

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	2
ANSWERS FROM JESUS:	
The Wheat & The Tares.....	9
The Olivet Discourse.....	13
The Upper Room Discourse.....	19
ANSWERS FROM PETER:	
Peter's First Sermon.....	33
Peter's Second Sermon.....	36
Peter's Epistles.....	38
ANSWERS FROM PAUL:	
1 Cor. 15 & The Last Trumpet.....	42
1 Thess. 4 & The Rapture.....	44
1 Thess. 5 & The Day Of The Lord.....	47
2 Thess. 1 & Post Trib Rest.....	53
2 Thess. 2 Anti Christ First.....	55
Titus 2:13 The Blessed Hope.....	66
ANSWERS FROM JOHN:	
The Rapture In Revelation.....	69
Resurrection In Revelation.....	74
MISCELLANEOUS ANSWERS:	
Rapture Terminology.....	79
ANSWERS FROM EARLY WRITERS:	
Early Church Eschatology.....	85
ANSWERS TO PRE TRIBBERS:	
Double Talk.....	107
Imminence.....	123
ANSWERS TO AMILLERS	
Corruption Of Apostolic Eschatology.....	137
ANSWERS RE: GENESIS & REVELATION	
Ussher's Creation Date Error.....	143
The "Sons Of God" in Gen. 6.....	145
The Date Of Revelation.....	170

The Rapture, Introduction

Copyright © Tim Warner

The timing of the "rapture" is a divisive and contentious subject in the world of Evangelical Christianity. Churches typically do not like controversy, and will do much to avoid it altogether. Evangelical churches in the United States seem to fall largely into two camps, being either staunchly "pretribulationist," or avoiding the subject altogether. The former group typically considers no other view worthy of a hearing. The latter group seems to think eschatology is too complicated for Christians to be bothered with, and completely unnecessary to the Christian life. I call these "pantribulationists" (it will all "pan out" in the end, no need to concern yourself).

What if pretribulationists are wrong?

If pretribulationists turn out to be wrong, the consequences will be devastating as millions of Christians who believed the myth of a pretribulation rapture find themselves in the midst of the end time drama, facing the Antichrist! Indeed, the evidence against the pretribulation view is staggering if people would simply allow themselves to be exposed to it. Yet, most refuse to even take a peek, and are constantly assured by their pastors and self-appointed TV prophecy experts that all is well. What are the shepherds going to say to the sheep if they have failed to prepare them for the roaring lion's brutal attack?

What if "pantribulationists" are wrong?

The New Testament contains a great deal of teaching on the tribulation, and the spiritual preparation necessary for it. Jesus indicated most Christians living through this time would abandon the Faith (Matt. 24:9-15). Is that not worth investigation to find out why? How does one avoid such a fate if he knows nothing about Bible prophecy?

This is a matter of utmost importance to Christians living in the last days. Where are the shepherds who are watching for the lion and wolf?

DESCRIPTION OF THE POSTTRIBULATION RAPTURE VIEW

The "posttribulation" rapture view is the belief that Jesus will return visibly and bodily to raise the dead and gather together living Christians at the end of a period of intense tribulation called by Jesus, "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21). The posttribulation view is unique in that it recognizes only a single future coming of Jesus. All other rapture views, pretribulation, midtribulation, and pre-wrath, claim the rapture and resurrection will occur prior to the second coming of Jesus by months or years. While these views see the "rapture" as a means to take the Church to heaven to escape God's wrath, the posttribulation view sees the

rapture as the necessary mechanism for gathering together all believers, from both heaven and earth, to participate in Christ's revelation to the world in power and glory at His coming. Therefore, in a posttribulation scenario, the rapture is an integral part of the second coming. Upon Jesus' descent from heaven to the clouds, the angels will be dispatched by the trumpet blast and gather together Jesus' elect to join Him in the air. The whole gathering will be revealed to the world in a blaze of glory. In Titus 2:13, Paul equated our "blessed hope" with the "glorious appearing" of Christ. He did the same in several other passages.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, 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. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt 24:29-31 NKJV).

Incidentally, the "posttribulation" view was actually named by Jesus in the above passage. The words, "after the tribulation" (verse 29) in the Latin Bible are literally rendered, "post tribulationem."

Holding the correct view of the timing of the rapture is more than academic, because one's beliefs dictate his actions. Those who believe they will escape the severe hardship and persecution of the tribulation have no incentive to prepare themselves spiritually and emotionally for that possibility. Both Jesus' and Paul's first warning regarding the timing of Jesus' return was the same, "Take heed that no one deceives you" (Matt. 24:4 NKJV), and "let no one deceive you by any means" (2 Thess. 2:3).

HISTORY OF THE POSTTRIBULATION RAPTURE VIEW

Despite a variety of millennial views in Christian history, the posttribulation view had no rival for the first seventeen centuries after Christ. Historic premillennialists and amillennialists have always been posttribulational. Only within modern dispensational premillennialism do we find the idea of a "rapture" distinct from the second coming. The evidence from early Christian literature is exclusively posttribulational. A few popular contemporary authors have claimed otherwise. They are mistaken or they are worse. And many Christians repeat these false claims without investigation. We have documented the revisionism of Church history by some pretribulation authors in the section entitled "Historical Evidence."

To my knowledge, the first to separate the rapture from the second coming was a Baptist minister named Morgan Edwards (1722-1795). He wrote a paper while in seminary that outlined a hypothetical form of midtribulationism, and years

later published his thesis. Within forty years of his death, Edward Irving (Catholic Apostolic Church), and shortly thereafter John N. Darby (Plymouth Brethren), both of England, were teaching pretribulationism.

THE RAPTURE QUESTION IN MODERN TIMES

In many parts of the western world, especially the USA and western Europe, the pretribulation view supplanted the posttribulation view in the last two centuries. This was due largely to the Christian seminary movement, with large schools like Dallas Theological Seminary leading the way in promoting this view. But, probably the single most important reason for the widespread acceptance of pretribulationism was the Scofield Reference Bible, which incorporated the dispensational, pretribulation scheme in the reference notes.

In the last several decades, there has been a considerable trend away from pretribulationism back to the ancient view. No doubt, there are several reasons for this. One reason seems to be the effective use by posttribulationists of the early Church writings, showing a unanimous posttribulationism in the early Church. George Ladd, Robert Gundry, and Dave MacPherson have led the way in exposing the recent roots of pretribulationism. This author has done considerable work in this area as well.

The pretribulation establishment has taken this thinning out of their ranks very seriously. The Pre-trib Research Center, founded by Tim LaHaye, and currently headed by Thomas Ice, was established to counter this trend, and to deal with the powerful historical evidence that posttribulationists have offered. Rather than taking a more scholarly approach, they have responded with a blitz of propaganda in the form of fictional novels and prophecy films, like LaHaye's "Left Behind" series, in order to shore up their base. But, despite this effort, there remains a steady exodus of Christians from the pretribulation camp.

We insist that the earliest Christian view is the correct one, because the earliest view is necessarily "Apostolic." These articles are dedicated to providing the biblical and historical reasons for adopting the ancient rapture view of the Church. It is our contention that the pretribulation view is not explicitly taught anywhere in Scripture and is based solely on incorrect inferences and a faulty version of the dispensational system. It was not what Jesus commanded to be preached in all the world until the end of the age. Neither was it the view handed down by the Apostles to the next generation of Christians. The view presented here is essentially the same as what was held by the earliest Christian writers contiguous with the time of the Apostles. We are not suggesting that anyone should hold to the posttribulation view simply because of its history or antiquity. We aim to show that it is the only biblical view of the rapture timing. The historical information is just further confirmation that the early Church trained

by the Apostles understood the Scriptures in a similar way. And it should prod the reader to take another look at the Biblical data.

METHODOLOGY IN BUILDING OUR BIBLICAL CASE

Underlying our approach is the realization that the Bible is a progressive revelation of God to mankind. All of the information available to us in Scripture was not available to everyone in history. Some things were revealed through Moses, others through the prophets many generations later. More was revealed by Jesus, and still more through the writings of the Apostles. Finally, the book of Revelation was given through John as the capstone of prophetic truth. The totality of biblical prophetic truth was progressively given over thousands of years.

Because of the progressive nature of Bible prophecy, when interpreting a given passage, we cannot assume things (known from later prophecy) that had not yet been revealed to mankind when that particular prophecy was written or spoken. For example, when examining what Jesus taught His disciples about His coming and the end of the age, we need to place ourselves in their shoes. We should take into account what they already knew from their Jewish training in the Old Testament Scriptures. They were certainly not aware of later prophecy, such as the book of Revelation given six decades later! When Jesus taught His disciples, He was quite aware that their understanding was limited to PAST revelation. Jesus built on and added to their current foundational understanding with more detailed revelation. This is clear in the Olivet Discourse, where Jesus referred the disciples to what Daniel had written about the "Abomination of Desolation" (Matt. 24:15). Many other passages could be cited in the New Testament where the writer or speaker quoted or alluded to Old Testament prophecy when teaching about eschatology.

In our study, we will try our best to understand a passage in the way the original audience would have understood it given their current level of learning. This assumes that Bible prophecy was first and foremost intended for the audience to whom it was first given. Of course, all Bible prophecy is beneficial to us who live thousands of years later. But, it was not originally written specifically to us. Therefore, we need to resist the temptation to interpret earlier prophecy in light of later revelation. The original hearers of that prophecy did not have the benefit of later revelation. When giving new revelation, which was obviously meant to be properly comprehended by the intended audience, we assume the writer was fully aware of what his audience knew and did not know. He expected his hearers or readers to interpret the prophecies correctly, given their limited understanding.

As you read the articles in the first section, you will notice they follow a sequential path through the New Testament. When appropriate, we will look at

Old Testament prophecy and consider its implications regarding the knowledge of the original audience of the New Testament prophetic Scriptures. By using this format, we will build our case sequentially, and demonstrate a strong reliance on previous prophecy, as well as examine new revelation when given. By default, we will assume that prophetic details given have a foundation in past prophecy. Where unique details are given that have no apparent basis in past prophecy, we can assume that this is new revelation. Often, the text itself tells us when new revelation is being given and when old revelation is being reiterated. For example, when Paul wrote, "behold I show you a mystery" (1 Cor. 15:54), we can conclude he was about to reveal something not previously understood. But, when Peter wrote that he was reminding his readers of "the words of the prophets" (2 Peter 3:1,2), we can conclude he was referring to previous prophecy.

PRETRIBULATIONISM'S FALSE CLAIMS OF "LITERALISM"

Pretribulation writers often claim to be the champions of the "literal" method of interpretation. While literalism necessarily leads to a premillennial understanding of prophecy, it does not favor the pretribulation rapture view within the premillennial camp. I realize that this is a radical statement in today's eschatological climate. But, we mean to prove our assertion in the following articles. It is pretribulationists themselves who frequently appeal to non literal interpretations as the primary support for their view. Some common examples of this are...

- John's being caught up to heaven in Rev. 4:1 represents the rapture
- The catching up of the "Man Child" in Rev. 12 represents the rapture
- the twenty-four elders represent the whole Church in heaven
- the seven letters in Revelation represent seven "church ages"
- Enoch's and Elijah's catching up are types of a pretribulation rapture

The articles on this website will prove conclusively that posttribulationists can far surpass pretribulationists in holding to a consistent "grammatical - historical" or "literal" methodology. And a consistent literal methodology will necessarily lead to a posttribulation rapture (within a premillennial framework). Further, we assert without any hesitation that pretribulationists cannot produce a single statement of Scripture, taken literally, that requires a pretribulation rapture. All of their arguments are based on non literal interpretations and unnecessary inferences.

HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS

We do not claim perfection for the post Apostolic Church, nor any of the early Christian writers. The intent of our historical section is to demonstrate that the second generation Church was solidly posttribulational, and that no hint of pretribulationism can be found in their writings. While this is a secondary argument, and does not carry the weight of the Biblical arguments, it is the

natural extension of our premise. Since we are viewing prophecy progressively, always building on previous revelation, it is logical to conclude that students (or disciples) of the Apostles would largely reflect the view handed down to them by Apostolic oral tradition. The second generation Church was the product of the lifetime teaching ministries of Jesus' Apostles. The early Church not only possessed the written documents of the New Testament, but also a considerable body of oral personal instruction from their mentors, the Apostles. We will demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that the second generation Church held a well developed posttribulationism. The implications of this fact are enormous. If the pretribulation view is correct, then the entire early Church was mistaken, and had departed from the truth even before John wrote Revelation! Hence, the Apostles of Jesus were miserable failures in transmitting sound doctrine to the very next generation of Christians, and grounding them in the Word. That means, all the early local churches succumbed simultaneously to the same false view of the rapture virtually overnight, and no record can be found of any kind of resistance or rebuttal of this alleged massive departure from the supposed pretribulationism of the Apostles. All this despite the fact that the early Christian apologists, like Justin, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus, wrote volumes against the contemporary heresies that threatened the Church, appealing to the Scriptures and Apostolic oral tradition. If pretribulationism is true, we are forced to conclude that as soon as the Apostles died (actually while John was still alive), the whole Christian Church abandoned the Apostles' doctrine and substituted a false eschatology that required them to go through the tribulation. Perhaps they were enjoying the Roman persecution so much, they wanted more!

PRETRIBULATION ARGUMENTS ANSWERED

Our approach is to first provide a positive presentation of the biblical view from the Scriptures. Next, we deal with the historical issues. Finally, we present to the reader a rebuttal of all of the major pretribulation arguments for your consideration. Posttribulationists have been accused of arguing our case by merely tearing down pretribulationism rather than advancing a positive presentation of the Biblical basis for our view. Unfortunately, this is a fair analysis in many cases. But, this author has taken the high road by first building our case from Scripture alone, then dealing with the historical arguments, and lastly providing our rebuttal of the pretribulationists' arguments.

The process of developing our eschatology first and foremost from a progressive handling of Scripture using the grammatical - historical (literal) method, and then adding the testimony of the early Church, leads firmly, logically, and inescapably to a posttribulation understanding of the rapture. One of the reasons the pretribulation view cannot be correct is because it depends exclusively on circular arguments, unnecessary inferences, and ignores the progressive nature of revelation. Arguments are invented and forced upon the

Scriptures, rather than building a case progressively on a proper foundation. Because we have built our case progressively, you will benefit most from reading the articles in sequence.

CHALLENGE TO PRETRIBULATIONISTS

All we ask is a fair hearing. As you consider our arguments from Scripture with an open mind, ask yourself the following questions. "If a pretribulation rapture is what Scripture teaches, where was it introduced in the progressive revelation of Biblical prophecy?" Such a major concept must have been unveiled to the Christian world at some point in time. When? Where? What effect did it have on those who first heard it? What passage of Scripture indicates this new radical departure from the rest of Bible prophecy? As you contemplate the historical evidence provided here, ask yourself this question. "Why was the pretribulation rapture only discovered, and documented in the history of Christianity, many centuries after the founding of Jesus' Church?" If it is truly part of the "Faith once delivered to the saints," why did the early Church, taught by the Apostles, know nothing of it?

The Wheat & The Tares

Matthew 13:24-43

Copyright © Tim Warner

May 1, 2008

The Consummation

Jesus' disciples had a thoroughly "Jewish" perspective on the coming of Messiah's Kingdom. They had been taught, (from such passages as Psalm 37, Isaiah 40, 62, 65, 66; Daniel 2, 7; Joel 3; & Zechariah 14), that the creation would be restored to its pristine condition when the Messiah comes to establish His Kingdom on earth. The restoration of the creation was their hope. Their belief that they had "found the Messiah"¹ drove their anticipation. They did not understand the concept of two comings of the Messiah. They were oblivious to the fact that He first had to suffer. They had no idea there was to be a period of time in which the "Gospel of the Kingdom" must be preached to all nations prior to His coming in power and glory. ²

Jesus first began to reveal the details of His second coming through parables. By far the most important such parable is the "Wheat and Tares." This parable sheds considerable light on the nature of the Kingdom of God and when the righteous will be received into the presence of Christ the King. It is therefore a fitting place to begin our study.

