd. After this chapter, chapter 34 will look at the New Wine System view of Revelation 20. The New Wine System, of course, takes the literal and futurist view of Revelation 20. But the New Wine System is significantly different from dispensationalism. The New Wine System is even more literal and picks up where historic premillennialism left off.

Revelation 20:1-8 I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. (2) He seized the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited earth, and bound him for a thousand years, (3) and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were finished. After this, he must be freed for a short time. (4) I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as didn't worship the beast nor his image, and didn't receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand. They lived, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (5) The rest of the dead didn't live until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over these, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him one thousand years. (7) And after the thousand years, Satan will be released from his prison, (8) and he will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

33.1) Dispensationalism and Historic Premillennialism

Both historic premillennialists and dispensationalists view Revelation 20 almost identically. Both are premillennial, meaning that Christ returns before a literal thousand-year reign of Christ here on the earth. Most historic premillennialists come from dispensational teaching. However, most historic premillennialists do not believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. The major distinction between historic premillennialists and dispensationalists is that the historic premillennialist makes much less of a distinction between Israel and the Church. Dispensationalists argue that the Church must be removed from the earth so that God can shift the dispensation back to a focus on Israel. It's generally argued that in the Old Testament dispensation God required faith plus works for salvation. The New Covenant dispensation, it's argued, requires only faith. So God must remove the Church from the earth in order to shift back to faith plus works.

There is one body, one faith, one baptism. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile. Those who are in Christ are Abraham's seed, and are thus Israel. George Ladd, arguably the most predominant historic premillennialist, believed the Church is a "spiritual Israel." The New Wine System takes it a step further, saying we are grafted into Israel. Whatever the Bible prophesies about the future of Israel is true of the Church as well, because there is no distinction between Israel and the Church. That does not mean we replace Israel. It means we are grafted into Israel. Bride of Christ is Israel.

Dispensationalism, on the other hand, relies on a huge distinction between Israel and the Church. Israel is related to the previous dispensation and the future dispensation. The Church is a "parenthesis" between two dispensations of God's plan for Israel and relates only to the current "Church Age" dispensation. Dispensationalists believe the Church is removed from the earth and stays in heaven at least for the duration of the millennium, while Israel rules the world during Christ's millennial reign.

We must remember that John wrote Revelation, and that John had already written the Gospel of John. Both dispensationalists and historic premillennialists believe that Revelation 20 adds detail to the two resurrections spoken of in John's Gospel. John 5:28-29 speaks of two resurrections that occur in one "hour."

John 5:28-29 ESV Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice (29) and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Both dispensationalists and historic premillennialists believe that Revelation 20 stretches this hour into a thousand years. Or some might say there are really two hours that are separated by a thousand years. The general principle of progressive revelation, however, states that later Scripture should be interpreted in the context of earlier Scripture. This is especially true when it's the same author. The author and audience of that time would have already understood there to be two resurrections that happen at basically the same time. The "first resurrection" would be the first of those two resurrections. To say these two resurrections are separated by a thousand years makes these words of Jesus, be in direct contradiction. The natural interpretation of Revelation 20 would allow for a third event that happens a thousand years later. But that third event is never actually called a resurrection. To be resurrected means you are brought back to life, with a new body, so that you can live again. To come alive for the purpose of judgment and then being thrown into the lake of fire should not be called a resurrection.

The dispensationalist has another major problem with Revelation 20. After reading Revelation 20 it becomes very clear that the resurrection happens after the great tribulation. The "souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as didn't worship the beast nor his image, and didn't receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand" are resurrected in the first resurrection. They come to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years. This resurrection clearly occurs after the tribulation. Also, John tells us in his Gospel that the resurrection is on the "last day" (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54, 7:37, 11:24, and 12:48). This "last day" must be after the great tribulation. More specifically, it's the "last day" of Daniel's 1290 days. With this, the dispensationalist would probably agree. But then look at the rapture verse in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 But we don't want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you don't grieve like the rest, who have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. (15) For this we tell you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left to the coming of the Lord, will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with God's trumpet. The dead in Christ will rise first, (17) then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. So we will be with the Lord forever.

The rapture must be after the resurrection. Since the resurrection is after the great tribulation, the rapture must also be after the great tribulation. This then, is the post-tribulation rapture. Dispensationalists require there to be a pre-tribulation rapture because they believe God must remove the Church before he can proceed with the dispensation of Israel. Dispensationalism and the pre-tribulation rapture go hand in hand. One does not work without the other. Dispensationalists will sometimes respond to this point by saying there are two resurrections and two raptures. Both resurrections become the “first resurrection” on the “last day.” How can there be two “first resurrections?” And how can there be two “last days?”

Another big problem with two resurrections involves the question of who will be at the wedding banquet. Dispensationalists separate Israel from the Church. The dispensationalists believe Israel will rule over the earth during the millennial reign while the Church remains in heaven. If this is true, then when are the Old Testament saints resurrected? If there are two resurrections, would not the Old Testament saints be resurrected in the post-tribulation resurrection to be with the rest of Israel? Would they be present at the wedding banquet?

Matthew 8:10-12 When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to those who followed, "Most certainly I tell you, I haven't found so great a faith, not even in Israel. (11) I tell you that many will come from the east and the west, and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, (12) but the children of the Kingdom will be thrown out into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This verse makes it clear that Gentile believers will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob most likely at the wedding banquet. Most dispensationalists conclude that Old Testament saints will be resurrected along with the Church and will reside in heaven, along with the Church, during Christ's millennial reign. It's reasoned that since they will have a resurrection body, they will not be living on the earth. Also, it's reasoned that the Old Testament saints are currently in heaven, prior to receiving a resurrection body. So they won't be returning to the earth.

But what about those who accept Christ during the tribulation? Most will be beheaded for not taking the mark of the beast and worshipping the image. They will come to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years. Would they not also have a resurrection body? Would not they also be residing in heaven, alongside the Church, during the millennium?

33.2) Is Dispensationalism in Scripture?

The term dispensationalism comes from the word “dispensation” in the King James Version (1 Corinthians 9:17, Ephesians 1:10, 3:2, Colossians 1:25), in which the corresponding Greek word means the administration or stewardship (of a household or estate), specifically of a religious “economy.” These verses can be interpreted as Paul speaking about different times. According to dispensationalists, each dispensation shows different arrangements between God and mankind. Dispensationalists agree that it’s not rules of salvation that change from dispensation to dispensation. Hebrews 11 clearly teaches that people of all ages are saved by faith. Under Abraham, God’s people were told to physically circumcise themselves. Was circumcision required for salvation? Under Moses, God’s people were told they must observe certain religious festivals. Was this also required for salvation? Today we are told these things were shadows of Christ. Were words required for salvation in the Old Testament but not in the New Testament? So no one questions that our instructions from God have changed over time. But dispensationalists believe there are different standards by which our faith is tested. And they believe there are seven such dispensations.

1 Corinthians 9:17 KJV For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

Ephesians 1:10 KJV That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.

Ephesians 3:2 KJV If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.

Colossians 1:25 KJV Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God.

Paul, however, only speaks of two dispensations. He speaks of the present dispensation that he saw as being given to him to present to us. Dispensationalists call this the Church age. Ephesians 1:10 speaks of a future “dispensation of the fullness of times,” which is probably Christ’s millennial reign. We can also assume a past dispensation prior to the present age. So we must remember that Scripture itself only speaks of these three dispensations. But dispensationalists extrapolate

this thinking out into seven dispensations. (It's interesting that everyone seems to agree that there are seven dispensations, but they don't agree on exactly what the list of seven should be.) Still, for argument's sake, we can agree to a chart of seven ages during which the revelations and instructions of God have been given. But dispensationalists say that recognizing such a chart does not make one a dispensationalist. Real dispensationalism is the separation of Israel and the Church.

When one looks at the verses in which the KJV uses the word "dispensation," one can see ages and perhaps different "economies" of which God relates to man. The Greek word means the administration or stewardship (of a household or estate), specifically of a religious "economy." But when one examines the other uses of this Greek word, it becomes doubtful that these are different ages of rules by which God judges men. God is not the "steward." Men are the "stewards." The word refers to head servants of a household where the Master of the household gives the responsibility for running the household to one of this servants. We are God's servants. We are given a stewardship. As we are given new revelation about God, we are given additional responsibilities for what we do with that revelation. We are given a greater stewardship, as servants of God. So it can still be viewed as ages. But it's not referring to God's rules for judging our faith. In the following verses, the word "stewardship" is the same Greek word as "dispensation."

Luke 16:2-4 KJV And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. (3) Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. (4) I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

1 Timothy 1:4 neither to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which cause disputes, rather than God's stewardship, which is in faith.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 So let a man think of us as Christ's servants, and stewards of God's mysteries. (2) Here, moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

Galatians 4:1-2 But I say that so long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a bondservant, though he is lord of all; (2) but is under guardians and stewards until the day appointed by the father.

Titus 1:7 For the overseer must be blameless, as God's steward; not self-pleasing, not easily angered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for dishonest gain;

1 Peter 4:10 KJV As every man hath received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Now let's take another look at those four verses with the word "dispensation" in the KJV. But this time, we will use a translation that uses the words "stewardship" or "administration."

1 Corinthians 9:17 For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward. But if not of my own will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.

Ephesians 1:10 to an administration of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth, in him;

Ephesians 3:2 if it is so that you have heard of the administration of that grace of God which was given me toward you;

Colossians 1:25 of which I was made a servant, according to the stewardship of God which was given me toward you, to fulfill the word of God,

There are no dispensations, as in ages of which God changes his rules for judging our faith. Dispensationalists believe the previous dispensation and the next dispensation of Israel require works, whereas the current Church age dispensation does not. If anything, in this present age, we have a stewardship that is based on the new revelation of Jesus Christ. This stewardship, by definition, is an expectation of works. As Paul says, we have a "stewardship" entrusted to us.

But what about the question of faith and works? It's true that we are saved by faith alone under the New Covenant. But we are also expected to obey God's commandments. These commandments involve works. Faith without works is dead. Exercising our spiritual gifts, and doing the works of the Father, help us to overcome sin. One can be resurrected to live in the millennium without works. But it would be a salvation that's like escaping from a burning house. One is still alive. But he has nothing to show for it. If we expect to inherit the kingdom, we must store our treasures in heaven. This means doing the works of the Father. I think that even in the Old Testament, the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins (Hebrews 10:4).

33.3) What is Dispensationalism?

The core belief of dispensationalism is to distinguish “two purposes of God.” The pre-tribulation rapture is argued on that basis. One purpose is said to be “heavenly” and the other “earthly.” Generally speaking, the heavenly purpose is the Church, and the earthly purpose is Israel. Only the dispensation of the Church age is involved in the heavenly purpose. All other dispensations are of the earthly purposes. This distinct purpose for the Church age is a “parenthesis” in God’s purposes. Each individual believer is either in the Church or in Israel. Thus each individual believer is either for the heavenly purpose or for the earthly purpose of God. Thus it’s argued that the rapture must be before the tribulation in order for God to switch purposes from the Church back to Israel. All the heavenly purposed individuals must be removed before earthly purposed believers will begin to believe in Christ. Without the pre-tribulation rapture, under this system, there would be no one left to populate the earth in the millennium. This distinction of two purposes between Israel and the Church is what makes one a dispensationalist.

It’s important to remember that Scripture never mentions these two purposes of God. These two purposes are seen as necessary by dispensationalists in order to resolve the friction between the Old and New Testaments in the area of covenants, prophecies, and promises, without reverting to spiritual interpretation. Yet few seem to realize that the same thing can be accomplished by saying that the Church is Israel. The Church can be the recipient of the literal fulfillments of all the covenants, prophecies, and promises. This is not covenant theology where the Old Testament is reinterpreted in light of the New Testament. This amillennial-based reinterpretation uses allegorical and figurative methods to force the Old Testament to fit what is traditionally understood about the New Testament. Instead, we should interpret the New Testament in the context of a literal interpretation of the Old Testament, even if it forces us to reexamine some of our traditional beliefs. Under such a system there would not be two purposes of God, because Israel and the Church would be the same. But under such a system there would not be a pre-tribulation rapture either. So it would not have the popularity that dispensationalism has received.

Darby developed dispensationalism around 1830. It was spread over Europe and America primarily through the Scofield Reference Bible. Over the years since Darby, dispensationalism has evolved into three major flavors. From Darby forward is now known as “classical dispensationalism.” From the late 1950’s to the late 1970’s emerged what is known as “revised dispensationalism.” And then “progressive dispensationalism” emerged in the 1990’s.

Classical dispensationalism teaches that the people of God's two purposes remain eternally separate. During the millennium there is the "kingdom of heaven" here on earth, and the "kingdom of God" in heaven. After the millennium those on earth become the "kingdom of God" in the new earth. Those in heaven become the "kingdom of God" in the new heaven. Revised dispensationalism brought the two groups together after the millennium, some saying it's to be a "kingdom of God" on earth, and others saying it's to be a "kingdom of God" in heaven.

Both classical and revised dispensationalists view the covenants similarly. All the covenants are to be fulfilled literally in Israel. But the Church only gets the covenant with Abraham and the new covenant. And for the Church they are only fulfilled spiritually (or "typologically"). Since Augustine, right up to Darby, the church has been almost exclusively amillennial. With amillennial teaching, Christians think of themselves as going to heaven eternally when they die. There is not much thought about living on earth after the resurrection. So naturally, to the amillennialists, the old covenants would seem to be about Old Testament Israel. That's why the Bible was once divided into the "Old Covenant" and the "New Covenant", which means the same as the Old Testament and the New Testament.

When the old covenants are interpreted literally, there is a tendency to assume they are exclusively about Old Testament Israel. Dispensationalists put major emphasis on the "grammatical-historical" hermeneutical system. So it's clear that the covenants must be fulfilled literally. Covenant (reformation) theology holds that Israel is the Church. Therefore, if millennialism were to be applied to covenant (reformation) theology, the covenants would be literally fulfilled in the true Church, which is true Israel. But dispensationalists must show a distinction between Israel and the Church. To show this distinction, dispensationalists say the covenants are only to be fulfilled spiritually (or "typologically") in the Church. Therefore, classical and revised dispensationalists go against their own principles of hermeneutics and revert to a spiritual (or "typological") interpretation of the covenants for the Church. But if the Church were Israel, this problem would be eliminated.

33.4) Progressive Dispensationalism

Recognizing some of these problems, "progressive dispensationalism" emerged in the 1990's. Progressive dispensationalism does not see the Church as spiritually (or "typologically") fulfilling any of the covenants. All the covenants are literally applied to both Israel and the Church. Progressive dispensationalism believes that the covenants have not been completely fulfilled. But today, aspects of the covenants are being fulfilled. They are being partially fulfilled in the Church.

For example, the Davidic covenant is about the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is in our hearts, but not yet in the world. So the kingdom of God is here and now, but not yet. When Christ returns, the kingdom will be literally set up. The same is true with all the covenants. They are progressive. When Christ returns, they are to be completely fulfilled in Israel as well as the Church. Thus the covenants are “progressive” in nature, which leads to the name “progressive dispensationalism.” Progressive dispensationalism still distinguishes the Church from Israel.

Progressive dispensationalism does not have two purposes of God. Both Israel and the Church are together on earth during the millennium. Without the two purposes of God, there is no longer an argument for the pre-tribulation rapture. In other words, the original argument for the pre-tribulation rapture was so that God could shift back to the earthly purpose of Israel, remove all the heavenly-purposed believers, and then get some new believers in order to repopulate the earth during the millennium. Without the two purposes, we are all really one body, one faith, and one baptism. So for this I applaud progressive dispensationalists. But are progressive dispensationalists really dispensationalists? It takes more than simply acknowledging a chart of dispensations to be a dispensationalist. Perhaps they still consider themselves dispensationalists because they still distinguish the Church from Israel. Yet even this distinction is vague. Perhaps they still consider themselves dispensationalists in order to keep in good standing with Dallas.

Progressive dispensationalists tend to keep silent about the pre-tribulation rapture. They would say that it’s an optional belief. But people forget that dispensationalism was the original Scriptural argument for the pre-tribulation rapture. Now, it would seem, progressive dispensationalists want the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine to stand on its own.

33.5) The Children of Abraham

One verse that is sometimes used by dispensationalists is Romans 9:3-4. Paul is speaking about his brothers of his own race, who had rejected Christ. He said, “Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.” Some dispensationalists distinguish between the covenants and the promises, saying that promises can be given to the Church, but the covenants are strictly for Israel. But Paul is making no such distinction. As a matter of fact, Galatians 3:17 (quoted below) directly equates the covenant with the promise.

The context of these verses is Paul's anguish over his own race, and the fact that apparently God's word had failed. How could those who are "adopted as sons, recipients of the covenants, of the law, of the temple worship, and of the promises" have rejected the Messiah? Paul concludes by saying that those who did this were not really the true Israel. They were Israel only by their physical bloodline. Paul is saying that their bloodline did not make them Israel. If they were not Israel, then they were not the recipients of the covenants, of the law, of the temple worship, and of the promises. On the contrary, it is all who are in Christ who are "adopted as sons" (Ephesians 1:5). Thus, it would also follow that those who are in Christ are also recipients of the covenants.

Ephesians 1:5 having predestined us for adoption as children through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his desire,

Consider Galatians 3, which teaches Gentiles are Abraham's Children:

Galatians 3:6-9 NIV Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." (7) Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. (8) The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." (9) So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

So, being children of Abraham, we are blessed along with Abraham. But is this blessing simply salvation? Or does it include the covenant of Abraham?

Galatians 3:15-17 NIV Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. (16) The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. (17) What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.

Notice how this verse equates the covenant with the promise? Paul is using these two words interchangeably. Thus as children of Abraham, we are heirs of the covenant of Abraham. This one verse alone should cause one to reject dispensationalism. These verses prove that all true Christians are the true and literal

heirs of the literal covenant with Abraham. And this implies we are the true literal heirs of all the Old Testament covenants. But generally people spiritualize verses that are in disagreement with what they want to believe. In this case, dispensationalists say the Church is a recipient of this covenant in only a spiritual way. But Paul concludes by saying that there is no difference between Jew and Greek (Gentile). And that anyone who belongs to Christ is Abraham's seed, and heirs of the covenant (promise.)

Galatians 3:26-29 NIV You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, (27) for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

No Jew is or was a child of Abraham except by faith. No Gentile is or was a child of Abraham except by faith. So all who are children of Abraham, and heirs of the covenants, are in the vine of Israel.

Dispensationalism is based on the idea that Jews after the rapture, who are physically descendants of Abraham, and who also receive Christ, will be sole literal heirs of all the Old Testament covenants. But according to Paul, being a physical descendent of Abraham is not significant with regard to the "promise," which are the covenants. Romans 9:6 says:

Romans 9:6 NIV It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.

This is like saying not all Christians are Christians. People can go to church and take the sacraments. But does that give them the "promise" of inheriting the kingdom? Likewise, being a physical descendent of Israel does not give anyone a promise or covenant. Otherwise, God's word would have failed.

The next verse says,

Romans 9:7a NIV Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children.

This makes it clear. They are not his descendants simply because they have Abraham's physical seed. We see the same thing in John 8:39-40. Jesus is telling the Jews that they are not Abraham's children. Then in verse 44, he says their father is the devil. Being a child of Abraham is the same as being a child of God. It is

only by faith. According to Jesus, even the Jews in Jerusalem were not Abraham's children. They were instead children of the devil.

John 8:39-40 They answered him, "Our father is Abraham." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. (40) But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God. Abraham didn't do this.

John 8:44 You are of your father, the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and doesn't stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks on his own; for he is a liar, and its father.

Paul goes on to say:

Romans 9:7b-8 NIV On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." (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.

It's only by faith that we are "Abraham's seed," with regard to anything having to do with either inheriting the kingdom, or with the promises that were given to Abraham. How can any of the covenants apply to people who are not children of Abraham? In other words, the covenants themselves have nothing to do with being Abraham's physical seed. They all have to do with being Abraham's seed by faith.

Next, Paul goes on to explain why this is true:

Romans 9:9-13 NIV For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son." (10) Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. (11) Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: (12) not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." (13) Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

The promise is the covenant of Abraham. Paul is making the point that the promise was not to be given through Ishmael, even though Ishmael was also Abraham's physical seed. Then he makes the same point with Jacob and Esau. The

promise was to go through Jacob, even though Esau was Abraham's physical seed, and even the first-born. So the covenants themselves are not for the physical seeds of Abraham. It's for those who God chooses, which are those who have faith (Hebrews 11). That's because faith only comes from God. Those who have faith in Christ are those in the vine of Israel, which is Christ. The promises (covenants) of Abraham are only for those who are true Israel, which is the same as true Christians. Since the covenant of Abraham only applies to the true children of Abraham, the covenants of Moses and David, who were Abraham's children, would also only apply to Abraham's children.

Of course you can say that many or most Jews will turn to Christ in the end times. This is true. But that doesn't change the fact that the promises given to Abraham are to those who are by faith children of Abraham. Again, Paul says, "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" (Romans 6:8). Those who have faith in Jesus Christ are the chosen people. Paul is making this clear. He is showing that the promises didn't fail when the Jews rejected Christ at his first coming (Romans 9:6). He is saying that these promises (covenants) are instead fulfilled through God's elect. The Jews had considered themselves to be God's elect because of their birth. But Paul and Jesus are saying that the true children of Abraham are only Abraham's children by faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 9:6-7 NIV It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. (7) Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

The Church is the elect (Matthew 24:31, Rom. 8:33, 16:13, Col. 4:12, 2 Tim. 2:10, Titus 1:1, 1 Peter 1:2, 2:4, 2:9, 2 John 1:1, 1:13, all use the same Greek word). There is no difference between the elect of the Old Testament and the chosen people of the New Testament. Thus those who are chosen by faith to inherit the kingdom are those who also receive the promises of the covenants.

We have been discussing Romans 9. Chapters 9-11 are all about Paul's agony over the fact that the Jews didn't accept Christ. In Romans 11 Paul concludes that they will accept Christ after the full number of Gentiles have accepted Christ.

Romans 11:25 says,

Romans 11:25-26 NIV 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. (26) And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

This verse can be interpreted two different ways. Israel is experiencing a hardening in part. Does that mean that some but not all the Jews were hardened? Or is Israel here the true Israel? And the true Israel is experiencing a hardening in part because the Jewish part of Israel is hardened. I interpret it the second way. Both ways of interpretation mean that Jews will be grafted back in after the full number of Gentiles have come in. But Israel should be considered to be the vine into which both Jews and Gentiles are grafted. Right now, the hardening is the fact that Jews are not coming into the vine, as Paul had desired. Thus, when Paul says "and so all Israel will be saved," he is saying that "all Israel" includes Gentiles and then later man Jews after they are no longer hardened.

Paul then quotes the end-times covenant from Isaiah 59:20-21 to prove that all Israel will be saved. Paul is thus recognizing that the covenants are for true Israel, which includes both Jew and Gentile. He then concludes with:

Romans 11:28-32 ESV As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. (29) For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (30) For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, (31) so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. (32) For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

In other words, Paul is saying that because of God's love for the patriarchs, that their physical descendants will not be forgotten. They will become part of the elect, and thus will be given faith to turn to Christ. This brings them back into the vine. But all who remain in the vine are still recipients of all the covenants, including the New Covenant, which is the covenant for those who will inherit the kingdom. Gentiles are recipients of the New Covenant, because we are Abraham's children by faith. Likewise we are recipients of Abraham's covenant and the Davidic covenant as well. There is all one body, one faith, and one baptism. And that one faith makes you a child of Abraham.

33.6) A People Called By My Name (Israel)

God says that Israel is a “people called by My Name” (2 Chronicles 7:14, 6:5-6, 1 Kings 8:16, Nehemiah 1:9, Isaiah 43:7, Jeremiah 7:12, 7:30, Acts 9:15). Is this name Jehovah or Yahweh? Israel was never called by that name. They wouldn’t even say that name. Israel was called by the name Israel. Those who are God’s people are Israel.

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 6:5-6 Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be prince over my people Israel: (6) but I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel.

1 Kings 8:16 Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house, that my name might be there; but I chose David to be over my people Israel.

Nehemiah 1:9 but if you return to me, and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts were in the uttermost part of the heavens, yet will I gather them from there, and will bring them to the place that I have chosen, to cause my name to dwell there.

Isaiah 43:7 who is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, yes, whom I have made.' "

Jeremiah 7:12 But go you now to my place which was in Shiloh, where I caused my name to dwell at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.

Jeremiah 7:30 For the children of Judah have done that which is

evil in my sight, says Yahweh: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to defile it.

Acts 9:15-16 But the Lord said to him, "Go your way, for he is my chosen vessel to bear my name before the nations and kings, and the children of Israel. (16) For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake."

Genesis 32:22-32 tells us the story about Jacob receiving his new name Israel. Jacob wrestled with a man who is God. The man, of course, is Christ. He said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." In each of the seven letters to the seven churches, Jesus says that those who overcome are given some aspect of inheriting the kingdom. We overcome as we "work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12) "For it is God who works in [us] to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philippians 2:12) God does this only with those whom God chooses. God's chosen people are the people who overcome. The people in true Israel are a chosen people. The people in the true Church are a chosen people. "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (NIV Ephesians 4:4-6). The name Israel means, "he struggles with God." So God's chosen people, those who wrestle with God and with men to overcome sin, are Israel.

After Jacob wrestled with Christ, Jacob asked, "Please tell me your name." But Christ replied, "Why do you ask my name?" The name Israel means, "he struggles with God." We are given that name because we struggle to overcome sin. But Christ also struggles with God. He doesn't struggle to overcome his own sin, because He has no sin. Christ struggles with God and with man to overcome our sin. Christ works in us to will and to act according to his good purpose. Christ is our mediator. He struggles alongside us. He is our advocate. Christ is our High King, and He is our High Priest. As King, he is the Anointed One (Messiah). The High King and the High Priest are our representatives to God. Since Christ struggles with God on our behalf, Christ is Israel. Christ is the King of Israel.

The Church is the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33). Israel is the Bride of Christ (Ezekiel 16). Thus the Church is Israel. Hosea 2:16 tells us about the future time when Israel will no longer call Christ "Master", but will call him "Husband." Revelation 21:2,9 tells us about the time after the millennium, after the new heaven and the new earth, when all who have overcome sin will be the Wife of Christ. This

must include redeemed Jews and Gentiles from every age, and from every nation, tribe, people, and language. The true Bride of Christ is Israel. Christ gives His Name to his Bride. We are a people called by His Name. We are Israel.

Jesus said, "I am the vine and you are the branches" (John 15:1-5). This had to infuriate the Pharisees because in the Old Testament, the olive tree, the fig tree, and the grape vine are all symbolic of Israel (Judges 9:7-15, Habakkuk 3:17, Haggai 2:18-19). So those who abide in the vine are Israel. If Christ's words abide in you, then you are Israel. Paul used the symbolism of the vine in Romans 11:13-24. Those who are in the vine are in Israel. Those who are in the vine are in Christ. Christ is the root (or the head) of Israel. From this text some have spoken of "natural Israel" and "spiritual Israel." But the text never mentions "spiritual branches." Romans 9:8 speaks of the "natural children" as specifically not being God's children. So they are not Israel. Paul refers to "natural branches" as opposed to branches from a "tree that is wild by nature." In this context, Paul is comparing Jews with Gentiles with respect to the fact that the Promise of Christ came through the Jews, and that the Jews had been trained in God's word from birth. The Gentiles were simply chosen by God's Grace (favor) alone. But Paul never speaks of a "spiritual Israel." He is simply pointing out that not all Israel are Israel (Romans 9:6). In other words, not all Christians are true Christians.

James addresses his letter "to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations" (James 1:1). Some dispensationalists will go to the extreme and say the book of James, Matthew 24, and parts of Hebrews are not written for the Church, but are written for Israel. The early Church canonized the book of James. They would not have effectively discarded it by saying it's only for Jews. The followers of this extreme form of dispensationalism apparently do not understand dispensationalism itself. Most dispensationalists would say that all Christians, Jew or Gentile, who accept Jesus Christ before the rapture are said to be a part of the Church-age dispensation. They are said to be a part of the heavenly purpose of God, because they are to be caught-up in the rapture. The Christians to whom James was writing would certainly be a part of this dispensation. James was simply writing to the Church. James obviously considered the Church to be the "twelve tribes scattered among the nations."

Also, remember that James was written before 70 AD. Jews were living abroad at that time. To refer to the tribes as scattered among the nations is an obvious allusion to the scattering of Israel to Assyria, and to the later scattering of Judah to Babylon. Also remember that the Jews at the time of Christ were descendants of Judah, re-gathered from Babylon. The northern ten tribes have not been re-

gathered. No doubt James understood this. So James seems to be addressing the Gentile Church as being the lost tribes of Israel.

As stated previously, the opposite of dispensationalism is the belief that true Israel and the true Church are one and the same. This is held to be true by covenant (reformation) theology, and was the basic belief of Calvin and the reformation. It was important to the reformation because it allows for the priesthood of the believer. It gives Scriptural justification for the believer to be saved without being a part of an earthly church system such as the Catholic Church. However, covenant (reformation) theology also implies a lot of spiritual (“typological”) interpretation of Old Testament Israel to force it to fit traditional New Testament interpretations. In so doing, covenant theology would hold that the Church replaces Israel. A better way of looking at the equality of Israel and the Church is to say the Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. The olive tree, into which Paul said we are grafted, is Israel.

One important consideration to remember is that at the time of the reformation, the Protestant church was almost exclusively amillennial. Amillennialists will always interpret Old Testament prophecies about Israel with spiritual (“typological”) methods of interpretation. There were groups like the Anabaptists who were millennial. But they were considered to be heretics. Therefore covenant (reformation) theology could be considered as strictly amillennial. From the amillennial perspective, covenant theology would say that the old covenants are fulfilled in the Church, in a spiritual (or “typological”) way. The amillennialist would not, for example, believe that the covenant of land with Abraham is to be literally fulfilled when Christ returns. But the core belief of covenant theology is that the true Church is true Israel. If we can continue to insist upon the “grammatical-historical” hermeneutical system, and at the same time recognize the truth that Israel is the Church, then we must conclude that all the covenants will be fulfilled literally in the Church, which is Israel.

The best way to measure whether or not there is a difference between the true Church and true Israel is to examine the covenants and to see if there are differences in the promises of God between his different adopted children. We must also ask, “Who are God’s adopted children?” Are not the children of Abraham really the same as God’s adopted children? Are not the promises given to Abraham promises for all of God’s children? And in sticking with the “grammatical-historical” hermeneutical system, can we arbitrarily say that some of God’s children receive the promises with spiritual (or “typological”) fulfillments, while others receive literal fulfillments of the very same promises?

33.7) The New Covenant

At the Last Supper, Jesus instigated the new covenant. He said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 20:20). Is this the same “new covenant” as is spoken of in Jeremiah 31:31 and Hebrews 8:8? This question has been debated quite a bit amongst dispensationalists. In order to better distinguish the Church from Israel, some dispensationalists have said that there are two new covenants. Others say the new covenant is spiritually (or “typologically”) fulfilled in the Church, and is to be fulfilled literally in Israel. In their book “Progressive Dispensationalism”, Craig A Blaising and Darrell L Block write about this controversy (page 37).