Before we begin, we need to dispense with a common misconception. Many Christians suppose that the term "Kingdom of Heaven" found in Matthew's Gospel refers to heaven itself, to a kingdom that exists within the sphere of heaven. That concept would be foreign to the Jewish mind, because all of the prophets had predicted that the coming Kingdom would be here on earth.³ The term "Kingdom of Heaven" was used by Matthew exclusively, the parallel accounts in the other Gospels all having "Kingdom of God." The terms are therefore synonymous. The Kingdom is "of heaven" in the sense that it comes from heaven, and its authority is derived from heaven. Both terms probably originated from Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Dan 2:43-44

*44 And in the days of these kings **the God of heaven will set up a kingdom** which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.*

This Kingdom is really "the Kingdom of the God of Heaven." It is easy to see how it could be abbreviated as both "the Kingdom of Heaven" and "the Kingdom of

God." That "the Kingdom of the God of heaven" will rule the earth is made clear in various other passages in Daniel.

Dan 7:13-14, 27

13 I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.

14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed. ...

*27 Then the kingdom and dominion, **and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.** His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'*

Notice in the highlighted portion above that "the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven" will be inherited by the saints. "Kingdoms" is plural. Essentially, the saints will rule the earth with the Messiah. This is "the Kingdom of Heaven" for which the Jews eagerly waited. With that background, let's turn our attention to Jesus' parable.

Matt 13:24-30, 36-43

*24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: **"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field;***

25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.

26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'

29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'" ...

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

37 He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.

38 *The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.*

39 *The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.*

40 *Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.*

41 *The Son of Man will send out His angels, and **they will gather out of His kingdom** all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,*

42 *and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

43 *Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun **in the kingdom** of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*

First, let's notice that the "Kingdom of Heaven" is introduced by "planting" wheat. We learn from verse 37, that Jesus is the "sower." He was at that time beginning to "sow" the seed, preaching "the Gospel of the Kingdom."⁴ The disciples themselves would take up this task when Jesus went back to the Father.⁵ And this "sowing" of the seed would continue until the "end of the age."⁶

Satan sowed "tares" among the wheat. These "tares" were wicked persons who perverted the truth of the Gospel. An example would be the Gnostics that invaded the churches in the late first century, of which Paul warned the Ephesian elders.⁷ Jesus also warned about many "false prophets" who would appear to be true "wheat," but would be refused entrance in His coming Kingdom.

Matt 7:21-23

21 *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*

22 *Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'*

23 *And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*

These pseudo-Christians are the "tares" in Jesus' parable. While they use the name of Jesus or the title of the Messiah, they are really the Devil's apostles, "sons of the Wicked One" (v. 38).

When the angels noticed the tares growing alongside the wheat, they asked the Master whether they should remove them for the sake of the wheat. Yet, the reply was to let them alone until the time of the harvest.

Next we see that “at the end of this age” the harvest will arrive. The angels are the agents of the harvest (both of the true followers of Christ and the wicked imposters).

Notice that the Lord commands the angels to first gather and bind the tares into bundles so they could later be burned. They are not, however, destroyed at this time. They are merely “bound,” and their fate is sealed. We see this “gathering” of the wicked imposters just before the Lord returns in both Testaments.⁸

As soon as the tares are separated and bundled for burning, the wheat are gathered by the angels into the barn. It is significant that the angels gather the wheat. We will see this again in the Olivet Discourse, as Jesus sends forth His angels to gather together His elect “immediately after the tribulation.”⁹

It is important to note that the wicked are being removed from “the Kingdom.” That is, the Kingdom does exist now in this age. It exists among all those who profess Jesus as their Lord and King. But, the Kingdom will continue after the harvest, with the genuine followers of Jesus Christ. The imposters will all be removed.

This is the extent of Jesus' interpretation of His parable. However, we need to keep some things in mind as we proceed.

- The tares are limited to those who are false followers of the Messiah, and not all who may be unsaved.
- The “binding” of the tares takes place before the true followers of Jesus are harvested. (This “binding” may in fact be the purpose for the mark of the Beast, which condemns to the furnace of fire all who take it).¹⁰
- The harvest of the righteous takes place at the “end of this age.”

Notes:

1. John 1:41

2. Matt. 24:14

3. Acts 3:20-22 “and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times **of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.**”

4. Matt. 4:23, 9:35

5. Matt. 24:14

6. Matt. 28:18-20

7. Acts 20:29.

8. cf. Joel 3:1-2, 9-17, Zech. 14:2, Rev. 16:13-16.

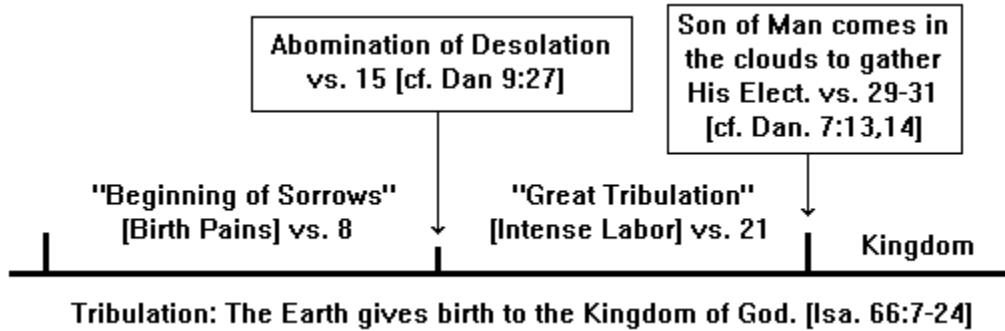
9. Matt. 24:29-31

10. cf. Matt. 13:40-42 & Rev. 14:9-11

The Olivet Discourse

Matthew 24 (Mark 13)

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007



The Importance of the Olivet Discourse

The Olivet Discourse, contained in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, is the most straightforward and important teaching regarding the end of the age found anywhere in Scripture. It is the cornerstone of all New Testament eschatology. New Testament writers referred to this discourse repeatedly, and based their eschatology on Jesus' own teaching to His disciples about the end of the age. In successive articles, we will demonstrate the strong dependence on Jesus' Olivet Discourse by Peter, Paul, and John, when referring to the Christian's hope. This reliance on the Olivet Discourse by the Apostles to answer questions about the rapture utterly demolishes the pretribulationists' position. Jesus placed the gathering together of His elect "*immediately after the tribulation*" (Matt. 24:31), and His followers within the tribulation events. The only hope of sustaining a pretribulation rapture for the "Church" is to claim that the passage does not concern the "Church" but Israel. They have consistently claimed this very thing despite the overwhelming internal evidence to the contrary. Yet, if the Apostles repeatedly referred their Christian readers to the Olivet Discourse to answer questions about the rapture, the connection between Jesus' eschatological teaching and Church doctrine is assured, and pretribulationism is soundly defeated.

The Setting and Sequence of Events

None of the four Gospels give us a complete picture of Jesus' life, actions, or teachings. Details in one Gospel are not always found in the others. This holds true for the Olivet Discourse as well. Only by examining each account and synchronizing them together, can we reconstruct the fullest possible account of what Jesus taught.

One common mistake has been to assume that Luke 21 is another account of the Olivet Discourse. But, a careful examination of Luke 21 reveals that this discourse was delivered on the Temple Mount earlier the same day before Jesus and His disciples went out to the Mount of Olives that evening. Luke 21 is sometimes referred to as "**The Great Temple Discourse.**" In that discourse, Jesus outlined the following future sequence covering the entire age.

- The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple
- The scattering of the Jews among the nations "*until the times of the Gentiles*" are fulfilled
- An upheaval among the nations
- Certain cosmic signs
- Jesus' return to set up His Kingdom

It is significant to notice that in Luke's account (Luke 21), Jesus gave specific instructions to His disciples concerning their escape from the Roman siege of Jerusalem that came in AD70, some forty years after Pentecost. The early Church historian, Eusebius, recorded that the early Jewish Christians heeded Jesus' warnings, fled the city when they saw the Roman armies surrounding Jerusalem, and were spared. It is obvious then that Jesus' instructions to His disciples in Luke 21 concerned the "Church" and their escape from the Roman armies. Yet, in the very same discourse Jesus spoke of the turmoil of the end of the age, and the cosmic signs that would announce His coming to set up His Kingdom. He told the very same people whom He instructed to "*flee to the mountains*" when the Roman siege arrived that they would know that His posttribulation coming was near by watching for the signs he gave. He also told them to pray that they might be counted worthy to "*escape all these things,*" which included both the events of AD70 and the tribulation. By observing HOW the early Christians escaped the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 we have a good idea of how we can expect to escape the events of the last days - not by rapture but by fleeing when appropriate.

No Confusion of the Destruction of the Temple and the End of the Age

While the disciples no doubt were interested in the destruction of the Temple foretold by Jesus (and Daniel in Dan. 9:26), their real concern was His second coming and establishing His Kingdom. The disciples could not have missed the fact that these two events were clearly distinguished by Jesus, and separated by a significant period of time. Not only did He distinguish the destruction of the Temple (AD70) and the second coming in Luke 21's Great Temple Discourse earlier that day, but Matthew also recorded something Jesus said on the Temple Mount that Luke did not mention. Prior to their leaving for the Mount of Olives Jesus said this:

Matt 23:37-39

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

38 See! **Your house is left to you desolate;**

39 for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

Here again, Jesus has clearly separated the destruction of the Temple from His second coming to set up His Kingdom. Many commentators claim that the disciples' question "when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age" presupposes that both would occur at the same time. But that is not the case. Jesus clearly put Israel's rejection of Him, the desolation of the Temple, and the dispersion of Israel among the nations, before His second coming.

On the Mount of Olives

On the Mount of Olives later that evening, four of the disciples privately asked Jesus specifically about the signs of His coming and the end of the age. Their interest was more than academic. They expected to live to see His coming. And, they wanted to know how they would recognize when this event was approaching. In this discourse, Jesus answered their question in the most straightforward way, outlining a sequence of events up until the end of the age and His coming in glory. He gave a series of SIGNS to watch for, including; wars, famines, earthquakes, the Gospel being preached among all nations, the abomination of desolation, and finally the cosmic signs which will announce His coming after the tribulation. This graphic sequence ended with the following words;

Matt 24:29-31

29 "**Immediately after the tribulation** of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, 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 His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Here we see that at Jesus' coming after the tribulation, He will sound a trumpet, and dispatch His angels to gather together "His elect." In Mark's account of this

statement it is apparent that Jesus' elect will be gathered from both earth and heaven (Mark 13:27). Now, notice verse 33;

Matt 24:33

*33 So you also, **when you see all these things**, know that it is near — at the doors!*

Only after all of these signs Jesus gave were fulfilled could His disciples expect Him to come.

Some claim that this "gathering" of Jesus' "elect" is not "the Church." An artificial dichotomy has been constructed by dispensationalists in order to segregate Jewish believers and "tribulation saints" from "the Church." However, let me just suggest that you read this chapter taking special note of all the places Jesus used the personal pronouns "you," "yourselves," etc. In doing so, it will become obvious that Jesus' answer to His disciples assumed that they could survive to see His coming. How can this be? Simply because Jesus Himself did not know when He would return (Mark 13:32). And, we know from several other passages that the early Christians, including Paul, expected to survive until the second coming (John 21:20-23, 1 Thess. 4:15). In fact, the entire New Testament is written with the assumption that the second coming of Jesus **could** (but not must) come in the first century. This fact is important in recognizing the continuity of the Olivet Discourse, and that Jesus' teaching extends throughout the present age until the second coming.

Of course, pretribulationists deny that this passage refers to the followers of Jesus (the Church). They think the disciples here represent another group, perhaps certain elect Jews in the tribulation. It must be noted that such an interpretation is far from the "literal" method that pretribulationists claim to champion. However, the Great Commission is of utmost importance in resolving this dispute. Jesus told His disciples;

Matt 28:19-20

*19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
20 **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

We must bear in mind, that Jesus was speaking to the very same disciples who asked Him about the signs of His coming just a few weeks earlier. They sat at His feet on Mt. Olivet while He instructed them to watch for all the signs and His coming "*immediately after the tribulation.*" In the above passage, Jesus further commanded them to take all of His teaching to them into all the world and make converts of the Gentile nations. "*Teaching them to observe ALL THINGS*

WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU," cannot leave out His teaching in the Olivet Discourse about watching for the signs of His coming after the tribulation. I would like to draw your attention to two important points.

1. Jesus never mentioned a pretribulation rapture before His coming in glory after the tribulation. He spoke of His followers going through the tribulation, and watching for the signs of His coming after the tribulation. This is when He will "gather together His elect."

2. The Gospel He commanded the Apostles to preach, did not include a pretribulation rapture, but instead included teaching concerning watching for His posttribulation coming.

Now, compare the Olivet Discourse to the Great Commission in the following passages.

The Olivet Discourse	The Great Commission
<i>Matt 24:14</i> 14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to <u>all the nations</u> , and then the end will come.	<i>Matt 28:19</i> 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of <u>all the nations</u> , baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
<i>Matt 24:3</i> 3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of <u>the end of the age?</u> "	<i>Matt 28:20</i> 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to <u>the end of the age.</u> " Amen.

Jesus defined the term "end of the age" in the Olivet Discourse, by identifying it with the end of the tribulation. Jesus placed the "great tribulation" just **before** the "end of the age" (Matt. 24:3,21,29). It is apparent that the "end of the age" in the Great Commission is also at the end of the tribulation. We are commanded to preach the gospel to all nations until the "end of the age." Therefore, we must continue with the Great Commission until the end of the tribulation. This is the logical conclusion of Jesus' statements.

In Mark's account of the Olivet Discourse Jesus ended with a stern warning and instructions for Christians to watch for His posttribulation coming.

Mark 13:24-27,33-37

24 "But in those days, **after that tribulation**, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light;

25 the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26 **Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.**

27 And **then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect** from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. ...

33 Take heed, watch and pray; for **you do not know when the time is.**

34 It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and **gave authority to his servants**, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

35 **Watch therefore**, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming — in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning —

36 lest, coming suddenly, he find **you** sleeping.

37 **And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!**"

This parable in Mark's account of the Olivet Discourse proves that Jesus' instructions were meant to apply to Christians. He elsewhere told the disciples He was "going away," but would return for them. That refers to Jesus' ascension to heaven. He "left His house"; He "gave authority to His servants"; and He gave "to every man his work." These statements unquestionably refer to the Apostles and the Great Commission, thereby encompassing the entirety of this age. He commanded them to "watch" for His coming while carrying on this "work." Again, there is absolutely no question that Jesus was referring to the period of time between His ascension to heaven and His second coming, (or the age in which we live. He was referring to Christians when He said, "watch." The question then is, watch for what? The context leaves no wiggle room for pretribulationists. The answer is in verses 24-27. We, as Christians, are to be watching for Jesus' coming "after the tribulation." Notice the last verse. What Jesus said to them (the disciples) He says to ALL of His followers, "watch" (for His coming "after the tribulation").

In My Father's House

John 14:1-3

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

John 14:1-3

1 *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.*

2 *In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

3 *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

John fourteen one through three is sometimes quoted as evidence that Jesus taught a pretribulation rapture to His disciples. Other pretribulationists believe the rapture was not revealed by Jesus at all. They believe Paul alone was the conduit for this alleged revelation. Those who claim John fourteen teaches a pretribulation rapture believe this passage implies Jesus will take the raptured believers immediately to heaven.