Revised dispensationalists who were disciples of Lewis Chafer, notably Ryrie and Walvoord, originally defended Chafer’s opinion that the new covenant which the New Testament saw fulfilled in the church, was not the new covenant predicted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Charles Ryrie wrote in 1953 that if the doctrine of two new covenants were given up, dispensationalism would be weakened. Soon after that, however, both he and Walvoord abandoned the view, for the simple reason that it was not biblically defensible. Moreover, the opposite view, that the same new covenant predicted by the Old Testament prophets was in fact regulating God’s relationship to the church today, was undeniably taught in Scripture! This was argued convincingly by John F. McGahey in 1957 in a doctoral dissertation at Dallas Theological Seminary. (McGahey became a long-term faculty member and chairman of the Bible and Theology department at Philadelphia College of Bible until his death in 1986.)

Here is the New Covenant as prophesied in the Old Testament.

Jeremiah 31:31-37 Behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: (32) not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they broke, although I was a husband to them, says Yahweh. (33) But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says Yahweh: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people:

(34) and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Yahweh; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says Yahweh: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more. (35) Thus says Yahweh, who gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirs up the sea, so that its waves roar; Yahweh of Armies is his name: (36) If these ordinances depart from before me, says Yahweh, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever. (37) Thus says Yahweh: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says Yahweh.

Hebrews quotes the New Covenant from that Old Testament prophecy.

Hebrews 8:8-13 For finding fault with them, he said, "Behold, the days come," says the Lord, "that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; (9) not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they didn't continue in my covenant, and I disregarded them," says the Lord. (10) "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days," says the Lord; "I will put my laws into their mind, I will also write them on their heart. I will be their God, and they will be my people. (11) They will not teach every man his fellow citizen, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all will know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. (12) For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness. I will remember their sins and lawless deeds no more." (13) In that he says, "A new covenant," he has made the first old. But that which is becoming old and grows aged is near to vanishing away.

In Hebrews 8:8, we have a quote of the new covenant from Jeremiah 31:31. It's the longest quote in the New Testament of an Old Testament verse. The writer of Hebrews is making it clear that the old covenant (of Moses) had been made obsolete (Hebrews 8:13), and that this new covenant replaced the old covenant. This, of course, matches the teaching of Paul about the Law of Moses, and God's Grace that was given after Christ's crucifixion.

The big problem that dispensationalists have with this new covenant, is in the wording of both Jeremiah 31:31, and its quote in Hebrews 8:8. Both state clearly that the covenant is “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” If the Church is not Israel, how can the new covenant be fulfilled in the Church? Dispensationalists use that license of “spiritual interpretation” to eliminate “the house of Israel and the house of Judah” from the covenant. The “grammatical-historical” wording of the new covenant, however, in both New Testament and Old Testament, proves that the Church is Israel. The verses that directly follow the new covenant in Jeremiah are even more convincing that this covenant is literally with Israel.

Jeremiah 31:35-37 NIV This is what the LORD says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the LORD Almighty is his name: (36) "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the LORD, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me." (37) This is what the LORD says: "Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done," declares the LORD.

In order for dispensationalists to interpret the Church’s relationship to the new covenant as spiritual (or “typological”), they not only have to do so with Old Testament Scripture, they also have to deny the literal interpretation of Hebrews 8 as well. But how can there be a spiritual (or “typological”) interpretation of Hebrews 8? Is the writer of Hebrews trying to say that a spiritual interpretation of a literal covenant is making the old literal covenant obsolete? It’s hard to get your mind around such an idea. How can you get a spiritual interpretation of a literal covenant by quoting the literal covenant?

Or dispensationalists may take the older position that there are two new covenants. Then they must completely deny any natural interpretation of Hebrews 8, which quotes the new covenant, saying that it replaces the old covenant. Some dispensations go to the extreme and say that all or parts of Hebrews is not for the Church. So they would say Hebrews 8 is not speaking to the Church. Yet Hebrews was written during the Church dispensation. And the audience of Hebrews are readers that were all in the Church dispensation. Dispensationalists who deny that some parts of the New Testament are for the Gentile Church are known as hyper-dispensationalists or ultra-dispensationalists. They say that some parts of New

Testament Scripture are for Jews and other parts of the New Testament Scripture are for Gentiles. Yet classic and revised dispensationalism is not supposed to distinguish Jew from Gentile. It's supposed to identify only dispensations, saying that believers from each are for two different dispensational purposes. It's not supposed to say the rules and the arrangement between God and men are different for Jews after Pentecost.

So the dispensationalists continue to abandon their “grammatical-historical” hermeneutical system and say that the new covenant is fulfilled in the Church in only a spiritual (or “typological”) way. They are not about to let the covenant be literally fulfilled in the Church, because that would show that the Church is literally Israel. Yet no one has told us what aspect of the new covenant is to be fulfilled literally in Israel, but not in the Church.

All this confusion about the new covenant clearly shows that neither the writer of Hebrews, nor Jeremiah, ever intended for there to be two new covenants, nor two interpretations of one new covenant, one for one class of believers and one for another class of believers.

Chapter 34

Revelation 20 ---- New Wine Premillennialism

In the previous two chapters, we have looked at the two major camps of eschatology: amillennialism and dispensationalism. We have also looked at historic premillennialism, which is basically the same as dispensationalism without as much emphasis on distinguishing Israel and the Church. Historic premillennialists have said the Church is a “spiritual Israel” and generally do not believe in the pre-tribulation rapture. Historic premillennialists generally believe that all of God’s people will live here on the earth during Christ’s millennial reign. Dispensationalists, on the other hand, believe the Church will remain in heaven. They say the purpose of the millennial reign is to fulfill Old Testament prophecy. But why did God prophesy the Messianic reign? Why is the Messianic reign needed? Why doesn’t God simply bring all believers to heaven and destroy all the wicked, as is the amillennial claim? Neither historic premillennialists nor dispensationalists seem to have a good answer for this question.

Revelation 20:1-8 I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. (2) He seized the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited earth, and bound him for a thousand years, (3) and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were finished. After this, he must be freed for a short time. (4) I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as didn't worship the beast nor his image, and didn't receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand. They lived, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (5) The rest of the dead didn't live until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over these, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him one thousand years. (7) And after the thousand years, Satan will be released from his prison, (8) and he will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

34.1) Problems with Dispensationalism and Historic Premillennialism

Both the dispensationalists and the historic premillennialists interpret Revelation 20 almost identically. The souls of those who were beheaded come to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years. This is the “first resurrection.” It’s assumed that the souls of those beheaded represents all Christians of all ages. The second resurrection is said to be a thousand years later. At that time, everyone who has not accepted Christ as Savior will be resurrected in order to be judged. Then they are thrown into the lake of fire. There are several problems with this view.

We must remember that John wrote Revelation, and that John had already written the Gospel of John. Both dispensationalists and historic premillennialists believe that Revelation 20 adds detail to the two resurrections spoken of in John’s Gospel. John 5:28-29 speaks of two resurrections that occur in one “hour.”

John 5:28-29 ESV Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice (29) and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Both dispensationalists and historic premillennialists believe that Revelation 20 stretches this hour into a thousand years. Or some might say there are really two hours that are separated by a thousand years. The general principle of progressive revelation, however, states that later Scripture should be interpreted in the context of earlier Scripture. One’s natural interpretation of earlier Scripture should not change because the author and audience of the earlier Scripture did not have the later Scripture. This is especially true when the later Scripture and the earlier Scripture is by the same author.

In Revelation 20:5, the “first resurrection” would be the first of those two resurrections in John 5:28-29. To say these two resurrections are separated by a thousand years makes John’s gospel, and these words of Jesus, be in direct contradiction. The natural interpretation of Revelation 20 would allow for a third event that happens a thousand years later. But that third event is never actually called a resurrection. To be resurrected means you are brought back to life, with a new body, so that you can live again.

To come back to life for the purpose of judgment and being thrown into the lake of fire should not be called a resurrection. It would be more like Samuel being awakened from his sleep when Saul went to the medium to talk with Samuel after Samuel had died. Samuel was not resurrected. He did not get a new body. But John 5:29 says those who had done evil are to be given a resurrection of judgment.

Those who have lived a good life are given a resurrection of life. In verse 24 explicitly say they have eternal life and will not come under judgment. So by contrast, those who are given a resurrection of judgment do not have eternal life. They are still under judgment. But they get to live again. This is not a “second chance.” We all get many chances to live for Christ and inherit eternal life. This resurrection of judgment is given for those who have not explicitly and knowingly become one of Christ’s enemies.

This is what is taught in the three parables of Matthew 25. The parable of ten virgins, five wise and five foolish is about people in the Church waiting on the bridegroom to return. The parable of the servants with five, two, and one talent is also about wise and wicked people in the Church. And the parable of sheep and goats is about Christ judging the foolish people of the nations who are resurrected after Christ returns. Remember, however, that those who are given a resurrection of life, in the first resurrection, are no longer under judgment. So the sheep and the goats are those in the nations who are resurrected in the second resurrection, in that same hour, which is a resurrection of judgment. This judgment happens during the course of their resurrected life.

We must also consider the parable of the wheat and the tares. This parable is also about the wise and the wicked in the Church. Satan has sown wicked people in the Church who know about Christ’s salvation. But they do not live lives in obedience to Christ. They do not really consider Christ their Lord and Master. They do not live lives that lead to holiness. They wind up being wicked and are not resurrected, along with everyone else who becomes an enemy of Christ. Instead, they are awakened from their soul sleep at the end of the thousand years and are thrown into the lake of fire.

I think the main problem with the traditional interpretation of these four parables is that it makes salvation be all about works. The sheep perform acts of kindness to others. They are saved. The goats fail to perform acts of kindness to others. They go to hell. The servants who are given five and two talents put those talents to work. They are saved. The servant who does not put his one talent to work goes to hell.

The parable of the ten virgins also has the same problem. All ten virgins are waiting on the bridegroom. So all ten are believers. All ten are asleep when the bridegroom comes. The only difference between the wise and the foolish virgins is the amount of oil. Is this the amount of faith? If so, then how much faith do you need to be saved? Is this the amount of works? Free-Grace advocates should

have problems with this parable. Either you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior or you have not. There is no amount of oil involved. The New Wine System has three groups of people in the grave and not the traditional two. And these three parables are great illustrations about the wise, the foolish, and the wicked.

The parable about wheat and the tares, and the parable about servants with five, two, and one talent, are both about people in the Church. It's not about people who do not know Christ. The wicked servant with one talent considers his master as unloving and somewhat wicked. That would be people in the Church who don't make use of the spiritual gifts they have been given because they have a very low opinion of Christ. They are not counted even as foolish. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, the tares are in the Church. So they know Christ. But they are secretly Christ's enemies, because the enemy (Satan) has sown them in the Church. So again, they know Christ because they are in the Church. But they do not really follow Christ. So they are not even considered to be foolish. They are wicked because they know Christ but reject Christ at their Lord and Master.

These parables, and also the Sermon on the Mount, is where we get the terms: wise, foolish, and wicked. That's how Jesus described them. And I believe Jesus got this from Daniel 12. In Daniel 12:3, the foolish would be those who are taught righteousness by the wise during the millennium.

34.2) New Wine Premillennialism

By definition, eschatology is the study of the end times, as well as the study of the intermediate state of the soul between death and the resurrection. Over the centuries, all the different views of eschatology can be divided into two major camps: preterism and futurism. The word 'preterist' means past-fulfillment. Preterists believe that most Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled. Full-preterists believe that all Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled. The opposite of this is futurists. Futurists believe that a significant portion of the Bible's prophecies are yet to be fulfilled.

Traditional preterists are generally amillennial. They believe the 1000-year reign of Christ in Revelation 20 is currently underway. Or they might believe it's in the future, but before Christ returns. Full-preterists would say the 1000-year reign was the forty years from the crucifixion to 70 AD, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans.

Futurists believe the 1000-year reign is in the future after Christ returns. Christ literally reigns here on earth as the head of a one-world government. This is also

known as premillennialism. Futurists also believe in a short period of time called the great tribulation, just prior to Christ's return, during which an evil man known as the antichrist will literally reign over the entire world.

Preterists tend to spiritualize or allegorize Old Testament prophecies, and believe they were fulfilled during Christ's first coming. Futurists believe these Old Testament prophecies will be literally fulfilled in the future.

Most preterists generally equate futurism with dispensationalism. Dispensationalists make a strong distinction between Israel and the Church. Most preterists would say that the Church is a New Testament extension of Old Testament Israel. Thus Israel is the Church. But the way they view it, is that the Church replaces Israel. New Wine Premillennialism, on the other hand, says that Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. We are Israel, but the Old Testament prophecies are to be fulfilled literally in Israel. Dispensationalists would never equate Israel with the Church.

The clear distinction between Israel and the Church allows the dispensationalists to stick with a literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecies, as being fulfilled literally in the future, without challenging the traditional New Testament beliefs of eschatology and the afterlife. The New Testament can say one thing about the Church, while the Old Testament says another thing about Israel. Dispensationalists say there are two purposes of God, one being heavenly and the other being earthly. The two do not have to be reconciled if Israel is not the Church. For this to work, the dispensationalist must maintain a distinction between Israel and the Church to the point of saying the Church will spend eternity in heaven and Israel will spend eternity here on the earth after Christ returns.

Not all futurists are dispensational. There is a futurist system known as historic premillennialism. The best-known proponent of this system is the late George E. Ladd. Ladd was premillennial, but he was not a dispensationalist. Ladd wrote a lot of really great things about the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom, he said, is partially fulfilled in our hearts now, but will be completely fulfilled in the millennium. Most of the covenants are partially fulfilled in the Church age, but will be completely and literally fulfilled when Christ returns. Ladd's influence probably caused many dispensationalists to come up with a new branch of dispensationalism called progressive dispensationalism. In it, the distinctions between Israel and the Church no longer exist in that all the covenants are applied in the same literal manner to both Israel and the Church. But the seven dispensations remain. So it's still considered to be dispensational.

Historic premillennialism is about as close as you can be to the middle-ground between amillennialist and dispensationalism without challenging the traditional New Testament beliefs about eschatology and the afterlife. Ladd considered the Church to be a “spiritual Israel.” Thus, he still drew some distinctions between Israel and the Church. But as Ladd started to move away from dispensationalism, letting the Church be more and more the same as Israel, he had to start allegorizing and spiritualizing the Old Testament prophecies about Israel, similar to the preterist approach.

As we will see, New Wine Premillennialism is similar to historical premillennialism in that it’s futuristic and premillennial, and it yet does not separate Israel and the Church. However, New Wine Premillennialism goes further in saying that there is no difference at all between Israel and the Church. We are grafted into Israel. New Wine Premillennialism interprets Old Testament prophecies about Israel in the same literal (historical-grammatical) way of the dispensationalists, but applies those prophecies directly to the New Testament Church. In order to do this, New Wine Premillennialism must challenge some of the traditional New Testament beliefs about eschatology and the afterlife. In other words, New Wine Premillennialism holds that there are three types of people in the grave instead of the traditional two. These are the wise, the foolish, and the wicked and they correspond to the two resurrections at the start of the millennium and the awakening from soul sleep at the end of the millennium.

When did the traditional and fundamental New Testament beliefs of eschatology and the afterlife develop? And exactly what are they? During the majority of the centuries of church history, the majority of the Church theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, were preterist and amillennial. Without the millennium, there can be only two types of people in the grave. Either you are saved, or you are not saved. There is no millennial reign for the foolish group.

Fundamentally, amillennialists believed in a future return of Christ, with an immediate and literal destruction of the heavens and the earth by fire, an immediate day of judgment, and an immediate and literal new heavens and new earth. They did not believe in an earthly literal reign of Christ. So if Christ were to return at any moment, everyone’s eternal destiny would be finalized at that point in time. They believed that those in Christ, when they die, go straight to heaven (or perhaps purgatory.) Or if you were not in Christ you are eternally punished in the fire of hell starting immediately after death. Without an earthly reign of Christ, no other alternative could be considered.

As we have already seen, preterists (both traditional and full) must use allegories or spiritualization to force Old Testament prophecies to be already fulfilled in the first coming of Christ. It's often said that the Old Testament must be reinterpreted in light of the New Testament. (Dispensationalists do not see the New Testament teachings about the Church as applying to Israel.) But instead of reinterpreting the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, what if we were to reinterpret the New Testament in the context of the Old Testament? What if we were to temporarily suspend our knowledge of the New Testament when we read the Old Testament? After all, the New Testament did not exist when the Old Testament was written. Then, we can interpret the New Testament in the same way the Jewish audience of that day would have done.

With this in mind let's take a fresh look at what the Old Testament teaches. Read it as if it's talking about your own future. If you are in Christ, you are Israel. The Church is Israel. If you are in Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:29). If you are in Christ, this is about you as Israel. For those not in Christ, this is about you as the nations.

34.3) Old Testament Context for a Better Understanding of the New Testament

Any good overview of the Old Testament must start with Genesis. God created the heavens and the earth. God created Man. And then Adam fell into sin. When this happened, all was lost. Eternal life was lost. Prosperity was lost. Peace on earth was lost. But God established a plan to restore all things.

Most of the world fell into the worship of idols and many different gods. If those gods existed at all, they were really demons. There was often an understanding that there is a one true God over all the many gods. But Paganism effectively separated most people from any type of relationship with the one true God who created the heavens and the earth.

However, there were some people left who worshiped the one true God. This Bible tells us about Job, Abraham, and Melchizedek. God chose Abraham and gave him a special promise. This was known as a covenant, which is an unbreakable promise.

God choose Abram and changed his name to Abraham. In doing so, God made Abraham the father of a multitude of nations (Genesis 17:4-6). To accomplish this, God made Abraham the father of a chosen kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:5-6), called Israel. Through this nation there would be a Messiah who would be the Savior of Israel (Isaiah 45:15-18). This Savior will also

be the Prince of Peace, and the government will be on his shoulders (Isaiah 9:6). That government will have no end (Isaiah 9:7). Through this one holy nation, God's righteousness will be made known to all the nations (Psalm 98:2-3, Isaiah 42:6-7, 61:11, 62:2).

Genesis 17:4-6 "As for me, behold, my covenant is with you. You will be the father of a multitude of nations. (5) Neither will your name any more be called Abram, but your name will be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. (6) I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you. Kings will come out of you.

Exodus 19:5-6 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own possession from among all peoples; for all the earth is mine; (6) and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Isaiah 45:15-18 Most certainly you are a God who hid yourself, God of Israel, the Savior.' " (16) They will be disappointed, yes, confounded, all of them. Those who are makers of idols will go into confusion together. (17) Israel will be saved by Yahweh with an everlasting salvation. You will not be disappointed nor confounded to ages everlasting. (18) For thus says Yahweh who created the heavens, the God who formed the earth and made it, who established it and didn't create it a waste, who formed it to be inhabited: "I am Yahweh; and there is no other.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born. To us a son is given; and the government will be on his shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (7) Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, on the throne of David, and on his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from that time on, even forever. The zeal of Yahweh of Armies will perform this.

Psalms 98:2-3 Yahweh has made known his salvation. He has openly shown his righteousness in the sight of the nations. (3) He

has remembered his loving kindness and his faithfulness toward the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Isaiah 42:6-7 "I, Yahweh, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and make you a covenant for the people, as a light for the nations; (7) to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners out of the dungeon, and those who sit in darkness out of the prison.

A bit later, God gave the law to these chosen people through Moses. Through the law, God teaches man how to overcome the sin that caused everything to be lost. This included ten important commandments that were written in stone by God himself. God taught that sin brings death by teaching that anyone who disobeyed these Ten Commandments should be put to death.

Not only did the law contain God's commandments regarding sin, the Law of Moses also contained rules and regulations for the government. The Law of Moses is a theocracy. Moses judged the people. Seventy elders were appointed to help (Numbers 11:16). Including Moses himself, these seventy-one people are considered to be the first Sanhedrin. As members needed replacing, new members underwent Semicha ordination. This continued unbroken through the time of Christ, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and even down until 425 AD.

34.4) The Afterlife, and the Resurrection, in the Old Testament

Most Christians believe that when you die, those in Christ go straight to heaven (or perhaps purgatory.) Or if you were not in Christ you are eternally punished in the in the fire of hell starting immediately after death. This is taught early to children, and becomes an integral and unquestioned part of our culture. At funerals the pastor will often comfort the grieving by saying the deceased is in a better place (meaning heaven.) Ancient Jews, however, did not believe this. Ancient Jewish children were taught that when you die, you go to Sheol, which literally means the grave. Both the righteous and the unrighteous went to Sheol to rest and to await the resurrection. This is what the Old Testament teaches. When Martha was grieving over the death of her brother Lazarus, she took comfort in knowing the he will rise again on the last day (John 11:24). There was no expectation of seeing Lazarus in heaven.

The first mention of the resurrection in the Old Testament is in Isaiah 26. First, Isaiah talks about the wicked who will not be resurrected:

Isaiah 26:10-14 ESV If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the LORD. (11) O LORD, your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it. Let them see your zeal for your people, and be ashamed. Let the fire for your adversaries consume them. (12) O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works. (13) O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance. (14) They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise; to that end you have visited them with destruction and wiped out all remembrance of them.

People who are shown the hand of God, but refuse to see it, will not be resurrected. They refuse to learn righteousness. Think about this from the perspective of both the righteous and the unrighteous resting in Sheol. Those to whom God reveals Himself, and yet they deliberately and knowingly choose to remain in wickedness, will not be escape from the grave.

Isaiah also said in verse 11, “Let the fire for your adversaries consume them.” The NIV translates this as, “Let the fire reserved for your enemies consume them.” At some point, after God’s enemies (adversaries) are no longer in Sheol, fire will consume them. Notice that these are God’s enemies or adversaries. They are people who explicitly set themselves against the Creator of the world. They are not simply people who sin.

Then, Isaiah said in verse 13, “Other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance.” And then the next verse says they are dead and will not live again. God has “wiped out all remembrance of them.” One could argue that Isaiah is simply saying those who have ruled over Israel are no longer to be remembered. But the context here, especially in the verses that follow, is that of the resurrection. Isaiah explicitly says, “they will not live” and “they will not arise.” Also, in the context that follows, Isaiah speaks of the growth of Israel. They have possessed more land.

In this context, Isaiah seems to be saying that Israel’s growth is important because foreign rulers tend to become enemies of God. When they see the power of God, but this does not cause them to seek God’s righteousness, they become enemies of God. They reject God’s authority over them. In so doing, they lose

their chance of being raised from the dead at the resurrection. This, then, is the real definition of unredeemed evil and wickedness. Those who deliberately and knowingly reject God lose their opportunity to be saved from the grave (Sheol). They will not live again.

Next, Isaiah talks about God's chosen people, the holy nation of Israel. God has blessed them, increasing the size of their land. But God didn't choose the holy nation only for the benefit of that one nation. God chose a holy nation to be priests and a blessing to the world (Exodus 19:5-6). But Israel has failed to bring righteousness to the world, so that the people of the world can escape the grave.

Isaiah 26:15-18 ESV But you have increased the nation, O LORD, you have increased the nation; you are glorified; you have enlarged all the borders of the land. (16) O LORD, in distress they sought you; they poured out a whispered prayer when your discipline was upon them. (17) Like a pregnant woman who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, so were we because of you, O LORD; (18) we were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind. We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen.

First, notice that God had expanded the borders of Israel. For a while people not in Israel ruled over Israel. "In distress, they sought you." They "whispered prayer when your discipline was upon them." Discipline for what? It was discipline for righteousness. But did this small discipline allow them to escape the grave?

Isaiah uses the metaphor of the pregnant woman in speaking about the resurrection. Israel was described as a pregnant woman. But the woman only gave birth to wind. Think about it. To only give birth to wind means exactly what that brings to mind. Under the discipline of Israel, there was "no deliverance [from] the earth." There was no deliverance from the grave for the nations.

This metaphor of the pregnant woman is used many times in Scripture with this being the original source. It is always about the resurrection, with Israel being an important part of God's plan for bringing about the resurrection. Israel is the woman, about to give birth.

Isaiah 66:7-9 "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she delivered a son. (8) Who has heard such a thing? who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? shall a nation be brought forth at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. (9) Shall I bring to the birth, and not

cause to bring forth?" says Yahweh: "shall I who cause to bring forth shut the womb?" says your God.

Hosea 13:12-13 ESV The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is kept in store. (13) The pangs of childbirth come for him, but he is an unwise son, for at the right time he does not present himself at the opening of the womb.

Matthew 24:8 But all these things are the beginning of birth pains.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 For when they are saying, "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction will come on them, like birth pains on a pregnant woman; and they will in no way escape.

Revelation 12:1-2 A great sign was seen in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. (2) She was with child. She cried out in pain, laboring to give birth.

The pregnant woman can be found in Isaiah 66:7-9. The resurrection of Christ is in verse 7. Israel gives birth to the first son before she was in labor. Then, verses 8b through 9 speak of the rest of Israel giving birth to all the brothers of Christ. This is the resurrection of the Church, which is Israel, on the last day.

The pregnant woman is also in Hosea 13:12-13. This is about the sins of Ephraim, the northern kingdom. They knew about God. They had the teachings of Israel. But they deliberately turned to idol worship. Verse 13 (ESV) says the "pains of childbirth come for him, but he is an unwise son, for at the right time he does not present himself at the opening of the womb." In other words, they are not to be resurrected. They knew about God's salvation. But they deliberately and knowingly rejected it.

Temporarily skipping over to the New Testament, the pregnant woman can be found in Matthew 24:8. The signs of wars, and rumors of wars, are the beginning of the birth pains of the woman. In other words, the signs of Matthew 24 tell us what will be happening leading up to the time of the resurrection.

The pregnant woman can also be found in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. While the world is saying "peace and security," the sudden destruction of Armageddon will

come upon it like the birth pains of a pregnant woman. The resurrection is on the “last day,” right before Armageddon and the return of Christ.

And finally, the pregnant woman can be found in Revelation 12. The woman is Israel. This vision is very similar to Isaiah 66:7-9. The resurrection of Christ is the male child (Rev. 12:5) who is caught up to God and to his throne. Then later the woman gives birth to many of his brothers.

We have now seen all the places in Scripture that use metaphor of the pregnant woman. All are about the resurrection. So now let’s go back to our discussion of the original in Isaiah 26. What does the last part of verse 18 mean? Israel only gives birth to wind. Israel accomplishes no deliverance from the grave. So what does Isaiah mean with, “The inhabitants of the world have not fallen” (verse 18b)? This can be seen in the next few verses:

Isaiah 26:19-21 ESV Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead. (20) Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by. (21) For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.

Someday, there will be a resurrection. And this is not just a resurrection of those in Israel. This is not a resurrection of those in the Church. This is a resurrection for everyone in all the earth who has not deliberately and knowingly rejected God’s salvation and become an enemy of God (or Jesus Christ). But the inhabitants of the earth will be punished for their iniquity. And most people, at that time, will have taken the mark of the beast and thus become an enemy of Christ Jesus.

Think back a little earlier in the passage. The borders of Israel had grown somewhat. This brought God’s discipline upon those living within the new borders. But Israel was not able to give those people an escape from the grave. Yet, the time will come, when God’s fury will be world-wide. When the earth gives birth to all the dead, Israel’s borders will be extended to cover the entire earth. That’s what is meant by verse 18b which says, “The inhabitants of the world have not fallen.” After Armageddon, after the resurrection, Israel will rule the entire world, and God’s discipline will cover the entire world through Israel. Thus, Israel will be a blessing to all the nations.

As we will see when we get to the New Testament, the Church is grafted into Israel. The Church/Israel will rule the world with Jesus Christ after the resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous. The resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous, before the Messianic reign, can also be seen in an Old Testament study of the Book of Life.

34.5) The Book of Life, in the Old Testament

David asked God to blot the names of his enemies out of the Book of Life.

Psalms 69:27-28 Charge them with crime upon crime. Don't let them come into your righteousness. (28) Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the righteous.

Notice that in verse 27, David relates this action to denying them salvation. David actually uses this term, "Book of Life." If it's possible for David's enemies to be blotted from the "Book of Life", then the "Book of Life" must contain their names. David is often understood to be a type for Christ as the King of Israel. If one becomes an enemy of Christ, then he would be blotted from the Book of Life.

If the names of David's (Christ's) enemies are in the "Book of Life", then it's impossible for this to be a book of predestination. Also, the preconceived notion that the Book of Life is a book of predestination comes from reading the New Testament without having the Old Testament drilled into you from childhood. We should not reinterpret the Old Testament in light of the New Testament. Instead, we should interpret the New Testament in the context of the Old Testament.

If David's enemies are in the "Book of Life", then it's also unlikely for this to be a book in which the names of the righteous are written as they become saved. David would probably not have considered his enemies to be people who love and fear the one true God. And if names are written in as people become saved, it would be unthinkable for David to ask that any of them be blotted.

Some people will argue that just because David asked God to blot names out of the Book of Life doesn't mean that God would do so. Perhaps God did not do what David asked. Nevertheless, this verse shows David's understanding of how the "Book of Life" works. David was a Holy-Spirit inspired author. His understanding has the weight of Scripture. David would not have asked God to blot out the names of his enemies if the names of these enemies were not already in the book. Moreover, when we combine all the other accounts in which people were actually blotted out, it proves that it can be done, and has been done.

The first mention of the Book of Life in Scripture is in Exodus 32:32-33. The Lord had brought ten miraculously spectacular plagues upon Pharaoh and Egypt. He had parted the Red Sea, and the armies of Pharaoh had perished in the sea behind them. He'd given the miraculous manna in the desert. Water came from the rock at the strike of Moses' staff, for all to drink. A cloud went before them by day, and a pillar of fire by night. After all of these miracles, however, the people built a golden calf to worship. In other words, no matter what God did, no matter how much God revealed about Himself, some of these people were never going to simply trust and have faith in God. When they sinned against God in this way, God blotted their names out of the Book of Life.

Exodus 32:22-24 Aaron said, "Don't let the anger of my lord grow hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. (23) For they said to me, 'Make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him.' (24) I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them take it off:' so they gave it to me; and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."

Exodus 32:30-33 It happened on the next day, that Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin. Now I will go up to Yahweh. Perhaps I shall make atonement for your sin." (31) Moses returned to Yahweh, and said, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made themselves gods of gold. (32) Yet now, if you will, forgive their sin--and if not, please blot me out of your book which you have written." (33) Yahweh said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."

One person I know tried to wiggle out of Exodus 32:32-33, saying that the names in this book were only the names of those under God's covenant with Israel. Yet Scripture does not teach about such a book. In other words, the assumption has been that the Book of Life is a book of predestination. Therefore, when this verse is used to challenge that assumption, some people tend to look for other possibilities as to what this book might be other than the Book of Life. Even if this were a book of names under God's covenant with Israel, how would being blotted out of such not be a loss of salvation?

Exodus 17:14 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19 says that the memory of Amalek was blotted out from under heaven because of actions against Israel as they were coming out of Egypt. See Exodus 17 for the account of this battle against Israel.