The idea that this passage teaches Christians will go to heaven after the rapture would be strong support for pretribulationism and equally troublesome for posttribulation, **if it were true**. The posttribulation view does not allow for the Church to go to heaven after the rapture, but directly into Christ's physical Kingdom.

Presuppositions & Bias

One of the difficulties with the way this passage is interpreted is our own personal bias. If we believe in a pretribulation rapture, we naturally would look at this passage with a bias toward pretribulationism. We might assume that since Jesus was referring to coming *for* His disciples, He had a pretribulation rapture in view. If we already believe that Christians will go to heaven after the rapture we would be inclined to interpret "My Father's House" as heaven. But, if, like the disciples, all we knew was from Old Testament prophecy and what Jesus had said previously, we would understand Jesus as referring to the second coming and His Kingdom. If we are going to understand this passage correctly, we need to look beyond our own presuppositions. Any inferences we draw must be based on the prophetic outlook the disciples would have had. The disciples themselves had certain presuppositions based on their Jewish upbringing and training in the Old Testament Scriptures, and based on Jesus' prior teaching. And Jesus was aware of what they knew and thought, and spoke to them in such a way that they could understand Him. In order to correctly interpret this passage, we must jettison our own presuppositions and understand the presuppositions

the disciples brought to Jesus' teaching. What did they already know about Jesus' coming again for them? The prior understanding of the disciples regarding Jesus' coming for them must be a crucial component of our interpretation if we are going to be fair and unbiased and if we are going to be faithful to grammatical historical method.

Too often Christians ask the wrong question of Scripture, "what does this passage mean to me?" Instead, we should ask, "what did Jesus' words mean to His disciples at the time?" That Jesus limited his teaching to what they could digest is evident from Jesus' own words in this very discourse. **"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.** However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and **He will tell you things to come.**" (John 16:12-13 NKJV). Notice eschatology was one of the things the Holy Spirit would further develop for them at a later date. It is apparent Jesus was only giving the disciples information they could digest at the time. John 14:1-3 should be interpreted by us only as it WOULD have been understood by the disciples at the time. They would understand Jesus' teaching based on their knowledge of Old Testament Scriptures and Jesus' prior teaching to them.

Using a Double Standard

The difficulty that has yet to be overcome by pretribulationists is how to reconcile this passage with the **Olivet Discourse**. That discourse, spoken by Jesus to them only two days earlier, was a lengthy discussion of the last days and the second coming. There is no pretribulation coming or rapture in the Olivet Discourse. The only coming of Christ mentioned by Jesus will occur "*immediately after the tribulation*" (Matt. 24:29-31). Jesus had given them a series of signs for which to watch. By paying attention to these signs they could know when His coming was "*near, even at the doors*" (Matt. 24:33). Then Jesus told them this:

Mark 13:32-37

*32 "But of **that day and hour** no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*

33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

34 It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming — in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning —

36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

"That day and hour" refers to Jesus' coming after the tribulation mentioned in the

previous verses. The "man going to a far country" was Jesus. He was about to return to heaven. That He "gave authority to His servants and to each his work" refers to the Great Commission. Obviously, this concerns Christians since the Great Commission was given to Jesus disciples, and was passed down to us through the disciples. Likewise, **the commands to watch** for Jesus' coming "*immediately after the tribulation*" were given to the same disciples, and passed on to us in succeeding generations as well. But, the point I would like to stress is this: The disciples' expectation from the Olivet Discourse was most certainly that Jesus would come back for them after the tribulation, not before. This is the coming for which Jesus commanded them to watch.

Typically, pretribulationists try to disqualify the Olivet Discourse from any discussion of the rapture, claiming it is Jewish and does not concern the "Church" (as they define the term). However, any reasoning they employ to disassociate the Olivet Discourse from the Church must also be applied to the Upper Room Discourse recorded by John. Both discourses were delivered to Jesus' disciples only two days apart, both in the midst of a Jewish setting (here it was the Passover meal). If the disciples "represent" a remnant of Jewish "tribulation saints" in the Olivet Discourse, why not in John fourteen? Just what in John 14 distinguishes the disciples in this discourse from the disciples in the Olivet Discourse? Isn't this a double standard? If we are going to do the Word of God justice, these two passages must be reconciled. They cannot be referring to two separate events or people groups since **they were both delivered to the disciples in view of their looking for Christ's coming for them.** The disciples could not be expecting to be persecuted by the Antichrist, watch for signs, and be gathered together "*immediately after the tribulation,*" as the Olivet Discourse indicates, and still be expecting a pretribulation rapture based on John fourteen. Nor could John fourteen be simply further revelation, adding a pretribulation rapture to the scenario Jesus described on the Mount of Olives. **The two ideas are mutually exclusive** because one cannot watch for signs of a posttribulation coming when one has been already raptured to heaven.

The Olivet Discourse was not merely Jesus' informing them of future events for Israel. It was personal instruction to the disciples regarding watching for the signs so they would know when Jesus was coming back for them. These signs would occur during and immediately after the tribulation. His parables of the fig tree, the thief in the night, the unfaithful servant, the ten virgins, and the man taking a journey (Matt. 24,25 & Mark 13), all illustrated how the disciples were to watch for the coming of Christ "*immediately after the tribulation*" mentioned within the context. The disciples were included in Jesus' "elect" who would be gathered together when Christ comes in glory, (Matt. 24:29-31). **If Jesus was teaching them a pretribulation rapture in John fourteen, He was directly negating everything He had just told them two days earlier!!!** If pretribulationists make the disciples representative of "Israel" in the Olivet Discourse, they must do the same

in John fourteen, or they are using a double (false) standard. If the disciples represent the Church in John fourteen, they must also in the Olivet Discourse. Consistency and integrity in Biblical interpretation demands no less. The idea that Jesus taught His disciples about the second coming, using them as representatives of Israel and the Church indiscriminately without telling them, makes havoc of the Scriptures. This kind of teaching would have been incomprehensible to the disciples. It totally destroys the continuity of Jesus' teaching. **Any legitimate attempt to interpret Jesus' teaching to His disciples must harmonize all of His teaching to them.**

After the resurrection, Jesus gave them the Great Commission. Part of His instruction was to teach all new Gentile converts to "*observe all things that I have commanded you*" (Matt. 28:20). Since both the Upper Room Discourse and the Olivet Discourse were direct teaching of Jesus to His disciples, and BOTH included personal instructions and commandments regarding Jesus' coming for them, it is obvious that BOTH discourses were intended for the same people, and both must be passed on as Christian doctrine. Therefore, it is illegitimate to apply one to physical Israel and the other to the Church. This kind of interpretive method is arbitrary and subjective, allowing the interpreter to manipulate the passage to achieve the desired result.

Where was Jesus Going?

The main point of the Upper Room Discourse was Jesus' preparing His disciples for His "*going away*." The disciples still did not fully appreciate two separate advents of Christ. In the Olivet Discourse Jesus discussed the events leading up to His appearing in the clouds in glory. He also indicated that a rather lengthy period would transpire before the physical Kingdom would be set up. He said the gospel must be published among all nations before the end would come. The disciples did not yet understand that **Jesus would not be present with them as they preached the gospel among the nations**. In the upper room Jesus told them He must go away to prepare a place for them. No doubt, the period of His absence includes the ascension and the entire time until His second coming. This is obvious in the discussion of the coming of the Comforter. Yet, His going specifically **to prepare a place for them** referred primarily to the crucifixion. Since this discourse took place the night before the crucifixion, it seems natural that Jesus was preparing the disciples for what would happen the following day. As you read John 14:1-3 within its context, you will immediately see that Jesus was speaking initially of His "*going away*" **to the cross to redeem mankind**. Jesus was preparing the disciples for the events of the following day by foretelling the crucifixion, by which He would "**prepare a place**" in His coming Kingdom for His "*little flock*." In the verses immediately preceding the passage in question, Jesus' "*going away*" meant going to the cross. This is implied in His remark to Peter about his impending denial.

John 13:33-14:3

33 Little children, **I shall be with you a little while longer.** You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, **'Where I am going, you cannot come,'** so now I say to you.

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

36 Simon Peter said to Him, "**Lord, where are You going?**" Jesus answered him, "**Where I am going you cannot follow Me now,** but you shall follow Me afterward."

37 Peter said to Him, "**Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.**"

38 Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.

14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go to prepare a place for you.**

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

In verse 36, Jesus told Peter that he could not follow Him yet, but that he would follow Him afterwards. This is most likely a reference to Peter's martyrdom Jesus foretold in John 21.

John 21:17-24

17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.

18 Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."

19 **This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God.** And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

20 Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

21 Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?"

22 Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."

23 Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"

24 This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

Notice Jesus left open the possibility that John might live until the second coming. But, Peter definitely would not. He was to "follow Christ" on a cross. We know from Church history that Peter was crucified by the Romans about 30 years after Jesus. Since Jesus told Peter he could not follow Him now, but would follow Him later, His "going away" most likely had His crucifixion in view. All of this is strong evidence that Jesus was referring to His crucifixion when He first spoke of "going away" in chapter 13 and the beginning of chapter 14. His going to "prepare a place for you" should be understood within this context. Jesus was going to the cross to prepare the way of salvation, and to secure a place for His followers in His coming Kingdom.

Some might object that later in the discourse Jesus said "I go to the Father," and was therefore speaking of His ascension and not His crucifixion. However, the ascension witnessed by the disciples in Acts 1 was only the last trip to the Father, not the first. Jesus ascended to the Father earlier as part of His priestly atonement work immediately after the resurrection. Hebrews 9 indicates that the role Jesus played in the atonement was more than sacrificial, being the "Lamb of God." Jesus was BOTH the sacrifice and the High Priest who performed the atonement, by offering of His own blood in the literal presence of God in heaven.

Heb 9:11-12,23-24

11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, **but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place** once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ...

23 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, **but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.**

24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, **but into heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

That Christ's role was both sacrifice and Priest is critical to understanding John 14's reference to His going to the Father. Immediately after the resurrection and coming out of the tomb, Jesus met Mary. While Mary was overwhelmed with joy, Jesus cautioned her. "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father

and your Father, and to My God and your God'." (John 20:17 NKJV). Jesus was not referring to His ascension recorded in Acts 1. That took place 40 days later. He was referring to His immediate ascension to the Father to complete His priestly duty, offering His own blood in the most Holy Place in the Temple in heaven. Jesus told Mary not to touch Him BECAUSE (Greek - "gar") He had not yet ascended to the Father. He then told Mary to tell the others that "I am ascending to the Father." Here He used the present tense, which would not make much sense if He was referring to an ascension over five weeks (40 days) in the future.

Jesus' statement in the Upper Room Discourse, that He was "going to the Father," was connected with the atonement. Jesus appeared several times to the disciples within the 40 days after the resurrection. The "ascension" in Acts 1 is merely the last time Jesus ascended to heaven, allowing His disciples to witness it. Therefore, we can conclude that Jesus' going away and also His had to do with His atoning work. It was the atonement that Jesus was referring to when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you." He was going to make atonement for the sins of His disciples so that they could rule and reign with Him. That Jesus was referring to His impending crucifixion and performance of His High Priestly atonement function when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you," is also evident as the conversation developed further.

John 16:17-23

*17 Then some of His disciples said among themselves, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, '**because I go to the Father**'?"*

18 They said therefore, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is saying."

19 Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"

*20 Most assuredly, **I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.***

21 A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.

*22 **Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.***

*23 "And **in that day** you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.*

In this passage, did Jesus refer to His ascension and present absence from the world? Or did He refer to His crucifixion and resurrection? Was their seeing Him

again in reference to the second coming? Or the resurrection? Answer this question and it is obvious what Jesus meant by His "going away." In the above verses, Jesus told them they would have intense sorrow upon His "going away" but would be filled with joy when they saw Him again. This begs the question, **when did the disciples experience great sorrow?** If the common pretribulation assertion is true (that Jesus was referring to His final ascension), **the disciples should have experienced great sorrow when Jesus ascended to heaven.** But according to Luke, just the opposite was the case. He wrote that the disciples returned from watching Jesus' ascension "**with great joy**" (Luke 24:50-53). Were the disciples sorrowful when Jesus was crucified? Absolutely! Jesus' prediction of His disciples **experiencing great sorrow at His going away**, and great joy when they see Him again, only fits the crucifixion and resurrection. It does not fit the ascension and second coming.

Also, notice the promise of their asking the Father directly in Jesus' name in prayer is placed AFTER their sorrow turns to joy, after they see Him again. This promise of asking the Father in prayer in Jesus' name was something reserved for after the resurrection, not after the second coming. (See John 15:16).

This is proof that Jesus' statement about going away to prepare a place for them had absolutely NOTHING to do with returning to heaven to build Christian condominiums. It had everything to do with His making atonement for them by offering Himself as the spotless Lamb of God, and performing His priestly duties by offering His own blood in the presence of the Father in the heavenly Temple. Just as the priest took the carcass of the animal outside the camp (Lev.4:21), so also Jesus suffered outside the camp.

Heb 13:11-12

11 For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp.

12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

And just as the priest was not finished after killing the animal, but must offer the blood in the presence of God, so too Jesus was not finished His priestly duties until He offered His own blood in the presence of God in heaven.

Heb 9:12,23-24

12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ...

23 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

Jesus is not Building Christian Condos

Jesus did not go to heaven to build Christian condominiums at His final ascension. He went to sit down at the Father's right hand to await His enemies being made His footstool (Heb. 10:12,13). That Jesus was not referring to His going to heaven to construct Christian condominiums is proven by the language He used.

1. Jesus spoke of the dwelling places in the present tense. He said: "*In my Father's house are many dwelling places.*" **This language requires that the abodes Jesus was referring to already existed when Jesus said these words.** Jesus was simply saying He would make room for His disciples among the already existing dwelling places.

2. The word "*prepare*" does not mean to "build," but to get something ready. This is the same word Jesus used when He sent the disciples ahead to make ready (*prepare*) the upper room to accommodate the Passover meal. They did not build a second story on the house, but prepared the upper room to accommodate the Passover celebration. Therefore, Jesus did not go away to build anything.

In what sense would Jesus' ascension to heaven have anything to do with making ready (or preparing) already existing "abodes" in heaven to accommodate His disciples, or making the way for the disciples to occupy these heavenly abodes? Where is such an idea taught in Scripture? The fact is, this idea is completely foreign to Scripture, and is based solely on pretribulation presuppositions.

What is "My Father's House?"

The words "*my Father's house*" do not refer to heaven. We cannot arbitrarily assign a meaning to this phrase without biblical precedent. It must be interpreted in the same manner we interpret any other biblical phrase, by looking at other occurrences of this and similar phrases. There is no precedent in Scripture for supposing "*my Father's house*" means heaven. In the numerous Old Testament passages which mention the "*house of the Lord*," the **earthly** abode of God's presence is always in view. This includes the Tabernacle (1 Samuel 1:24), Solomon's Temple (2 Chronicles 2:1, 7:16), and the Millennial Temple and Kingdom (Isaiah 2:2-4, Joel 3:18). The biblical writers **never** referred to heaven as the Lord's house. The "*house of the Lord*" is **always earthly and related to the Temple**, which will be the locus of Christ's Kingdom. Here is one of many examples.

Isa 2:2-4

2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of **the LORD's house** shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it.

3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, **To the house of the God of Jacob**; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of **Zion** shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from **Jerusalem**.

4 He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.

In the New Testament, occasionally the "Church" is called the Lord's dwelling in a metaphorical sense, Eph. 2:19-22. But, the disciples were not familiar with this metaphorical usage by Paul, and would certainly not understand Jesus' words as a metaphor. They would understand His words in light of their familiarity with the Old Testament usage, and Jesus earlier usage of the phrase "my Father's house."

John 2:15-17

15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of **the temple**, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables.

16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make **My Father's house** a house of merchandise!"

17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for **Your house** has eaten Me up."

Here Jesus unquestionably referred to the Temple in Jerusalem as "my Father's house." Verse 17 shows the disciples associated Jesus' expression with an Old Testament reference to the "house of the Lord," [Psalm 69:9]. Therefore, it is natural they would understand the same expression in John fourteen in the same way. Some New Testament manuscripts also contain the same expression in Luke 2.

Luke 2:46,49

46 After three days they found him **in the temple courts**, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions....

49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in **my Father's house**?"

(NIV)

The disciples expected the Kingdom of God to be centered in Jerusalem, specifically in the Temple, (see: Isaiah 2:1-5, Psalm 68:29). In the Olivet Discourse, only two days before, Jesus emphasized their waiting and watching for **the coming of His Kingdom**, (Matt. 25:31, Luke 21:31). This was the focus of their hope. The disciples were familiar with the frequent Old Testament usage of the term "house of the Lord" in reference to the Temple in Jerusalem. They were also familiar with Jesus' previous usage of the phrase "my Father's house," also in reference to the Temple. They were not familiar with modern pretribulation eschatology. It is virtually certain they understood Jesus to mean He was going to prepare a place **in His Kingdom** for them, more specifically **in the Temple** from which Jesus would rule. When He returned they would accompany Him to His Kingdom. "And if I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

In Luke's parallel account of the Upper Room Discourse, there is more evidence Jesus was speaking of His Kingdom and not heaven in the upper room. While Luke did not record Jesus' statement about His "Father's house," it is clear from his account that the context of the discussion was indeed the coming of Christ's Kingdom to earth.

Luke 22:15-18,28-30

15 Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;

*16 for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled **in the kingdom of God.**"*

17 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves;

*18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine **until the kingdom of God comes.**" ...*

28 "But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials.

*29 And **I bestow upon you a kingdom**, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me,*

*30 **that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**"*

According to Luke's account, Jesus spoke of His Kingdom in the upper room and mentioned nothing about heaven. When Jesus said in John 14, "In my Father's house are many mansions [dwelling places], I go to prepare a place for you," He was speaking of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God in order to prepare a place in His Kingdom for His "little flock." Luke places them ruling beside Christ on twelve thrones, and eating with Him at His own table in the coming Kingdom. This places the disciples in the Kingdom Temple, ruling with Christ.

As the disciples listened to Jesus' words, they had to assimilate His new teaching with what He had previously taught them and their knowledge of the Old Testament. Based on a synthesis of all of this material, the disciples could only conclude that when Jesus returned they would accompany Him to His Kingdom, where they would sit on thrones and reign with Him. This is why, after the resurrection, they asked Jesus; "Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). They apparently believed His death was all there was to His "going away," and mistakenly thought the resurrection would signal His return in power and glory. After all, He told them only days before, "If I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself." Of course Jesus had to correct their error by referring them back to the Olivet Discourse. The Gospel must first be preached among all nations, (Acts 1:8). But the important point here is apparent. Even after the resurrection, and in spite of their error, they were looking for Christ's Kingdom, not a trip to heaven. He therefore did not teach them a pretribulation rapture.

Many Mansions

The Disciples were not only familiar with the Temple from Scripture, but had gone to the Temple complex many times. They had been at the Temple with Jesus the very day Jesus gave the Olivet Discourse. They were familiar with the beautiful architecture of the Temple complex (Matt. 24:1) which included many **apartments** (mansions) which lined the Temple structure designed for the Temple priests (1 Kings 6:5-10 & 1 Chron. 9:26,27). Jesus said that the "many dwellings" in "My Father's House" (Temple) would be made ready for them. He told them they would rule with Him on twelve thrones and eat with Him at His table in His Kingdom. Knowing all this, the disciples no doubt imagined themselves as the Royal governing Cabinet, occupying the luxurious apartments at the Temple. The disciples were no doubt also familiar with Ezekiel 40-44, which describes in detail the many "chambers" (apartments) that will be a part of the future Kingdom Temple from which Christ will rule. It would be natural for them to associate the "many mansions" with these chambers, since they clearly associated Jesus' expression, "my Father's house" with the Temple, (John 2:16-19, Psalm 69:9).

Josephus, who was an eyewitness of the Temple of Jesus' day, described the Temple apartments familiar to the disciples.

*"But the inmost part of the temple of all was of twenty cubits. This was also separated from the outer part by a veil. In this there was nothing at all. It was inaccessible and inviolable, and not to be seen by any; and was called the Holy of Holies. **Now, about the sides of the lower part of the temple, there were little houses, with passages out of one into another; there were a great many of them, and they were of three stories high; there were also entrances on each side into them from the gate of the***

temple. *But the superior part of the temple had no such little houses any further, because the temple was there narrower, and forty cubits higher, and of a smaller body than the lower parts of it. Thus we collect that the whole height, including the sixty cubits from the floor, amounted to a hundred cubits.*" (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Bk. V, ch. v)

Those occupying the "many mansions" at that time were not fit to rule with the Messiah. Jesus told them so in the hearing of His disciples the very day He gave the Olivet Discourse. "Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?" (Matt 21:23 NKJV).

Within ear-shot of these "many mansions," and speaking directly to the ones who were occupying them at the time, Jesus responded with the parable of the husbandmen who had custody of God's vineyard. They beat His servants, and killed His Son. The result was they were destroyed by the land owner, and the vineyard was given to others. This parable was meant to convict the chief priests and elders of their rejection of Jesus, and give them their eviction notice. Jesus closed His remarks with the following statement. "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (v. 43). But to His disciples, Jesus said: "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

When we compare these verses to Jesus' statements, that the disciples would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel in His Kingdom, the picture becomes clear. The disciples were chosen, not only to spread the Gospel, but to replace the unfaithful Jewish priests in the coming Kingdom. This does not mean the "Church" replaces "Israel," usurping her place and promises. The disciples were Jewish, yet also the elders of the Church. The "Church" consists of purified Israel along with the believing remnants of the Gentile nations.

I realize some may object to this view because there are certainly not enough "apartments" in the Kingdom Temple for all believers. But, as Luke's account indicates, Jesus was not speaking to all future Christians here, only His disciples. Certainly He did not mean all Christians would sit on twelve thrones and judge Israel! Both the passage in Luke twenty-two and John fourteen were meant for those disciples who "have continued with Me in My trials" (Luke 22:28). All saints of God will reign with Christ in His Kingdom. But, the disciples earned a special place, ruling from Christ's side in the Temple. Other faithful believers will be given positions of authority over various cities, (Luke 19:11-26, 2 Tim. 2:12).

Some may object that this view merges God's programs for Israel and the Church. However, this objection stems from excessive dispensationalism, not

proper exegesis of the passages concerned. While there will be national distinctions in the Kingdom, there will not be dispensational distinctions. There is only one program for both Jew and Gentile. All those saved before the inauguration of Christ's physical Kingdom will form a single body, regardless of nationality or dispensation in which they lived. This will include Old and New Testament saints. *"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see **Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God**"* (Luke 13:28-29). And again, *"When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that **many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth**"* (Matt. 8:10-12 NKJV).

Conclusion

There is no reason to separate Jesus' coming again in John 14 from what He had just told the disciples two days earlier on the Mount of Olives. As we attempt to apply the grammatical-historical method of interpretation to John 14:1-3, we must take into account the following things:

- The context in which Jesus was speaking to going away to be crucified
- The disciples' familiarity with Old Testament references to the "house of the Lord"
- Jesus earlier usage of the phrase "My Father's house"
- Jesus instructions in the Olivet Discourse given only 2 days earlier
- The parallel passage in Luke 22, which shows the context of the discussion was the coming Kingdom

Given the Jewish background of the disciples, their familiarity with the Temple complex, their knowledge of the Old Testament, and their instruction in the Kingdom of God by Jesus, it is natural to conclude that they expected to experience the tribulation Jesus mentioned two days earlier, and be gathered at the coming of Jesus Christ immediately after it. They would then take up residence in the Temple "mansions," ruling with Christ seated on His right hand and on His left. The priests, who were at that time occupying the priestly chambers at the Temple, were destined to be evicted from these "many mansions" (in AD70) and locked out of His coming Kingdom.

Peter's First Sermon

Acts 2:15-21

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

Ten days before Pentecost Jesus ascended to heaven. He had just commanded His Apostles to preach the Gospel to all the nations. Yet, just before ascending, He told them to delay their mission until they received the Spirit's power. *"And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me" (Acts 1:4 NKJV).*

The importance of Peter's Pentecost sermon cannot be overstated. That it was clearly the first sermon preached within this Gospel dispensation cannot be questioned. That the words spoken were by the power of the Holy Spirit is equally indisputable. There is simply no way to avoid the conclusion that this sermon applied to the "Church" of Jesus Christ. Luke's statement that *"the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47)*, unquestionably makes Peter's sermon applicable to the "Church."

We stated in the introduction that one of our goals in this series of articles was to demonstrate the reliance of the New Testament writers on Jesus' Olivet Discourse. The very first sermon preached in this dispensation does just that. It shows that Peter's own understanding of prophecy at this time was still very much based upon the Old Testament and what Jesus taught him in the Olivet Discourse.

He began by defending the supernatural event the crowd had just witnessed, uneducated Galileans speaking in the languages of many other nations. He did this by citing Joel's prophecy, identifying the event they had just witnessed as the fulfillment of that prophecy.

Acts 2:15-21

15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

*16 **But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:***

*17 'And it shall come to pass in the **last days**, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.*

18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

19 I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

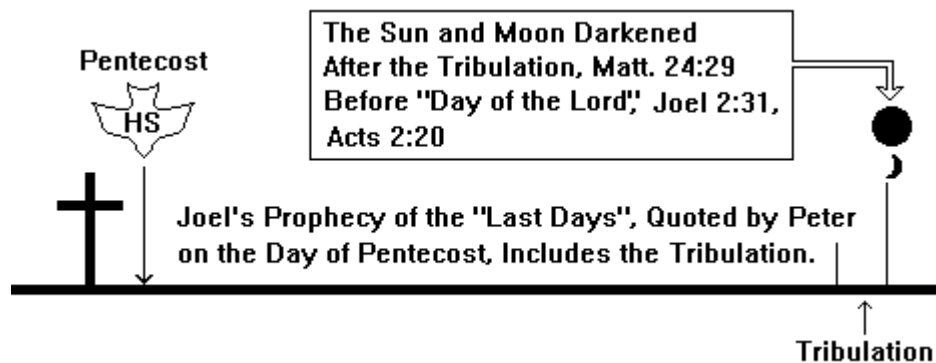
21 And it shall come to pass That **whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.**

Verses 19 & 20 describe the very things Jesus said would immediately precede His coming back for His elect. These are the very things for which He told the disciples to be watching.

Olivet Discourse	Peter's Pentecost Sermon
<p>Matt 24:29-31</p> <p>29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.</p> <p>30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, 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.</p> <p>31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.</p>	<p>Acts 2:19-20</p> <p>19 I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.</p> <p>20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.</p>

Acts 2 displays Peter's thinking by his application of Old Testament prophecy. On the day of Pentecost, Peter placed himself within Joel's prophecy of the "last days" (Acts 2:17). According to Peter, the "last days" had already begun. This period would conclude with the coming of the "Day of the Lord," which would be heralded by the same cosmic signs Jesus said would occur "*immediately after the tribulation.*" It is apparent, from Peter's use of Joel's prophecy, he expected to continue with the task of world evangelism **until the end of the tribulation.** The promise, "*whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,*" spans the time from Pentecost until the cosmic signs at the end of the tribulation. Peter made this connection, no doubt, because Jesus said the

gospel must first be preached among all nations before He would return, "immediately after the tribulation."



According to Peter, between the Day of Pentecost, and the cosmic signs "immediately after the tribulation," the Spirit of God would be poured out upon all flesh. During this day of grace, **which includes the tribulation**, anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

If we pick out the two most important signs Jesus gave His disciples in Matthew twenty four, they would be the preaching of the gospel to all the world (Matt. 24:14), and the cosmic signs just before His coming (Matt. 24:29). These two signs must have had a huge impact on Peter, because he alluded to both in his sermon. Peter indicated to the crowd when the present age of grace will end. It will end when the sun and moon are darkened. It will end with blood, fire, and pillars of smoke at Christ's coming in power and glory. Undoubtedly, Peter believed the "end of the age" would come "immediately after the tribulation," just as Jesus taught him. Peter's sermon is incompatible with pretribulationism, but fits smoothly with posttribulationism. It shows that Peter understood Jesus' teaching in a very straightforward way. He viewed the return of Jesus, related to this dispensation, as His coming in the Olivet Discourse and in Old Testament prophecy.

Peter's Second Sermon

Acts 3:19-21

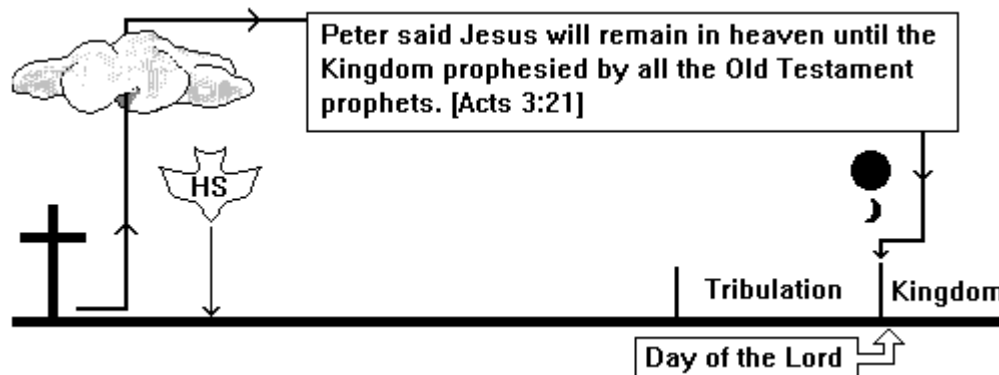
Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

With Peter's second sermon, we have an even clearer indication of his thinking on the timing of Christ's coming for Christians. The healing of the lame man at the Temple gate caused a stir among the crowd assembled to worship. Peter seized the opportunity to preach the gospel right on the Temple mount. In his invitation at the close of his sermon he made a prophetic promise regarding the Lord's return.

Acts 3:19-21

19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,
20 and that **He may send Jesus Christ**, who was preached to you before,
21 **whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.**

The coming of the Christ and His Kingdom was foretold by all the prophets. This is the major theme of most of them. This is when Jesus will restore all things and the curse will be removed from the earth, (Isaiah 2:1-4, Isaiah 35, Zech. 14:1,8-11, Rom. 8:19-23). Peter held out this coming of Christ to restore His creation as the future hope for new converts to the Church. He declared that Jesus must remain in heaven until this Kingdom, foretold by the prophets, comes.



Peter did not originate this idea. He borrowed it from Psalm 110:1. There is no doubt Peter was familiar with this Psalm because he quoted it in his previous sermon to prove that Jesus was the Messiah.

Acts 2:34-35

34 "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand,

35 **Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'**"

It is clear, both from this Psalm and from Peter's commentary on it in Acts 3:19-21, that Jesus will be seated at the Father's side until the time comes to overthrow the kingdoms of this world and restore all things predicted by the Prophets. This utterly eliminates the possibility of Jesus' coming before the tribulation to rapture the Church to heaven. He would have to leave the Father's right hand before His enemies are made His footstool, and before the "restoration of all things."

Both of Peter's sermons display a clear continuity with Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse. The fact that he taught Jesus' chronology of the tribulation and second coming to believers after the day of Pentecost strongly suggests that Jesus taught "Church doctrine" in the Olivet Discourse.

We should also not fail to notice Peter's appeal to Old Testament prophecy, and its application to the promise of Jesus' coming for believers. Pretribulationists not only seek to distance Jesus' prophetic teaching from the "Church age," but they do the same with Old Testament prophecy. Both of these practices are shown to violate the practice of the New Testament writers themselves. In short, they were not "dispensationalists" if such a dichotomy is necessary to dispensationalism.