Perhaps Amalek had seen God's miracle of water in the desert, and had decided to fight Israel for the water. Also see 1 Samuel 15 and 1 Samuel 28:18. Saul was commanded to destroy Amalek, not for revenge, but because their names had been blotted out from under heaven. Obviously Amalek was not under the covenant of Israel. Yet, for his name to have been blotted out, it had to have been in the book in the first place.

Exodus 17:14 Yahweh said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under the sky."

Deuteronomy 25:17-19 Remember what Amalek did to you by the way as you came forth out of Egypt; (18) how he met you by the way, and struck the hindmost of you, all who were feeble behind you, when you were faint and weary; and he didn't fear God. (19) Therefore it shall be, when Yahweh your God has given you rest from all your enemies all around, in the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it, that you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under the sky; you shall not forget.

Deuteronomy 29:18-20 lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from Yahweh our God, to go to serve the gods of those nations; lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood; (19) and it happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart, to destroy the moist with the dry. (20) Yahweh will not pardon him, but then the anger of Yahweh and his jealousy will smoke against that man, and all the curse that is written in this book shall lie on him, and Yahweh will blot out his name from under the sky.

Deuteronomy 9:12-16 Yahweh said to me, Arise, get down quickly from hence; for your people whom you have brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they have quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image. (13) Furthermore Yahweh spoke to me, saying, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people: (14) let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from

under the sky; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they. (15) So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire: and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands. (16) I looked, and behold, you had sinned against Yahweh your God; you had made yourselves a molten calf: you had turned aside quickly out of the way which Yahweh had commanded you.

Psalms 9:5-6 ESV You have rebuked the nations; you have made the wicked perish; you have blotted out their name forever and ever. (6) The enemy came to an end in everlasting ruins; their cities you rooted out; the very memory of them has perished.

Some may argue that the actual book was not explicitly mentioned in Exodus 17:14 and Deuteronomy 25:18-19 where the memory of Amalek was blotted out from under heaven. But with similar language, Deuteronomy 29:18-20 says that if the people of Israel, who know about God, turn to gods of the nations, then their names are to be blotted from under heaven. The same language presenting Amalek being blotted out is used to portray the people of Israel being blotted out as well. Both are blotted out from under heaven. From Exodus 32:32-33, we know that people of Israel were also blotted from the book.

Furthermore, Deuteronomy 9:12-16 also speaks about God blotting many names from under heaven because of the calf they had made. In other words, Exodus 32:32-33 and Deuteronomy 9:12-16 are both about the same sin, and both speak of their names being blotted out. In one case, their names are blotted from the book. In the other case, their names are blotted from under heaven. This equates the terminology and shows that Amalek was blotted from the same book.

The memory of Amalek was blotted out from under heaven. Go back and look at Isaiah 26:10-14, quoted above. This was the first of original passage in Isaiah that talks about the resurrection. These were the verses that talked about those who would not be resurrected. Verse 14 (ESV) said, "They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise; to that end you have visited them with destruction and wiped out all remembrance of them." So it's clear that when the memory of Amalek was blotted out from under heaven it means he will not be resurrected.

The reason these people were blotted out is that they had no fear of God even with the knowledge of the miracles. An intentional and knowledgeable turning away from God is a sin that is unpardonable.

Psalm 9:5-6 speaks of the names of the wicked being blotted out forever and ever. A book is not specifically mentioned, but the language remains consistent. Their names had to be written in a book in order for them to be blotted out.

Daniel 12:1-3 teaches that even the resurrected unjust are in the Book of Life, at that time. They are "delivered" or "escape" from the grave simply because their names are in the Book of Life.

Daniel 12:1b-3 At that time your people shall be delivered [escape], everyone who shall be found written in the book. (2) Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (3) Those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the expanse; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

The Hebrew word used for “delivered” is better translated as “escape.” Some will argue that Daniel 12:1 says those who are “delivered” or “escape” are being delivered from the great tribulation. Pre-tribulation rapture advocates like to interpret it this way. However, Scripture teaches that the saints are defeated during the great tribulation (Dan. 7:25). These saints are also in the Book of Life.

Therefore, Daniel 12:1 cannot be saying that those in the Book of Life are all delivered from the tribulation. Those in the Book of Life are “delivered” or “escape” from the grave. According to the verse, some who escape the grave are raised to everlasting life. Others who escape the grave are raised to shame and contempt. But not all who are in the grave escape. According to the verse, “many” awake, but not all. What then, is the criterion given for being raised? Apparently, it’s not an issue of being just or unjust. Those who are in the Book of Life are the ones who escape from the grave. Those who are not enemies of God will escape the grave.

Here again is the verse in Daniel:

Daniel 12:2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Here is Young's Literal Translation of this verse:

Daniel 12:2 YLT And the multitude of those sleeping in the dust of the ground do awake, some to life age-during, and some to reproaches--to abhorrence age-during.

Notice that many, but not all, sleep in the dust of the earth. Remember that some will not be resurrected because they deliberately and knowingly reject God. They become enemies of God. Their names are blotted from the Book of Life. Also, notice that both the righteous and the unrighteous are asleep in the dust of the earth. This is the same as Sheol. They are still asleep in Sheol at the time of the resurrection. They are not in heaven or hell.

Those not awaking to everlasting life are people described as resurrected to "reproaches" and resurrected to everlasting "abhorrence." The Hebrew word translated "abhorrence" is a much stronger word than the Hebrew word translated "reproaches." Abhorrence is found only in one other verse of the Old Testament.

The eternal state of those resurrected to shame and everlasting contempt has not yet been determined. As we will see, some of them will be resurrected to reproaches, but will then advance in wisdom and will later inherit everlasting life. Others in this group will be resurrected to reproaches, and will fall into everlasting abhorrence. In other words, some in this group will wind up being eternally saved, and others will wind up forfeiting their salvation by being blotted from the Book of Life, because they will become enemies of Christ after the resurrection.

To understand better, we need to take a look at the Hebrew word used here for "abhorrence." This Hebrew word is used only one other time in the Old Testament. Isaiah 66:24 uses this word to describe the people who are killed at the battle of Armageddon. This verse also says their "worm never dies." Isaiah is a book of poetry. Things in Isaiah are said in a poetic way. To say the "worm never dies" is simply saying they are not resurrected. They stay in the grave. There is no literal worm. So to say it does not die is to say that the state of death remains.

The Hebrew word translated "reproaches" is not nearly as strong as the one for "abhorrence." It means "shame" or "disgrace." It's used 73 times in the Old Testament. The word is often used in reference to the people of Israel. It's not considered an irreversible condition. Those resurrected without everlasting life would be in "shame" or in "disgrace." This resurrected unjust group is described with both the words "reproaches" and "abhorrence." Over time, the resurrection of "reproaches" can turn into everlasting life. So the "reproaches" is not everlasting. But if the resurrection of "reproaches" becomes "abhorrence," then

it's eternal. That's why the word for everlasting, in the text, is only applied to "abhorrence" and not to "reproaches."

Two types of people in the unjust group are given because the fate of the unjust group is not yet determined. During the Messianic reign, each individual in this unjust group will eventually become either righteous like those in the just group, or they will fall further into "abhorrence" and be eventually condemned, like those in the wicked group. They will become enemies of their King, the Lord Jesus Christ. After the Messianic reign, at the final judgment, those who wind up being eternally in a state of "abhorrence" will be blotted from the Book of Life. They will die a second death. Their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched.

Now, let's look at the next verse.

Daniel 12:3 NIV Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Daniel 12:3 (NIV) tells us the "wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens," and that they are like the stars. The verse also says they will lead many to righteousness. What does it mean to shine like the "brightness of the heavens?" At the same time, what does it mean to be like the stars?

Stars can be symbolic of angels (Isaiah 14:12-14). The wise will shine like the angels, and will lead many to righteousness. So the wise of Israel will lead the resurrected nations to righteousness. Some, however, will continue in their sin and will eventually be blotted from the Book of Life.

Isaiah 14:12-14 How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, who laid the nations low! (13) You said in your heart, "I will ascend into heaven! I will exalt my throne above the stars of God! I will sit on the mountain of assembly, in the far north! (14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds! I will make myself like the Most High!"

Daniel 8:9-10 Out of one of them came forth a little horn, which grew exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the glorious *land*. (10) It grew great, even to the army of the sky; and some of the army and of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled on them.

Daniel 12:3 Those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of

the expanse; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

Read Young's Literal Translation of the verse:

Daniel 12:3 YLT And those teaching do shine as the brightness of the expanse, and those justifying the multitude as stars to the age and for ever.

Notice that he translates the wise as “those teaching.” The Hebrew word means those who are intelligent, and the word is associated with teachers. Also notice that they teach “age-during,” and “forever.” The context here is right after the resurrection. So they teach into the age to come, and then forever. Let's look at the ESV translation.

Daniel 12:3 ESV And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Some (preterists) say that the wise are not teachers because they will have nobody to teach. The Hebrew word does not require that they be teachers. They can simply be wise, who would be able to teach. But the text itself says the wise "turn many to righteousness." This is teaching. Those resurrected to “shame” and “contempt” will need to be taught. The wise will “turn many [but not all] to righteousness,” after the resurrection, during the Messianic reign when Israel rules the world.

34.6) The Desolation and Rebuilding of Jerusalem, in the Old Testament

The promise to Abraham was not only to be the father of a chosen holy nation, he was also promised the land of Palestine (Genesis 12:7, 15:7, 15:18-21, 17:8). The most important part of this land is Jerusalem. One very important aspect of the Law of Moses is that if the people obey the law they will stay in the land. But if they disobeyed the law, they will be scattered to other lands. But later, when repentance comes, they are gathered back to the land of Israel (Deuteronomy 29:1 – 30:10). This is really a part of God's covenant with Moses. But it is often referred to as the Palestinian Covenant. The Jews were scattered the first time with the northern kingdom being conquered by Assyria, and a bit later the southern kingdom was conquered by Babylon. The southern kingdom stayed in Babylon for seventy years. Then they were allowed to come back to Jerusalem.

This concept of being scattered for disobedience and being gathered when there is obedience is very fundamental to Old Testament teaching. It's not about some long-dead group of people in some ancient time. It's about you. For the ancient Jews, it was literal. Their nation was subject to being scattered and gathered. For us today, it's about our relationship with God. We are gathered to be closer to Christ when we are obedient. So think about the importance of this aspect of God's law personally. Then think about how important this aspect of God's law would have been to the Jews of ancient times. They could lose everything they have, including their lives, and the lives of their loved ones, if their nation were to be attacked because of their own disobedience.

In 600 BC it really happened. A young Daniel was taken from his home in Israel and his home was destroyed. His loved ones were killed. Jeremiah had been warning that it would happen, but most of the people had ignored his warnings. Now it was too late. Jerusalem became desolate. And Jeremiah said their captivity, and the desolation of Jerusalem, would last seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10, Daniel 9:2).

After the seventy years was completed (Daniel 9:2), Daniel prayed for the forgiveness of Israel's sins (verses 3-10). In his prayer, Daniel explicitly remembers what the Law of Moses says about the curses for disobedience (verses 11-14). Daniel speaks of the great calamity that has been brought on his people and the city of Jerusalem (verse 12).

Daniel 9:2-14 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years about which the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah the prophet, for the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem, even seventy years. (3) I set my face to the Lord God, to seek by prayer and petitions, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. (4) I prayed to Yahweh my God, and made confession, and said, Oh, Lord, the great and dreadful God, who keeps covenant and loving kindness with those who love him and keep his commandments, (5) we have sinned, and have dealt perversely, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even turning aside from your precepts and from your ordinances; (6) neither have we listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. (7) Lord, righteousness belongs to you, but to us confusion of face, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, who are near, and who

are far off, through all the countries where you have driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against you. (8) Lord, to us belongs confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. (9) To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness; for we have rebelled against him; (10) neither have we obeyed the voice of Yahweh our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. (11) Yes, all Israel have transgressed your law, even turning aside, that they should not obey your voice: therefore has the curse been poured out on us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God; for we have sinned against him. (12) He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us, and against our judges who judged us, by bringing on us a great evil; for under the whole sky has not been done as has been done on Jerusalem. (13) As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come on us: yet have we not entreated the favor of Yahweh our God, that we should turn from our iniquities, and have discernment in your truth. (14) Therefore has Yahweh watched over the evil, and brought it on us; for Yahweh our God is righteous in all his works which he does, and we have not obeyed his voice.

Daniel 9:17-18 Now therefore, our God, listen to the prayer of your servant, and to his petitions, and cause your face to shine on your sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. (18) My God, turn your ear, and hear; open your eyes, and see our desolations, and the city which is called by your name: for we do not present our petitions before you for our righteousness, but for your great mercies' sake.

Daniel 9:24-26 NIV "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. (25) "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. (26) After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have

nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.

Jeremiah often used the word “desolation” in describing what would happen to Jerusalem, and then later what would happen to Jerusalem’s enemies. In Daniel’s prayer, he uses this same word in reference to the Jerusalem (verses 2, 18). Daniel is praying for the desolations of Jerusalem to come to an end.

God answered Daniel’s prayer with a vision. This vision is a prophecy of time which is allocated for Daniel’s people, and the people of Jerusalem, to completely stop sinning (Daniel 9:24). During this allotment of time, Jerusalem would not be desolate. At the end of this allotment of time, the Messiah would come.

Daniel 9:24 NIV "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

This is big. This is huge. This is at the very core of the Law of Moses. This is at the very core of all that’s been written. Adam sinned and Mankind fell into slavery to sin. All was lost to sin. However, God made a promise to Abraham. Abraham’s children would be a holy nation. But Israel, God’s chosen holy nation, must stop sinning. And then the Messiah will come so that God’s chosen holy nation can bring righteousness to the rest of the nations through the earthly reign of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Israel’s failure to stop sinning brings desolation to Jerusalem. Israel’s obedience to God brings an end to the desolation of Jerusalem, so that the Messiah can come, and so that God’s people can rule the world. Jerusalem will be the capital of the world. Through this rule the Messiah brings about the restoration of all things. But before he can return the Messiah must first have a holy nation to rule with him. And that holy nation must put an end to their own sins before they can help bring righteousness to the nations.

At this point we can stop trying to reinterpret the Old Testament in light of the New Testament. We can interpret the New Testament in the context of the Old Testament. Preterists will say that the seventy weeks of Daniel 9 were fulfilled in Christ’s first coming. They will reinterpret the purpose of the seventy weeks. The verse says that “your people” and “your holy city” must put an end to sin and bring in everlasting righteousness. Preterists reinterpret this verse to say that Christ put an end to sin and brought in everlasting righteousness at the cross. Jesus Christ

is not “your people” and “your holy city.” Sure, Jesus Christ died for our sins. It is only through the blood of Jesus Christ that our sins which we have already committed, and sins that we may commit in the future, are forgiven. But that’s not what this verse says. It says we must overcome our sinful habits and stop sinning.

To interpret this verse in any way other than as a requirement for Israel to completely stop sinning is to completely ignore Daniel’s prayer. Daniel knew that his people and his holy city had sinned. Daniel knew they had been scattered to Babylon because of sin. Daniel knew Jerusalem was desolate because of sin. Yes, Israel’s sins were forgiven at the cross. But Israel, which is the Church, must stop sinning before the Messiah can return.

34.7) The Sanhedrin Must Anoint the Most Holy

Daniel 9:24 says “your people” and “your holy city” must anoint the most holy. The noun which is most holy is left out. It’s assumed. A noun can be a person, place, or thing. So the verse does not say whether it’s the most holy person or the most holy place. Grammatically it could even be a holy thing. Some translations, such as the ESV and the NASB, say they must anoint a most holy place. Perhaps these translators have preterist beliefs, and they did not see a way for the Messiah to have been anointed as Messiah at the cross. Remember that Messiah means “anointed one.” In any case, most of the other translations simply leave the noun out just like it’s done in the Hebrew. This allows the reader to decide whether it’s a person, place, or thing that’s being anointed as most holy.

One could argue that a holy place is being anointed because of context. The overall context of the passage is about the desolation of Jerusalem. In that context, “your people” and “your holy city” could be anointing the holy place where the temple is built. However, verse 25 tells us that after an allotment of time, the anointed will come. A place does not “come.” This would imply that it’s a person that is to be anointed. An anointed person is also mentioned in verse 26 as someone who is “cut-off” and shall have nothing. Of course it’s possible that a most holy place is being anointed in verse 24 and yet it’s an anointed person in verses 25 and 26.

We must decide whether “your people” and “your holy city” must anoint a person or a place (verse 24). I believe the answer is that both are true. The place that’s being anointed is the temple mount, for the building of the temple. Remember that Daniel is praying for the desolation of Jerusalem to come to an end. The person that’s being anointed is the Messiah. It’s very difficult to read the

vision without seeing the Messiah in verses 25 and 26. Therefore, “your people” and “your holy city” must anoint the most holy place, and the Messiah, in conjunction with ceasing to sin and bringing in everlasting righteousness.

As we have seen, “your people” and “your holy city” must anoint the most holy place as well as the most holy person. To anoint a person means to make him king. The word Messiah means the anointed one. The word “Christ” means Messiah. To believe that Jesus is the Christ means that Jesus is the king of Israel. Does this mean that all of those who are in Jesus must anoint the Messiah? That goes without saying. If you are in Christ, it means that you believe Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the most holy person that has ever lived, or will ever live. That’s what we believe. But what does it mean for “your holy city” to anoint Jesus as the most holy person? And what does it mean for “your holy city” to anoint the most holy place?

“Your holy city” is the city of Jerusalem. Daniel prayed for the desolation of Jerusalem to come to an end. In order for Jerusalem to anoint Jesus as the Messiah, the people who have the authority to do so must anoint Jesus as the Messiah. The people who are in charge of the most holy place are those who have been given this authority from the time of Moses. They are the Sanhedrin.

There have been a several attempts to re-establish the Sanhedrin over the centuries, including four attempts during the twentieth century. There is a current group that performed a ceremony in October of 2004 who believe they have re-established the Sanhedrin. However, they are not recognized by the Israeli government, nor by the majority of the Jews. (http://www.thesanhedrin.org/en/index.php/Historical_Overview)

But in the future, the temple will be rebuilt. When that starts to become a reality, the need for a Sanhedrin will become apparent to all the Jewish community who will be in favor of building the temple. So that Sanhedrin will have to anoint the most holy place in order for the temple to be built. And before the end comes, the Sanhedrin will eventually anoint Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

Jesus said the same thing. He told the “scribes and Pharisees who sit on the seat of Moses” (Matthew 23:2) that they must say “blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” before they will see him again. The people of Jerusalem had already said this when he rode in on a donkey (Matthew 21:9). They were proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah by quoting Psalm 118:26. But I think Jesus knew that “your people” and “your holy city” includes the religious leaders of Jerusalem. They must anoint the most holy person before he can set up his kingdom.

Matthew 23:36-39 Most certainly I tell you, all these things will come upon this generation. (37) "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets, and stones those who are sent to her! How often I would have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not! (38) Behold, your house is left to you desolate. (39) For I tell you, you will not see me from now on, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' "

This is the famous chapter of seven woes, where Jesus calls them a brood of vipers (Matthew 23:33) as John the Baptist had done earlier (Matthew 3:7). The prophecy of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, anointing Jesus Christ, can be found in Revelation 11:7-13.

But why is this important? Why is it necessary for the Jewish leadership to recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah? Isn't it good enough for the Church to recognize Jesus as the Messiah? I believe that God wants to maintain a legal continuity between the Law of Moses and the Messiah when he reigns over the entire world. If the Church is really a continuation of Old Testament Israel and not some kind of replacement for Israel, then something like this has to happen.

Also, God has not abandoned the Jewish community. In Romans 9-11, Paul agonizes over the fact that his people had rejected the Messiah. How could such a thing happen from the perspective of Old Testament Scripture? During this three-chapter discussion, Paul reconciles this through election. This is not election of salvation. It's election of who are to be a part of the holy chosen nation that will reign with the Messiah. Who is chosen to be a part of Israel? At the end of Paul's discussion of the topic, he concludes that Israel is experiencing a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in. And Paul concludes by saying that all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25-26). In other words, Paul recognizes the legal need through the Law of Moses for Israel to recognize the Messiah. He just concludes that it will happen in the future by a future Jewish leadership.

Romans 11:25-27 For I don't desire you to be ignorant, brothers, of this mystery, so that you won't be wise in your own conceits, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, (26) and so all Israel will be saved. Even as it is written, "There will come out of Zion the Deliverer, and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. (27) This is my covenant to them, when I will take away their sins."

34.8) The Desolation of Jerusalem, to Fulfill All That is Written

Jesus will not return until they say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” In other words, they must recognize Jesus as the Messiah before he will return. Jesus could not have been talking to the Jewish people of Jerusalem in general. Just earlier that week, the people of Jerusalem said these exact same words as he rode in on a donkey (Matthew 21:9). Therefore, Jesus was still talking to those who sat on the seat of Moses (Matthew 23:2). Jesus was talking to the Sanhedrin. They must acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah before Jesus will return.

The Jewish people of Jerusalem actually did acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. But it didn’t take long for most of them to swing back after the crucifixion. Without the leadership acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, the people are not going to remain confident in their earlier proclamation. It would be like the conservative evangelical church members of today, as a whole, saying that all their pastors are fundamentally wrong in everything that’s being taught. People want at least some of those who are in authority to lead to be in agreement if there is to be any new thinking in religion and theology.

Jesus knew the leaders of that generation appeared to be righteous on the outside, but inside they were full of greed and self-indulgence (Matthew 23:25-26). And most of the people who grew up in that culture would wind up being the same if they were given the opportunity to be the leaders. Jesus often spoke of them as an evil and adulterous generation (Matthew 11:16, 12:39, 42, 45 16:4, 17:17, and 23:36). If Jesus were to have allowed himself to be anointed king of the world, he would have just been putting that authority into the hands of greedy, adulterous, and self-indulgent people. So he had to return to the Father and promise to come again at a time when those on the seat of Moses would repent of their sins. Daniel’s prayer had not yet been answered. “Your people” and “your holy city” were not yet ready to anoint the Messiah in conjunction with ceasing to sin and bringing in everlasting righteousness.

Did Daniel’s prophecy fail? Did the Law of Moses fail to bring in the Messiah as ruler of the world? There is still time for the prophecy of Daniel 9 to be fulfilled. Daniel’s seventy weeks can be allocated in two different ways. The seventy weeks are stated as being seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. These two allocations of time could have been contiguous. Or, the seven weeks can be a separate allocation of time, not contiguous with the sixty-two weeks. This allowed for the Sanhedrin of Jesus’ generation to have had the free-will choice to be evil and to reject the Messiah. When Israel was not ready to anoint the Messiah, God simply delayed

the seven weeks until a time when the gospel of the kingdom had spread throughout the world. The Father delayed until a time when there would be people from every nation who loves the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, a future Sanhedrin could be raised up to anoint the most holy place for rebuilding the temple.

The leadership at the time of Christ had hearts so hardened that they were unwilling to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah even when presented with all the signs and proofs of the miracles. A lot of this hardness of heart comes from being given the power to rule for many generations. The power to rule corrupts the heart. But the Sanhedrin of the future will not have had that power for very long. Their hearts will be open enough to recognize Jesus as the Messiah through the testimony of the two witnesses (Revelation 11: 7-13). They will be open to repent when God once again reveals His Son Jesus again through the work of miracles.

However, the leadership at the time of Christ did not repent. They had the free-will opportunity to repent but didn't. I believe Jesus was very hopeful that they would repent. This was the generation he had grown up in. Jesus was very much a part of that culture. He loved the temple worship and the Jewish customs. He even spoke of returning during that generation (Matthew 10:23, 16:28, and 24:34). Full preterists consider these to be prophecies that had to have been fulfilled in 70 AD. But Jesus didn't return in 70 AD. All prophecies of God for blessings or curses are dependent upon repentance. This is fundamental to the Law of Moses. These prophecies of Christ's return in that generation were conditional upon the repentance of the Sanhedrin. And Jesus said these things out of his great hope that he would be able to return in his own generation. Not even the Son, however, knew the day or time when the second coming would happen (Matthew 24:36).

Matthew 10:23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next, for most certainly I tell you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man has come.

Matthew 16:28 Most certainly I tell you, there are some standing here who will in no way taste of death, until they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom."

Matthew 24:34 ESV Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

Matthew 24:36 But no one knows of that day and hour, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Jesus spoke prophecies of his return in that generation. He also spoke prophecies of the desolation of Jerusalem in that generation. Both were conditional upon the repentance of the Sanhedrin. As it turned out, they did not repent. So God had to bring about the curses of the Law of Moses that were understood so well by the Jewish people. When Jesus was so emotionally speaking the seven woes to those who sat on the seat of Moses, he said, "See, your house is left you desolate" (Matthew 23:38, quoted above). In Luke 21, Jesus also foretells about the desolation of Jerusalem. Remember that this word "desolation," as applied to Jerusalem, goes back to Jeremiah's prophecy of Jerusalem's desolation and Daniel's prayer that the desolation would end. It connects back to the seventy weeks that Israel has been given for the desolation of Jerusalem to come to an end.

Luke 21:5-7 As some were talking about the temple and how it was decorated with beautiful stones and gifts, he said, (6) "As for these things which you see, the days will come, in which there will not be left here one stone on another that will not be thrown down." (7) They asked him, "Teacher, so when will these things be? What is the sign that these things are about to happen?"

Skipping down a few verses, we read about the desolation of Jerusalem that was fulfilled in 70 AD.

Luke 21:20-22 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand. (21) Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let those who are in the midst of her depart. Let those who are in the country not enter therein. (22) For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Full preterists will use this verse to say that 70 AD fulfilled every prophecy in the Bible including the return of Christ. But that's not what Jesus meant by this being a fulfillment of all that is written. This verse can only be understood when it's interpreted in the context of the Old Testament. All the Law of Moses and the prophets can be summarized by God's plan to rid this world of sin and death through the reign of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The reign of Christ must be through the Church, which is Israel. The Bride must make herself ready for Christ to return by overcoming sin before Christ returns. This is necessary to fulfill all that is written. When Israel sins the people of Jerusalem are taken as prisoners to

the nations. When Israel repents, they are gathered and Jerusalem is rebuilt, all for the purpose of bringing righteousness to all the nations. This summarizes the Law of Moses and the prophets. Therefore, when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, it was God's vengeance in fulfillment all that is written. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said basically the same thing:

Matthew 5:17-20 ESV "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. (18) For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (19) Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (20) For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus is not talking about salvation. To enter the kingdom is what God expects of Israel, which is the Church. The Bride will reign with Christ over the nations during the Messianic reign. To enter the kingdom means that you will enter the Paradise of God and will literally reign with Christ. The Messianic reign is needed to accomplish the Law of Moses and all that is written. After the Messianic reign, after righteousness has been taught to the nations, the heavens and the earth will be destroyed by fire and there will be a new heavens and a new earth. These words of Christ can only be truly understood in the context of the Old Testament.

Luke 21:23-24 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who nurse infants in those days! For there will be great distress in the land, and wrath to this people. (24) They will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Daniel prayed for the desolation of Jerusalem to come to an end. And for sixty-two weeks of years, the desolation of Jerusalem was over. But Jerusalem became desolate again because of sin. Jerusalem became desolate again in fulfillment of the Law of Moses. The people of Jerusalem fell by the sword and were lead captive to the nations. The Jews have maintained their culture scattered throughout the nations for almost two thousand years. During this time, Jerusalem was trampled underfoot by the Gentiles.

But this came to an end in 1967. Today, Jerusalem is not being trampled upon by Gentiles. The Jews have not yet accepted Jesus as their Messiah. But give it time. Now that Jerusalem is no longer being trampled upon by the Gentiles, the seven weeks of Daniel are underway. God is implementing his plan to fulfill all that has been written. The Sanhedrin will be re-established. They will anoint the most holy place. And before Christ sets up his kingdom, they will anoint the most holy person, Jesus Christ, as the Messiah.

Thus, Christ will return to a Sanhedrin that acknowledges him as the Messiah. And Christ will return to an Israel (a Bride) with people who love him from every nation, tribe, people, and language. Israel, which is the Church, will reign with Christ for a thousand years. Every nation, tribe, people, and language of this world will be reigned over by their own people, who are themselves part of the Bride of Christ, the holy nation of Israel. He must reign until the last enemy is destroyed. The last enemy is death (1 Corinthians 15:26). After the last enemy is destroyed there will no longer be death. After Christ's reign all things will be restored.

34.9) Elijah Will Restore All Things

John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah. This does not mean that John the Baptist was actually Elijah. But his ministry was in the same spirit. Let's first look at this Old Testament prophecy so that we can interpret the New Testament in context of the Old Testament.

Malachi 4:4-6 ESV Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. (5) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. (6) And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."

The context of the prophecy is for Israel to be obedient to the Law of Moses. This goes back to the same basic truth about the Law of Moses. When there is obedience to the Law, Israel is blessed. When Israel is disobedient, the land can be stricken with utter destruction. In other words, Jerusalem can become desolate.

The ministry of Elijah is to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. This is a strong allusion to one of the Ten Commandments. The fifth commandment is to, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which Yahweh your God gives you"

(Exodus 20:12). But notice that in Malachi's prophecy, it's a deeper meaning for the commandment. It's not just honor. It's love.

When Jesus was asked which is the most important commandment, he answered "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). He was quoting Deuteronomy 6:5. Then he gave us the second most important commandment. We are to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). He was quoting Leviticus 19:18. Then he said, "The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:39).

No doubt the Pharisees who asked this question expected Jesus to answer with one of the Ten Commandments. They were trying to trap him. But Jesus made use of other text from the Law of Moses which effectively summarizes the Ten Commandments and brings them to the deeper level of love. The first four commandments are all about loving God. The last five commandments are all about loving your neighbor.

Romans 13:9-10 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not give false testimony," "You shall not covet," and whatever other commandments there are, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (10) Love doesn't harm a neighbor. Love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.

Galatians 5:14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Let's go back and look at the fifth commandment again: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which Yahweh your God gives you" (Exodus 20:12). Do you see how this ties back to the basic principle of blessing and curses in the Law of Moses? All the Law can be summarized as love. With that love, Israel stays in the land. Without that love, Israel is scattered to the nations and Jerusalem becomes desolate. Parents naturally love their children. And children naturally love their parents. This commandment connects the first four commands to the last five. This commandment connects the love of God to the love of our neighbors. This commandment, therefore, is representative of all the Law of Moses.

As we love God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind, we overcome sin. As we love our neighbors as ourselves we overcome sin. As this love reaches maturity, all sin is completely overcome. Love becomes the fulfillment of the Law

of Moses. If someone refuses to obey Christ's commandments, eventually we become enemies of Christ, and as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, he blots his enemies from the Book of Life.