Peter's Later Thoughts

The Epistles

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

Peter cannot be charged with changing his mind later after receiving further revelation. His Epistles, written much later, show clear evidence of the same posttribulation thinking as his early sermons. Shortly before his martyrdom, he was still teaching believers to anticipate Christ's posttribulation coming in glory, with no hint of a pretribulation rapture.

First Peter

1 Peter 1:7,13

*7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory **at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ...***

*13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at **the revelation of Jesus Christ;***

Peter encouraged believers to remain faithful to Christ until the "revelation of Jesus Christ" in glory. The word "revelation" is the Greek word, "αποκαλυψις" (apocalypsis). This word is used of the second coming several times. In fact, the last book of the New Testament is named "the Revelation (αποκαλυψις) of Jesus Christ," and depicts only His coming in power and glory after the tribulation. Each time, the "revelation" of Jesus Christ has the idea of His coming in glory, showing Himself to the world in all His awesome power. Paul gave a very vivid picture of the "**revelation**" of Jesus Christ in the following verse.

2 Thess 1:7-8

*7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is **revealed** from heaven with His mighty angels,*

8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Greek reads literally, "rest with us at **the revelation of the Lord Jesus** from heaven," which Paul describes as "in flaming fire, taking vengeance" on the wicked. This certainly does not fit a pretribulation rapture by any stretch of the imagination.

Peter went on to encourage his readers to endure the anticipated suffering to come, keeping their hope fixed firmly on **the revelation** of Jesus Christ's glory.

1 Peter 4:12-13

12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

*13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is **revealed** [Greek: "in the revelation of His glory"], you may also be glad with exceeding joy.*

The "fiery trial" was a specific time of testing that would end with the revelation of Christ in glory. The KJV/NKJV, by using the definite article and future tense, ("*the fiery trial which is to try you*"), indicates it was a known trial that would come in the future to try them all. He was most likely referring to the tribulation and persecution mentioned by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:9,21), although this is not certain from the text. However, the important point here is that Peter encouraged them to place their hope in Christ's coming in glory and power. Christ's coming in glory is always posttribulational, (Matt. 16:27, 24:20, 25:31, Mark 8:38,13:26, Luke 9:26, 21:27, 2 Thess. 1:9).

Second Peter

In his second Epistle, written just before his death, Peter devoted his last instruction for Christians to the second coming. He addressed the apparent delay in Christ's return from the perspectives of both the scoffers (who denied His future coming) and believers (who were watching for it). In verses 3-7, Peter wrote that the long delay should not be interpreted by unbelievers as indicating Jesus was not coming back. He then explained the reason for the delay (in order to encourage those watching).

2 Peter 3:9

*9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is **longsuffering toward us**, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

Peter did not say the delay was caused by Lord's being longsuffering to the lost, but to us. He does not want any to perish. This strongly implies He is waiting for Christians to complete the Great Commission! This idea comes directly from the Olivet Discourse, and was reinforced by Jesus after the resurrection.

Matt 24:14

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Acts 1:6-8

6 *Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

7 *And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.*

8 *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Peter went on to describe the coming of the Lord, calling it the "Day of the Lord," (vs. 10), and the "Day of God," (vs.12). In his first sermon, Peter clearly established the fact (by quoting Joel) that the Day of the Lord will come after the cosmic signs, the darkening of the sun and moon. And, Jesus told him these same signs would occur "*immediately after the tribulation*" (cf. Matt. 24:29 & Acts 2:20).

Peter connected the expected coming of Christ **for Christians** with the coming of the "Day of the Lord" (2 Pet. 3:9-10). And, as we have already shown, he understood the "Day of the Lord" to be "*immediately after the tribulation*" (Acts 2:20 & Matt. 24:29).

It is interesting to note that Peter repeated himself in verse 12, but substituted the phrase "Day of God" for the phrase "Day of the Lord."

2 Peter 3:12

12 **looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God**, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

No doubt the phrases are interchangeable. The "Day of God" is found only one other time in the Bible, and it is undeniably in a posttribulation setting, (Rev. 16:13-16).

Notice also that this is the day for which Christians are "looking," and are capable of "hastening." The reason we are "looking for" this day is obvious. Jesus commanded his disciples to "watch" for His posttribulation coming, and then added this important statement: "*What I say to **you**, I say to **all**: **Watch!***" (Mark 13:37).

As to how we can hasten the posttribulation coming of Jesus, the answer is also found in the Olive Discourse, and earlier in this chapter. We are to complete the Great Commission (Matt. 24:14 & 2 Pet. 3:9).

No hint of pretribulationism can be found in Peter's sermons or his Epistles. He faithfully and consistently obeyed the command of Christ to "*teach them to observe all things I commanded you.*" In his sermons and Epistles Peter consistently repeated Jesus' teaching to him about watching for the blessed hope of believers.

The Last Trumpet

1 Corinthians 15

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

Most pretribulationists believe the pretribulation rapture was not taught by Jesus, but was given to Paul as a special revelation. Therefore, it is important for us to see if what Paul taught about the rapture is different from Jesus' teaching. If there are mutually exclusive differences between what Jesus taught about His second coming and what Paul taught about the rapture, we might conclude they were speaking about different events. However, if Paul's teaching about the rapture is compatible with Jesus' teaching about the second coming, there is no reason to suppose that Paul taught a distinct coming of Christ apart from the coming Jesus mentioned.

Posttribulationists believe Paul's teaching concerning the rapture is completely compatible with, and built upon, the teaching of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse. There were certainly some new details added by Paul. But the general sequence of events is identical.

In 1 Cor. 15, Paul wrote primarily of the resurrection of believers, and the fact that we will be raised "incorruptible." I would like to point out three things that I believe connect this event to Jesus' posttribulation coming described in Matthew twenty-four.

1. Paul said the reason our bodies will be changed is because; "*flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*" (1 Cor. 15:50). The future "Kingdom of God" to which he referred was Christ's earthly reign, the Kingdom prophesied throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Since the purpose for putting on incorruption is because our old bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom to reign with Christ, this implies that the change would occur at the commencement of that Kingdom. There is nothing here about going to heaven. Heaven is never "the Kingdom of God" anywhere in Scripture. The context also clearly indicates Paul was referring to the Millennium, (see: vss. 22-28).

2. Paul said this transformation of the living and resurrection of the dead will occur "*at the last trumpet*" (1 Cor. 15:52). If we try to impose a pretribulation scenario on this passage, the "last trumpet" could not really be last. Jesus said He will sound the **trumpet** to gather His elect "*immediately after the tribulation*" (Matt. 24:31). In order for this trumpet to be "the last trumpet," it cannot sound

before the end of the tribulation described in the Olivet Discourse signaled by the trumpet blast at His coming.

3. When this transformation occurs, Paul said an Old Testament prophecy will be fulfilled at that time.

1 Cor 15:54

*54 So **when** this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, **then** shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: **"Death is swallowed up in victory."***

This is a direct quote of Isaiah 25:8. And, Isaiah's prophecy clearly refers to the coming of Christ's Kingdom to earth. **Paul said that this particular Kingdom prophecy will be fulfilled at the resurrection of the Church.** Therefore, the rapture must occur at the beginning of the Kingdom, which is posttribulational.

These three things connect this passage with the posttribulational coming of Christ. What can pretribulationists point to in this passage that would exclude this connection, or demonstrate the uniqueness of the Pauline "rapture" that they allege? Nothing at all! So far Paul's writings fit seamlessly into Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse. And the above three points eliminate the possibility that the events described by Paul could be separated from the posttribulation coming of Jesus Christ.

Comfort in the Hope of Resurrection

1 Thessalonians 4

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

Paul indicated to the Thessalonian believers his main reason for addressing the resurrection and rapture. It was so they would not sorrow as those who had no hope. It is apparent the Thessalonians had a question about the resurrection that Paul was trying to answer. Their sorrowing had to do with those who had died. In his answer, Paul clarified the exact events surrounding the resurrection and rapture. While the question is not stated, we can reconstruct it from Paul's answer. Notice his answer linked the **timing of the resurrection** to the catching up of the living saints. Therefore, their question most likely concerned the fact and timing of the resurrection of the dead in Christ. In answering their question, Paul assumed his readers were familiar with the Lord's coming itself. He attached the timing of the resurrection of dead saints to an event they were already familiar with, the catching up of the living saints.

1 Thess 4:13-18

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

*15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, **that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.***

Before Paul began to speak of the timing of the resurrection, he mentioned "*the coming of the Lord*" as though they were already familiar with this event. He took it for granted that they knew what the "*coming of the Lord*" was. Then he proceeded to link the timing of the resurrection of the dead saints to this already established event.

*16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: **and the dead in Christ shall rise first:***

*17 **Then** we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

I have placed in blue type the NEW information Paul was giving them. I have placed in red type the well known event to which he linked the new information. They were already familiar with the Lord's descending from heaven, and the living believers being caught up in the clouds when the trumpet sounds. In this passage, **Paul simply placed the resurrection of the dead saints in its proper place in the sequence of events.** In essence, Paul did this by saying that the dead saints will rise just before we are "caught up." So, it is apparent that the Thessalonians were already familiar with Christ's coming, and the "catching up" of the living believers. But, they were not sure where the resurrection of the dead saints fit in. And this led to some sorrow among them. How is it that they knew about the coming of Christ, and the catching up of the living saints, but did not understand where the resurrection fit in? It is because of their familiarity with the Olivet Discourse. In that passage, Jesus described His coming, and the gathering of the elect, but He did not specifically mention the resurrection of the dead, or how it would fit into the end time drama.

Matthew 24:29-31

29 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.***

Paul's words would, no doubt, bring to memory the words of Christ in the Olivet Discourse. Notice the similar language. Both mention the coming of the Lord. Both mention the sounding of the trumpet to gather His own. Both mention angelic participation. But when we look at Jesus' words, we see that He did not mention the resurrection of the saints specifically in the Olivet Discourse. Based on these things, the Thessalonians' question for Paul becomes apparent. They wanted to know what will happen to those who have previously died. Will they be raised to witness the revelation of Christ to the world in all His glory, and to participate in the establishment of Christ's Kingdom? Or will they be raised at some other time? Or perhaps not at all? The fact that Jesus only spoke of the living, and did not place the resurrection in His sequence of events described in the Olivet Discourse, caused these Christians to worry about their departed brethren not participating in the spectacular events surrounding Christ's revelation to the world in power and glory, and the setting up of His Kingdom. Paul's answer indicates that this was indeed the problem. By linking the timing of the resurrection to the gathering of the living that Jesus spoke of, Paul

completely resolved the problem for them and gave them reason for hope regarding their loved ones who had died.

Again, so far we find nothing in Paul's writings that conflicts with the scenario described by Jesus. But more importantly, we see Paul's reliance on Jesus' Olivet Discourse. In the articles that follow, we will demonstrate conclusively that Paul actually used the Olivet Discourse as a backdrop for His teaching about the rapture. Jesus' teaching was the authority, and Paul simply supplemented it with additional details, and dealt with questions arising from Jesus' discourse. This fact forces us to draw two major conclusions that absolutely devastate the pretribulation position.

- Jesus' Olivet Discourse concerns His Church
- Paul did not teach a distinct "rapture."

The "Day of the Lord"

1 Thessalonians 5

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul dealt with the relationship of the resurrection to the rapture. The dead in Christ will rise first, then the living will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Paul continued in chapter 5 by addressing the question of when they might expect the rapture and resurrection to come.

1 Thess 5:1-2

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

Notice Paul was placing the rapture in the "Day of the Lord." This is an extremely important point. Here Paul shifted from describing the events surrounding the rapture to speaking about when the rapture might come. And he referred them again to something they already knew, "*yourselves know perfectly...*" The "Day of the Lord" was coming as a "thief in the night."

Paul used a phrase that was familiar to these Christians. The "Day of the Lord" is found several times in the Old Testament, always in the context of Christ's coming to destroy the enemies of Israel, (see: Isa. 13:6-13, Joel 3:9-17, Zech. 14). This is exactly what Revelation 19 records as the "battle of Armageddon."

The nature of the "Day of the Lord" is crucial to understanding this passage. It is also critical to any foundational understanding of eschatology in general. Pretribulationists claim the "Day of the Lord" includes the alleged pretribulation rapture and the entire tribulation. This allows them to reconcile 1 Thessalonians 5 with pretribulationism, since Paul instructed believers to be watching for the "Day of the Lord," (1 Thess. 5:1-6). If the "Day of the Lord" comes after the tribulation, as every Old Testament occurrence seems to indicate, then Christians must still be here at the end of the tribulation in order to watch for that day.

Much has been written by pretribulationists trying to stretch the Day of the Lord forward to include the entire tribulation and supposed pretribulation rapture. Comparisons of similar themes, such as wrath, judgment, etc. have been offered as evidence. Yet, no one has provided any biblical requirement

supporting making them synonymous. None of the Old Testament passages support this conclusion. It comes only from a preconceived assumption of a pretribulation rapture superimposed on the Thessalonian passage. Their theory is a product of reverse engineering of the Scriptures in order to get the desired outcome rather than applying sound rules of interpretation. The fact is, there are passages that forbid the "Day of the Lord" from overlapping the tribulation. The two are mutually exclusive.

First, throughout the Old Testament, a catastrophic sign is associated with the coming of the "Day of the Lord." The darkening of the sun and moon will herald that day. [See: Isaiah 13:9,10, Isaiah 24:19-23, Joel 3:13-15]. Here is one example.

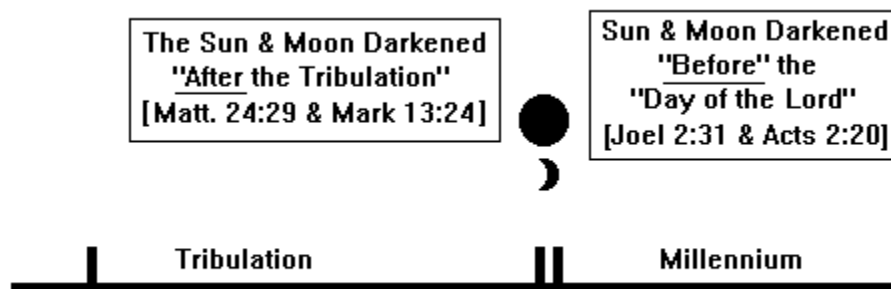
Joel 2:31

31 **The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.**

Matt 24:29

29 "**Immediately after the tribulation** of those days **the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light**; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

These verses establish a clear sequence of events. They place the cosmic signs, the darkening of the sun and moon, **between** the end of the tribulation and the beginning of the "Day of the Lord."



This absolutely forbids any overlapping of the tribulation into the "Day of the Lord." They are distinct events. No other interpretation is possible without doing violence to these passages.

Secondly, the very first time the "Day of the Lord" is mentioned in the Bible, the text clearly forbids associating it with the tribulation. Isaiah two describes the "Day of the Lord" with the following words:

Isa 2:10-19

10 Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, From the terror of the LORD
And the glory of His majesty.

11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall
be bowed down, **And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.**

12 For **the day of the LORD** of hosts Shall come upon everything proud and
lofty, Upon everything lifted up — And it shall be brought low —

13 Upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, And upon
all the oaks of Bashan;

14 Upon all the high mountains, And upon all the hills that are lifted up;

15 Upon every high tower, And upon every fortified wall;

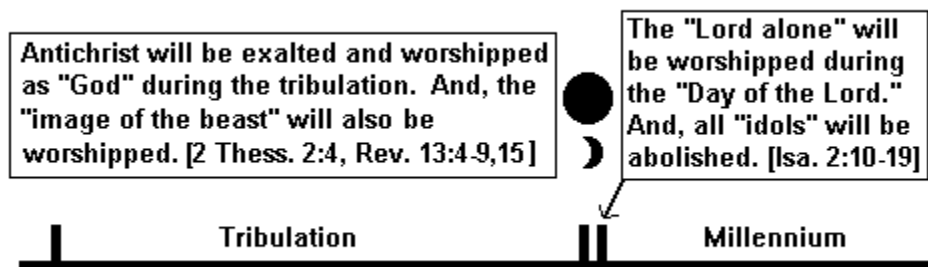
16 Upon all the ships of Tarshish, And upon all the beautiful sloops.