The ministry of John the Baptist was to bring love and repentance to Israel so that Israel would be ready for the coming of the Messiah. John said, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:1). In the context of the Old Testament, the kingdom of heaven is the Messianic reign. It's when Israel will rule the world. But the people of Israel must first completely, one hundred percent, overcome all sinful habits before the kingdom can come. The Bride must be completely ready before Christ can have the wedding banquet (Revelation 19:7) and then set up his kingdom with the Bride of Christ reigning over the world. The ministry of Elijah, therefore, is to bring complete holiness to Israel in preparation for the coming of the Messiah.

Matthew 3:1-6 ESV In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, (2) "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (3) For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'" (4) Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. (5) Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, (6) and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Let's take a look at the verse in Isaiah that John was quoting:

Isaiah 40:1-5 ESV Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. (2) Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. (3) A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (4) Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. (5) And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Why does this verse say Jerusalem has received "double for all her sins?" Could it be that the people of Israel were to be scattered to the nations twice? Could it be

that Jerusalem became desolate twice? Could it be that Daniel's seventy weeks are divided into two allocations of time, seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, for the restoration of Jerusalem?

The ministry of John the Baptist was that of Elijah. The ministry of Elijah was that of bringing Israel back to God in the face of rulers and the religious leaders who wanted Israel to worship pagan gods. Likewise, John the Baptist preached in opposition to the religious leaders and in opposition to Herod. The ministry of John the Baptist was to bring holiness to Israel so that Israel would be ready for the kingdom of heaven to come. But the Sanhedrin was not willing. The Pharisees and Sadducees of the Sanhedrin were more concerned with losing their own power and influence over the people. Jerusalem would become desolate again. Another time of the Gentiles, which is another time of desolation, was required during which the kingdom of heaven would grow in the hearts of those who love Jesus.

This verse says, "The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." Also, "every mountain and hill be made low." Is this figurative or literal? It could be figurative because Isaiah is a book of poetry. In Revelation, we find allusions to this prophecy:

Revelation 6:12-14 I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became as blood. (13) The stars of the sky fell to the earth, like a fig tree dropping its unripe figs when it is shaken by a great wind. (14) The sky was removed like a scroll when it is rolled up. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

Revelation 16:19-21 The great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. (20) Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. (21) Great hailstones, about the weight of a talent, came down out of the sky on people. People blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for this plague is exceedingly severe.

The mountains being made low is not literal. In the Old Testament, mountains can be symbolic for kingdoms. In Revelation, this is a strong allusion back to Isaiah. In Isaiah, it's about a time when the Messiah will reign over all the earth. So all the individual mountains are made low under the Kingdom of Israel.

The purpose of John the Baptist's ministry was that of Elijah, in reference to the prophecy of Malachi 4:4-6. But that prophecy included a curse for what would happen if Israel was not made ready for the Messiah. The religious leaders of Sanhedrin were not made ready for the coming of the Messiah. The religious leaders were opposed to John. That prophecy said the land would be utterly destroyed. Jerusalem was therefore made desolate.

Did the prophecy fail? Did the prophecy of the coming of Elijah fail to make Israel ready for the coming of the Messiah? Paul said Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in (Romans 11:25-26). But Christ is coming again. Therefore, Elijah will come to bring holiness to Israel before Christ comes. Here is an earlier verse in Malachi about the messenger that will come before Christ returns. We can see that this time Israel will be made ready. The Bride will be completely without sinful habits when Christ returns.

Malachi 3:1-4 ESV Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

The "sons of Levi" are the religious leaders. This prophecy is saying that the offerings of Jerusalem will be pleasing to God. But Jerusalem was destroyed and became desolate after Christ's first coming. The only possible conclusion is that the ministry of John the Baptist failed. Sure, John the Baptist preached in the spirit of Elijah. But there must be another coming of someone who will preach in the spirit of Elijah for which this prophecy will not fail.

Speaking of John the Baptist, Jesus said that Elijah had already come, and they did not recognize him. The leaders did not recognize John as fulfilling the prophecy of Elijah. John was not able to bring repentance to the religious leaders. But Jesus also said Elijah comes and will restore all things (future tense.)

Matthew 17:10-13 ESV And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was already dead when Jesus said this. John the Baptist did not restore all things. Jerusalem became desolate. But a future Elijah will come and will restore all things.

What does it mean to restore all things? Without question, from the context of Law of Moses and the desolation of Jerusalem for disobedience, to restore all things would be to bring about the restoration of Jerusalem the way God would have it. That has to mean that the religious leaders in Jerusalem will recognize Jesus as the Messiah. But more than that, the restoration of all things goes back to the fall of Adam. Everything was lost when Adam fell into sin. The restoration of all things must be Israel overcoming sin, just as it says in Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks. When Israel overcomes all sinful habits, then Christ can reign over the world with Israel (the Church) reigning with him. Then righteousness can be brought to the nations. This is the restoration of all things.

34.10) The Resurrection of the Just and the Unjust

From early childhood, we have been taught that if you live a good life you will go to heaven when you die. If you live a bad life you will go to hell when you die. If this is the foundation of your religious teaching, then naturally the following verse seems to be saying that some will be resurrected to live in heaven and others will be resurrected to be condemned.

John 5:28-29 ESV Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice (29) and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

You read this New Testament verse in the context of what you were taught from childhood. Then you progress back to the Old Testament, which speaks a lot about the Law of Moses as doing good and evil. So you interpret the Old Testament based on what you have already learned from the New Testament.

But for the Jews who first read this, and for John who wrote these words of Jesus, and for the Jewish people who heard these words, that background teaching was not there. They had been taught from their youth that everyone goes to Sheol when they die to await the resurrection. After the resurrection the Messiah would rule (judge) the world. So to be resurrected was only considered a great gift from God. To be resurrected was the hope of overcoming the grave. Those without hope would not be resurrected. Under that background, these words say and mean something entirely different than what we learn from our youth.

It's not surprising that most people read John 5:28-29 as it's traditionally read, from the traditional two-state view. Tradition is a strong background when it comes to interpretation. And that traditional view only sees things in terms of going straight to heaven or hell when you die. This prevents people from perceiving that there could be three types of people in the grave instead of the traditional two. But the Jews would not have had this limitation because they didn't believe everyone goes straight to heaven or hell when they die. They believed both the righteous and the unrighteous went to Sheol (Hades) to await the resurrection. But the evil people who are enemies of God would not be resurrected.

Let's look at the context of John 5:28-29 a bit. Verse 22 says the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son. And this is done so that everyone will honor the Son. Think of this from the perspective of the Jews at that time. They believed in a future Messianic age when the Messiah would reign and judge. This is an age, not a moment in time. For someone to be raised to be judged at that moment would be thought of as an act of God, not an act of the reigning king. When you see that all the judgment being done in this passage is by a ruling king, the resurrection of judgment cannot be a resurrection for immediate condemnation.

John 5:19-29 Jesus therefore answered them, "Most certainly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father doing. For whatever things he does, these the Son also does likewise. (20) For the Father has affection for the Son, and shows him all things that he himself does. He will show him greater works than these, that you may marvel. (21) For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom he desires. (22) For the Father judges no one, but he has given all judgment to the Son, (23) that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who doesn't honor the Son doesn't honor the Father who sent him. (24) "Most certainly I tell you, he who hears

my word, and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and doesn't come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (25) Most certainly, I tell you, the hour comes, and now is, when the dead will hear the Son of God's voice; and those who hear will live. (26) For as the Father has life in himself, even so he gave to the Son also to have life in himself. (27) He also gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man. (28) Don't marvel at this, for the hour comes, in which all that are in the tombs will hear his voice, (29) and will come out; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.

It's true that in some contexts, judgment means condemnation at that point in time. But in this context, there are many uses of the word judgment. No translation uses "condemnation" for all the words "judgments" in the passage. So the translator switches back and forth, using the two different words for the one Greek word, as he tries to fit what he reads into a system where everyone goes straight to heaven or hell when they die. In any given context, the translation should be consistent with the use of the same word occurring multiple times in that context. The Jews didn't have this restriction of two types of people in the grave. So they would not naturally interpret it the same way as traditional Greek thinking.

Both those in the resurrection of everlasting life, and those in the resurrection of judgment are resurrected because they hear Christ's voice. And do not Christ's sheep hear his voice? And are there not lost sheep? Even the lost sheep would hear Christ's voice and be resurrected.

But some will argue that verses like John 10:26 say unbelievers are not of his sheep. Let's look at that verse.

John 10:24-28 The Jews therefore came around him and said to him, "How long will you hold us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." (25) Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you don't believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, these testify about me. (26) But you don't believe, because you are not of my sheep, as I told you. (27) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (28) I give eternal life to them. They will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

Jesus said, "you do not believe because you are not of my sheep, as I told you." Who is the "you" in this context? The context is verse 24 when Jesus gathered and

ask him, “How long will you hold us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” In verse 25 he replies, “I told you and you don't believe me. The works that I do in my Father's name, these testify about me.” The miracles were proofs that what Christ said was from the Father. When they rejected even the miracles, it was the same as those in the desert who saw the miracles and yet built the golden calf. They were blotted from the Lamb's book of life (Exodus 32:32). They were no longer Christ's sheep.

But those who have never seen the miracles, have never been given proof, have not yet heard God's voice, have not been blotted.

Hebrews 3:7-11 ESV Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, (8) do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, (9) where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. (10) Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' (11) As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'

Another example people give for unbelievers not hearing Christ's voice is John 8:43. Verses 42-43 says that “If God were your Father, you would love me ... Because you can't hear my word.” Again, this is in the context of those who refuse to hear Jesus. It's in that context of him actually being there and doing the miracles. This causes some to refuse to hear Christ, and thus be blotted out.

We cannot take this out of the context of those people in that generation. Other generations have not seen the miracles. So the things Jesus said to them, who saw the miracles, should not be automatically applied to people who have never even heard about Christ!

The very fact that people can be blotted from the Book of Life proves there are three types of people: Those who love Christ, those who don't know Christ, and those who have been blotted out. It is only when you see this basic fact of Jewish context that you can understand verses like John 5:28-29.

Not everyone who saw a miracle and didn't accept Christ was blotted. It would depend on how much they hardened their hearts in light of the miracles. More precisely, it's “when you hear God's voice”, as it says in Hebrews 3:7-11, quoted above. If God used the miracles to personally show someone who Jesus is, and they hardened their hearts to it, they may have been blotted. But God does not do this lightly. The people who wandered in the wilderness saw God's miracles for forty years. It was only after this that God said, “They shall not enter my rest.”

When God determines that a heart is so hard that no matter what they see or hear will they will not unhardened their hearts, they are blotted. This is the unpardonable sin of Matthew 12:31. They brought a man with a withered hand to Jesus to test him. They didn't believe it was possible to heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus did so in their synagogue. This was absolute proof that they were wrong. But what did they do? They attributed the miracle to Satan. Their hearts were hardened beyond what even the Holy Spirit could do through the miracles. To attribute the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. The sin is not pardonable because their hearts are too hard when God speaks in this way. Some of them were probably blotted from the Lamb's Book of Life.

People say for the unrighteous to be resurrected is a second chance. It's not just a second chance. It's a continual opportunity to mature in Christ that is not stopped by something as un-consequential to God as death. The idea that death would prevent someone from having the opportunity to mature in Christ, is putting God into Man's box.

Let's go back and look at John 5:28-29 in a broader context:

John 5:24-29 "Most certainly I tell you, he who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and doesn't come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (25) Most certainly, I tell you, the hour comes, and now is, when the dead will hear the Son of God's voice; and those who hear will live. (26) For as the Father has life in himself, even so he gave to the Son also to have life in himself. (27) He also gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man. (28) Don't marvel at this, for the hour comes, in which all that are in the tombs will hear his voice, (29) and will come out; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.

Consider again the fact that both the just and the unjust, in this passage, hear Christ's voice and come out of the tombs. Now look back at verse 24. Jesus is also talking about hearing. In this case, it's more than hearing Christ's voice. It's hearing Christ's word and believing the Father about Christ. Those who completely reject Christ are said to not hear him. We can go back to John 10:26 and John 8:43. Those who deliberately reject Christ no longer hear his voice. So they would not be resurrected. Those who hear Christ and believe in him who sent Christ will be

resurrected to eternal life, so they are no longer under judgment. It's like the wife of a king. She is not considered one of his subjects for which he judges disputes.

Verse 25 says the hour is coming when the dead will hear Christ, and those who hear will live. Does not this mean that some will not hear? If they don't hear, they won't be resurrected. But those who do hear Christ's voice will be resurrected. Yet some will not have eternal life. They will just have a resurrection of judgment.

One other quick point about John 5:28-29. If there are two types of people in the grave, then the criteria for which type you are is solely determined by belief in Christ. But consider the three types of people that Scripture calls the wise, the foolish, and the wicked. The wicked group is determined by being blotted from the Lamb's Book of Life because God spoke to you but you hardened your heart. In other words, explicit and intentional unbelief in Christ would make you wicked.

What would be the determination of whether you are in the wise or foolish group? It would not simply be belief. People can believe but still they have not yet matured in Christ. So the distinction between the wise and the foolish is that of maturity and the overcoming of sin. The wide gate that leads to destruction is that of the foolish group. (The wise build their house on the Rock.) And the entire Sermon on the Mount context is obedience to the Law, even deep in the heart, which is righteousness. Many Christians who believe in Christ and love Christ are still in the foolish group because they still have sinful habits. Only a few find the narrow gate, which is that of overcoming all our sinful habits.

Now what does John 5:28-29 say the criteria between those resurrected to life and those resurrected to judgment? Those who do good are raised to life and those who do bad are raised to judgment. Is this salvation by works? This goes contrary to the Protestant teaching that it's totally based on belief in Christ. But it precisely fits the system of three types of people.

Salvation is a free gift. There is nothing that you can do to earn salvation. Everyone can be resurrected, but they can forfeit their salvation by hardening their hearts when God speaks to them. No amount of work can be done to earn your salvation. But for the wise to inherit the kingdom requires lots of work.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Or don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, (10) nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortioners, will inherit the Kingdom of God.

The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom. But they will be resurrected. They will live in the nations. But those in Christ will reign with Christ as kings and priests. They will inherit the kingdom. Again, think of it like a Jew. Israel is the chosen nation. Israel is a holy nation. To be a part of it, you must be holy. The people of Israel will inherit the kingdom when the Messiah comes. But the Gentiles of the nations can still be saved.

Now think like you are Jewish. You are a part of the true Israel, even if you are Gentile. Remember that the true Israel is the true Church. Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. Those who completely overcome sin through a personal relationship with the Messiah are a part of the true Israel who will rule the nations as priests and kings, leading the nations to righteousness and salvation. Those who do not completely overcome sin, even if they know and love Jesus, are still resurrected with the nations, in the resurrection of judgment. That's because they still do bad. They have not yet matured in Christ. But they will have the opportunity, along with the nations, to mature in Christ during the millennium.

If you want to be a part of the Bride of Christ, to get into the wedding banquet, to reign with the Messiah, you must overcome all your sinful habits. This is done by faith. The Holy Spirit will do the greater work as you give your life totally over to Christ's will and become completely obedient to Christ's commands. This is accomplished through love. Love is the fulfillment of the Law of Moses. Love the LORD your God with all your heart. Love your parents and your children. Love your neighbors as yourself. Through love, you can overcome all sinful habits.

34.11) The Rest of the Dead

With three types of people in the grave, instead of the traditional two, Revelation 20 is interpreted even more literally. Those who have been beheaded because they refused to take the mark of the beast, or worship the image, come to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years. This is the first resurrection of the two as described by John in his gospel (John 5:28-29). We know from John 5:24 that all who hear and believe will be raised at the first resurrection. But does that mean the rest of the dead are not resurrected until a thousand years later?

John is not explicitly addressing those who die in Christ before the great tribulation. John is explicitly and literally addressing those who are beheaded because of their testimony for Christ during the great tribulation. The "rest of the dead" should be interpreted in the context of Revelation 20, especially when we understand there are three types of people in the grave. Also, the first and second

resurrection of John 5:28-29 happen both in the same “hour.” It’s not reasonable for those who originally heard John’s Revelation to have understood “the rest of the dead” to fundamentally change the “hour” of the two resurrections of which John had already taught.

It’s more reasonable and more literal to stick with the context of those who were martyred during the great tribulation. In that context, the “rest of the dead” would be those who had taken the mark of the beast, but had died as a result of Armageddon and God’s wrath. They would “come to life” at the end of the thousand years for judgment and to be thrown in to the lake of fire. Remember that the Jews believed in soul sleep. So they must awakened in order to be tormented as Revelation teaches. This would not be a resurrection for living again with a new body. This would be a third event at the end of the thousand years that would not be considered a resurrection.

Thus, there are three types of people in the grave. The wise are resurrected in the first resurrection. The foolish are resurrected in the second resurrection. They have bodies, but have not been given everlasting life. They can still die a second death. Then there are the wicked, who are enemies of God (or Christ). They come to life for judgment at the great white throne judgment at the end of the thousand years.

Acts 24:14-16 ESV But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, (15) having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. (16) So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.

Chapter 35

Revelation 20:9-21:8 ---- The New Heavens

Revelation 20:9 through the end of the chapter is about those who do not mature in Christ as a result of Christ's reign. Inwardly they are an enemy of Christ. Satan must be released in order to tempt them into openly and publicly becoming an enemy of Christ. This causes their names to be blotted from the Lamb's Book of Life. They fall from being foolish and become outwardly wicked. Or you might argue that in their hearts they were already wicked. For them, Christ's reign does not result in righteousness and holiness. So they are turned over to Satan.

Revelation 20:9-10 They went up over the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the camp of the saints, and the beloved city. Fire came down out of heaven from God, and devoured them. (10) The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are also. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

35.1) Torment Day and Night Forever and Ever

The term "day and night" seems to be an expression for intensity and duration. The devil, beast, and the false prophet will be tormented day and night. The four living creatures praise God without rest day and night (Revelation 4:8). The countless number in white robes, who come out of the great tribulation, stand before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple (Revelation 7:15). Our accuser stands before God accusing us day and night (Revelation 12:10). Those who worship the beast and take the mark are tormented. The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever with no rest day and night (Revelation 14:11).

This verse in Revelation 14:11 is very similar to the one here in Revelation 20:10. Refer back to section 28.4 to see a full discussion of the torment for those who take the mark of the beast. The smoke of their torment goes up forever. As discussed, I do not believe the torment itself continues eternally. The evidence of their torment is eternal. The smoke of their torment is eternal. And they are eternally condemned to death, not to be resurrected. In section 28.4, this was argued by looking at the passage in Isaiah that also refers a day of vengeance, burning in sulfur, day and night, it not being quenched, and the smoke going up forever. That section also made reference to what Jesus said in Matthew 10:28.

Jesus tells us, "Don't be afraid of those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."

Isaiah 34:8-10 ESV For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. (9) And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into sulfur; her land shall become burning pitch. (10) Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.

The verse in Revelation 14:11 was about the smoke of their torment going up forever. It's obviously an allusion to this verse in Isaiah. This verse in 20:10, on the other hand, seems to be saying the torment lasts forever. But here we are talking specifically about the devil, the beast, and the false prophet.

Revelation 20:10 The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are also. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The punishment seems to be much more severe for these three. They are the leaders of the enemies of God. Are these three literally tormented for all eternity? The Greek words used in "forever and ever" is literally "ages of the ages." Some have argued that "ages of ages" is not eternal because an age is not eternal. But this same phrase is also used for how long God lives and for the duration of his kingdom (Revelation 1:6, 4:9, 4:10, 5:13, 7:12, 10:6, 11:15, 15:7, and 22:5). So naturally speaking, these three will be tormented for all eternity. But it might be that after countless ages God's wrath will subdue and he will relent and allow these three souls to also be destroyed. But their sentence certainly seems to be that of eternity.

35.2) They are Judged by their Works

Revelation 20:11-15 I saw a great white throne, and him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. There was found no place for them. (12) I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and they opened books. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. (13) The sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them. They were judged, each one according to his works. (14) Death and Hades were

thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) If anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

These verses (Revelation 20:11-15) should all be taken together in one small context. God sits on the great white throne in order to judge the enemies of His Son. The earth and heaven flees way from God's face. This is not to be taken literally. It is Isaiah-like poetry for saying everything and everyone will fear God because God is the Judge of all things and all people.

At this time, everyone who will receive eternal life will have done so by this time. The wise and the foolish are raised to life at the start of the millennium. The wicked, who are enemies of God, are not resurrected. Of the foolish, many will become wise and receive eternal life as a result of Christ's reign and as a result of the teaching of the wise. They will bring many to righteousness. The others, however, will eventually become enemies of Christ, especially after Satan is released at the end of the millennium. So everyone at this time who is dead and in Hades (the Grave) is an enemy of God.

The sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them. Those who are dead are asleep. The sea would not have to give up its dead if they were already in heaven or hell. Hades simply means the grave. The dead may be awakened for a time if God allows it. For example Samuel was awakened from his sleep when Saul went to the medium after Samuel's death. But in general, the dead do not experience time. From their perspective, they awake up being judged by God at the great white throne of judgment.

They are judged by their works. This are both good works and bad works. In other words, they are judged by what they have done. Some will receive a lighter sentence of torment. Others will receive a stronger sentence of torment.

Some people ask why God doesn't just go ahead and destroy the souls of all the wicked. They lose their salvation because they do not repent and they become an enemy of Christ. But they are judged by their works, both good and bad. In other words, justice requires that they be tormented because of what they have done to other people.

Romans 12:19-21 Don't seek revenge yourselves, beloved, but give place to God's wrath. For it is written, "Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord." (20) Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so,

you will heap coals of fire on his head." (21) Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

If God were to allow people to live lives of cruelty, then simply die and stay unaware forever, where would be the vengeance? For example, think of all the horrible things that are done to innocent children. They are sold as sex slaves. Where is the justice for these children if there is no torment in the lake of fire? On the other hand, if anyone repents and truly turns to Christ for forgiveness of their sins, they are welcomed by all of us, no matter what they have done, because we have all sinned. We can all forgive when there is true repentance. But without repentance, justice for sins against the innocence requires torment after death. That's why they are judged by their works. They are judged by what they have done, either good or bad, to others.

35.3) Is There a Resurrection after the Millennium?

Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. Many have interpreted these verses to say there is a second resurrection after the thousand years. They are resurrected in order to be judged. Then they die a second death. Some have even said that not everyone will be condemned at this judgment, because they are judged by their works. Some people's good works would out-weigh their bad works. A righteous judge may take into account some good works in considering his sentence. But good works do not eradicate sins. Only the blood of Christ can atone for sins. Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire. Thus, everyone who is dead is thrown into the lake of fire. The only issue for judgment is the amount of torment each is to receive.

The text mentions the first resurrection at the start of the millennium. But the text does not mention a second resurrection. To be resurrected is to come alive and in order to live again. They are awakened to be judged, just as Samuel was awakened by the medium. But Samuel did not get a new body. He was not resurrected at that time. Instead, the second resurrection is a resurrection for the foolish and takes place at the start of the millennium. Those resurrected in the second resurrection will have mortal bodies. Thus, they can die a second death.

Each of the seven letters to the seven churches includes a reward for those who overcome sin. We are given this reward when Christ returns and at the time of the resurrection. One of these rewards is that the second death will have no power over us. Those who are raised with spiritual bodies have eternal life.

Revelation 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies. He who overcomes won't be harmed by the second death.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over these, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him one thousand years.

Revelation 21:7-8 He who overcomes, I will give him these things. I will be his God, and he will be my son. (8) But for the cowardly, unbelieving, sinners, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their part is in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

The foolish, who are resurrected with mortal bodies, will die a second death if they do not find righteousness as a result of Christ's millennial reign. For them, their destination is the lake of fire. But there are also the wicked who take the mark of the beast. Others become wicked who know the truth about God perhaps because they see the miracles, and yet they still become enemies of God. They are not resurrected. None of God's enemies are resurrected. Some become his enemies before the time of the resurrection and others after the resurrection. The destination for all of God's enemies is the lake of fire. So this is considered to be the second death, even if they have only really died once.

If anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire. Will any of these being judged be found in the book of life? I think not. Salvation is not by works. These are being judged by their works. Salvation comes only by living a life of faith in Jesus Christ whereby we overcome all our sinful habits. I think the point being made here is that everyone being judged and thrown into the lake of fire made themselves into an enemy of God and/or his Son Jesus Christ during the course of his lifetime.

Revelation 3:5 He who overcomes will be arrayed in white garments, and I will in no way blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Everyone was originally in the book of life. Those who become enemies of Christ are blotted from the book. Those who overcome all their sinful habits will not be blotted. During the course of Christ's millennial reign, everyone will wind up either overcoming all their sinful habits, or becoming one of Christ's enemies and will march against Jerusalem when Satan is released.

35.4) The New Heaven and the New Earth

Revelation 21:1-2 I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth have passed away, and the sea is no more.

(2) I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband.

The term “new heavens and a new earth” originally comes from Isaiah. But this seems to be a time of some sin and some death. Isaiah is a book of poetry. Isaiah is talking about a new age. But the purpose of the Messianic reign is for Christ to reign until the last enemy (death) is destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26). Then all things will be truly new. Revelation 21:1-2 says the first earth will have passed away, and the sea is no more. This confirms the literal nature of the new heavens and the new earth after the millennial reign.

Isaiah 65:17-20 "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. (18) But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. (19) I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and there shall be heard in her no more the voice of weeping and the voice of crying. (20) "There shall be no more there an infant of days, nor an old man who has not filled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, and the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.

Isaiah 66:20-24 They shall bring all your brothers out of all the nations for an offering to Yahweh, on horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and on mules, and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says Yahweh, as the children of Israel bring their offering in a clean vessel into the house of Yahweh. (21) Of them also will I take for priests *and* for Levites," says Yahweh. (22) "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me," says Yahweh, "so your seed and your name shall remain." (23) It shall happen, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me," says Yahweh. (24) "They shall go forth, and look on the dead bodies of the men who have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they will be loathsome to all mankind."

I do not believe God intends to destroy all of heaven and create a new heaven. I believe the original creation story in Genesis 1 is about the formation of the solar system. Thus, the destruction of the present heavens and earth would be the destruction of the solar system. The sun could become a red giant and engulf the inner planets, including the earth. It would later become a white dwarf. Thus, the smoke (evidence) of their torment would remain forever and ever (ages upon ages). Those of us who receive eternal life through living for Christ would eventually go to a new earth, which would be a planet in orbit around another star. Apparently this planet will not have seas like that of our present earth.

This then, is what is known as the eternal state. The last enemy will be destroyed. Sin and death will be no more in God's people. There will be no more mourning because of death. There will be no more crying because of death. There will be no more pain because of death. The first things will have passed away. There will be no more tears.

Revelation 21:3-4 I heard a loud voice out of heaven saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with people, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. (4) He will wipe away from them every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; neither will there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more. The first things have passed away."

At this point, John begins to transition back to the time when Christ will return. When Christ returns, his purpose in reigning is to make all things new. This will climax with the new heavens and the new earth. But it will begin with the appearance of the New Jerusalem. All things are being made new for God's people. But all things are not being made new for those who choose to remain in their sins and thus become enemies of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 21:5-8 He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." He said, "Write, for these words of God are faithful and true." (6) He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give freely to him who is thirsty from the spring of the water of life. (7) He who overcomes, I will give him these things. I will be his God, and he will be my son. (8) But for the cowardly, unbelieving, sinners, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their part is in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Chapter 36

Revelation 21:9 - 22 - The New Jerusalem

Starting with Revelation 21:9, John is given a new vision in his Revelation. Compare this verse to that of verse 4:1, where John is told to come up here.

Revelation 21:9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were loaded with the seven last plagues came, and he spoke with me, saying, "Come here. I will show you the wife, the Lamb's bride."

Revelation 4:1 After these things I looked and saw a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, like a trumpet speaking with me, was one saying, "Come up here, and I will show you the things which must happen after this."

In verse 4, death is no more. Christ reigns until the last enemy is destroyed, which is death (1 Corinthians 15:26). But in the verses that follow, we will see evidence that sin and death have not yet been entirely destroyed. I believe this section, starting with verse 9, is another vision in Revelation that is talking about the appearance of the New Jerusalem when Christ returns. This is a pre-tribulation appearance of the New Jerusalem.

The New Jerusalem is called the "wife, the Lamb's bride." It's the dwelling place for Israel. And we are grafted into Israel. The New Jerusalem is the only place that is big enough for the wedding banquet.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 But we don't want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you don't grieve like the rest, who have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. (15) For this we tell you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left to the coming of the Lord, will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with God's trumpet. The dead in Christ will rise first, (17) then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. So we will be with the Lord forever. (18) Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Some people have argued against the post-tribulation rapture without understanding that the New Jerusalem will come when Christ returns. They say, “Why would we go up into the clouds and the air and then come right back down again?” The answer is that the New Jerusalem will be in orbit around the earth. We will be going to the New Jerusalem to have the wedding banquet while the armies of the earth are being gathered in order to march against the Old Jerusalem. After the wedding banquet, we will return with Christ as he defeats the armies of the world and the antichrist. We will reign with Christ, as priests and kings, over the nations of the earth. But we will still have “rooms in the Father’s house.” We will still dwell in the New Jerusalem while reigning over the nations of the earth.

Revelation 21:10-12 He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, (11) having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, as if it was a jasper stone, clear as crystal; (12) having a great and high wall; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

Notice there are no names for Gentile tribes. We are grafted into the twelve tribes of Israel. I believe we will each be a member of one of the twelve tribes.

Revelation 21:13-14 On the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. (14) The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.

I believe the name that is to replace Judas will be Paul.

Revelation 21:15-17 He who spoke with me had for a measure, a golden reed, to measure the city, its gates, and its walls. (16) The city lies foursquare, and its length is as great as its breadth. He measured the city with the reed, Twelve thousand twelve stadia. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. (17) Its wall is one hundred forty-four cubits, by the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

This city is 1400 miles cubed. It’s too big to sit on the earth. It’s slightly smaller than the moon. I believe it will be in orbit around the earth.

Revelation 21:18-21 The construction of its wall was jasper. The city was pure gold, like pure glass. (19) The foundations of the city’s wall were adorned with all kinds of precious stones. The first

foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; (20) the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprasus; the eleventh, jacinth; and the twelfth, amethyst. (21) The twelve gates were twelve pearls. Each one of the gates was made of one pearl. The street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

This is the place in the Bible where we get the idea that heaven has streets of gold and pearly gates. This city is heaven. But it's physical and real and exists in this universe. It will be in orbit around the earth.

Revelation 21:22-27 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. (23) The city has no need for the sun, neither of the moon, to shine, for the very glory of God illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb. (24) The nations will walk in its light. The kings of the earth bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. (25) Its gates will in no way be shut by day (for there will be no night there), (26) and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it so that they may enter. (27) There will in no way enter into it anything profane, or one who causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Try to read this from the Jewish perspective. (It was written by a Jew.) The Old Testament teaches that when the Messiah comes, Israel will rule the world and righteousness will go throughout the earth as a result of that rule. Here we read that the nations will walk in the light of the New Jerusalem. "The kings of the earth [will] bring the glory and honor of the nations into it." (There is no night when you are in high orbit around the earth.) The nations will be able to enter into the New Jerusalem as they also become holy as a result of overcoming all their sinful habits. This, of course, can only happen as a result of walking with Jesus. "There will in no way enter into it anything profane, or one who causes an abomination or a lie." Why would this even be stated if all those who still have sinful habits will have been destroyed? This cannot be after the great white throne of judgment. This must be speaking of the Messianic reign when Israel will reign over the nations. And we, as Gentile believers, are grafted into Israel. So we will also reign with Christ as priests and kings over the nations. But we will dwell (live) in the New Jerusalem, which will be in orbit around the earth.