17 The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, And the haughtiness of men
shall be brought low; **The LORD alone will be exalted in that day,**

18 But the idols He shall utterly abolish.

19 They shall go into the holes of the rocks, And into the caves of the
earth, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty, When He
arises to shake the earth mightily.

Twice these verses indicate that **the Lord alone** will be exalted in the "Day of the Lord." This is an exclusive statement. **No one else can be exalted or worshipped during the "Day of the Lord."** Yet, during the tribulation, the Antichrist will be worshipped as God. (See: Rev. 13:3-8,14 & 2 Thess. 2:3,4) And, his image will be worshipped as well. Isaiah's statements about the Lord alone being exalted, and the idols being abolished during the "Day of the Lord," forbid any overlapping with the tribulation and reign of Antichrist.



The celestial sign, and the statements in Isaiah two, absolutely forbid stretching the "Day of the Lord" forward to include the tribulation, as pretribulationists attempt to do in order to reconcile 1 Thessalonians 5 with a pretribulation rapture.

The meaning of the phrase "Day of the Lord" holds the key to the interpretation of Paul's instructions to believers in 1 Thessalonians. The meaning of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:9 is entirely dependent on the meaning of this phrase.

There is no question the rapture and the coming of the "Day of the Lord" are firmly connected by Paul in this passage. He uses the term "Day of the Lord" as a synonym for the rapture. **Notice Paul instructed Christians to be watching for the coming of the "Day of the Lord."** And, as we have just demonstrated, the "Day of the Lord" is after the tribulation. **Therefore, Christians must pass through the tribulation in order to watch for the "Day of the Lord."** The rapture that Paul referred to is after the tribulation.

1 Thess 5:2-6

2 For you yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord** so comes as a thief in the night.

3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

4 **But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.**

5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

6 Therefore **let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.**

Since he instructed Christians to watch for the "Day of the Lord," and, as we have seen, that day comes after the tribulation, Paul was simply confirming Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse. There is nothing here to suggest new revelation of a secret pre-trib rapture. In fact the opposite is true. Paul said in verse 2 that they already knew this perfectly. He was simply refreshing their memory. Yes, in chapter 4 Paul gave them some new revelation. He placed the timing of the resurrection just before the catching up of the living. This exact sequence was previously unknown to them. But, in chapter 5, his comment about their being already familiar with the coming of the Day of the Lord, indicates he was now pointing them back to something already revealed in Scripture.

How did the Thessalonian believers "know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a **thief in the night**?" It was because they were familiar with Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse! The idea of Christ's coming as a "*thief in the night*" was originated by Jesus Himself when describing His coming. After describing His coming in glory "*immediately after the tribulation,*" Jesus said to His disciples:

Matt 24:42-44

42 "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

43 "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour **the thief would come**, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

44 **"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**

Obviously, Paul was referring to Jesus' teaching! His reminding them of Jesus' "thief in the night" illustration leads to the conclusion that he was confirming the chronology Christ gave. The following table proves conclusively that Paul was using Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse as the basis of his instructions to the Thessalonian believers. He was simply repeating Jesus' instructions to His disciples. In effect, he was applying the teaching of Jesus to the Thessalonians, connecting their "watching" for the rapture with Jesus' instructions for His disciples to be watching for His coming "immediately after the tribulation."

Paul Referred to Jesus	Jesus	Paul
Coming of the Lord from heaven	Matt 24:30 "... they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."	1 Thess. 4:16 "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven..."
Angel(s)	Matt. 24:31 "...He shall send forth His angels..."	1 Thess. 4:16 "with the voice of the archangel..."
Trumpet blast	Matt. 24:31 "...with the sound of a trumpet..."	1 Thess. 4:16 "...with the trumpet of God"
Catching up of the living	Matt. 24:31 "...they shall gather together His elect..."	1 Thess. 4:17 "...shall be caught up together..."
Thief in the night	Matt. 24:43 "...if the goodman ...had know in what watch the thief would come..."	1 Thess. 5:1,2 "...so cometh as a thief in the night."
Warning against "sleeping"	Mark 13:36 "lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping."	1 Thess. 5:6 "...let us not sleep as do others"
Warning against "drunkenness"	Luke 21:34 "take heed ... lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness"	1 Thess. 5:6-8 "be sober...they that are drunken are drunken in the night. ...be sober"
"Watching" for Christ's coming	Mark 13:35-37 "Watch ye therefore ... What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."	1 Thess. 5:6 "let us watch..."

There is no question that Paul referred his readers to Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse, which only teaches a posttribulation coming of Christ, to answer their questions about the rapture. This is overwhelming evidence that Paul taught a posttribulation rapture. His use of the phrase "Day of the Lord," which other Scriptures place after the tribulation, to describe the rapture, makes it impossible

to reconcile this passage with pretribulationism. Once again, we have every reason to connect Paul's teaching on the rapture to Jesus' teaching on the second coming. Nothing here excludes this linkage. And as the table above illustrates, there is much evidence of this connection. Therefore, the natural inference is Paul was simply building on Jesus' teaching, and was encouraging the Thessalonian believers to be watching for Jesus' coming after the tribulation! Here is another reason the "Day of the Lord" cannot be stretched forward to include the tribulation in this passage. Paul wrote, "*when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and **they shall not escape.***" Notice it is those who are surprised by the sudden coming of the Day of the Lord that encounter sudden destruction with **NO ESCAPE** possible! In a pretribulation scheme, where the Day of the Lord is supposed to be the beginning of the tribulation, many of those who enter the tribulation, and consequently are among those surprised by the coming of the Day of the Lord (tribulation), are still saved to become the multitude of "tribulation saints" according to pretribulationists. Therefore, Paul's statement that "they will not escape" is necessarily false if the pretribulation theory is true! Paul's point is clearly that all those who are "in darkness" and who are surprised by the coming of the Day of the Lord will encounter "sudden destruction" and none of them will escape! This is precisely what Paul also indicates in 2 Thessalonians 1, as we will see in the next article.

Rest from Persecution AFTER the Tribulation

2 Thessalonians 1

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

Second Thessalonians was written soon after the first Epistle to correct further questions and misconceptions about the coming of Christ. In his previous Epistle, Paul tied the resurrection to the rapture, thereby comforting them concerning those who had died. In the fifth chapter he encouraged them to be expecting the coming of Christ. The Thessalonian church was experiencing severe persecution and had lost some of its members to martyrdom, (1 Thess. 2:14). Apparently, this persecution was interpreted by some as the fulfillment of "great tribulation" Jesus mentioned in the Olivet Discourse. Since Paul had instructed them to be watching for the "Day of the Lord," many of them mistakenly thought the tribulation was nearly over, and Christ was about to return momentarily. This unfounded excitement caused Paul to write again to these dear saints, correcting their misconception, and encouraging them to await the signs Jesus gave in His Olivet Discourse.

2 Thess 1:4-10

4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,

5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;

6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,

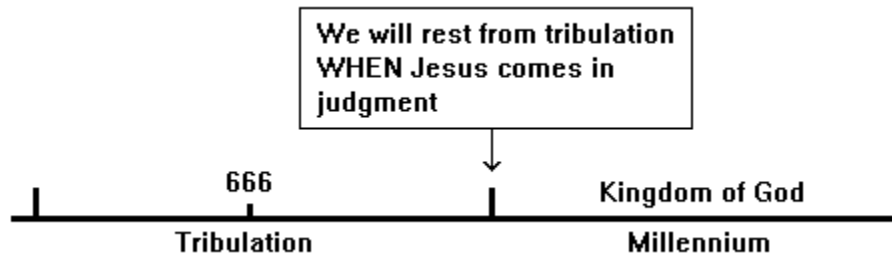
*7 and to give you who are troubled **rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,***

8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

*10 **when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe,** because our testimony among you was believed.*

Notice first of all, believers will rest from persecution when Jesus is revealed from heaven in judgment, (1:7). Since this coming in judgment is posttribulational, the rapture must also be posttribulational.



There is only one logical interpretation of this passage regarding the timing of the rapture. No one will deny this coming is "posttributational." No pretribulationist believes Jesus will come in flaming fire, bringing vengeance on the ungodly, before the tribulation! However, many passages speak of Christ's coming in judgment after the tribulation. This passage makes it perfectly clear that Christians will "rest" from tribulations at that time. Paul was in effect telling them when their ordeal would end, at the posttribulation coming of Christ in judgment. In a pretribulation rapture scenario, Christians would have already been resting for seven years before this event, making Paul's statement dubious and illogical. Paul was trying to comfort the Thessalonian Christians in their persecutions. Yet, his encouragement was not centered around an alleged "any moment" pretribulation rapture, whereby they might expect immediate relief, but looked forward to the appearing of Christ in glory. By connecting their relief from persecution with the posttributational coming of Christ, Paul effectively placed the rapture after the tribulation. Notice also, that he connected their seeing Christ and admiring Him for the first time with the same coming in judgment, (1:10).

Antichrist Comes First

2 Thessalonians 2

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul directly addressed the problem that precipitated his Epistle. Some believers had been told their relief from persecution was imminent, and that Jesus was about to return momentarily. This error was dealt with decisively by Paul.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

*1 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;***

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

(KJV)

This passage is very clear to the casual reader, and needs very little comment if we just take it at face value. But, because it is so devastating to the pretribulation view, much has been written to explain it away. Therefore, to do it justice, we will need to take it a verse at a time in some detail.

Verse 1 - The Topic of Discussion

*1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by **the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,***

Paul's topic of discussion was the "coming" of Jesus and "our gathering together unto Him." It is necessary to establish whether Paul was **distinguishing** or **connecting** the "coming" of Jesus and "our gathering together" to Him. Some pretribulationists claim that Paul was introducing two separate topics, the rapture (our gathering together) and the second coming (the coming) as separate events. This question is easily resolved from the Greek text. When two nouns of the same case are connected by "and" (kai), if the first noun has the article (the) and the second noun does not, the two nouns are being

connected, being viewed as a unit. If both nouns have the article (the), they are being distinguished — viewed as being distinct or contrasted.¹ The words in question are as follows:

της παρουσιας του κυριου ημων Ιησου Χριστου
the coming the Lord our Jesus Christ

και ημων επισυναγωγης επ αυτον
and our gathering- to Him
together

As you can see, "the coming" has the definite article (the). The second noun "gathering together" does not have the article. Therefore, both the "coming" and "gathering together" are seen as united. In this case, the second noun (gathering together) is a component part of the first noun (coming), as demonstrated clearly in Matt. 24:29-31. If Paul meant to distinguish them as occurring at different times, he would have also used the definite article with "gathering together," as follows:

της παρουσιας του κυριου ημων Ιησου Χριστου
the coming the Lord our Jesus Christ

και του επισυναγωγης ημων επ αυτον
and **the gathering-together** of us to Him

Since both nouns point to a single composite event, we can be certain that Paul's topic was the coming of Jesus **for His people**.² In essence, Paul was saying, "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, **more specifically**, our gathering together unto Him..." That is, the clause "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" refers to the whole event, as Paul had just described it to the Thessalonians in the previous chapter, including the destruction of the wicked (2 Thess. 1:7-10). But, since in chapter 2 Paul wished to get more specific, and deal with the problem at hand — the over enthusiasm of some who thought the rapture was imminent — he narrowed the discussion to focus exclusively on the gathering of Jesus' elect.

The second observation we should make is Paul's choice of words. "Gathering together" is a term the Thessalonians were very familiar with from the Olivet Discourse. This is a compound word used only a few times in Scripture. It is the noun form of the verb "epi-sunago." This compound verb is found in Matt. 24:31, Mark 13:27, Luke 17:37, all in reference to Jesus' gathering His elect "immediately after the tribulation" (cf. Matt. 24:29-31). In Matthew 24, Jesus said He would

dispatch His angels to "gather together His elect." Here, Paul referred to "our gathering together unto Him" using the noun form of the same word. While all words and phrases should be interpreted by their contexts, the similar phrases certainly carry considerable weight, particularly since this is a very rare expression in the Greek New Testament. Coupled with "the coming" (parousia) of Jesus Christ in both passages, "gathering together" can only mean one thing. Every occurrence of "epi-sunago" in the context of Christ's coming refers to His posttribulation coming (Matt. 24:31, Mark 13:27, Luke 17:37). Therefore, there is every reason to believe the Thessalonians would connect this "coming" (parousia) and "gathering together" with the "coming" (parousia) and "gather together" of Jesus' elect in Matt. 24:29-31. This is even more probable because Paul had just told them a few verses before that they could expect relief from persecution at Christ's (posttribulation) coming to destroy their persecutors (see previous article on 2 Thess. 1).

In summary, verse 1 flows from the discussion in the previous chapter. It narrows the discussion from the whole complex event known as the "parousia" of Jesus Christ, zeroing in on the matter of most concern to the Thessalonians — "our gathering together unto Him."

Verse 2 - The Problem Paul was Addressing

*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**.*

What did Paul mean by soon (quickly) "shaken in mind" and "troubled?" The Greek word "shaken" means "waver, agitate, rock, or topple." It is the opposite of firmness or steadfastness. Since Paul wrote "soon shaken in mind," he most likely meant to be quickly or easily moved or shaken from sound doctrine concerning their expectancy of Christ's coming. The Greek word for "troubled" means "to cry out" and implies being anxious. Paul did not want his readers to be quickly or easily shaken in their minds from the proper kind of expectancy regarding Christ's coming. Their thinking that Christ's coming was about to occur, when in fact it was not, could easily shake them from their composure and firm footing. Paul mentioned three things that might have caused their wrong expectation: spirit, word, or forged Epistle. "Spirit" most likely referred to some kind of alleged word from the Lord in a false prophecy circulating among them. "Word" no doubt means oral false teaching. "Letter as from us" refers to a counterfeit Epistle, allegedly from Paul. In 2 Thess. 3:17-18, Paul reminded them of his unique way of signing his Epistles, so they would know it was really from him.

The Textual Variant

This verse is problematic for two reasons, both related to variant readings in our English Versions. The majority of Greek manuscripts (and KJV/NKJV) read "the

day of Christ." But, a small number of early manuscripts (and most modern versions) have *"the day of the Lord."* From a posttribulationist's perspective, either reading is acceptable because we view the *"day of Christ"* and the *"day of the Lord"* as being the same posttribulation coming. However, pretribulationists have a serious problem either way.

If *"the day of Christ"* is the correct reading, every other occurrence of *"day of Christ"* in the New Testament refers to our hope - the rapture (cf. Phil. 1:10, Phil. 2:16). Once again, this is consistent with verse one which speaks of *"our gathering together unto Him"* as the topic of discussion. Yet, as we shall see, the next verse plainly says that this day (our gathering together to Him - the Day of Christ) cannot come until after the Antichrist is revealed. Therefore, if *"the day of Christ"* is the correct reading, this passage plainly puts the rapture after the revelation of Antichrist, and makes the pretribulationist's idea of *"imminence"* utterly impossible. *"Day of Christ"* is consistent with the posttribulation scenario, and very problematic for the pretribulation scenario.