Only those whose names are written in the book of life can enter into the New Jerusalem. The book of life is all about those who God hopes to give eternal life. This is everyone who has not become an enemy of God. Everyone was originally in the book of life. But one's name is blotted from the book if and when they decidedly become an enemy of God or his Son Jesus Christ. This is especially true as Christ reigns over the nations. The government will be on his shoulders.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born. To us a son is given; and the government will be on his shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (7) Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, on the throne of David, and on his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from that time on, even forever. The zeal of Yahweh of Armies will perform this.

Let's continue in Revelation, now at the start of chapter 22. Remember that there were no chapter divisions in the original Greek text.

Revelation 22:1-2 He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, (2) in the middle of its street. On this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruits, yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

The Bride of Christ (Israel) will reign with Christ. During that millennial reign, the nations will be healed of all their diseases. The curse on the earth will be lifted. The curse is removed at the beginning of Christ's reign; not after the literal new heavens and the new earth.

Revelation 22:3-5 There will be no curse any more. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants serve him. (4) They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. (5) There will be no night, and they need no lamp light; for the Lord God will illuminate them. They will reign forever and ever.

We will see Christ's face when he returns. His name will be on our foreheads when he returns. This is in the New Jerusalem, which is the heavenly city. At this point, John begins to wrap up the vision and starts talking about the soon coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus is coming soon for every generation. We live a short life that must be lived in great expectation of Christ's soon return. If we die first, we will awaken at the resurrection when Christ will set up his kingdom and we will reign with him.

Revelation 22:6-9 He said to me, "These words are faithful and true. The Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to show to his bondservants the things which must happen soon." (7) "Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (8) Now I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. When I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who had shown me these things. (9) He said to me, "See you don't do it! I am a fellow bondservant with you and with your brothers, the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

Notice how John is wrapping it up by bringing it back to where he started in Revelation. This book is the only book in the Bible that offers a blessing to those who read it and take the words to heart. Here are the first three verses again:

Revelation 1:1-3 This is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things which must happen soon, which he sent and made known by his angel to his servant, John, (2) who testified to God's word, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, about everything that he saw. (3) Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written in it, for the time is at hand.

The blessing comes from actually reading the words and taking them to heart. The words about a coming antichrist are frightening. The blessing comes from knowing that it's coming soon. Knowing Christ is coming soon forces us to get ready for his return. This does not mean that we should buy a farm way out in the woods. Not everybody can do that.

We defeat the antichrist through our testimony of Jesus Christ. As we walk with Christ in holiness, we learn to not fear death. We become willing to die rather than take the mark of the beast or worship the image of the antichrist. We will not deny Christ even if it means losing our lives. This is how we defeat the antichrist. And it's how we overcome all our sinful habits. If we continue to sin, we will not have the strength in Christ to place our love for him above our very lives. If we continue to sin we are not really taking up our crosses and following Christ. This is the blessing of reading Revelation and taking it to heart.

Overcoming sin, and thus being ready for Christ's soon return, is thus the theme of Revelation. It starts and ends with that theme. It's all about maturing to the point of being willing to die for Christ, so that we can reign with Christ.

Revelation 22:10-11 He said to me, "Don't seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. (11) He who acts unjustly, let him act unjustly still. He who is filthy, let him be filthy still. He who is righteous, let him do righteousness still. He who is holy, let him be holy still."

John is told not to seal up the words of the book, because the time is at hand. He is also told that the wicked will continue to be wicked and the wise will continue to be wise. These two points are a strong allusion to Daniel 12.

Daniel 12:3-4a Those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the expanse; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever. (4) But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.

Daniel 12:6 One said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?

Daniel 12:8-10 I heard, but I didn't understand: then said I, my lord, what shall be the issue of these things? (9) He said, Go your way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. (10) Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand.

The question asked in Daniel was, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" The disciples asked the same question (Matthew 24:3). The same sign is given in response to both questions. From the abomination there are 1290 days (Daniel 12:11). In both cases, the mystery of God concerns the day and time of the resurrection and Christ's return.

Daniel is told to seal the book. The understanding of the answer would remain a mystery until the time of the end. But John is told not to seal the book because the time is at hand. The exact day and time of Christ's return remain a mystery. But in this age, we must consider the timing of Christ's return to be within our generation, even if it turns out not to be the case. We are given more Revelation than was given to Daniel. He was told that he would sleep until the resurrection. But we are told to expect it to happen in our generation. And during this time of the end, the wise will understand the answer to the question and know the day and time of the resurrection. It will be 1290 days after the abomination.

Revelation 22:12-16 "Behold, I come quickly. My reward is with me, to repay to each man according to his work. (13) I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. (14) Blessed are those who do his commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. (15) Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. (16) I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify these things to you for the assemblies. I am the root and the offspring of David; the Bright and Morning Star."

Here we have red-letter words of Jesus. He continues with the theme of coming quickly as well as doing the works of the Father. Only those who obey Christ will have the right to the tree of life. Outside are those who continue to sin. This is further evidence that the New Jerusalem will come when Christ returns. It will be here during the millennial reign. Jesus also continues with the theme of being blessed by reading the words of the prophecy and taking them to heart. Those who do his commandments, in other words they do his works, are blessed. They overcome their sinful habits are able to enter into the New Jerusalem.

In verse 12 Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly. My reward is with me." It's a reward for doing the works of the Father. But notice also, the word 'reward' is singular and not plural. In the seven letters to the seven churches, different rewards were given to those who overcome sin. But here, it's a single reward. What would the single reward be based on this context? The reward is the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 22:17-21 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" He who hears, let him say, "Come!" He who is thirsty, let him come. He who desires, let him take the water of life freely. (18) I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if anyone adds to them, may God add to him the plagues which are written in this book. (19) If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, may God take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book. (20) He who testifies these things says, "Yes, I come quickly." Amen! Yes, come, Lord Jesus. (21) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints. Amen.

Appendix A

Problems with the Pre-tribulation Rapture

The New Wine System affirms that salvation is a free gift. There is nothing we can do to add to what Christ did for us on the cross. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Salvation cannot be earned by works.

Yet, according to the New Wine System, lots of work is required in order to inherit the kingdom. Those of us who are saved must then seek the kingdom of God, and His righteousness. Only those who seek the kingdom will inherit the kingdom. Only those who seek His righteousness to overcome sin will inherit the kingdom. Salvation is a free gift. But to inherit the kingdom requires lots of work.

But what does this have to do with the pre-tribulation rapture? The difference between simple salvation and inheriting the kingdom is to truly deny ourselves, and to take up our crosses and follow Christ. Belief in the pre-tribulation rapture is a fearful response to the reading of Revelation. And yet Revelation is the only book in the Bible that promises a blessing for reading and taking to heart that which is written within (Revelation 1:1-3). We read Revelation and it scares us. Instead of knowing that God will protect us, we put our faith in the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine, which has no explicit support in Scripture. Verses must be taken out of context, assumptions must be made that are not supported by Scripture, and the natural reading of Scripture must be abandoned. But the pre-tribulation doctrine is popular because Christians do not want to go through the tribulation in Revelation.

Is there a danger in the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine? Yes, there is lots of danger in this doctrine. It makes people believe they are ready for Christ to return when they still have sinful habits in their lives. They could be one of the foolish virgins, who do not have enough oil in their lamps. (The amount of oil is the only difference found in the parable between the wise and the foolish virgins.)

The foolish virgins say that the only thing required to get into the wedding banquet is belief in Jesus. How does belief in Jesus translate into not enough oil? They have some oil, but not enough. The oil cannot represent belief because either you have accepted Christ as Savior, or you haven't. Either you are a believer, or you are not a believer. There is no quantity/amount involved. The oil involves works that lead to the overcoming of all our sinful habits.

This gets to the heart of the debate between Lordship Salvation and Free-Grace Salvation. The New Wine System doesn't require Lordship for salvation. But it does require Lordship to inherit the kingdom and to be part of the Bride of Christ who will reign with Christ during the millennium. The foolish virgins will not go to hell. They will simply be a part of the nations during the millennium.

The foolish virgins will say, "Lord, Lord open [the door] to us." Jesus will reply, "I don't know you. Watch therefore, for you don't know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Matthew 25:12-13).

And that's exactly what pre-tribulation rapture advocates claim for everyone! Jesus says this to the foolish virgins who do not get into the wedding banquet; not to the wise virgins who are able to enter. Pre-tribulation rapture advocates apply this to everyone! They say that nobody will know the day or the hour of the rapture. We don't know the day as yet. We currently don't know the day of Christ's return. But the wise will know before it happens.

Revelation 3:2-3 Wake up, and keep the things that remain, which you were about to throw away, for I have found no works of yours perfected before my God. (3) Remember therefore how you have received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If therefore you won't watch, I will come as a thief, and you won't know what hour I will come upon you.

The foolish virgins do not have enough oil, which comes from works, to get into the wedding banquet. Likewise, Jesus tells the church of Sardis to wake up because their works were not perfected before God. Just like the foolish virgins, they are warned that if they don't watch, Jesus will come as a thief, and they won't know the hour that he will come. But this is exactly what advocates of the pre-tribulation rapture proudly apply to themselves and to everyone else! The wise will know the day and the time of the rapture. The rapture is 1335 days after the abomination.

The foolish virgins, and the church at Sardis, say they won't be going through the great tribulation. They say they are not meant for God's wrath. This is true. But neither are the so-called tribulation saints. Do those "left behind" become believers meant for God's wrath? Or can God protect them? If so, then why do we cling to a pre-tribulation rapture doctrine using such faulty arguments? Again, it's because of our fear of Revelation. It's our fear of the great tribulation. It's because we think about ourselves and our own security more than we think about others. It's because we have not learned to take up our cross and follow Christ.

Our suffering should be as nothing in comparison to the works God would have us do. Paul wrote:

2 Corinthians 1:3-10 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; (4) who comforts us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (5) For as the sufferings of Christ abound to us, even so our comfort also abounds through Christ. (6) But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer. (7) Our hope for you is steadfast, knowing that, since you are partakers of the sufferings, so also are you of the comfort. (8) For we don't desire to have you uninformed, brothers, concerning our affliction which happened to us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, so much that we despaired even of life. (9) Yes, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead, (10) who delivered us out of so great a death, and does deliver; on whom we have set our hope that he will also still deliver us;

This writing by Paul is the true spirit of one who knows what it means to take up his cross and follow Christ. The pre-tribulation rapture doctrine teaches us that we will be leaving this world before Christian suffering really begins. The doctrine teaches that we will be leaving those who suffer, and those who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior. The doctrine teaches that we want to abandon the ones who will be "left behind." Such thinking is not the thinking that Paul demonstrated.

God has always used the Church to bring others to Christ. Nobody comes to the Lord without being drawn by the Holy Spirit, and it's usually as a result of the witness of a believer. Are pre-tribulation rapture advocates against missionaries? They claim that the Holy Spirit, and all the missionaries, and all the witnesses of Christ will be removed at the time when they are needed the most. When the antichrist is revealed, the Church and the Holy Spirit will be needed the most.

There is a time of great tribulation for God's people that is coming. It's in the second half of the seven-year period. However, the first half is a time of great awakening. It's a time of revival. The spiritual temple of God (as well as the

physical temple) will be built during that time. It's a time when the two witnesses will be preaching. It's a time when God will be using all of us. It's a time when there will be a lot more work that is left to be done.

And don't fall into a belief in a mid-tribulation rapture either. All the Scriptural evidence indicates the rapture is after the great tribulation. Therefore, God has a purpose for us even in the great tribulation. All things work to the good of those who are called according to His purpose. This includes the great tribulation. Tribulation brings holiness. We must overcome sin before we can inherit the kingdom. We must overcome sin before we can be caught up in the rapture.

The New Wine System shows that there is a big difference between simply being saved and inheriting the kingdom. But the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine tends to hide that difference. Jesus told us to watch and be ready for his return. The pre-tribulation rapture doctrine helps convince us that we are ready for the rapture when actually we are not. Only those who are willing to die for Christ, in order to further the kingdom, are actually ready for the rapture. Only those who truly seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and have overcome all sinful habits in so doing, are ready for the rapture. There will not be a pre-tribulation rapture because most of the Church is not ready. And there will not be a pre-tribulation rapture because God has more work for us to do, so that others will find faith in Jesus Christ, and so that we can inherit the kingdom.

During the time of great tribulation, many people will take the mark of the beast. This mark is a knowledgeable and explicit rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior. Those who take the mark will no longer have the opportunity for salvation. According to the New Wine System, only those who deliberately reject Jesus Christ will go to hell. Everyone else will still have the continued opportunity to accept Christ as Savior, and to mature in Christ for eternal salvation during the Messianic reign. But those who take the mark of the beast reject their free gift of salvation, and will not be saved.

We see people dying all the time without Christ. It has become the norm for us, because we think that only a few will be saved. But the New Wine System shows us that people from every nation, tribe, people, and language is only the tip of the iceberg for the total number of people who will eventually receive eternal life. For those who really care about the eternal souls of others, the time of great tribulation that is coming is the most important time in all of history. We must be there to minimize, as much as possible, the number of people who will take the

mark of the beast. We need to overcome our fear of the great tribulation and to have faith in Christ even if it means our death.

The purpose of this article is to show that the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine is false. It's based on taking verses out of context, and upon invalid assumptions. Anyone who simply reads the following two verses in a natural way knows that the rapture is "immediately after the tribulation."

Matthew 24:29-31 says:

Matthew 24:29-31 ESV "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (30) Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (31) And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 ESV For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

Are these two verses speaking about the same event, or two different events? Pre-tribulation advocates claim that 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 is the rapture, and that Matthew 24:29-31 is the "glorious appearing." Applying two separate terms to these verses makes you interpret it as two separate events. But look at the similarities. If it's two separate events, then this event happens twice. The word 'rapture' comes from the Latin, and means "caught up." This word has always meant our being gathered into the clouds when Christ returns. And the word was around long before Darby introduced the pre-tribulation rapture in 1830. As we can see, the rapture happens in both of these verses. God's people are "caught up" into the clouds, by the angels, at the sound of God's trumpet. However, since Matthew 24:29 clearly states it happens after the tribulation, pre-tribulation rapture advocates must believe these are two separate events.

A.1) Two men working; two women grinding

No pre-tribulation rapture advocate doubts there is also a post-tribulation gathering of the elect. Some will say Matthew 24:31 is not a gathering into the clouds, but instead it's a gathering to Jerusalem. But this does not fit the context of even Matthew 24 itself. Verse 40 and 41 speak of two men in the field. One is taken and the other is left. Two women will be grinding grain. One will be taken and the other one will be left. In Luke 17:34-35 we see an account of the two women grinding with one taken and the other left. We also see two people in bed at night. One is taken and the other is left. This can only be interpreted as a disappearance of some people during their ordinary chores. Do they disappear and then re-appear in Jerusalem? No, Jerusalem is not mentioned in the passage. This disappearance of people is in the very same context as Matthew 24:31, where the angels in the clouds "gather together his elect." By context, they are gathered into the clouds and the angels are doing the gathering. How can this event not be the rapture? Bottom line is verse 29, in which this gathering is to be "immediately after the tribulation of those days."

Some will agree that the disappearance of people while in bed or working is the pre-tribulation rapture, but that the gathering of the elect, in verse 31, is a different event. The pre-tribulation advocate would likewise believe that the date for which "no one knows the day or the hour" to be the pre-tribulation rapture. The problem with this view is context. Verse 36 says, "No one knows about that day or hour." The gathering of the elect is just five verses earlier. That's the context of the day that no one knows about. To say there is another day that no one knows about, in which people disappear from their beds, is to take these verses completely out of the context of the gathering of the elect in verse 31. A pre-tribulation rapture event is not mentioned in the passage. In order for the unknown day and hour to refer to a pre-tribulation rapture event, such an event would have to be included in the text. Likewise, the text about the men in the field and the women grinding grain follows the text for the gathering of the elect. Context dictates that these verses are also describing the gathering of the elect that's mentioned in the passage.

Two men are working in the field. Two women are grinding at the hand mill. Two people are in bed at night. Pre-tribulation rapture advocates ask whether Christians and non-Christians would be working together at the end of the tribulation. The answer is yes. I think there will be lots of people left who will have not taken the mark, but are not yet ready for the rapture. Perhaps they will be in poorer countries like India, where the politics of the world will not be enforced at first. They will live with natural bodies into the millennium.

Read Luke 17:24-37. Two women are grinding grain together, and one is taken (verse 36). The disciples ask, “Where, Lord.” The answer given is, “Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.” We also find the dead bodies and vultures in Matthew 24:28, which is in the post-tribulation time frame. In other words, God’s people disappear in the same time frame of Armageddon. The dead bodies and the vultures is a reference to Ezekiel 39:17-20, which is very similar to the feast of birds on flesh in Revelation 19:24. In other words, the birds feeding on dead bodies is an obvious reference to Armageddon. In Revelation 16:15-16, Christ comes as a thief (verse 15) right before Armageddon (verse 16).

Pre-tribulation rapture advocates have said that the disappearance of people while in bed or working must be the rapture because it’s in a time when people are saying peace and safety. It will be as in the “days of Noah ... before the flood, [when] people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark” (NIV Matthew 24:38-39). The argument is based on an incorrect assumption that during the 42-month reign of the antichrist, the bowls of wrath will be poured out. This does not seem to fit a time similar to the days of Noah before the flood. However, the book of Revelation does not teach that the bowls of wrath will be poured out during the 42-month reign of the antichrist. Isaiah 26:19-21 teaches that the wrath of God is after the resurrection.

A.2) Common Pre-tribulation Rapture Arguments

The following is a list of very common arguments that are used by pre-tribulation rapture advocates. As we will see, each is based on assumptions not made by Scripture, or taking verses out of context.

- 1) Because the rapture is said to be imminent. Matthew 25 :13, “*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*” This verse is argued as saying that no man will know the day or the hour right up to the time that it occurs. But in context, it’s saying that no man currently knows the day or time, so we should watch for the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, so that we will know the day and time. More is given about this topic in sections A6 and A7 below.
- 2) Because the rapture is said to be the “blessed hope.” Titus 2: 13, “*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*” There is a blessed hope of his glorious appearing before the great tribulation. Hebrews teaches about the hope of the coming heavenly city of God. The New Jerusalem will appear before the great tribulation. But this does not mean

the Bride will be ready for the rapture. Most of the Church is still in sin. Most of the Protestant Church claims that you can't overcome sin. And most of the Catholic Church assumes they will have to spend time in purgatory. Seven more years of the New Covenant will be decreed in order that the Church can overcome sin and get ready for wedding banquet.

- 3) Because there is no mention of the church after Revelation Chapter 4. This argument is based on the assumption that the so-called "tribulation saints," who are mentioned after Revelation 4, are not part of the Church. It's based on an "us-and-them" mentality that divides Jew and Gentile.

Paul says that not all are Israel that are of Israel (Romans 9:6). Not all of Abraham's seed are Abraham's children (Romans 9:7). Those who are in Christ are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise of Abraham (Galatians 3:29). Paul says there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. The unbelieving Jews were broken off of Israel. The Gentile believer is grafted into Israel. If the olive tree is not Israel, then from what were the unbelieving Jews broken? The context of the whole passage of Romans 9-11 is all about Israel and the issue that the Jews rejected the Messiah.

Therefore, all saints are either a natural branch or a wild branch of Israel. There is no difference. The pre-tribulation rapture assumes a difference and then says the Church, meaning Not Israel, is not mentioned after Revelation chapter 4. I'm not advocating replacement theology. We don't replace Israel. God's eschatological purpose for Israel will be fulfilled in all of Israel, both Jew and Gentile.

- 4) Because the Lord has not appointed us to wrath. Pre-tribulation rapture advocates recognize that God's people, called the "tribulation saints" will be around during the great tribulation. They are not appointed to God's wrath as they go through the tribulation. Yet somehow this argument is used in saying that we won't be around during the great tribulation. This become another "us-and-them" argument. We are supposed to be able to avoid the great tribulation. But Israel, who become believers in Jesus Christ as Savior, seem to be around during God's wrath. There are two invalid assumptions being made here. First is that there is a difference between Jew and Gentile. But Paul says there is not. Secondly, the assumption is made that the wrath of God is poured out during the great tribulation.

It's been assumed that the bowls of wrath occur during the second half of the seven-year period. But Isaiah 26:19-21 teaches that the wrath of God is after

the resurrection. Nothing in Revelation teaches that the bowls of wrath are during the 42-month reign of the antichrist. See section A9 below for more information.

- 5) Because of the removal of the Restrainer, assumed to be the Holy Spirit, who indwells all believers. The Holy Spirit is assumed to be the restrainer that Paul refers to in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8. The text does not say the restrainer is the Holy Spirit. It can be easily shown from Daniel 10-12 that the restrainer is Michael the Archangel. Also, the Holy Spirit is needed in order to draw men to the saving grace of Jesus Christ. If the restrainer is removed, then how are the “tribulation saints” drawn to Christ? The “us-and-them” mentality causes the pre-tribulation advocate to not give the tribulation saints much thought when it comes to the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that if he did not leave, the Holy Spirit would not come (John 16:7-11). It could be that after Christ sets up his millennial reign, the Holy Spirit will no longer draw men to Christ. But Christ’s millennial reign will not be in place during the great tribulation. The Holy Spirit will still be needed to draw people to Christ. See section A8 below for more about Michael the restrainer.
- 6) Because of the Old Testament types of the rapture. Enoch was removed from God’s wrath before the floods came. But God’s wrath is after the resurrection, not during the great tribulation. Lot was delivered from Sodom before the fire fell. But the post-tribulation resurrection is before God’s wrath. Noah was lifted above the floodwaters. Again, God’s wrath is after the resurrection. The six bowls of wrath do not happen during the 42-month reign of the antichrist.
- 7) Because of the twenty-four Elders in the book of Revelation. The 24 elders of Revelation do seem to be humans who once were mortal here on the earth. But that doesn’t mean they represent all the Church. The number ‘24’ seems to be literal and not figurative. The term ‘elder’ suggests they are very old and not the newly raptured Church. They seem to be 24 individuals. Perhaps one is Enoch. Perhaps another is Elijah. Perhaps the rest are others who “walked with God” and were caught up as special exceptions to the general revelation and the rapture. I also believe the 144,000 will receive their spiritual bodies on or before the seven-year covenant.
- 8) Because Jesus said, “In my Father's house are many rooms. ... I go and prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2-3). This verse is sometimes used as an argument for the pre-tribulation rapture. But what is to say that we don’t get these rooms after the tribulation instead of before? Probably the main reason that

dispensationalists use this verse is because of their belief that the Church is separated from Israel during the tribulation and the millennium. They believe the Church goes to heaven while Israel remains on the earth.

Does this sound like God's plan for the apple of his eye (Zechariah 2:8)? Will Israel miss out on going to heaven? There is no difference between Jew and Gentile. We are grafted into Israel. The difference between the wise and the foolish is that the foolish do not overcome all their sinful habits before the New Jerusalem appears and the tribulation begins. Of course the majority of the Church fits this category. They will be given the opportunity to mature in Christ during the tribulation. Those who are wise at the time of the rapture, which is at the end of the tribulation, will be given spiritual bodies and rooms in the Father's house (New Jerusalem). Then we will reign with Christ over the earth during the thousand years.

- 9) The Church cannot be overcome by Satan, but the Tribulation saints are conquered. This is another "us-and-them" argument. We are generally portrayed as given greater rewards than those who become believers after the rapture. This argument, of the saints being conquered, is based on this verse:

Revelation 13:7 Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation.

This is not a spiritual battle for the souls of the believers. The antichrist literally conquers the world, including Christians. Christians are not immune to being conquered by the armies of the world. And it has happened many times in the past. This verse in Matthew is used to make the claim that the Church cannot be conquered.

Matthew 16:18 ESV And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Does this mean that ISIS (or ISIL) should not have been able to conquer the Christians in Iraq and Syria? Does this mean that Muslims of the past should not have been able to conquer the city of Jerusalem? If so, Jesus was a false prophet. Jesus is not saying that armies will not be able to conquer his Church. Hades means grave. The gates of Hades means to enter the grave. This verse is not talking about demonic wars. Jesus is simply saying that the Church as a whole will not die out. And even if the gates of Hades means demonic wars, it

would still not apply to physical wars where armies of the world are able to conquer Christians.

The antichrist does not spiritually conquer the saints. When we get to the point where we are willing to take up our crosses, and die for Christ, then we become the spiritual conquerors. The “tribulation saints” actually conquer the antichrist because of the word of their testimony and their love for Christ, even unto death. They are willing to lose their heads rather than take the mark of the beast. They are physically conquered. But spiritually they conquer the antichrist as it says in the following verse.

Revelation 12:10-11 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. (11) And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

- 10) The verb “caught-up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is a much stronger word than the verb for “gather” in Matthew 24:31. Because Paul uses a stronger word than the word used by Christ, it’s been argued that these must be two separate events. However, 2 Thessalonians 2:1, a clear reference to the rapture, uses the noun “being gathered.” In the Greek, it’s the noun form of the same verb used in Matthew 24:31. See section A11 below for more information.

The original argument for the pre-tribulation rapture was made in order for dispensationalism to work. In other words, the pre-tribulation rapture and dispensationalism go hand in hand. If one fails the test of Scripture, both will fail. Dispensationalism claims that the Church is a “parenthesis” between two “dispensations” of Israel. The Church is a heavenly purpose of God and Israel is an earthly purpose. God must remove the Church in order to switch back to Israel. The problems with dispensationalism is covered in chapter 33 of this book.

A.3) The Olivet Discourse in Daniel 12

Most people try to read Matthew 24 in context. We read the Scripture with careful “exegesis.” The American Heritage Dictionary says this word means, “Critical explanation or analysis, especially of a text.” This means we try to understand what the author meant to say by following the author’s flow of thought, and by carefully looking at the context of the text. In Matthew 24, Jesus mentions

the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel. The abomination of desolation can be found in Daniel 9 and also in Daniel 12. But few have really tried to interpret Matthew 24 with Daniel 12 as its major background text. Doing so brings forth obvious interpretations of Matthew 24 that are a bit harder to see without this background material.

When we compare Daniel 12 to Matthew 24, many confusing points about Matthew 24 become clear. The problem is that many verses of Daniel 12, for years, have been taken out of context. How often is Daniel 12 studied as a whole, in one context? I hope to show that a good understanding of Daniel 12 is essential for the proper understanding of Matthew 24. And when we properly understand Matthew 24, any arguments for the pre-tribulation rapture disappear.

Daniel 12 is a condensed Olivetti Discourse.

Daniel 12:1-2 "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who shall be found written in the book. (2) Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Daniel 12:6 One said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?

Matthew 24:3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? What is the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Daniel 12:8-10 I heard, but I didn't understand: then said I, my lord, what shall be the issue of these things? (9) He said, Go your way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. (10) Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand.

Matthew 24:36 But no one knows of that day and hour, not even

the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Daniel 12:11 From the time that the continual *burnt offering* shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days.

Daniel 12:12 Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred thirty-five days.

Daniel 12:13 But go you your way until the end be; for you shall rest, and shall stand in your lot, at the end of the days.

1 – Michael the Restrainer (2 Thess. 2:7) takes a stand (Daniel 12:1). See the section below titled “Who is the Restrainer” for more information as to why this verse is the removal of the restrainer, spoken of by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:7.

2 – The Greatest Tribulation of all time (Matthew 24:21, Daniel 12:1)

3 – The Resurrection (Daniel 12:2)

4 – The big mystery question: “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” (Daniel 12:6) “Tell us, when will these things be?” (Matthew 24:3).

5 – The big mystery answer: “It shall be for a time, times and half a time.”

6 – Daniel did not understand the answer (Daniel 12:8).

7 – The answer is sealed until the time of the end. None of the wicked will understand the answer. But the wise will understand the answer to the question at the time of the end. But until the time of the end, not even the wise (including Daniel) will understand the answer (Daniel 12:9-10). At the time of Christ, not even the angels in heaven understood the answer. No man knew the day or hour [time] (Matthew 24:36).

8 – A sign, however, is given: “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.” (Daniel 12:11 NIV) Based on context, the 1290 days is from the abomination to the resurrection.

9 – Jesus echoes the words of Daniel saying, “When, therefore, you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, let the reader understand” (Matthew 24:15).

10 – The rapture is not directly mentioned in Daniel 12. The dead do not have to wait during the 1290 days. They are dead. However, those who are alive at the rapture are those who will have waited for and reached the end of the 1,335 days. “Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.” (Daniel 12:12 NIV) Therefore, the resurrection precedes the rapture. (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

11 – Daniel rests until the time of the end, when he will be resurrected. (Daniel 12:13)

Traditionally, the “time, times, and half a time” of Daniel 12:7 has been thought to mean three and a half years. And without doubt, the “time, times, and half a time” of Daniel 7:25 is three and a half years. “The saints are handed over to him for” three and a half years. This is the 42 months of Revelation 13:5. But does that necessarily mean the “time, times, and half a time” of Daniel 12:7 is also three and a half years? It’s my feeling that people have misinterpreted the question because they have assumed the answer. The question was, “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” (KJV Daniel 12:6) When it’s read naturally, the start of this time period is the time in which the question is asked. But since people have believed they knew the answer, they have assumed a start of the period that’s not given in the text of the question. Plus, what is the more natural question to have been asked? If you were told for the first time about this greatest tribulation of all time, and then the resurrection, would you not want to know when it will happen?

Another point to consider is that the “time, times, and half a time” of Daniel 7:25 and Daniel 12:7 do not use the same Hebrew / Aramaic words. Both have the pattern of singular, plural, and half of the singular. But it’s not the same word. One is in Hebrew and the other is in Aramaic. In the case of Daniel 12:7, the word has more of the meaning of a season or an era.

Daniel didn’t understand the answer to the question. Daniel was told that the understanding of the answer is sealed until the time of the end, which according to verse 13 is the time of the resurrection. If the answer to the question is three and a half years, why would the understanding have been sealed, and then plainly stated in verse 11? 1290 days is about three and a half years. But that can’t be the answer because the answer is sealed. We have incorrectly assumed the answer and thus we have misread the question. Our incorrect assumption about the answer has effectively sealed our understanding of the question and its answer over the centuries. The question being asked is the big mystery question. It’s what everybody wants to know. It’s, “When will all this happen?” Again, the question

reads, “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” (KJV Daniel 12:6) The question does not specify a starting point. Therefore, the question is asking how long, from the time the question was asked, until the resurrection.

With this background of Daniel 12 in place, let’s take another look at Matthew 24. The disciples asked the same question, “When will all this happen?” To be accurate, “all this” was in reference to the destruction of the temple. But the disciples’ question also asked for the signs of Christ’s coming (Parousia), and the end of the age. The disciples, at that time, didn’t understand that the destruction of the temple would not happen at the time of the resurrection. But they seemed to be familiar with the concept of the end of the age, as taught by Daniel 12. They seemed to understand that Christ would return at the time of the end. No doubt Jesus had taught his disciples about the prophet Daniel.

This very same teaching can be found in the parable and symbol we know as the thief in the night. Refer to section A7 below about the thief in the night. A study of that parable and of all the uses of the symbol shows that it’s only the world (wicked) who will be surprised. The wise will understand and know the day and time of Christ’s return. “But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:4).

Jesus gives a few early signs, such as wars, famines, and earthquakes. Jesus says these are the beginnings of the birth pains, which is a reference to Isaiah 26:17-21. Next, Jesus gives us the major sign for which we are to watch. Daniel 12:11 tells us that from the abomination to the resurrection (by context) there are 1290 days. So Jesus gives the same major sign. The abomination of Daniel 11:31 was fulfilled in 168 BC by a statue of Zeus on the temple mount. This would indicate the abomination to come is also a statue on the temple mount for the world to worship. While we should also consider the abomination of Daniel 9, it’s most likely that Jesus was primarily referring to this abomination in Daniel 12, because Daniel 12 has so many parallels to the Olivetti Discourse.

Notice the verse again: “When, therefore, you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, let the reader understand” (Matthew 24:15). Considering the background of Daniel 12, what is the reader to understand? This is not the reader of Matthew. It had not yet been written when Jesus said these words. Jesus is talking about the reader of Daniel. And Daniel had been told that not even the wise would understand the answer to the question until the time of the end (Daniel 12:8-10). The wicked will not understand, but the wise will understand at the time of the end.

Jesus is saying that when we see the abomination, then the wise reader of Daniel should understand the answer to this big mystery question. The reader of Daniel will know the number of days until the resurrection. But that won't happen until the time of the end. And then only the wise will understand. So Jesus is saying let the reader be one of the wise who will understand.

In verse 21, Jesus tells us about the time of “great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be” (ESV). This corresponds to Daniel 12:1, which speaks of the “time of [tribulation] such as never has been since there was a nation till that time” (ESV). After the time of great tribulation is the resurrection (Daniel 12:2).

But the disciples were not asking about the resurrection. They were asking about the second coming (Parousia) of Christ. It would seem from Daniel 12:13, that the rapture happens 45 days after the resurrection. Jesus describes details of the second coming (Parousia) (Matthew 24:27) as the blowing of the trumpet and God's chosen (elect) being gathered into the clouds. Later on, this omission of the resurrection would cause some confusion in the church of the Thessalonians. Some of them had died since the time of Christ, and there was concern as to whether or not their loved ones would see the second coming (Parousia). But Paul assures them that the resurrection would happen first (1 Thessalonians 4:15). So Paul comforts them with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Paul is not introducing another second coming (Parousia) (1 Thessalonians 4:15) of Christ.

Matthew 24:27 For as the lightning flashes from the east, and is seen even to the west, so will be the (Parousia) coming of the Son of Man.

A.4) Parable of the Fig Tree

After describing the second coming (Parousia), Jesus tells the parable of the fig tree. Many people believe the fig tree is the nation of Israel. But Jesus could simply be giving a small parable about watching for signs themselves. A better way to see the nation of Israel in the Olivetti Discourse is to look over at Luke 21:24. "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). In 70 AD, the Jews were taken as prisoners to all the nations. Today, for the first time since 70 AD, Jerusalem is no longer being trampled on by the Gentiles. Therefore, the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled. At least it's fulfilled within the adult generation that saw Israel take Jerusalem in 1967.

Matthew 24:32-34 "Now from the fig tree learn this parable. When its branch has now become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near. (33) Even so you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. (34) Most certainly I tell you, this generation will not pass away, until all these things are accomplished.

When the fig tree's leaves get tender, we know that summer is near. I believe the generation that does not pass away, until all the signs have happened, is the baby boom generation, which started right after World War II. Israel became a nation right after, and as a result of, World War II. So there is no problem in saying that the "summer is near."

The problem lies in the very next sentence. Jesus says, "Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door." The fig tree is a parable about the signs themselves. Right now the "summer is near." But we must see "all these things" before we know time "near, right at the door." "All these things" includes the abomination of desolation and the great tribulation. No doubt the fig tree is Israel, and that the rebirth of Israel was a major sign. But in this parable, when we associate the fig tree strictly with Israel, and not as signs of the end times, people tend to conclude that it's already "near, right at the door." But the Scripture is very clear about this point. We are not "near, right at the door," until we see "all these things," including the abomination and the tribulation.

The Olivetti Discourse must be interpreted with the background of Daniel 12. In Daniel 12, the major sign given which precedes the resurrection is the abomination. From the abomination there are 1290 days. The abomination is also the major sign given in Matthew 24. So we are not "near, right at the door" until

we see the abomination. Then we will be able to calculate the number of days until the resurrection (1290), as well as to the rapture (1335).

Today, pre-tribulation rapture advocates claim that we are already “near, right at the door,” even though we have not yet seen “all these things.” Pre-tribulation rapture advocates have unknowingly deceived many people with this ever since Israel became a nation, and even before. In Luke 21:8, Jesus tells about the many who will come in the name of Jesus and teach, “The time is near.” Jesus says not to follow them. And in the very next verse Jesus says the end will not happen right away. We must see “all these things” before we see the end. We must see “all these things” before there is going to be a resurrection or the rapture.

Luke 21:7-9 They asked him, "Teacher, so when will these things be? What is the sign that these things are about to happen?" (8) He said, "Watch out that you don't get led astray, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is at hand.' Therefore don't follow them. (9) When you hear of wars and disturbances, don't be terrified, for these things must happen first, but the end won't come immediately."

Pre-tribulation teachers don't like to be associated with Luke 21:8. They say it's talking about false christs. But false christs do not come in the name of Jesus. And false christs would not say, “The time is near.” False christs would say that christ has already come. Instead, these false teachers are acknowledging that Jesus is the Christ. The “I am he” (ego eimi) in the verse is Jesus referring to himself. In other words, the words of Jesus do not directly quote the false teachers. But even if you insist that these are false christs, would you want to be echoing this bad teaching of false christs? Jesus is clearly telling us the bad teaching which says “the time is near” before we see “all these things.” This is the Doctrine of Imminence, which is this false teaching. Jesus tells us not to follow these false teachers.

The baby-boom generation is the generation that sees “summer is near.” We are the generation that will not pass away until we see “all these things.” It's OK to say the time is getting near as long as it's clear that the abomination and the tribulation must come first. We can say, “The summer is near.” But to say it can happen at any moment is the false doctrine that Jesus warned us against. From the perspective of the Olivetti Discourse in Daniel 12, the wise at the time of the end will understand the answer to the question. From this fact, you can deduce that there would be an end-time generation that can understand the answer to the question. I believe that's what Jesus was teaching.

A.5) The Unknown Day and Hour

We are continuing to examine Matthew 24 with the background of the Olivetti Discourse in Daniel 12. In Matthew 24:36, we read about the unknown day and hour. Then Jesus illustrates his point using the days of Noah, the two men in the field, and the two women grinding at the hand mill.

Pre-tribulation advocates insist that the unknown day and hour will remain unknown right up to the point of the rapture itself. But think about it from the perspective of Daniel 12. The big question of Daniel 12 is the same as asked by the disciples. “When will all this happen?” The answer was given in Daniel 12, but the understanding of that answer is sealed until the time of the end. At that time, the wise will understand the answer. But the wicked will not understand the answer. So the understanding about the unknown day and hour remains sealed until the time of the end. When we see the abomination, the wise (and only the wise) will understand because the resurrection will be 1290 days later, and the rapture will be 1335 days after the abomination.

People use the “no man knows” verse to argue a pre-tribulation rapture. They make the verse refer to a rapture that’s not even in the chapter, instead of to the rapture (gathering) just five verses prior. This is taking the verse out of context. Such flawed reasoning is the basis of the doctrine of imminence.

When Jesus said “no man knows” did he really mean that from that time forward, the rapture could have happened at any moment? What he really teaching the Doctrine of Imminence? If so, then from the time that Jesus said, “No man knows the day or the hour,” the rapture could have occurred at any time after that. In the context of Matthew 24, the abomination of desolation is required before the return of Christ. But the doctrine of imminence states that no additional signs are needed before Christ returns. Christ predicted his own crucifixion and resurrection. Does “no man knows” mean the rapture could have occurred before that? Christ predicted the coming of the Holy Spirit. Does “no man knows” mean the rapture could have occurred before Pentecost? Christ predicted the destruction of the temple. Does “no man knows” mean the rapture could have occurred before 70 AD? Christ predicted the death of Peter. Does “no man knows” mean the rapture could have occurred before Peter was crucified?

Christ predicted that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all the nations, and then the end would come. Does “no man knows” mean the rapture could have occurred before that? Pre-tribulation rapture advocates say the seven-year tribulation begins with the antichrist signing a treaty with Israel. But how could

the antichrist sign a treaty with Israel before Israel again became a nation? Does “no man knows” mean the rapture could have occurred before Israel became a nation in 1948? If the rapture could not have occurred before all these signs were fulfilled, then how can it be a doctrine that was true ever since Christ said, “No man knows the day or the hour?” Or could it be that Jesus was saying these signs must take place first? Does “no man knows” mean the rapture could have occurred before the abomination of desolation? If not, the resurrection is 1290 days later. The doctrine of imminence does not stand the test of Scripture. It’s a false doctrine.

Some will argue that the rapture could not have occurred before all these previous signs, but it could occur before the abomination, simply because after the abomination the day of the resurrection will be known. But would the disciples have interpreted Jesus’ words as meaning that all signs must first take place except for the big one that Jesus just mentioned? The only argument for assuming the abomination of desolation is not one of these signs which must take place first is the assumption of the doctrine of imminence itself. And at that point, the argument becomes circular reasoning. The pre-tribulation rapture would be used to argue the doctrine of imminence, and then the doctrine of imminence would be used to argue the pre-tribulation rapture.

Jesus did not say that no one would ever know the day or the hour. He simply said that no one currently knows the day or the hour. Understanding the verse from the background of Daniel 12 makes it clear. To insert that word ever into the interpretation changes the tense of the verb. Here is Young’s Literal Translation of the verse, which does a better job of showing the correct tense of the verb:

Matthew 24:36 YLT And concerning that day and the hour no one hath known — not even the messengers of the heavens — except my Father only.

Notice that Jesus says that not even the angels understand the answer to the question. In Daniel 12:5-6, it was an angel who originally asked the big mystery question. Perhaps the angel understood the answer, but was asking the question for Daniel’s benefit. But apparently Jesus interpreted it to mean that not even the angel who asked the mystery question understands this mystery answer.

Daniel 12:5-6 Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, there stood other two, the one on the brink of the river on this side, and the other on the brink of the river on that side. (6) One said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?

Daniel 12:8-10 I heard, but I didn't understand: then said I, my lord, what shall be the issue of these things? (9) He said, Go your way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. (10) Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand.

Matthew 24:36 NIV "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

The wise should watch the signs so that we will know. The wicked will not know the day or the hour. But the wise will understand the answer to the question. If we are to be removed before these signs happen, then why did Jesus ask us to watch for the abomination in the first place?

Matthew 24:36 ESV "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

What about knowing the hour? Most likely Jesus was not speaking about a 60-minute hour. The terms “day and hour,” in English, are usually seen as the specific hour of a specific day. But the point Jesus is making is that no one, at that time, knew the answer to the question. Not even Christ, at that time, knew when He would return. (He probably does know now.) The Greek word for “hour” often means a time, not the hour of a specific day. For example, in John 2:4, Jesus said “My hour [to do miracles and ministry] has not yet come” (ESV). It’s the same Greek word. Jesus was saying the time for the three or four years (3 ½) of his ministry had not yet come. The NIV translates the same verse as “My time has not yet come.” Likewise, Matthew 24:36 could be translated as, “And concerning that day and time no one hath known.”

The seven-year period prior to Christ’s appearing in the clouds can be considered as the “time” of Christ’s return. It fits the context because in verses 15-29 Jesus speaks of the time of great tribulation. It’s this entire time-period, of which he has spoken, that is in answer to the disciples’ question. It’s this entire time-period of the great tribulation that no one hath known when will come. The unknown day is the day Christ will appear in the clouds. The unknown time is the time-period which precedes that day. When we see the time of the great tribulation,

we will also know the day Christ will return. It will be 1290 days after the “abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel.”

“No one knows the day or [time].” According to Strong’s Concordance, the Greek word for “knows” (eido) is “used only in certain past tenses.” The word can also be translated as “understand.” As shown earlier, Young translates it as “No one hath known.” This Greek word cannot place restrictions on whether or not one will know in the future. Here are some other places in the gospels where the same Greek word is used in the negative to say that someone does not know something: Matt. 20:22, 22:29, 26:70, 26:72, 26:74, Mark 4:13, 9:6, 10:38, 12:24, 14:68, 14:71, Luke 9:55, 23:34, John 1:26, 2:9, 4:22, 4:32, 7:28, 9:12, 9:21, 9:25, 9:29, 9:30, 10:5, 12:35, 13:7, 14:5, 15:15, 19:10, 20:2, 20:9, 20:13, 20:14, 21:4. None of these verses imply that they would never know. In many cases, later they did know. For example, in Mark 4:13, we read, “And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable?” Did Jesus mean that the disciples would never understand the parable?

Today we don’t know (understand) the exact day when the rapture will happen. But when we see the abomination of desolation, we will know. We will understand the answer to the big mystery question. The doctrine of imminence is a false doctrine.

A.6) The Doctrine of Imminence

The doctrine of imminence states Christ could return at any moment. J. Dwight Pentecost is one of the most famous dispensationalist theologians. Since 1965, he served 35 years on the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary. In his book “Things To Come”, (over 215,000 copies sold without a revision), copyright 1958, Ch. XIII, Sect. 2-I, page 202, on “The doctrine of imminence,” Pentecost writes:

Many signs were given to the nation Israel, which would precede the second advent, so that the nation might be living in expectancy when the time of His coming should draw nigh. Although Israel could not know the day nor the hour when the Lord will come, yet they can know that their redemption draweth nigh through the fulfillment of these signs. To the church no such signs were ever given. The church was told to live in the light of the imminent coming of the Lord to translate them in His presence.

Let’s think about what Dr. Pentecost is saying. We are taught, “No one knows the day or the hour.” So the rapture can happen at any moment. If the rapture were post-tribulation, so the reasoning goes, then we could compute 1290 (or 1335) days

from the abomination (Daniel 12:11-12). Therefore, the rapture must be pre-tribulation. Because the rapture is pre-tribulation, Dr. Pentecost reasons, the signs are not for the Church, but for Israel. Yet, according to Dr. Pentecost, not even Israel can know the day or the hour. “No one knows.” And these signs are given for Israel. So I guess he thinks the tribulation saints are going to be too stupid to do the calculation once they see the abomination.

Ok, so perhaps Dr. Pentecost misstated the pre-tribulation rapture position. Perhaps the pre-tribulation rapture position holds the words, “No man knows,” to be addressing only the “secret” coming (Parousia) and not the coming (Parousia) as given in Matthew 24:27-31. Let’s think about the idea that the pre-tribulation rapture is imminent, and this is thus a doctrine of Scripture. Dr. Pentecost goes on about the doctrine of imminence:

This doctrine of imminence, or “at any moment coming,” is not a new doctrine with Darby, as is sometimes charged, although he did clarify, systematize, and popularize it. Such a belief in imminence marked the premillennialism of the early church fathers as well as the writers of the New Testament.

So, Dr. Pentecost believes this doctrine goes all the way back to the New Testament. I guess Dr. Pentecost did not fully think about the ramifications of 2 Thessalonians 2.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 ESV Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, (2) not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. (3) Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

The man of sin must be revealed before “our being gathered together to him.” Is this not a sign that must precede the rapture? If so, the doctrine of imminence would be false. “No,” the pre-tribulation rapture advocates will claim. “The Holy Spirit is the restrainer,” they say, “and when the Holy Spirit is removed in the rapture the man of sin will be revealed at the same time.” (See section A8 below for problems with the Holy Spirit being the restrainer.)

OK, so how is the man of sin revealed? “Well,” say the pre-tribulation rapture advocates, “The man of sin is revealed when he signs a covenant with Israel” (Daniel 9:27).

OK, how could there have been a covenant with the nation of Israel, before it came into existence in 1948? Would not the appearance of Israel in 1948 be a sign that had to come before the rapture could take place? If so, would that not disprove the doctrine of imminence? Was the doctrine of imminence true only true after 1948? Yet Dr. Pentecost says the doctrine of imminence goes all the way back to the writers of the New Testament. “But,” the pre-tribulation advocate might counter, “Israel existed at the time of the New Testament writers.”

OK, so perhaps the doctrine of imminence became false in 70 AD, but became true again in 1948. Yet Dr. Pentecost says the doctrine was not new with Darby. So it must have been true at the time of Darby and before. Darby wrote in 1830, long before Israel became a nation. Dr. Pentecost also says the doctrine of imminence existed at the time of the early church fathers. All the writings of the early church that we have were written after 70 AD. Bottom line is the doctrine of imminence is a false doctrine. The New Testament writers were hopeful of the (Parousia) coming of Christ. But they understood that the great tribulation must come first.

As we have seen, the existence of Israel as a nation has been a sign that had to precede the rapture, disproving the doctrine of imminence. Another event that had to precede the rapture was the death of Peter. In John 21:18-19, Jesus told the disciples how Peter would die at an old age. Perhaps the disciples didn’t think about it. But the rapture could not have happened before Peter’s death. Otherwise, Peter would not have died as Christ had foretold.

It may surprise the pre-tribulation rapture advocate to learn that Paul actually taught against the doctrine of imminence. To see this, look at 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3. The letter or rumor Paul was dealing with alleged that the day of the Lord had already come (verse 2). It concerned the coming of the Lord, and our being gathered unto him (verse 1). If the day of the Lord were understood by the Jews as a single 24 hour day, it would have come and gone long before a rumor or letter could get around. We must interpret Scripture the way ancient Jews would have understood. The day of the Lord is the Messianic Age to come.

Paul couldn’t say, “Hey look, we have not yet been caught up in the rapture!” That’s because the day of the Lord was not a 24 hour day. Also, if the day of the Lord is defined as being a time period beginning at the start of the tribulation, and

if Paul believed in a pre-tribulation rapture, then Paul could have also said, “Hey look, we have not yet been caught up in the rapture!” So, in order to dispel the rumor or letter, Paul had to give a sign that must occur before the age to come, and our being gathered unto Him. He was preaching against the doctrine of imminence. In other words, certain signs and events do have to occur before Christ will return. It can’t happen at any moment.

A.7) The Thief in the Night Parable

We are continuing to examine Matthew 24 with the background of the Olivet Discourse in Daniel 12. In Matthew 24:42-51, we read about the thief-in-the-night parable. This is the original source of the thief-in-the-night symbolism. The word "watch" (KJV), in this verse, indicates that the thief comes at night. Other translations, such as the NIV, actually use the word ‘night.’ This doesn't necessarily mean that Christ will come during nighttime hours. (More about that later.) The parable is about a servant who is either wise or wicked. And the issue, according to verse 42, is not knowing what day the Lord will come. If the servant is wise, he will know the day. If the servant is wicked he will not know the day (verse 50). So those who are wise will know the day. They will watch the signs and know the day from the signs. Those who are wicked will not know the day or the time.

Matthew 24:42-51 Watch therefore, for you don't know in what hour your Lord comes. (43) But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. (44) Therefore also be ready, for in an hour that you don't expect, the Son of Man will come. (45) "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has set over his household, to give them their food in due season? (46) Blessed is that servant whom his lord finds doing so when he comes. (47) Most certainly I tell you that he will set him over all that he has. (48) But if that evil servant should say in his heart, 'My lord is delaying his coming,' (49) and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eat and drink with the drunkards, (50) the lord of that servant will come in a day when he doesn't expect it, and in an hour when he doesn't know it, (51) and will cut him in pieces, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There is where the weeping and grinding of teeth will be.

The concept of the wise, who will understand, and the wicked, who will not understand, comes from the original Olivetti Discourse in Daniel 12. The wicked will not understand the answer to the question in Daniel 12. They will not know the answer to the question, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" (Daniel 12:6). They will not know the day or the time (hour). But the wise will observe the abomination of desolation and will know the day of Christ's return.

Pre-tribulation rapture advocates use the thief in the night symbolism to say that the rapture will be "secret", and can happen at any moment. But most pre-tribulation rapture advocates seem to be unaware of where this symbolism originates. They are simply assuming its meaning by the fact that a thief comes when you don't expect him to come. However, it's only the wicked that will be surprised.

The thief comes to steal. What is the Son of Man coming to steal? He is coming to take away his Bride. The house is the world, owned by the Master but controlled by Satan. Christ is coming into the house ruled by Satan to steal His Bride from Satan's kingdom. The world will not know the day or the time. But the Bride will know, because the Bride watches the signs of His return. Read verse 50 closely. Is it the good servant or the wicked servant who will not know the day when Christ returns? It's the wicked servant that will not know the day or the time. But the Bride will know. Right now, no one knows the day. But after enough of the signs have been given, the Bride will know. The closer we get to that day, the better we will know (verses 32-33). But the wicked will remain in darkness.

The thief in the night symbolism continues: In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Paul describes the rapture in the same way Jesus did in Matthew 24:29-31. Then, in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4, Paul refers to the thief in the night. In so doing, Paul is making reference to the parable given to us by Jesus. Paul also makes it clear that it's the world that does not know when Christ will return. But the Bride is not in this darkness (verse 5:4). In verse 5:1, Paul says that he does not need to tell us the times and the seasons (which is to say, the day and the time (hour).) Why? In verse 4 he tells us why. The Bride is not in this darkness. The Bride will be able to understand the signs. So the Bride will know the day and time (hour).

1 Thessalonians 5:1-4 But concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need that anything be written to you. (2) For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. (3) For when they are saying, "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction will come on them, like birth pains on a

pregnant woman; and they will in no way escape. (4) But you, brothers, aren't in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief.

Another use of the thief in the night symbolism is 2 Peter 3:10. Peter associates this symbol with the day of the Lord, as does Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. The day of the Lord is not the day of Satan. The antichrist is allowed to rule for a short period of time in order for the Bride to get ready. But then Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet are defeated.

The next use of the thief in the night symbolism is Revelation 3:3. Jesus says that it's those who do not wake-up (NIV) or watch (KJV) who will not know the hour of his return. Jesus is telling the people at this Gentile church at Sardis to repent or they will not know the time (hour) of His return. Those who watch the signs, and make themselves ready, will know the time (hour). The world, however, will not know the time (hour) of Christ's return. This is not to say that these Christians at Sardis will not be saved if they do not watch. It's saying they will be like the wicked, who will not know. If they do not watch (or wake up) they will be saved. But they will not inherit the kingdom. Let's read this verse carefully:

Revelation 3:2-3 Wake up, and keep the things that remain, which you were about to throw away, for I have found no works of yours perfected before my God. (3) Remember therefore how you have received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If therefore you won't watch, I will come as a thief, and you won't know what hour I will come upon you.

Pre-tribulation rapture advocates will quickly say that “no man knows the day or hour.” By this they mean that no man will know the day or hour right up to the time of the rapture. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Since pre-tribulation rapture advocates believe that no man will know the day or the hour, they would include themselves. Yet this verse makes it clear that not knowing the day or hour is a bad consequence for a lack of repentance.

All of the previous uses of the thief-in-the-night symbol are future tense. “If ... thou shall not watch ... thou shall not know” (KJV). But the final use of this symbol is in the present tense. In Revelation 16:15 Jesus says, “Behold, I come like a thief.” That's when it happens. This is after the sixth bowl of wrath (Revelation 16:12-14), and before Armageddon (Revelation 16:16). So the rapture is after the great tribulation, just as Jesus taught us in Matthew 24:29-31.

Revelation 16:15-16 "Behold, I come like a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his clothes, so that he doesn't walk naked, and they see his shame." (16) He gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew, Megiddo [Armageddon].

Because of this verse, some pre-tribulation rapture advocates say the thief in the night comes to kill and destroy. Some do not associate the thief in the night with the unknown day and hour. However, such a view does not hold up when all the verses are re-examined. Revelation 3:3, quoted above, directly associates the coming of Christ as a thief with His coming at an unknown hour. Also, the original thief-in-the-night parable, in Matthew 24:43-44 directly equates the timing of the thief with the unknown day and hour. The only possible conclusion is for the thief to be associated with the unknown day and hour, and for the unknown day and hour to be after the six bowls of wrath.

Let's go back and think about Daniel 12 again. This parable was derived from the background of Daniel 12. In Daniel 12, what is the night? The word "night" is not found in Daniel 12. However, Daniel 12:3 speaks of the time right after the resurrection. It says, "Those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the expanse [sky or heavens]; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). Does this time of righteousness not sound like day? Think back to the words of Paul. "But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief" (2 Thessalonians 5:4). A time of darkness is a time of unrighteousness. It's a time of night. So, the time before the resurrection is the night. At the time of the resurrection, Jesus will come to steal his Bride away from the night. From the abomination, there are 1290 days to the resurrection. And there are 1335 days to the rapture. This time of great tribulation is the night. Jesus comes as a thief in the night to steal his Bride. It's not before the night. It's in the night.

Jesus said, "I must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day. The night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:4-5). And now that Jesus is no longer in the world, we are the light of the world. But night is coming when no more work can be done. Night is the great tribulation. During that time the saints will be handed over to the man of lawlessness (Daniel 7:25). So no more work can be done. During that time, the beast will be given power to make war against the saints, and to conquer them. So no more work can be done. He will rule 42 months over every nation, tribe, people and language (Revelation 13:5-7). This is the night, when no work can be done. But at the end of the 1290 days, Jesus will return as a thief in the night.

A.8) Who is the Restrainer?

During the tribulation, the “man of lawlessness” will rule over every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 13:5-7). But Paul tells us the “man of lawlessness” will not be revealed until the restrainer is taken out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2:5-7). Pre-tribulation rapture advocates have argued that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit. This argues against the rapture being “immediately after the tribulation.” But if the restrainer is the Holy Spirit, there is a problem with verses 1-3 of this same chapter (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). These verses tell us that the “man of lawlessness” must be revealed before we are gathered. But if the restrainer is the Holy Spirit, verses 5-7 would argue that we must be gathered before the “man of lawlessness” is revealed. So which is it?

2 Thessalonians 2:1-6 ESV Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, (2) not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. (3) Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (4) who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. (5) Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? (6) And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.

The idea of the restrainer being the Holy Spirit is so ingrained into most pre-tribulation advocates that I saw a video where one well-known pre-tribulation rapture advocate quoted 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7, using the words “Holy Spirit” instead of simply, “one who restrains now.” But Paul does not give us the identity of the restrainer. Verses 5 and 6, however, indicate the people at Thessalonica would have known his identity. Was this a new revelation that Paul gave the people at Thessalonica, yet did not record in his letters? Or was Paul simply making reference to an Old Testament teaching?

Daniel 10:12-14, 10:20-21, 11:1-2 teaches us that Michael protects the rulers of the world from the forces of Satan. The angel speaks of Michael, saying that Michael is the only other power who helps him fight the prince of Persia. This vision was given two years after the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon.

The statue of Daniel 2 shows us these changes in world rule. The statue starts with Babylon. Then came the Medes and Persians. When Darius the Mede took power, Michael and this angel took a stand to protect him. After the Medes and Persians we have Greece. As each of the world rulers takes power, Michael and this angel take a stand to protect the rulers. The stand is against the powers of darkness, such as "the prince of Persia." These battles are in the spiritual realm. This is why Paul says the "mystery" or "secret" power of the iniquity, which the restrainer restrains, is already at work (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Daniel 10:12-14 Then said he to me, Don't be afraid, Daniel; for from the first day that you did set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard: and I am come for your words' sake. (13) But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but, behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me: and I remained there with the kings of Persia. (14) Now I have come to make you understand what shall happen to your people in the latter days; for the vision is yet for *many* days:

Daniel 10:20-21 Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Now I will return to fight with the prince of Persia. When I go forth, behold, the prince of Greece shall come. (21) But I will tell you that which is inscribed in the writing of truth: and there is none who holds with me against these, but Michael your prince."

Daniel 12:1 "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who shall be found written in the book.

God appoints these rulers, whom Michael is protecting (Romans 13:1-7). We are told to obey them. Michael's purpose is to protect the rulers of the world so that Satan does not completely overtake them. In so doing, Michael is protecting us. However, when Christ returns, God's people will rule (Revelation 2:26).

So, when the time comes, Michael will naturally take a stand to protect the new rulers. He will protect us instead of the world rulers. Daniel 12:1 tells us that Michael will take this stand just before the great tribulation. When Michael takes a stand, Satan is free to completely overtake the antichrist. So today, Michael

restrains the antichrist. When he "takes a stand" Satan will be free to move against the rulers of the world and the "man of lawlessness" will be revealed or exposed.

Dispensationalists seem to believe that the Holy Spirit is for the Church age and is not for Israel. They often see Pentecost as ushering in the Church age. And the Holy Spirit would leave with the rapture. But the Holy Spirit filled people even in Old Testament times. It simply was not as often as in New Testament times.

There is no Scriptural support for the restrainer being the Holy Spirit. The restrainer is Michael. The Church does not have to be removed before the antichrist is revealed. And Matthew 24:29-31 tells us that the rapture is "immediately after the tribulation."

A.9) We are Not Appointed to God's Wrath

In 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Paul says that we are not appointed to God's wrath. This has been a favorite verse that's been used by pre-tribulation rapture advocates. The argument is that the rapture must be before the tribulation, because we are not appointed to God's wrath. But actually, this is another verse that proves the rapture is after the tribulation. No one argues the fact that there are Christians during the tribulation. Pre-tribulation rapture advocates call them "tribulation saints." But are these saints appointed to God's wrath? No, they are not. We are not appointed to God's wrath, and neither are they. The rapture is for them as well.

So we must read the verse in context. Paul is speaking of the time when the world is saying "peace and safety." Then sudden destruction comes on the world. The world experiences a false "peace and safety" during the 42 months when the antichrist rules over every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 13:5-7). There will be no trumpet-plagues or bowls of wrath during the 1290 days. At the end of the 1290 days is the resurrection. Those who are still alive are changed and received spiritual bodies. Then the bowls of God's wrath are poured out. No one who has Christ will be harmed by this wrath. Here is an Old Testament verse which shows the wrath of God is after the resurrection.

Isaiah 26:17-21 ESV Like a pregnant woman who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, so were we because of you, O LORD; (18) we were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind. We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen. (19) Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the

earth will give birth to the dead. (20) Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by. (21) For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.