If the minority reading, *"the day of the Lord,"* is what Paul wrote, pretribulationists are faced with the fact that this term is consistently used of Christ's posttribulation coming. Paul gave the Thessalonian believers instructions regarding **their watching for** the *"Day of the Lord"* in 1 Thess. 5, implying that it is the day for which Christians wait. Peter and Joel wrote that it occurs after the cosmic signs Jesus placed *"immediately after the tribulation"* (cf. Matt. 24:29-31 & Acts 2:20), making it entirely posttribulational. Yet, here, Paul plainly connected the *"Day of the Lord"* with *"our gathering together unto Him"* (assuming this variant reading). Pretribulationists have the same problem here as they have in 1 Thess. 5. The rapture is connected with a clear posttribulational event - the Day of the Lord which occurs after the cosmic signs mentioned in Matt. 24:29-31.

Typically, modern pretribulationists assume that the *"Day of the Lord"* includes the entire tribulation. They do not take the term *"day"* literally, but stretch it out to include the entire seven years of the tribulation, encompassing the alleged rapture, the entire tribulation, and the posttribulation coming. This eases the problem for them in both 1 Thess. 5 and in this passage. However, the timing of the cosmic signs, being after the tribulation (Matt. 24:29) and before the Day of the Lord (Acts 2:20), renders this idea impossible. No matter which variant reading pretribulationists adopt, this passage undermines their view of the rapture occurring at a different time than the second coming, and utterly demolishes the concept that the rapture is imminent now (prior to the revelation of Antichrist).

The Translation — "is at hand" or "has come"

The second problem in verse two is the proper translation of the word *enesthken*. The KJV translates it "is at hand" (implying imminence or immediacy). Most modern versions read "has come" implying a past event. The Greek word can either mean "is present," or "is at hand," (imminent or immediate). A.T. Robertson, one of the most respected Greek scholars, wrote the following about this Greek word and its use in this verse.

*"In 1Th 4:13-5:3 Paul had plainly said that Jesus would come as a thief in the night and had shown that the dead would not be left out in the rapture. But evidently some one claimed to have a private epistle from Paul which supported the view that Jesus was coming at once, {as that the day of the Lord is now present} (|hōs hoti enestēken hē hēmera tou kuriou |). Perfect active indicative of |enistēmi |, old verb, to place in, but intransitive **in this tense to stand in or at or near. So "is imminent"** (Lightfoot). The verb is common in the papyri." ³ (bold & underline mine)*

As usual, Robertson quoted from the English Revised Version (ERV 1881) which he favored over the KJV. Yet, his analysis of the Greek actually agrees with the KJV against the ERV (and most modern versions).

Another highly regarded Baptist Greek scholar, John Gill, wrote: "**as that the day of Christ is at hand**; or is at this instant just now coming on; as if it would be within that year, in some certain month, and on some certain day in it; which notion the apostle would have them by no means give into, for these reasons, because should Christ not come, as there was no reason to believe he would in so short a time, they would be tempted to disbelieve his coming at all, at least be very indifferent about it; and since if it did not prove true, they might be led to conclude there was nothing true in the Christian doctrine and religion." ⁴

Pretribulationists sometimes appeal to the fact that Paul used the perfect tense here, which implies a completed action. On that basis they claim the Thessalonians did not think the rapture was imminent, but rather thought that the "Day of the Lord" (which they wrongly define as the tribulation) had already come. In other words, they thought they were already in the tribulation. However, according to Thayer's Greek lexicon, the Greek word "enesthken," translated "at hand," means "to place in or among, to put in, to be upon, **to impend, to threaten, to be close at hand, to be present.**" Using the perfect tense form would indicate the Thessalonians thought that the coming of Christ **had just become** "imminent" or "at hand." In other words, the new false teaching indicated that whatever had been delaying Christ's return for them no longer hindered His coming, and He could be expected to appear almost immediately, or momentarily. The perfect tense (indicating completed action) was related to the new belief on their part. The Thessalonians had wrongly been

persuaded (because of a false prophecy, false teaching, or false Pauline Epistle), that some current events (probably their persecution) had fulfilled the signs of Jesus' coming, and that Jesus could be expected to come for them momentarily. The ASV captures this meaning rather well. "*to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as **that the day of the Lord is just at hand***".

In summary, verse 2 indicates the problem Paul was addressing. The Thessalonians wrongly believed some false prophecy, teaching or counterfeit epistle, indicating that the Day of Christ's coming for them had just become imminent (or at hand), and that Jesus was coming momentarily. This new teaching caused great excitement, agitation, and controversy in the Thessalonian church.

Verse 3 - The Solution to the Problem

*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;***

It is significant that just before setting these believers straight, Paul echoed Jesus' words at the beginning of His Olivet Discourse. In Jesus' reply to the disciples' question, "*When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age,*" Jesus replied, "*Take heed that no man deceive you.*" Jesus followed this with a series of signs that must all occur before His coming.

In this passage, Paul began to correct the error of the Thessalonians with precisely the same instruction. Paul wrote, "*let no man deceive you by any means,*" and then reminded them of the same signs Jesus placed before His coming and gathering together His elect. Paul went on to say that certain things must come before the "*Day of Christ,*" and "*our gathering together unto Him.*" He was plainly indicating that the rapture is **not yet imminent**. Why? Because the things Jesus prophesied, that must come before Jesus would dispatch His angels to gather together His elect (Matt. 24:29-31), had not yet occurred.

There is no question that Paul was referring his readers back to Jesus' teaching in general, and the Olivet Discourse in particular. The two things Paul said must come before the "*Day of Christ*" and our being gathered to Christ are the two central features of Jesus' Olivet Discourse.

PAUL - 2 things that precede the rapture	JESUS - 2 things that precede the 2nd coming
<p>"That day shall not come unless there come a falling away first..."</p>	<p>"Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved." [Matt. 24. 9-13 (NASB)]</p>
<p>"...and the Man of Sin be revealed, the son of perdition.... who sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God."</p>	<p>"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand):" [Matt. 24:15]</p>

The evidence is overwhelming that Paul was alluding to the Olivet Discourse. He corrected the error, that the Day of Christ was upon them, and that the rapture could be expected at any moment, by referring them to the very things Jesus said would precede His coming after the tribulation. Again, we see a distinct pattern of Paul's conformity to the Olivet Discourse rather than teaching a pretribulation rapture in contrast to Christ's teaching. This statement by Paul is clear and direct. The Thessalonians should not be deceived by false prophecy, false teaching, or false Epistles, that Christ's coming to gather His elect to Himself had become imminent. This cannot occur until **after** the "falling away," and the "Man of Sin is revealed." Therefore, the rapture cannot be imminent until after the signs occur that Jesus gave to His disciples in the Olivet Discourse. Paul resolved the problem in the Thessalonian church by appealing to the Olivet Discourse.

The table below is provided for a quick comparison of the themes Paul certainly borrowed from Jesus. We have color coded these concepts as follows:

1. **The gathering of the saints**
2. **Jesus' coming in power and glory**
3. **Warning against deception**
4. **Apostasy**
5. **Revelation of the "Man of Sin"**

Matt 24:4,9-15,21,29-31

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, **Take heed that no man deceive you.** (KJV) ...

9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name.

10 "And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another.

11 "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many.

12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.

13 "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.

14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.

15 "Therefore when you see **the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place** (let the reader understand),...

21 for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. ...

29 "But **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 the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken,

30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and **they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.**

31 "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will **gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

(NASB)

II Thess 2:1-4

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;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that **he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**

(KJV)

In summary, there is perfect agreement between Jesus and Paul regarding the rapture. And, that agreement shows only a post-trib gathering of Jesus' elect.

Verse 4 - The Revelation of the Man of Sin

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

In verse 3, Paul warned the Thessalonians not to let anyone deceive them that Christ's coming for them was imminent. While the "falling away" or "apostasy" might be a difficult sign for Christians to recognize because it would not be a single event in one location, the revealing of the Man of Sin was something hard to miss. Jesus spoke of the "*abomination of desolation*" standing in the holy place, and referred back to Daniel's prophecy (Matt. 24:15). Daniel prophesied that the Antichrist would enter the Temple with his forces, and place an object in the Holy Place (Dan. 11:31). Mark's account of the Olivet Discourse also implies an inanimate object being set up in the Holy Place (Mark 13:14). This could refer to the "*image of the Beast*" in Revelation. Or perhaps, it could refer to a throne on which the Antichrist will sit. Either way, there is no doubt that Daniel, Jesus, and Paul spoke of the same event. And we know both from Dan. 9:27 and Dan. 12:11 that this event will occur 3.5 years before the second coming, or in the middle of the 7 years (70th week). This is another problem for pretribulationists because the very sign that Paul placed before Jesus' coming for us actually occurs 3.5 years after the tribulation begins in their scenario! It is also further evidence that Paul was relying on Jesus' teaching in this passage.

The coming of Christ for His people is not yet imminent. It cannot be considered imminent until certain signs occur. One of these signs will be easily recognized, when the Man of Sin takes his place in the Temple in Jerusalem claiming to be God and demanding worship. Until that occurs, it is wrong to suppose that Jesus might come momentarily, or that His coming is imminent. And those who insist that His coming is imminent, whether by an alleged prophecy, a teaching, or a forged document, are to be ignored. Do not allow them to deceive you.

Conclusion

The pretribulation rapture scenario is completely overthrown by this passage. Even if we allowed the variant "Day of the Lord" rather than "Day of Christ," and if we allowed their wrong definition of the term "Day of the Lord" as referring to the entire tribulation, the passage still makes no sense in a pretribulation scenario. If the Thessalonians had previously been taught to expect a pretribulation rapture, and if they had been deceived into thinking the tribulation had begun and they were still here, how do you suppose a pretribulationist Paul would have responded? The obvious answer is he would remind them that the rapture is pretribulationary, and they cannot possibly be in the tribulation because "*our gathering together unto Him*" is BEFORE the tribulation! Telling them that the Apostasy and revelation of the Man of Sin must come first does not resolve the problem in the least, but actually makes it much worse! In effect, it says that the Antichrist will be revealed before the tribulation (and allegedly the rapture). How then could the pretribulation rapture be "imminent" as pretribulationists claim? Or, if they attempt to dodge the problem by saying that the revelation of Antichrist is before the tribulation, but the rapture is even before that, then Paul did not resolve the problem at all! Why would telling them that the Antichrist

must come before the tribulation even matter to them, if it was a supposed pretribulation rapture that they had missed? Also, putting Antichrist's revelation before the 70th week contradicts Paul who put in it the middle of the 70th week, connecting his revelation to the abomination of desolation (see vs. 4)! The fact is, the pretribulation rapture scenario simply won't work in this passage no matter how much one tries to force it.

As we have seen by the side by side comparison, this passage flows easily and naturally from both Jesus' Olivet Discourse and from Paul's statements in the previous chapter. It agrees in substance and sequence with Jesus. The Thessalonians had been instructed previously about Jesus' coming from the Olivet Discourse. This discourse lists a series of signs that must come before Jesus comes to gather together His elect after the tribulation. There was a false teaching circulating among the Thessalonians, which had originated in either a false prophecy, false teaching, or false Epistle, that Jesus' coming for them had just become imminent or momentarily. The post-trib Paul corrects the problem by referring them back to Jesus' Olivet Discourse, reminding them of the two major signs Jesus gave: the apostasy and the abomination of desolation. In chapter one, Paul taught the Thessalonians, who were suffering great persecution, that they could expect relief when Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire, with his army of angels, to destroy their persecutors. Paul went on in chapter 2 to remind them to wait for the signs Jesus gave in His Olivet Discourse.

NOTES

1 Granville Sharp's **sixth rule** reads as follows: "And as the insertion of the copulative kai between nouns of the same case, without articles, (according to the fifth rule,) **denotes that the second noun expresses a different person, thing, or quality, from the preceding noun, so, likewise, the same effect attends the copulative when each of the nouns are preceded by articles**, as in the following examples - (John 1:17, John 2:22, John 11:44, Col. 2:2, 2 Tim. 1:5, 1 Pet. 4:11)." [Remarks on the uses of the Definite Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament; Granville Sharp, 1778] Essentially, the first rule deals with the TSKS (article-substantive-kai-substantive) which views the nouns together as a unit. The sixth rule concerns the TSKTS (article-substantive-kai-article substantive) construction and indicates that a distinction is being drawn between the two nouns.

2 F.F. Bruce draws the same conclusion from the Greek syntax in his commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians (p. 163). However, Daniel Wallace (pre-tribulationist Greek scholar) writes, "Since the TSKS construction involves impersonal substantives, the highest degree of doubt is cast upon the probability of the terms referring to the same event." [Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, p. 290]. But, Wallace himself, on pages 286-289 proved with several examples that impersonal TSKS constructions are meant to unite two substantives in a single unit. Wallace lists 5 types of impersonal TSKS constructions and their significance: "a) distinct entities, though united, b) overlapping entities, c) first entity subset of second, d) second group subset of first, e) both entities identical." (pp. 286-288). Impersonal nouns in a Sharp TSKS construction rarely mean that the two nouns are synonymous things. The "parousia" (coming of Christ) is NOT the same thing as "our gathering together unto him." The Sharp TSKS construction with impersonal nouns does not frequently identify the two nouns as being absolutely synonyms ("e" in Wallace's list of types of impersonal TSKS). Rather, it usually implies that they are being viewed together as a unit for a specific reason within the context. In fact, Wallace demonstrates with several examples that a TSKS construction with impersonal

nouns frequently indicates that one noun is a subset of the other. In other words, while the nouns are not identical things, one noun is a component part of the other. It is obvious from Matt. 24:29-31 that the "parousia" is not identical with the "gathering" of Jesus' elect. The former involves Christ Himself, while the latter involves believers. Yet, it is clear from Matt. 24:29-31 that the "gathering together" of the elect is a component part of the "parousia" of Christ. The "parousia" (coming) mentioned repeatedly in the context (vss. 3, 27,37,39) is the event described in verse 30, when all the tribes of the earth will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Yet, during this "coming" (parousia) Jesus will send His angels to "gather together" His elect (v. 31). Therefore, while the two substantives themselves do not have identical meanings, the "gathering together" is clearly a component part or subset of the "parousia." The term "parousia" of Christ represents the whole complex "coming" including all of its component parts mentioned in Matt. 24:29-31. The "gathering together" of the elect is simply one component part of the "parousia." Consequently, when Paul referred to "*the parousia and gathering-together*" using the TSKS construction he intended to view these two things as a unit, exactly as in Matt. 24:29-31. Based on the known precedent in the Olivet Discourse, the TSKS impersonal construction in 2 Thess. 2:1 indicates that Paul meant the following: "*Concerning the parousia (coming) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and **more specifically** our gathering together unto Him...*" In any case, Wallace himself asserts that regardless of whether impersonal, plural, or personal substantives are used, the TSKS construction always intends to show some kind of unity.

3 A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures, 2 Thess. 2:2.

4 John Gill, Gill's Exposition of the Bible, 2 Thess. 2:2

The Blessed Hope

Titus 2:13

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

Titus 2:13

13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

This verse is so simple, yet so profound. It has strong implications regarding the timing of the rapture. In the NKJV, it seems to imply that the "blessed hope" and the "glorious appearing" might be separate events. But, in the Greek text, it is quite clear that this is not the case. The "glorious appearing" is what we as Christians are awaiting. The NKJV is technically correct here, by translating the word "and" [Greek - **καί**]. But, it does not account for the "Granville Sharp rule," which applies to this verse.