But are we appointed to the other plagues given in Revelation? Are we appointed to the trumpet-plagues? Are the “tribulation saints” appointed to these plagues? The trumpet-plagues are a warning for the Church that we must overcome sin before we can inherit the kingdom. So for those who remain in their sins during the first half of the seven-years, the trumpet-plagues can be considered as a punishment from God that is given out of love as a parent punishes his child. Christians can be very stubborn in their belief that sins do not matter because of the blood of Jesus. It almost becomes a license to sin. But that’s not the teaching of Scripture. Those who are in Christ must become like Christ and overcome all their sinful habits. We must take up our cross and follow Christ, which means being willing to die for our testimony of Jesus Christ. Most in the Church today are not really willing to die for Christ. The trumpet-plagues, are not God’s wrath.

A.10) The Ten Virgins and the Wedding Banquet

We are continuing to examine Matthew 24 with the background of the Olivet Discourse in Daniel 12. In Matthew 25:1-13, we read about the parable of the ten virgins. Five are wise, and five are foolish. All ten are waiting on the Lord's return. All ten are Christian. But only five are able to enter into the wedding banquet. Remember that Jesus is continuing to draw from Daniel 12, where only the wise will know the answer to the question. Only the wise will know the day and the hour of the resurrection, and of Christ’s return.

Matthew 25:1-13 "Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. (2) Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. (3) Those who were foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them, (4) but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. (5) Now while the bridegroom delayed, they all slumbered and slept. (6) But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold! The bridegroom is coming! Come out to meet him!' (7) Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. (8) The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' (9)

But the wise answered, saying, 'What if there isn't enough for us and you? You go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' (10) While they went away to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. (11) Afterward the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' (12) But he answered, 'Most certainly I tell you, I don't know you.' (13) Watch therefore, for you don't know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Jesus concludes by saying, "Most certainly I tell you, I don't know you. Watch therefore, for you don't know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." So again, the issue of the unknown day and hour originates in Daniel 12 and is continued in this parable. In Daniel 12, the wise will know the answer to the question. The wicked will not know the day of the resurrection. Five of the virgins are wise and will know the day and hour. Five are foolish and will not know the day and hour. The foolish are not wicked. They are between wise and wicked. They are saved, but they do not inherit the kingdom.

This goes back to the New Wine System, as taught in my book titled, New Wine for the End Times. The only difference between the wise virgins and the foolish virgins is the amount of oil they have. All ten virgins are asleep. All ten virgins await the bridegroom, so all ten have faith in Christ. We can assume that all ten believe that Christ was raised from the dead. There is nothing we can do to add to what Christ did on the cross. Therefore, all ten are saved.

All ten virgins have some oil, but the foolish virgins do not have enough. The amount of oil is the only difference between the wise and the foolish virgins. Yet this difference seems to prevent them from getting in into the wedding banquet. They are saved, but they do not inherit the kingdom. What is the oil? If oil is faith in Christ, then we must ask how much faith is needed to be saved. Scripture does not teach that a certain level of faith is required for salvation.

Works are not required for salvation. If you assume the foolish virgins are not saved, then the lack of oil could not be a lack of works. A lack of works does not prevent us from being saved. All ten have some oil. If the oil is works, then how much works are required for salvation?

On the other hand, if we understand that salvation does not necessarily mean inheriting the kingdom, then the parable makes sense. The New Wine System uniquely explains this parable. The New Wine System distinguishes salvation from

inheriting the kingdom. In the New Wine System, salvation is a free gift. But inheriting the kingdom requires lots of work.

The oil is works. Right now, we are the light of the world. But Night is coming when no more work can be done (John 9:4-5). As we shine our light, the Holy Spirit gives us more oil. You get oil in your lamps by doing the work that our Father in heaven would have you do. The foolish virgins do not have enough works to get into the wedding banquet. Yet they are still saved.

The wise will know the time of the Lord's return, so they will be ready when the Bridegroom arrives. They will have oil in their lamps, because they overcome sin by doing the Father's works. The foolish will not be ready. They are more self-centered, fearful of the great tribulation. They adopt the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine because it's not in their nature to help others, doing the works of the Father, no matter the cost. Sure, they want to help others. But if it comes to choice between skipping over the tribulation, and trying to keep others from taking the mark of the beast, pre-tribulation rapture advocates pick skipping over the tribulation.

As we do the works of the Father, the Holy Spirit fills us. We do the works of the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is how Christ gets to know us. Those who believe in Christ, but don't do his works, are those who believe they know Christ, but Christ does not know them. Christ tells the foolish virgins, "I never knew you."

Only the wise virgins will know the day or the hour. The foolish virgins will not know. That's not to say that pre-tribulation advocates go to hell. The foolish virgins will not go to hell. But they don't inherit the kingdom either. Jesus is drawing a correlation between those who "watch," in order to know the day and time, and those who get into the wedding banquet to inherit the kingdom. Those who watch for "all these things" (Matthew 24:33), do so with full expectation of going through the tribulation. "All these things" includes the abomination of desolation and the tribulation.

This expectation of going through the tribulation brings holiness. Working to help bring in the kingdom also brings holiness. Working to stop others from taking the mark of the beast produces holiness. Post-tribulation advocates become spiritually prepared to die for the Lord. They know the true meaning of "take up your cross and follow me." Their heart is not set on skipping over the tribulation. Their heart is set on continuing to do the works of the Father until no more work can be done.

A.11) Is being ‘gathered’ different from being ‘caught-up’?

Pre-tribulation rapture advocates have also argued that the verb “to gather,” used in Matthew 24:31, has a different meaning from the verb “to be caught-up,” used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The verb in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 means to “take by force; take away, carry off, or catch up.” In John 10:12 the word is used for a wolf snatching sheep. So it is a much stronger word. But does this stronger verb indicate it’s a different event, or does it indicate that Paul was describing the same event with a bit more excitement? It’s easy to show that the latter is the case. We can simply look at another verse where Paul makes reference to the rapture, without using the stronger verb.

Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians apparently caused some confusion. He states that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night (5:2). People apparently were saying the day of the Lord had already come, so the rapture could happen at any moment now. In response, Paul writes a second letter. Paul writes:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 Now, brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to him, we ask you (2) not to be quickly shaken in your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by letter as from us, saying that the day of Christ had come.

The Greek word used for “gathering” in this verse is the noun form of the verb used in Matthew 24:31 for “will gather.” It doesn’t have exactly the same Strong’s Concordance number because one is a noun and the other is a verb. But the spelling in the Greek is almost identical, and the meaning of the two words is identical, except that one is a noun and the other is a verb. To say that Matthew 24:31 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 are different events because they are different verbs simply does not hold up when 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 is also considered. Paul was simply describing the same event with more excitement.

Let’s look at it another way. The event of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 is called the rapture. The event of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 is the same event, and therefore can also be called the rapture. Since this event uses an almost identical word in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 as in Matthew 24:31, the event of Matthew 24:31 can also be called the rapture. The event of Mathew 24:31 occurs immediately after the great tribulation, according to verse 29. Therefore, we must either conclude that this post-tribulation event is the rapture, or we must conclude there are two rapture events.

A.12) Pre-tribulation Advocates Double Down

The pre-tribulation rapture event itself is a kind of doubling down. As we have seen, in Matthew 24:29-31, the Son of Man appears in the clouds and sends out his angels with a loud trumpet. They gather the elect from the four corners of the earth. If they knew the words of Jesus, no doubt these words would come to mind when the church of Thessalonica read Paul's letter about the rapture. But the claim is that in one way or the other, the elect are gathered twice. They simply put a different label on it, calling it the "glorious appearing," at the end of the tribulation.

But what about the resurrection? Does the resurrection happen twice? When Paul describes the rapture, he tells us "that we who are alive, who are left to the coming of the Lord, will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thessalonians 4:15). "Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (verse 17). In other words, the resurrection is before the rapture. Thus, the question should not be whether or not the rapture is before or after the tribulation. The real question should be whether or not the resurrection is before or after the tribulation. In other words, is it a pre-tribulation resurrection or a post-tribulation resurrection? Revelation 20:4-5 tells us that the first resurrection is after the tribulation.

Revelation 20:4-5 I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as didn't worship the beast nor his image, and didn't receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand. They lived, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (5) The rest of the dead didn't live until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

The first resurrection is after the tribulation, and the rapture is after this resurrection. Thus, the rapture must be after the tribulation. This is an easy proof of Scripture for a post-tribulation rapture. On the other hand, there doesn't seem to be any real proofs of Scripture for a pre-tribulation rapture. So what do pre-tribulation advocates do? They double down. They say there are two resurrections and the second of these two is called the first resurrection. Actually, some claim that both resurrections should be considered to be a single resurrection and that the first resurrection takes place in stages. Some even include the resurrection of Jesus as the first stage of the first resurrection.

John clearly speaks of a resurrection that includes those who refused to take the mark of the beast. He calls this the first resurrection. In that context, it's doubtful that John would have called it the first resurrection if he had understood it to be the second of two resurrections. And to make the first resurrection be three resurrections that take place in stages, in my opinion, is a real stretch and is taking the words of John out of the immediate context of those who refused to take the mark of the beast.

There is another problem that presents itself with this doubling down of two resurrections. Will Old Testament saints be included in the pre-tribulation resurrection or in the post-tribulation resurrection? Most pre-tribulation rapture advocates say the Old Testament saints are not resurrected until the post-tribulation resurrection because the pre-tribulation resurrection is only for the Church. Others use Daniel 12:1-2, which seems to argue for a post-tribulation resurrection, as an argument for Daniel himself being resurrected after the tribulation. This is extended to include all the Old Testament saints.

The problem with this view is in who will be attending the wedding banquet. The Church is seen as the Bride of Christ, even by dispensationalists. So the wedding banquet is for the Church. But Matthew 22:1-14, Luke 14:16-24, and Matthew 25:1-13 show that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be at the wedding banquet, and they are considered to be part of Israel, and not the Church. To resolve this, dispensationalists double-down on the wedding banquet and say there are two wedding banquets. The first is called the "marriage of the Lamb" and the second is called the "marriage supper." In his book titled, "Things to Come," page 237, J. Dwight Pentecost writes (underline emphasis mine):

B. *The place of the marriage* can only be in heaven. Inasmuch as this follows the judgment seat of Christ, which has been shown to be in the heavenlies, and it is from the air the church comes when the Lord returns (Rev. 19:14), the marriage must take place in heaven. No other location would fit a heavenly people (Phil. 3:20).

C. *The participants in the marriage.* The marriage of the Lamb is an event which evidently involves only Christ and the church. It will be shown later, according to Daniel 2:1-3 and Isaiah 26:19-21, that the resurrection of Israel and the Old Testament saints will not take place until the second advent of Christ. Revelation 20:4-6 makes it equally clear that the tribulation saints will not be resurrected until that time also. While it would be impossible to eliminate these

groups from the place of the observers, they cannot be in the position of the participants in the event itself.

In this connection it seem necessary to distinguish between the marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper. The marriage of the Lamb is an event that has particular reference to the church and takes place in heaven. The marriage supper is an event that involves Israel and takes place on the earth. In Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24; and Matthew 25:1-13, where Israel is awaiting the return of the bridegroom and the bride, the wedding feast or supper is located on the earth and has particular reference to Israel.

In the gospel of John, Jesus says the resurrection is on the last day (John 6:39, 6:40, 6:44, 6:54, and 11:24). Are both resurrections on the last day? Are there two last days? I haven't heard of anyone doubling down on the last day. The only explanation that I could find goes back to this notion that the resurrection is to be seen as a single resurrection that takes place in stages. So somehow, this single resurrection that takes place in stages all occurs on the single "last day." I didn't really understand it myself.

So what did Jesus really mean when he spoke of the "last day?" Personally, I always go back to Old Testament Scripture in order to interpret New Testament writers. They were writing in the context of their own Bible, which for them, was the Old Testament. So we can continue to interpret these things in the context of Daniel 12. Daniel 12:11 says that from the abomination there are 1290 days. 1290 days until what? By the overall context of Daniel 12, it would be 1290 days until the resurrection in Daniel 12:2. So in that context, the "last day" would be the last of the 1290 days. The resurrection will happen on the last of the 1290 days. Then, the rapture takes place 45 days later, at the end of 1335 days from the abomination.

Daniel 12:11-13 And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. (12) Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. (13) But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days."

Daniel is told that he would rest until the end of the days. By immediate context, the end of the days would be the end of the 1290 days. Again, this means the resurrection is the last day of the 1290 days. That's why Jesus refers to the resurrection as being on the "last day."

What about the coming (Parousia) of Christ? Does it happen before or after the tribulation? Generally speaking, there is a definite article (“the”) before the Greek word for coming, which is Parousia. This generally indicates there is only one future coming of Christ. It’s THE coming of Christ. Verses which associate the assumed pre-tribulation resurrection and rapture with the coming of Christ are 1 Corinthians 15:23, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and 2 Thessalonians 2:1. Many would also associate the coming in Matthew 24:37 and 24:39 with the pre-tribulation rapture because the sudden destruction that took place in the days of Noah is associated with the unknown day of Christ’s return. On the other hand, verses which clearly refer to the coming at the end of the seven-year period include Matthew 24:27 and 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9. So pre-tribulation advocates must double down on the Parousia as well.

If there is a pre-tribulation rapture, then Matthew 24:43-44, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4, and Revelation 3:3 would say that the thief in the night is before the tribulation. But Revelation 16:15 shows us the thief comes after the sixth bowl of wrath, and before Armageddon. Does the thief in the night come twice? We covered this topic in section A7. Some pre-tribulation advocates associate the thief in the night with the unknown day and hour. Others associate the thief in the night with the “glorious appearing.”

If you believe in the pre-tribulation rapture, you must believe the gathering of the elect would have to happen twice, angels are in the clouds twice, the resurrection happens twice, thief in the night is twice, the coming (Parousia) of Christ would happen twice, and the wedding banquet happens twice. Does Scripture ever teach that Christ returns twice? (Acts 1:11, Col. 3:4, 1 Thess. 1:10, 5:23, 2 Thess. 2:1, 2:8, 1 Tim. 6:14, 2 Tim. 4:1, 4:8, Titus 2:13, Heb. 9:28, Rev. 22:20) Does Scripture teach that any of these events really happen twice?

That’s a lot of doubling down. And most of these doubling of events are never mentioned when trying to present reasons for the pre-tribulation rapture. Instead, the list of reasons given in section A2 are used. And as we have seen, all of these reasons involve either taking verses out of context or making assumptions that are not directly supported by Scripture. And even if these reasons were taken as valid, they don’t have the solid weight of Scripture verses such as Matthew 24:29-31, Revelation 16:15 and Revelation 20:4-5. These verses are side-stepped by doubling down. There must be some very strong emotional reasons why otherwise honest Christians insist on a pre-tribulation rapture. The mere suggestion that the Church will go through the great tribulation often brings surprise and avoidance. Could it be they know they are not ready to take up their crosses and die for Christ?

Appendix B

Problems with Christian Universalism

Unitarian Universalism can mean that all religions are acceptable to God and they can provide different ways to God. Or it can mean that religion is not necessary. Christian Universalism is different. Christian universalism says the only way to God is through Jesus Christ, and that there is no other name by which a person can be saved. However, Christian Universalism says that eventually all people will be saved through Jesus Christ.

Some Christian Universalists deny the existence of hell. However, they generally do believe there can be a separation and/or punishment, for some period of time, for those who die without accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior. They believe eventually each and every person will repent of their sins, accept Christ as Savior, and will go to heaven.

The Christian Universalist recognizes that no one can come to the Father unless the Father draws him (John 6:44). This draw is considered by many Universalists to be irresistible. For many, this occurs sometime after they have died. Other Universalists simply reason that nobody will refuse salvation when it's offered the other side of the grave. The Universalist believes that it is God's desire and will for everyone to be saved (Titus 2:4). The Universalist believes that God is foremost a God of love and mercy, and God will not fail to perfectly carry out His desire that everyone be saved.

It may surprise some to know that Universalists have some very strong Scriptural arguments. Christian Universalism cannot simply be associated with liberalism or the denial of the inerrancy of Scripture. In this appendix, we will look at these Scriptural arguments. Then we will see why these very good arguments do not require us to conclude that all people will be saved. Also, there is the issue of hell itself. If there is a punishment for the wicked, and if the wicked will eventually be saved, then the punishment cannot be eternal. Thus, Scriptural arguments about eternity will be examined. The Greek words involved will be discussed with emphasis on whether or not the punishment is eternal.

The viewpoint of this author is that those condemned to the lake of fire will never be reconciled with the Father. They will be tormented for some period of time, depending on their evil works. But eventually, their souls will be destroyed.

B.1) Verses for Everyone Being Saved

There are quite a few verses that can be interpreted as saying that everyone will be saved. Many of these verses do not have good explanations within the framework of traditional Calvinist or Arminian thinking. These are all verses that would be used by Universalists. Let's take a look at them:

John 12:32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

The traditional Arminian would probably simply say that not all men would choose to accept this drawing. The traditional Calvinist, however, might have more problems with this verse (above) because the Calvinist says that God's draw is irresistible. John 6:44 says no one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him. John 6:44 is often used by Calvinists in the doctrine of irresistible grace. John 12:32 (above) uses the same Greek word for draw. Universalists apply the Calvinist argument to this verse as well, saying that irresistible grace will someday apply to all people, many of them after the grave.

Romans 11:32 ESV For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

In this verse (above), there is an undeniable parallelism between the all of those consigned to disobedience, and the all for whom God has mercy. If God has mercy on everybody, then would not everybody be saved? The Arminian would again say that God has mercy, but that not all would accept God's mercy. But one can easily argue the case that God would show mercy on all by drawing all to Himself. Otherwise, how would it be mercy? How is it mercy for God to consign anyone to disobedience if they are not then drawn to God?

1 Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

This verse (above) also draws an undeniable parallelism. All those who die because of Adam are made alive because of Christ. This verse does not have a conditional upon those who are made alive. The verse has no conditional limitation to those who accept Christ as Savior. If you have died in Adam, then you will be made alive. And all have died in Adam.

This verse (above) is in the context of the resurrection. Therefore, some could argue it's saying that all are resurrected. The wicked would be resurrected to judgment and then condemned. But such an interpretation seems to be a stretch of what's being said. What good is it to be made alive in order to spend eternity in

hell? And why would the blood of Christ be a necessary provision in order to make someone alive that is to then immediately spend eternity in hell? This verse (above) is one of the very strong Universalist verses. The traditional Calvinist and Arminian systems do not seem to fit with this verse (above).

1 Timothy 2:3-6 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; (4) who desires all people to be saved and come to full knowledge of the truth. (5) For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (6) who gave himself as a ransom for all; the testimony in its own times;

Again we have a parallelism between God's desire for all people to be saved, and the fact that Christ is a ransom for all. This verse (above) does not fit well at all with the Calvinist system of limited atonement. However, the Arminian could argue that the ransom was paid for everybody, but that only those who accept Christ are actually credited with the ransom. Yet the Universalist could easily argue that if the wicked were actually ransomed, in the context of this verse, why would faith in Christ become an unstated requirement?

1 Timothy 4:10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we have set our trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

The same letter to Timothy has this second very interesting verse (above). Christ is the Savior of all people. And then there is special emphasis placed on those who believe. This special emphasis on those who believe makes it hard to place an unstated condition on the salvation of all people. This verse (above) is a very strong verse for the Christian Universalist.

1 John 2:2 ESV He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

This verse (above) is another case where it is difficult to put qualifications on Christ being the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. If Christ is the propitiation for only the sins of those who believe, then why does this verse add to it a propitiation for the sins of everyone else?

Hebrews 2:9 But we see him who has been made a little lower than the angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for everyone.

Christ tasted death for everyone. This was done by the grace of God. Does not this mean that God's grace is extended to everyone?

Luke 2:10-11 The angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be to all the people. (11) For there is born to you, this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

John 6:33 For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."

This next verse will give us a clue as to what is really going on with all these verses, and why not everyone will have eternal life:

Romans 5:18-19 So then as through one trespass, all men were condemned; even so through one act of righteousness, all men were justified to life. (19) For as through the one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one, many will be made righteous.

This verse has a similar parallelism. We have the condemnation for all men because of one act by Adam. Then "all men were justified to life" because of one act by Christ. This does not mean that all men are given eternal life. They are "justified to life." To see the difference, let's examine the verse in its broader context.

The very next sentence has a similar parallelism. However this time, it's not all men. It's simply the many who are made righteous. The first parallelism tells us that all are "justified to life", and the second parallelism tells us that many (but not all) are made righteous. This is the key point. This point shows us the problem Christian Universalists have in asserting all people will have eternal life. All people are "justified to life," but not all people are made righteous. To understand the difference, we need to look at these verses in a broader context. And then once we understand the distinction, all these other Christian Universalist verses will likewise become clearly understood. Let's back up to verse 10 in the same chapter.

Romans 5:10-12 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we will be saved by his life. (11) Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (12) Therefore, as sin entered into the world through one man, and death through sin; and so death passed to all men, because all sinned.

Because of Adam, sin entered into the world and everyone has sinned. This made us all enemies of God. But while we were still God's enemies, Christ's blood reconciled us to God. Thus, everyone has been reconciled to God. But that doesn't mean that everyone will receive eternal life. We must still accept Christ as our Savior and live like he lived in order to be eternally saved.

So what does it mean that everyone has been to be reconciled to God? It simply means that the penalty of eternal death has been removed for everyone. Adam was told that if he ate the fruit, on that day, he would surely die. (Ancient Jews believed this day to be a millennial day.) This was a sentence of eternal death for everyone. However, the blood of Christ ransomed everyone from the penalty of eternal death. Everyone was "justified to life." This means that everyone can be resurrected. But we must still accept Christ as Savior and live a life with Christ, walking as Christ walked to overcome sin, before we can inherit eternal life. Remember this verse? It's in the context of Paul's chapter on the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

Paul goes on to ask, "What types of bodies are they raised" (verse 15:35)? He then goes on to use the sun, moon, and stars to point out that there are different types of celestial bodies in heaven. He likewise uses the different animals of the earth to say there are different types of terrestrial bodies here on the earth. The point is that Paul is distinguishing celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies in the context of the resurrection. Again Paul asks, "What types of bodies are they raised" (verse 15:35). The answer is that some are raised as immortal celestial bodies and others, at the resurrection, are raised with mortal terrestrial bodies. It depends on what type of seed they are planted.

Those who overcome sin through a relationship with Jesus Christ will be raised with a celestial (spiritual) body. Most will be raised with a terrestrial (mortal) body. The fact that everyone has been reconciled to God, that everyone is "justified to life" allows God to raise people who have not overcome all their sinful habits with a mortal body so they can continue their journey of salvation. Those who have died having never heard about Christ can be raised from the dead. Those who have not yet made that decision for Christ can be raised from the dead. Others, however, who have deliberately and knowingly become enemies of God. They forfeit their salvation, including their reconciliation and will not be resurrected. But their souls will "come to life" for judgment at the end of the thousand years. Let's continue with what Paul said in Romans 5 about Christ being the second Adam.

Romans 5:13-15 For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not charged when there is no law. (14) Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those whose sins weren't like Adam's disobedience, who is a foreshadowing of him who was to come. (15) But the free gift isn't like the trespass. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

Paul makes the statement that “sin is not charged when there is no law.” Why would he say this? Even the Pagans, who are not under the law, all die because of sin. But if Christ’s blood has ransomed even the Pagans, giving them a resurrection from the dead, then for even the Pagans, sin is not charged. Paul makes the case that the sins of the Pagans are not like Adam’s sin of disobedience. Adam knew God and deliberately disobeyed God. The Pagans do not know God and thus cannot deliberately disobey God. Nevertheless, because of Adam’s sin even the Pagans die. But because of Christ’s gift, God’s grace of a resurrection can abound to even the Pagans. But for those under the law, it’s possible to become an enemy of God. God’s enemies will not be resurrected. The gift of the King is forfeited when one becomes an enemy of the King. So most, but not all, will be resurrected.

Romans 5:16-17 The gift is not as through one who sinned: for the judgment came by one to condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses to justification. (17) For if by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; so much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ.

Paul points out a difference in his parallelism. Adam trespassed once and brought condemnation for everyone. Christ brings justification even though there are many trespasses. Complete justification comes only by “receiving the abundance of grace” and becoming a believer and living for Christ. Not all men do that in this age. And not all men will do that in the age to come.

But as we will see in the next verse, all men were “justified to life” because Christ has reconciled the world to himself by his blood. This allows all men to be resurrected. Again, some are raised as immortal celestial bodies and others are raised with mortal terrestrial bodies. It depends on what type of seed they are planted. Many, but not all, will live for Christ and be made righteous. If they die before Christ returns, they will be planted as a righteous seed.

Romans 5:18-19 So then as through one trespass, all men were condemned; even so through one act of righteousness, all men were justified to life. (19) For as through the one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one, many will be made righteous.

Then Paul sums it up. Grace reigns in our lives until it matures into eternal life.

Romans 5:20-21 The law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace abounded more exceedingly; (21) that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In Adam, all die. So in Christ all will be made alive. All will be resurrected. Everyone will be led to righteousness. But not all will be made righteous. Everyone will be resurrected and will have the opportunity to be led to righteousness. But not everyone will have eternal life immediately upon resurrection. Some will never become righteous and will die the second death.

Protestant Calvinists, Arminians, and Universalists have all made the same incorrect assumption in their logic. It's been assumed that when one first accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, they are then saved (past tense) at that point in time. However, salvation does not happen at one point in time. Salvation is a journey. Salvation is the process of being made righteous, through faith in Jesus Christ. We were justified when we first make a profession of faith. But everyone was reconciled when Christ died on the cross, so everyone can be resurrected.

Everyone has been reconciled. And as long as you continue to be reconciled, you will not have eternal punishment. However, those who knowingly and explicitly reject God's Salvation will spend eternity in punishment. They become enemies of God and lose their reconciliation. They lose what Christ did for them on the cross. At some point in time, God will draw each and every person to himself. But each and every person has the free-will to refuse God's salvation. Sometimes this happens in this life. Sometimes it happens in the millennial age to come. Death is not the end of our journey towards salvation, because many die before God personally brings them to a full knowledge of His Son, Jesus Christ.

This is called the New Wine System. My book, titled "New Wine for the End Times", goes into much further details about this system. But for now, let's take a look at how these same verses work under the New Wine System.

John 12:32 ESV And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

At some point in time, every person will be drawn to Christ. For many, however, this happens in the age to come. Everyone has the free will to refuse God's salvation. Those who are evil in their hearts are much more likely to refuse out of pride. To accept God's salvation means you must begin the journey to holiness. You must submit yourself to Christ's commands and His rule. Many will refuse in the age to come. And some have already refused in this age. They have committed the unpardonable sin as described in Matthew 12.

Universalists have difficulty with the concept of blaspheming of the Holy Spirit. It will not be forgiven in this age. And it will not be forgiven in the age to come (Matthew 12:32). The Universalist must stretch these verses (in Matthew 12) and say it can be forgiven in ages after the age to come. Universalists are correct in saying that eventually every person will be drawn to Christ, even if it's in the age to come, after the resurrection. But they are incorrect in saying the draw is irresistible. Or that the draw continues until the person finally gives in. As we will see, the Father's draw does not continue after the unpardonable sin.

Another form of the unpardonable sin can be found in Hebrews 6:4-6:

Hebrews 6:4-6 ESV For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

Calvinists would have problems with this verse (above) because they would say once saved always saved. Those who have shared in the Holy Spirit would be considered saved. If one has had the Holy Spirit, you could not say they weren't saved to begin with. So how could they fall away? Yet this verse warns of that very possibility.

Arminians would have problems with this verse because while they might believe that salvation could be lost, they would believe that it could be obtained again. This verse says that if they fall away, it's impossible to restore them again to repentance. Please understand that this verse is not talking about sins that happen in weak moments. This is the deliberate and knowledgeable rejection of Christ's

salvation. And it's the central theme of the book of Hebrews. It's also a central aspect of the New Wine System.

Both Calvinists and Arminians have difficulty with this verse, and likewise with blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12). So the unpardonable sin is usually not used to point out the problems with Universalism. If a sin is truly unforgivable, then that alone disproves Universalism. How can everyone be saved if even one person commits the unpardonable sin? And if it's impossible to commit the unpardonable sin, then why was Hebrews written? Why was the warning necessary?

The author of Hebrews is saying that forgiveness of this sin would require Christ to be crucified again. The author does not believe this will not happen. Once reconciliation is lost, you can't get it back again. It's like committing Adam's sin where he knew God and disobeyed him anyway. One crucifixion was the greatest possible gift God could have made. A second crucifixion would be holding Christ up to contempt. Thus, it's impossible for this sin to be forgiven. And the author clearly states that forgiveness of this sin is impossible. This prevents Universalism from working as a system. If even one person commits this unpardonable sin, then Universalism's assertion that everyone will be saved becomes false. Universalism does not work any better than Calvinism or Arminianism.

Let's continue in our examination of these same verses, used by Universalists, in the light of the New Wine System.

Romans 11:32 ESV For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

God has given mercy on all because God has already reconciled everyone to himself and given everyone a "justification unto life" so that everyone can be resurrected. This was done by the blood of Christ. However, sins must stop before one can receive eternal life.

1 Timothy 2:3-6 ESV This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, (4) who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (5) For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (6) who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

The blood of Christ was a ransom for all. Christ is the second Adam. The penalty of death that was given to Adam has been removed for everyone. Everyone has been reconciled to God. But it's only by becoming a believer and living for Christ that we can become justified and begin our journey of sanctification. To receive eternal life, all our sinful habits must stop. We can't continue to sin forever.

1 Timothy 4:10 ESV For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

Christ died for all people. Everyone has been reconciled to God and can be resurrected. But there is a special class of people who, through faith in Jesus Christ, overcome sin in this present age. This is the Bride, and we will reign with Christ when He returns.

1 John 2:2 ESV He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Christ is the "propitiation" for our sins. This word means the act of appeasing or making well. The NIV translates this word as "atoning sacrifice." In other words, Christ was the "atoning sacrifice" for the world. The world was reconciled to God and the death-sentence of Adam was removed for everyone. And again, there is a special class of people who believe on Jesus to overcome sins in this present age. But each and every person who has ever lived, or who will ever live, has been reconciled to God. They have been "justified to life" so they can be resurrected. But to be truly justified and forgiven of all one's sins one must become a believer. To be sanctified you must follow Jesus. Eventually everyone will either accept or reject our opportunity to overcome sins by faith in Christ, and to be given eternal life. In the age to come, everyone will know about the King of Kings, because Christ will rule the world.

Hebrews 2:9 ESV But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Luke 2:10-11 ESV And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. (11) For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

John 6:33 ESV For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Jesus Christ died for each and every person in the world, of all generations. Everyone has been reconciled. Everyone has been "justified to life" so they can be resurrected and have the opportunity to mature in Christ during his reign. Consider this verse:

John 3:17-18 ESV For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn [judge] the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (18) Whoever believes in him is not condemned [judged], but whoever does not believe is condemned [judged] already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

The world is saved through Christ. But whoever does not believe in Christ is condemned already. When a person has not yet heard about Christ, does this mean he does not believe? Would this mean that he has been condemned, or judged, already? Yet at any time, one could begin to believe and would at that point not be condemned. This would seem to invalidate the idea that his has been condemned already. To be condemned already would be to say that the decision has been made, and is not open to change.

A better way to look at this verse is to understand that if one makes the knowledgeable decision to reject Christ, then he becomes condemned. Before that, Christ did not come into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world. Whoever continues to believe in him is not in the danger of becoming condemned already. But you have to reject Christ before you are condemned. Everyone has been reconciled to God. It's only by the rejection of Christ's salvation that one gets excluded from Christ's salvation of the entire world.

B.2) Eternal Punishment and Eternal Life

The second argument used by Universalists is that the Greek word for 'eternal' does not really mean 'eternal.' In other words, they believe that after some period of time the wicked will be able to repent and then be able to go to heaven. The Greek word for 'age' is 'aion.' The Greek word that is traditionally translated 'eternal' is 'aionios.' The point being made by Universalists is that 'aionios' is the adjective form of the noun 'aion.' Both should have the same meaning. If the noun 'aion' is simply an age, then adjective 'aionios' could not mean eternity.

But does an adjective always have the exact same meaning as the noun form of the same word? The noun ‘dirt’ and the adjective ‘dirty’ would be very related in most people’s minds. Yet the Encarta Dictionary has five meanings for ‘dirt’ and thirteen meanings for ‘dirty.’ Does ‘lovely’ have the exact same meaning as ‘love’? The noun ‘love’ is a much stronger word than the adjective ‘lovely.’ Is everyone who lives in a home ‘homely?’ Most people don’t tend to equate ‘home’ and ‘homely.’ The noun ‘time’ has no implication as to whether it’s long or short. But the adjective ‘timely’ implies a short amount of time. Context becomes a key factor in the interpretation of any word. Equally important is to look at all the various uses of a given word in Scripture.

The New Testament contains the adjective ‘aionios’ 71 times. 44 of these are in reference to our eternal life. Luke 16:9 refers to our eternal home (tabernacle). 2 Corinthians 4:17 refers to our eternal weight of glory. 2 Corinthians 5:1 refers to our eternal bodies in heaven. 2 Titus 2:16 refers to our eternal comfort. Hebrews 5:9 refers to our eternal salvation. Hebrews 9:12 refers to our eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:15 refers to our eternal inheritance. 1 Peter 5:10 refers to our eternal glory in Christ. We would hope that the adjective ‘aionios’ means eternity in these verses. However, I suppose one could argue that during eternity, if one were to decide to intentionally disobey Christ’s commandments, then these eternal promises would no longer apply.

There are other uses of the adjective ‘aionios’ that apply more to God or Christ. It becomes impossible for these adjectives, in these contexts, to mean anything except for eternity. Romans 16:26 refers to the eternal God. 1 Timothy 6:16 refers to the eternal honor and power of Christ. 2 Timothy 2:10 refers to the eternal glory of Jesus. Hebrews 9:14 refers to the eternal Spirit. Hebrews 13:20 refers to the eternal covenant of Christ’s blood. 2 Peter 1:11 refers to the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (The millennial reign has an end. But Christ’s kingdom itself is eternal.) Revelation 14:6 refers to the eternal gospel. In 2 Corinthians 4:18 Paul contrasts the things seen as being transient and the things unseen as being eternal. In the context of these verses, there is no question that ‘aionios’ truly means eternal.

Another use of the word is in Philemon 1:15. Paul writes:

Philemon 1:15-16 For perhaps he was therefore separated from you for a while, that you would have him forever, (16) no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much rather to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Does Paul really mean that this slave-owner will have the slave throughout eternity? The NIV translates the verse as “have him back for good.” However, Paul is saying this relationship will be more than master and slave. Both are Christian and brothers in Christ. This relationship as brothers in Christ will last for eternity.

However, the adjective ‘aionios’ might not always have to mean eternal when it is plural. In Romans 16:25 Paul speaks of the mystery of God. Literally, the text says the mystery has been kept secret for “times (plural) eternal (plural).” Eternal (plural) is an adjective for times (plural). The ESV translates it as “the mystery that was kept secret for long ages.” Can eternal be plural? Can there be more than one eternal time? The NIV translates it as “the mystery hidden for long ages past.” Paul is saying this mystery has now been revealed. Therefore, it’s not an eternal time. And translators do not use the word ‘eternal’ in their translations.

Likewise, the adjective ‘aionios’ is used in 2 Timothy 1:9. Literally, the text says “before times (plural) eternal (plural).” The same Greek words are used for “times (plural) eternal (plural)” as in Romans 16:25 (the first example of this). The ESV translates it as “before the ages began.” The NIV translates it as “before the beginning of time.”

One could make the argument that these two verses are talking about eternity past. This is less likely true of the second verse (2 Timothy 1:9), since it includes the word ‘before.’ How can there be a “before” eternity past? Likewise, Romans 16:25 probably just means long ages past, and does not necessarily mean eternity past. Also, note that the word for eternity in these two verses is in the plural. How can there be more than one eternal time? This adjective, when used in the plural, and in reference to the past, more likely means a plural of ages.

These two verses are used very differently than all our other cases. With these two verses the adjective is plural, paired with ‘times’ (plural) and is in reference to the past. This does not have a strong bearing on all the cases where the adjective is in the singular, and is in reference to the future. In the past, Jewish culture apparently understood there to be many ages (Titus 1:2). The present age was definitely understood to be limited in duration. But the age to come could easily be unlimited in duration. The age to come could extend past the millennium, and continue indefinitely into true eternity (Hebrews 9:26). At best, we can only say eternity means a very long period of time, without the specific understanding of there being an end to it. Each case must be examined in its own context.

Remember there are 71 occurrences of the adjective ‘aionios’ in the New Testament. All the rest are references to eternal punishment. Matthew 25:41 refers to the eternal fire that was prepared for the Devil and his angels. A few verses down, in Matthew 25:46, we have two uses of ‘aionios’ in the same verse. One is eternal punishment. The other is eternal life. 2 Titus 1:9 refers to eternal punishment and destruction. Hebrews 6:2 refers to eternal judgment. And Jude 1:7 refers to a punishment of eternal fire.

Mark 3:29 refers to the eternal sin (or judgment) that results in the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Notice this verse explicitly states that they are never forgiven. Christian Universalism says that everyone will someday be forgiven. This verse alone should put to rest any arguments of Christian Universalism.

Mark 3:28-30 Most certainly I tell you, all sins of the descendants of man will be forgiven, including their blasphemies with which they may blaspheme; (29) but whoever may blaspheme against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (30) -because they said, "He has an unclean spirit."

B.3) Ages of Ages (Forever and ever)

The New Testament uses the phrase “ages of ages” 19 times. Also, there is one occurrence of the phrase “age (singular) of ages.” Most translations render this as “forever and ever.” Christian Universalists point out that the literal translations does not mean forever. It can simply mean many ages. Again, we must look at the context of each case this phrase is used in order to ascertain the true meaning.

Ages of ages is used in Galatians 1:5, Philippians 4:20, 1 Timothy 1:17, 2 Timothy 4:18, Hebrews 13:21, and 1 Peter 4:11. In each of these cases it refers to the amount of time that God will have glory, honor, and power. The book of Revelation uses this phrase more than any other book. It’s used 14 times in Revelation. Verses 1:6, 5:13, and 7:12 refer to the amount of time God will have glory, honor, and power. Verses 1:18, 4:9, 4:10, 5:14, 10:6, and 15:7 refer to how long Christ will live. Revelation 11:15 refers to how long Christ will reign in his kingdom. Revelation 22:5 refers to how long we will reign with Christ. And finally, there are three verses in Revelation that say how long the wicked will be punished.

Revelation 14:9-11 Another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead, or on his hand, (10) he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed

in the cup of his anger. He will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. (11) The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. They have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.

Notice that this is not for those who simply die without accepting Christ as Savior. It's for those who explicitly and knowingly reject Christ's salvation by worshiping the beast and taking his mark of allegiance. The worship of this beast is not like the ignorant who have worshiped idols of wood, stone, gold, and silver. Nor is it like the ignorant worship of money. This beast is a world-government ruler who explicitly blasphemes God, and his name, and his dwelling, and all those who dwell in heaven (Rev 13:5-6.) Thus, this world ruler will be leading the world in the explicit and knowledgeable rejection of Christ's salvation. That is why he is called the antichrist. In worshiping this beast, the people will be explicitly worshiping Satan (Rev. 13:4) and will thus be denying Christ's salvation.

This is the unpardonable sin. It cannot be forgiven. Only those who commit the unpardonable sin will be eternally punished. This verse in Revelation effectively disproves Christian Universalism. However, the systems of interpretation used by traditional Calvinist and Arminian theologians have not been able to show why taking the mark of the beast is the same as the unpardonable sin of Hebrews 6 and the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit in Matthew 12 and Mark 3. You can learn more about the New Wine System from my book, "New Wine for the End Times."

Some Universalists have portrayed the fire as being symbolic. But this verse combines the word fire with the word sulfur making it explicitly literal. Also, this verse combines the word 'tormented,' making it even more difficult to interpret figuratively. Others have said there is no hell because the dead 'sleep.' Yes, many of the unrighteous souls are asleep right now. But just because soul sleep is true after the first death does not mean it's true after the second death. This verse explicitly says there is 'no rest' for those who take the mark of the beast.

Revelation 19:1-3 After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation, power, and glory belong to our God: (2) for true and righteous are his judgments. For he has judged the great prostitute, who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality, and he has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." (3) A second said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke goes up forever and ever."

This verse goes along very much with 14:9-11 (quoted above.) Both refer to the smoke that goes up forever and ever. This is the same phrase “forever and ever” (ages of ages) that describes the amount of time God will have glory, honor, and power. This is the same phrase “forever and ever” that describes how long Christ will live. And typically phrases have much more of a precise meaning than do individual words.

The great prostitute is the peoples of the world who take the mark of the beast. They turn away from Christ and his morality. They persecute those who profess Christ as Savior.

Revelation 20:9-10 They went up over the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the camp of the saints, and the beloved city. Fire came down out of heaven from God, and devoured them. (10) The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are also. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

This verse also connects back with 14:9-11 (quoted above). Both say the torment is day and night forever and ever. So again, the phrase used for how long Christ will live is “ages of ages.” It’s the phrase for how long God’s glory, honor, and power will last. And it’s the phrase for how long the beast and the false prophet will be tormented.

Is this another hell, fire, and brimstone sermon? No, because everyone has been reconciled to God. This is a warning to not reject Christ. Those who knowingly and explicitly reject God’s voice will be tormented for a very long time. This verse in Hebrews says it all:

Hebrews 3:7-11 Therefore, even as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you will hear his voice, (8) don't harden your hearts, as in the provocation, like as in the day of the trial in the wilderness, (9) where your fathers tested me by proving me, and saw my works for forty years. (10) Therefore I was displeased with that generation, and said, "They always err in their heart, but they didn't know my ways;" (11) as I swore in my wrath, "They will not enter into my rest." "

The Universalists are incorrect in saying that everyone will be saved. However, the Universalists have a good point in saying that God would not be effectively drawing all men to himself if the high majority of everyone who has ever lived will spend eternity in hell. Under the New Wine System, the countless number from every

nation, tribe, people and language (Rev. 7:9) are just a tip of the iceberg as compared with the total number of people, from every generation, who will be resurrected and then led down the path of salvation during the millennium.

There is one last point about the phrase “ages of ages.” If an age is not an eternity, then why does “ages of ages” mean “forever and ever?” If one age is not eternity, then many ages would not be eternity either. This question has been asserted by Universalists.

Most uses of this phrase use two plural words for ‘ages.’ There is one case, however, where the first word is singular, as in “age (singular) of ages (plural).” Young’s Literal Translation of Ephesians 3:21 renders the verse as:

Ephesians 3:21 YLT to Him *is* the glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus, to all the generations of the age of the ages. Amen.

Could Paul be putting emphasis on the one age (singular) of the Messianic kingdom? It would be the most important age of all the ages. Consider this Old Testament verse in Daniel that seems to do the same thing:

Daniel 7:17-18 YLT `These great beasts, that *are* four, *are* four kings, they rise up from the earth; (18) and receive the kingdom do the saints of the Most High, and they strengthen the kingdom unto the age, even unto the age of the ages.

The kingdom that the saints will receive is a specific kingdom for a given age. This age is the most important of all the ages. A single age is not eternity. Some number of ages is not eternity. But all the ages is eternity. I believe Paul knew Daniel’s verses, and Paul was also making reference to this most important kingdom of Jesus Christ. Paul was using a phrase that was probably well-known to the Pharisees, a phrase that had come from Daniel.

If the “age (singular) of ages” commonly referred to the Messianic kingdom, a kingdom singled out from all ages, then the phrase “ages (plural) of ages” would naturally simply mean all ages. Thus, the phrase naturally means forever and ever, even though it literally would not have that meaning. Both the usage of the phrase, and the natural progression in meaning of the phrase, indicate the phrase really means forever and ever. Therefore, those who are punished in the lake of fire are punished forever and ever. But does this mean their souls are eternal and they are tormented forever and ever?

B.4) Souls are Not Eternal by Nature

Does God intended to torment souls eternally? I think it's safe to say that those who become enemies of God will be tormented. Otherwise, where is the justice for the victims?

Some people ask why God doesn't just go ahead and destroy the souls of all the wicked. They lose their salvation because they do not repent and they become an enemy of Christ. But they are judged by their works, both good and bad. In other words, justice requires that they be tormented because of what they have done to other people.

Romans 12:19-21 Don't seek revenge yourselves, beloved, but give place to God's wrath. For it is written, "Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord." (20) 'Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so, you will heap coals of fire on his head." (21) Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

If God were to allow people to live lives of cruelty, then simply die and stay unaware forever, where would be the vengeance? For example, think of all the horrible things that are done to innocent children. They are sold as sex slaves. Where is the justice for these children if there is no torment in the lake of fire? On the other hand, if anyone repents and truly turns to Christ for forgiveness of their sins, they are welcomed by all of us, no matter what they have done, because we have all sinned. We can all forgive when there is true repentance. But without repentance, justice for sins against the innocence requires torment after death. That's why they are judged by their works. They are judged by what they have done, either good or bad, to others.

On the other hand, does justice require that torment continue forever and ever? Most would say not. But traditional theology says that souls are eternal by nature. This, however, is actually Greek thinking and not Jewish thinking.

Matthew 10:28 Don't be afraid of those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.

Yes, the wicked will be punished in the lake of fire (Gehenna) forever and ever. This simply means they will never be resurrected. Their punishment is eternal. But the actual souls do not have to be eternal. Depending on their evil works, they are probably tormented for a long time and then they are destroyed forever.

B.5) Those Who Die Without Hearing the Gospel

One of the strongest draws of Christian Universalism is that it seems to provide an answer for those who have died without ever hearing about Jesus Christ. Would a loving God create souls that have lived during past times, places, and generations that would have had no possibility of hearing about Christ? Would a loving God create these souls knowing they will spend eternity in hell?

The Universalists speaks of the endless love of God, and that the nature of God would not allow Him to give up on anybody. God, they say, cannot fail in His purpose of reconciling all men to Himself. Punishment, they say, is not eternal. It's a way to cleanse the person so that one day the person can be saved.

Both the Calvinist and the Arminian believe that if you have not accepted Christ at the point of death, then it's too late. The Calvinist and Arminian only argue over whether or not God chooses who will make the decision for Christ. I believe the Universalists are right in that death is not the end of the journey towards salvation. People can be saved after death.

Here is a verse that Universalists embrace:

1 Peter 3:18-20 ESV For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, (19) in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, (20) because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

Why would Jesus preach the gospel to dead people who had not obeyed God before they died? Some people would say that Jesus was not preaching the gospel to them. They say he was proclaiming victory over them. But just a couple of verses down, we see that this was not the case:

1 Peter 4:6 ESV For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

Clearly Jesus preached to these who are dead so that they might "live in the Spirit the way God does." These two sets of verses are in the same context. There are only seven verses between them. Being in the same context together, their interpretation is hard to deny. Universalists are correct in saying those who have died without Christ can still be saved. But this does not mean that everyone will

be saved. Nor does it mean that those who have died without Christ are currently being punished. This verse says that at least some of them, those from before the flood, are in “prison.” Eternal punishment is only for those who have knowingly and explicitly rejected Christ’s salvation. And eternal punishment, the lake of fire, is after the final Judgment, which is a thousand years after the resurrection.

It’s very true that God is a loving God, and he desires that all people be saved. For those who reject Christ’s salvation there is no other way to be reconciled with the Father. Corrective punishment only works when there is a deep-down desire to be reconciled with the Father. Deep-down, children want to please their parents. But our self-centered ways makes us test our boundaries. We tend to want to make up our own minds with regard to what we can and cannot do. The Father disciplines those He loves (Deuteronomy 8:5, Proverbs 3:12, Hebrews 12:6, 12:10). And if we have a deep-down love for our Creator, then punishment will bring us back to the Father. But there are those for whom the love of their Creator has grown so cold that no amount of punishment will work. They truly hate their heavenly Father. They knowingly and explicitly reject Christ’s salvation. They commit the unpardonable sin, and they forfeit their salvation.

Why were these dead people, to whom Christ preached, said to be in “prison” instead of in “Gehenna?” Universalists believe that punishment is not eternal, but is done only to bring people back into reconciliation with the Father. Why, then, would God punish those who have died without hearing about Christ? Even if the punishment is not forever, it makes no sense for God to punish people who have never heard the gospel. Is the system presented by Universalists really that of a loving God who shows no favoritism (Romans 2:11)?

The New Wine System is the only system where God shows no favoritism, yet salvation is through faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone. Under Calvinism, the elect are shown favoritism. If you are not one of the elect, you were created by God knowing that you will have no opportunity for salvation. Under Arminianism, those who are born into past generations that have had no opportunity to hear about Christ are not shown favoritism. Under Universalism, these people will be punished because they die having not heard about Christ. That’s favoritism for those who get the opportunity to hear about Christ.

B.6) Every Knee Will Bow

Universalists like to quote this verse:

Philippians 2:9-11 Therefore God also highly exalted him, and gave to him the name which is above every name; (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, those on earth, and those under the earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Does this mean that everyone will be saved? If we believe in our hearts that Jesus was raised from the dead, and we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord, then we will be saved (Romans 10:9). Calvinists and Arminians would say that after death, it's too late. So they believe this is a forced bending of the knee. Or they might say it's a confession that is not based on faith. However, I would agree with Universalists that this is a confession that leads to salvation. This verse is an Old Testament quote of Isaiah 45:23. From the context of this passage in Isaiah, it's obvious that Isaiah is talking about salvation.

Isaiah 45:20-25 "Assemble yourselves and come. Draw near together, you who have escaped from the nations. Those have no knowledge who carry the wood of their engraved image, and pray to a god that can't save. (21) Declare and present it. Yes, let them take counsel together. Who has shown this from ancient time? Who has declared it of old? Haven't I, Yahweh? There is no other God besides me, a just God and a Savior; There is no one besides me. (22) "Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. (23) By myself have I sworn, the word has gone forth from my mouth in righteousness, and will not return, that to me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. (24) They will say of me, 'There is righteousness and strength only in Yahweh.' " Even to him shall men come; and all those who were incensed against him shall be disappointed. (25) In Yahweh shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

From Isaiah, we see this verse is about “all the ends of the earth” turning to God to be “saved.” In Philippians, Paul applies these words to all those “in heaven and on earth and under the earth.” This does sound like everyone will be saved. Notice the emphasis in Isaiah on those who “have no knowledge.” They worship wooden idols because they don't know about Christ. But what about those who do know about Christ and yet reject Him?

The problem here is the way we have been trained to think. We think of one's eternal destiny of heaven or hell as being determined at the time of death. However, thanks to Christ's free gift for everyone, death is not a limiting factor for God. Christ died for the entire world. All people have already been reconciled to God. All people will be drawn to the Father because of the crucifixion. The Holy Spirit will reveal Himself and His Son to everybody. Everyone's name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life from the foundation of the world. However, many are blotted out, because they reject Christ's salvation. Refer to my book, "New Wine for the End Times" to see all the Scriptural evidence that people lose their salvation instead of gaining it. There is a lot of Scriptural evidence, for example, that people are blotted from the Book of Life. We are Christ's possessions unless or until we knowingly and explicitly reject Him.

Another aspect of this passage, in Isaiah, is that it's Messianic. This happens during Christ's earthly reign. Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess, during Christ's Messianic reign. Universalists, on the other hand, try to apply this verse to people after they have been punished by fire. They say the bending of the knee is after a punishment that lasts for "ages of ages." But it happens in the age to come, when Christ returns.

Again, Universalists, Calvinists, and Arminians see salvation as being gained. The New Wine System sees reconciliation as being given to everybody, and then possibly lost. In order to keep one's reconciliation everyone will eventually need to become a believer, and then mature in Christ into holiness. Everyone will eventually need to overcome sin. Eventually, they mature into eternal life, which is eternal salvation. This is after everyone has bowed the knee, and confessed Christ as Savior. You see, reconciliation can be lost even during Christ's reign. At the end of the millennium, when Satan is released, a countless number of people will march across the earth against Jerusalem. They will be marching against their King of Kings, committing the unpardonable sin.

B.7) Reconciliation of All of the Creation

Another verse that is very popular with Universalists is in Colossians. For many Universalists, this verse is very much like their major theme verse. All things will be reconciled to Christ.

Colossians 1:19-23 ESV For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, (20) and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood

of his cross. (21) And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, (22) he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, (23) if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

It is very true that everyone was reconciled to Christ, by the blood of the cross. Christ is the second Adam. Calvinists, Arminians, and Universalists all tend to think of this in terms of the future. They think in terms of reconciliation in the future. However, God was (past tense) pleased to dwell in Christ. The blood of the cross has already happened. This continues to be the case “if” we continue in faith. Everyone was given reconciliation at the cross. It’s already happened. Salvation is something to be lost, not gained. And those who lose their salvation cannot get it back again (Hebrews 6:4-6).

B.8) God’s Love

Have you had people you know, or loved ones, die without having made a profession of faith in Christ? Christian Universalism is right in that God’s plan, as seen by Calvinists and Arminians, does not portray a truly loving God for all people of all generations. However, the Christian Universalists plan is not that much better. Which would you consider to be more of a loving God? Would a loving God put them into corrective punishment, for perhaps several very long ages, or even for a few moments? Or would a loving God first reveal the saving grace of His Son, Jesus Christ?

What if a person lives and dies under Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam? Would a loving Father punish his child because they were reading the wrong scripture? Or would a loving Father make arrangements to reveal the salvation of His Son to His children before they are punished? Christian Universalism would have us believe God punishes his children because they are born under the wrong religion.

God loves us and gave His Son to die for us. We are already reconciled with the Father, even if we don’t know Christ or the Father as yet. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). And this includes every person who has ever lived, or will ever live.

Christians should seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Our sins were forgiven when we first became believers. But we should still seek the

kingdom. Only those who seek the kingdom will inherit the kingdom. However, many Christians confuse this inheritance of the kingdom with justification and being forgiven for our sins. Many Christians think all believers will inherit the kingdom. “Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians. 6:9-10).

This puts a great burden of guilt on Christians who associate inheriting the kingdom with the beginning of faith. God forgives us when we become believers. After that, we seek the kingdom because we love Him. But even if we don’t as yet seek the kingdom, we are not condemned. Those who do not inherit the kingdom will still be resurrected. There will, however, come a time when the Father will expect everyone to mature into righteousness. We cannot remain spiritual babies forever. Otherwise, there is no eternal life. There is only a second death.

But God loves. God is patient. God loves you just the way you are. The grave is not a show-stopper for God’s mercy, kindness, and patience. The grave does not mean ages upon ages of punishment.

For more information about this alternative to Calvinism, Arminianism, and Universalism, please read my book titled, “New Wine for the End Times.”

Appendix C

Problems with Preterism (Past Fulfillment)

The word 'Preterism' means past fulfillment. Bible prophecy is viewed as mostly fulfilled in the first coming of Christ, or by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Preterism goes hand-in-hand with Amillennialism and Covenant Theology. These views were predominate during the majority of Church history because the early Church distanced themselves from the Jews. Traditional Preterism has also been taken to the extreme. Full-preterism, or hyper-preterism states that every prophecy in Scripture has been fulfilled, including the return of Christ, the resurrection, and the new heavens and the new earth. These last fulfillments are stated as having happened in 70 AD. First we will take a look at the problems with full-preterism. Then we will look the more traditional preterism.

C.1) Problems with Full-Preterism

The Scriptural arguments for full preterism almost always begin here:

Matthew 10:23 ESV When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Matthew 16:28 ESV Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Matthew 24:34 ESV Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Was Jesus telling the disciples that he would return within their lifetimes? These three verses would seem to say yes. Full preterists argue that Jesus did in fact come in 70 AD.

Did Jesus fail to keep his promise? Full preterists argue that Jesus actually did come (parousia) in 70 AD. Then, after confusing their potential converts, they proceed to give complex arguments as to why Jesus did in fact return in the clouds, in judgment. They argue that the resurrection is fulfilled with believers living in heaven. Then they argue that the new heavens and the new earth is the new covenant. They are able to convince people that the Bible does not prophecy the future and return of Christ, the defeat of Satan, and the end of sin and death.

There is no need to come up with complex and doubtful reasons as to why Jesus really did keep these three promises without it really being the return of Christ. Refer back to section 15.13 of this book to see why prophecies that concern the blessing or the cursing of a nation are conditional upon repentance (Jeremiah 18:7-10, quoted below). The Jewish leaders had 40 years to repent before Jerusalem was destroyed. If they had repented, these conditional prophecies of Jesus would have come to pass. This is what Jesus hoped would happen.

As we saw in section 15.13, the seventy weeks of Daniel allowed for Israel to either accept or reject the Messiah. Jesus truly hoped that the Jewish leaders might repent and that he would be able to return in their lifetimes. Paul believed Jesus would return in their lifetime, even knowing that it would require the repentance of the Jewish leaders. This was not a false hope. It could have happened if the Jewish leaders had said, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." The people of Israel has said these very words as Jesus rode in on a donkey. But as Jesus had so indicated, he would not be able to return if those who sat on the seat of Moses would not repent and recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

Jeremiah 18:7-10 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; (8) if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to them. (9) At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; (10) if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they not obey my voice, then I will repent of the good, with which I said I would benefit them.

There is no need to stretch the Scripture for reasons why these three prophecies of Jesus actually did come to pass, as many have tried to do. According to Jeremiah 18:7-10, these types of prophecies are conditional. When the Jewish leaders asked for a sign to prove his claims, Jesus said the only sign that would be given to that evil generation was the sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:38-41).

Both Jesus and Jonah were in the heart of the earth, or the belly of the fish, for three days and nights. The resurrection of Jesus was a major sign. But the sign of Jonah goes much deeper. Jonah unconditionally prophesied that Nineveh would be destroyed in 40 days. But starting with the king, they repented and were not destroyed. Jonah was not a false prophet. Likewise, Jesus was not a false prophet for saying that he would return within 40 years (that generation) because the Jewish leaders did not repent. According to Jeremiah 18:7-10, it works both ways.

C.2) Problems with Traditional Preterism

Scripture is divided into the New Testament and the Old Testament. The word ‘testament’ means covenant. In other words, Covenant Theology views the New Covenant (Testament) as making the Old Covenant (Testament) obsolete. “In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (ESV Hebrews 8:13). In other words, the entire Old Testament is viewed as being obsolete. But does that really make God’s covenant with Abraham obsolete? How about God’s covenant with Noah? Is it obsolete?

Galatians 3:17-18 Now I say this. A covenant confirmed beforehand by God in Christ, the law, which came four hundred thirty years after, does not annul, so as to make the promise of no effect. (18) For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by promise.

Paul is saying that the covenant with Moses does not make obsolete the covenant with Abraham. Paul is not speaking of the new covenant. But I think the principle remains. The covenant with Moses was conditional and based on our obedience. That’s why we needed a new covenant that is not conditional for those whom God chooses. But the Abrahamic covenant was not conditional. Abraham was elected.

Covenant Theology tends to lump God’s covenant with Abraham together with God’s covenant with Moses. Both become the “Old Testament,” without mentioning God’s covenant with Noah. The Davidic covenant is said to be fulfilled in Christ’s current heavenly reign. The kingdom of heaven is viewed as entirely a spiritual kingdom that is “not of this world.” The Old Testament becomes “reinterpreted in the light of the New Testament.” Thus, the “Old Testament” replaces the “New Testament” and the Church winds up becoming the New Israel.

God’s covenant with Abraham involves the land of Israel including Jerusalem. Thus, those who hold to Covenant Theology would say the Jewish nation of modern-day Israel has nothing to do with Scripture or with Bible prophecy. These Christians often do not stand with Israel. This is known as Supersessionism and is also called Replacement Theology. Supersessionism says Christianity is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. It’s true that Jews who deny Jesus as the Messiah will not inherit the kingdom. But Supersessionism views God as forever turning his back on the Jewish people as a whole. Paul, of course, teaches that his people, the Jewish people, will be unhardened.

The Covenant Theologian should point out that Gentiles in Christ are also heirs to Abraham's promise (Galatians 3:29). Does this mean that all Christians from all generations, and the majority of all the Jews, will all be living in the land promised to Abraham? Dispensationalists would say the Jews will live in the land but the Church is a recipient of the land only a spiritual way. But this breaks their own grammatical/historical hermeneutical principle. We are literally recipients of Abraham's promise of the land. But what about, "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it weren't so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2)? Are these rooms in the land of Israel?

The only way to resolve this is to realize that Old Jerusalem is a representation of New Jerusalem and that the New Jerusalem will be in orbit around the earth. We will reign with Christ. The Old Jerusalem will be the capitol of the world and we will live in the New Jerusalem. It will all function together as we live and reign with Christ. This then, is fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. The kingdom is today present in the hearts of the believer because the Holy Spirit dwells in us. But that's only a small partial fulfillment of the future heavenly kingdom that is to come.

The earthly kingdom of heaven (or kingdom of God) was prophesied in Daniel 2. The Rock, not made by human hands, strikes the feet of the statue and the whole statue crumbles. Then the Rock expands into a mountain that covers the whole earth. This is recognized even by Preterists as being the kingdom of Christ Jesus, who is the Rock that becomes a mountain and covers the earth. Mountains can be symbolic of kingdoms. Preterists agree with this interpretation. But Preterists view the kingdom as being entirely spiritual and "not of this world."

Preterists would say that the spiritual kingdom of heaven began to expand around the world as the Roman Empire fell. Constantine converted Rome to Christianity. Today, the Roman Empire is gone and it will not be revived. So this is reasonable interpretation of the statue so long as the legs of iron are Rome. Look at the cover of this book, especially at the right foot. You might want to consider the Achilles' heel of Preterism as hidden on the back side this foot. As long as the legs of iron are interpreted as Rome, the Preterist interpretation holds some merit. The kingdom begins to fill the earth as Rome dwindles away. But as soon as one realizes that the legs of iron is really the Islamic Caliphate, the whole Preterist view crumbles along with the rest of the statue. The future and literal kingdom of heaven that expands throughout the world does not happen until after Islam is destroyed.

Overcome Sin, for the Kingdom Of Jesus Christ is Coming Soon.