Those who read the previous article will already be familiar with the Granville Sharp rule. The Greek word **καί** (kai) is equivalent to our English word "and" or "also." It is often used to connect two nouns in some way. It sometimes means the second noun is *in addition to* the first noun, distinguishing the two nouns. That is, two unrelated things are mentioned together. Example, "heaven **and** earth." But, under certain circumstances, "kai" is used to restate, or connect two nouns together, as referring to the same person or thing, or two things being joined together as a unit. (Example, "the God **and** Father.") That is, the second noun is a further description of the first noun. Both nouns refer to the same thing or person. Or, in the case of impersonal nouns, indicating that one noun is a subset of the other. The basic Granville-Sharp rule is as follows;

"If two nouns of the same case are connected by a "kai" [and] and the article is used with both nouns, they refer to different persons or things. [Sharp's rule VI] If only the first noun has the article, the second noun refers to the same person or thing referred to in the first."¹

The key to understanding this rule is the use of the definite article (the). When we have two nouns connected by "kai" (and), we must look to see if the definite article (the) is used before BOTH nouns, or just the first noun. If it is used before BOTH nouns, Sharp's rule VI applies, and the two nouns are referring to separate things or persons being distinguished or contrasted. But, if only the first noun has the definite article, Sharp's rule I applies. Both nouns refer to the same person (in the case of personal nouns) or two things are joined in some kind of unit (with

impersonal nouns).² Now, let's apply this rule to Titus 2:13. Here is the Greek text followed by a word for word translation.

προσδεχομενοι την μακαριαν ελπιδα και επιφανειαν της δοξης
Looking for **the blessed hope and appearing** the glory

του μεγαλου Θεου και σωτηρος ημων Χριστου Ιησου
the great God and Savior of us Christ Jesus

Granville Sharp's first rule actually applies twice in this verse. It applies to the words "*the great God and Savior.*" Both "great God" and "Savior" are nouns of the same case. The first noun "great God" has the definite article "the" and the second noun does not. This means that the Greek word "kai" [and] is being used to restate, and the second noun is referring to the same person as the first noun. So, in effect, "savior" (who is Jesus Christ) **IS** "the great God." This is a definitive statement on the deity of Christ which is lost if Granville Sharp is not applied.

The same rule applies to the first sentence, although in this case the nouns are impersonal things. Both "blessed hope" and "appearing" are nouns of the same case. And, the first noun (blessed hope) has the definite article, while the second noun (appearing) does not. With impersonal nouns, this indicates the "appearing" and "blessed hope" are being referred to as a unit. In an impersonal Sharp rule I construction, the relationship between the two nouns is either, a. distinct things being joined together as a unit, b. the first noun is a subset of the second, c. the second noun is a subset of the first, e. the two nouns are identical. In any case, with this construction, some kind of unity is being stressed between the two nouns.³ The NIV captures the meaning best in this verse. "*while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*" So, in essence, this verse says that the "blessed hope" for which we are looking is (or at least included within) the "glorious appearing" of Christ. This begs the question, what is the "glorious appearing?"

Matt 16:27

27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

Matt 24:29-31

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, 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 His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Mark 8:38

38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed **when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.**"

The "glorious appearing" is when Christ comes in all His power and glory, being manifest to all the world. So, in effect, Titus 2:13 tells us that our we are watching for Christ's coming in power and glory, which is after the tribulation. This strongly implies that the rapture is after the tribulation.

NOTES

1 Vaughn and Gideon, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), p. 83.

2 The Granville Sharp rule indicates that the two nouns are referring to the same **person** when personal singular nouns are found in the TSKS (Sharp) construction. When impersonal nouns are used, it implies one of the following:

- a) the two nouns are being viewed together as a unit.
- b) the two nouns are overlapping entities
- c) the first noun is a subset of the second
- d) the second noun is a subset of the first
- e) the nouns are identical (synonymous)

From Wallace, Greek Grammar, Beyond the Basics, pp. 286-288. In any case, the TSKS construction always implies unity, while the TSKTS construction always implies distinction or separation.

The Rapture in Revelation

Revelation 14:14-20

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

One of the glaring weaknesses of the pretribulation rapture view is the complete omission of any mention of a pretribulation rapture in Revelation. The book of Revelation was written to the "seven churches of Asia" to reveal the things that "must shortly come to pass." Its name literally means "the unveiling of Jesus Christ." If a pretribulation rapture was to be found anywhere in the New Testament, it should be found in Revelation prior to the tribulation scenes.

The Olivet Discourse gave us the sequence of events leading up to the end of the age. In that passage, no rapture before the tribulation was suggested. There is only the gathering of Jesus' elect "*immediately after the tribulation.*" (Matt. 24:29-31). Pretribulationists are forced to speculate where their alleged "rapture" fits into the Olivet Discourse. The book of Revelation presents the same problem, moving from the seven letters to the churches to the tribulation scenes without mentioning any coming of Christ at all. Many pretribulationists employ allegorical interpretation in order to fabricate a pretribulation rapture in Revelation, claiming that John's being caught up to heaven to see the future "represents" the Church being raptured. This argument will be addressed in our rebuttals to pretribulation arguments section.

Not all pretribulationists believe John's being caught up to heaven represents the rapture. Some excuse the omission of a pretribulation rapture by claiming the rapture is not the focus of the book. But, Revelation is addressed to the seven **churches** in Asia, and it exhorts them to remain faithful **until Jesus comes for them.**

Rev 2:25

25 But hold fast what you have **till I come.**

Rev 3:3

3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, **I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.**

Rev 3:11

11 Behold, **I am coming quickly!** Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Rev 22:7

7 "Behold, **I am coming quickly!** Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Rev 22:12

12 "And behold, **I am coming quickly,** and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

Rev 22:20

20 He who testifies to these things says, "**Surely I am coming quickly.**" Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

From beginning to end, the Book of Revelation exhorts Christians to be watching for Jesus' coming for them. Notice, in some of the above verses, Jesus exhorted believers to do something in anticipation of His coming for them. This proves that **the coming of Christ for His Church** is indeed the central focus of the book. Yet, the coming of Christ in Revelation is posttribulational only.

Revelation gives only one clear description of the rapture. It is described in terms of a harvest. Christ is seen on a cloud harvesting the earth. The symbolism of a harvest was a common way of describing the rapture to believers in the first century. This idea was first introduced in Jesus' parable of the wheat and tares. That parable shows that both the righteous and wicked would grow together until the time of "harvest." Then, the angels would separate the two at Christ's command. James 5:7,8 borrows from Jesus' parable, also describing the rapture in terms of a harvest, essentially applying Jesus' parable to the Church.

James 5:7-8

7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

The imagery of Christ's coming for His Church portrayed as a "harvest" was already firmly fixed in the minds of first century believers to whom the book was addressed. In the above passage, the delay leading up to the rapture was compared to the farmer awaiting the time of harvest. When the rainy season comes, he knows that the time of harvest has arrived. In the same way James exhorts us to be patient and wait for the rapture.

Revelation 14:14-20 vividly describes this harvest of the elect, followed immediately by the battle of Armageddon.

Rev 14:14-16

14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like **the Son of Man**, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "**Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.**"

16 So **He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.**

This is the rapture of the Church that James instructed us to be patiently awaiting. The same scene is found in Matthew 24:29-31. This is the Son of Man coming on the clouds, harvesting His elect. Immediately following, the wicked are harvested by the angel and thrown into the winepress where Christ destroys them. Revelation fourteen, like Luke 17:24-37, ties together the rapture with the battle of Armageddon.

Rev 14:17-20

17 Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "**Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.**"

19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, **and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.**

20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

What we have here is a dual harvest. The first harvest gathers the wheat. Then the rest are harvested immediately and cast into the winepress of God's wrath. Comparing Scripture with Scripture is a fundamental technique of good Bible study. This is especially apparent in Revelation where allusions to Old Testament prophecy and to Jesus' teaching abound. Comparing parallel passages helps us collate Revelation with previous prophecy.

Revelation fourteen is an important passage because it brings together several elements from other parallel passages. I believe there can be no doubt that the winepress of wrath in Revelation 14:17-20 is drawn directly from Joel.

Joel 3:12-16

12 "Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.

13 ***Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; 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 the LORD** is near in the valley of decision.

15 **The sun and moon will grow dark, And the stars will diminish their brightness.**

16 The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.

The "winepress of the wrath of God" is further described in Revelation 19.

Rev 19:11-16

11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. **He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.**

16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Joel adds something very important to this event. First, he included the cosmic sign, the darkening of the sun and moon. And, he called this the "**Day of the Lord.**" The parallel **winepress** in Revelation 19:15 makes it all but certain that each of these passages refer to the battle of Armageddon. Yet, the sun and moon sign ties in the Olivet Discourse where Jesus spoke of these events as occurring "*immediately after the tribulation.*" Jesus also spoke of the Son of Man coming on the clouds to harvest His elect, again paralleling Revelation 14:14-16.

Day of the Lord	Sun & Moon Darkened	Armies Gathered	Winepress of Wrath	Second Coming	Kingdom Follows
In Joel 3	vs.15	vss. 9-11	vs. 13	vss. 12,16	vss. 7-21
In Rev. 14		vs. 18	vs. 19		
In Rev. 19		vs. 19	vs. 15	vs. 11	Chap. 20

The comparison of these three passages shows clearly that each are speaking of the same event, the second coming of Christ after the tribulation. **So, the placement of the first harvest by the Son of Man, on the cloud, clearly reflects the idea that the rapture of the righteous occurs just before the battle of Armageddon.** This is consistent with the Olivet Discourse.

The uniform teaching of Jesus, Peter, and Paul, and John's description of a dual harvest makes a very compelling case for the posttribulation position. These parallel passages also make a good case for the idea that Revelation is not entirely sequential from beginning to end. If the battle of Armageddon is found in chapters 14 and 19, Revelation, like Daniel, must contain a certain amount of recapitulation.

The Resurrection in Revelation

Revelation 20:1-6

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

In Revelation 20, John described the resurrected saints seated on thrones and reigning with Christ after having been resurrected.

Rev 20:4-6

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

*5 But the rest of the dead did not live again 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 such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

The "first resurrection" is the only resurrection in the book of Revelation. Notice John did not actually see the resurrection of the saints taking place, but described resurrected saints being given their places of authority in the Kingdom. It is clear that they had been previously resurrected. According to verse four, this resurrection includes those who were slain by the Antichrist. Therefore, they must have come through the tribulation, not bypassed it. This resurrection, which is clearly posttribulational, was called by John, the "first resurrection." He contrasted it with the resurrection of the ungodly after the millennium. Of those who will experience the "first resurrection" he said: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." The implication is that all those who will reign with Christ will be raised in the "first resurrection." The fact that he called this the "first resurrection" precludes the possibility of there being a resurrection before this one at the beginning of the tribulation. By placing the "first resurrection" after the tribulation, John has also placed the rapture after the tribulation.

Many try to escape this obvious conclusion by claiming there are two stages of the "first resurrection" of the saints. The first stage being before the tribulation, and the second being after the tribulation, as described in Revelation twenty.

But this interpretation is extremely strained and unnatural. If John meant this was the second stage of the "first resurrection" he would have said so, especially since there is no other resurrection mentioned in Revelation. For that matter, there is no resurrection before the tribulation anywhere in the Bible! So such a supposition is a complete fabrication. The original readers of this epistle would have had no basis to draw such a conclusion. The natural, unforced, interpretation of Revelation twenty requires a posttribulation resurrection of the Church of Jesus Christ. This agrees with Paul's comments in 1 Cor. 15.

1 Cor 15:22-23

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

*23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward **those who are Christ's at His coming.***

Paul seems to say there is only a single future coming of Christ when ALL saints will be raised! No doubt Paul was referring to Jesus' plain teaching that all who belong to Him will be raised the same day.

John 6:39,40,44,54

*39 "This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of **all He has given Me** I should lose nothing, **but should raise it up at the last day.***

*40 "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that **everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him** may have everlasting life; and **I will raise him up at the last day.**" ...*

*44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and **I will raise him up at the last day.** ...*

*54 "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and **I will raise him up at the last day.***

John 11:24

*24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again **in the resurrection at the last day.**"*

Some pretribulationists claim this resurrection in Revelation twenty cannot occur at the rapture because it follows the second coming in chapter 19. In other words, it seems to occur after Christ destroys the Antichrist rather than just before. However, this objection is based on misunderstanding the verb tenses that John used, and poor English translations.

John was NOT describing the "first resurrection" as taking place in the context of Revelation twenty. The English wording in most translations does not do a very good job of conveying the precise verb tenses found in the Greek text. In most cases in Revelation, John recorded what he saw in the order he saw it. But, in the case of the "first resurrection," the wording and tenses of the verbs in the

Greek text suggests that the first resurrection was already past, and John was seeing the saints already ruling on thrones after having been raised. The rest is his explanation of who these people are.

Notice that John did NOT say he saw the resurrection. He began by saying that he saw THRONES with people sitting on them. This was a Millennial scene he was describing. They were already reigning with Christ when John observed them, INCLUDING the resurrected martyrs of the tribulation. John then went on to explain who these people are. The second occurrence of the words "and I saw" in verse 4 are NOT in any Greek text, but were added by the translators. They give the false impression that the martyrs were resurrected after the others. That is NOT what the Greek text says at all. Here is Young's Literal Translation.

4 "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, **and judgment was given to them, and the souls of those who have been beheaded** because of the testimony of Jesus, and because of the word of God, and who did not bow before the beast, nor his image, and did not receive the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand, and they did live and reign with Christ the thousand years;"

YLT

Here is how the Greek text literally reads word for word: "And (I) saw thrones and (they) sat upon them, and judgment **had been given to them and the souls that were beheaded** for the witness of Jesus..."

The words "was given" (YLT) in verse 4 is the Greek verb "edoqh" (a form of "didomi" #1325). This verb is an aorist indicative, and points to an action that occurred in the past. It is precisely the same verb used by Jesus in Matt. 28:18, where He said, "all authority in heaven and earth **has been given** unto me." So, John was not witnessing judgment being given to them. Rather, he was telling his readers that judgment had already been given to them prior to his seeing them on thrones.

Also, the verb "lived" in verse 4 does NOT mean raise up, or the act of being resurrected. It is "ezhsan" a form of "zao" (live). It is an aorist active indicative verb, meaning the state of living. In the New Testament, **it always refers to a state of life after having been raised from the dead.**

Luke 15:32

32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and **is alive again**, and was lost and is found."

Rev 2:8

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and **came to life**:'

Rev 13:14

14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword **and lived**.

As you can see, in every case this verb in its aorist active indicative form means a state of living AFTER having been raised, never the act of being raised. We see then that judgment being given to them was something already accomplished, and their resurrection was already accomplished when John saw them reigning on thrones in Rev. 20.

Now, lets translate this passage, leaving out the words that are not in the Greek text, and using the more precise verb tenses. I have put John's explanatory notes in parenthesis in order to mark off what John actually saw from his regressing to give explanations. The parenthetical portion is not a part of what he actually saw occurring in sequence, but are his explanatory notes.

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them,

(and judgment **had been given** unto them AND the souls that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands);

and they were living and reigning with Christ a thousand years.

(But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished);

This is the first resurrection."

Note the switch from the present tense (which I have in blue type), where John was narrating what he saw, to his regressing in order to explain who these people are, (the bracketed portion in black type). The reason he mentioned "souls" was NOT because he saw "souls," but to identify some of the ones reigning on thrones with the "souls" he had previously seen under the altar at the 5th seal.

Rev 6:9-11

9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and

true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

John was showing the final results of the martyr's "waiting" for a little season. He described one large group who were all sitting on thrones. Then he explained that some of these were the "souls" he had previously seen under the altar, who had later been given authority, and were at that time LIVING and REIGNING with Christ in His Kingdom. This is also the interpretation of the Jamieson - Faussett - Brown Commentary which says of this verse, "*From #Re 6:9, I infer that "souls" is here used in the strict sense of spirits disembodied when first seen by John.*" So, in the sequence of events that John was describing, the "first resurrection" had already taken place (presumably at the second coming). He was describing the aftermath of the resurrection, and what became of the souls he had previously seen under the altar, not the resurrection itself.

In the final analysis, the only resurrection of the saints mentioned in Revelation includes all of those killed by the Antichrist. It is therefore to say that the only resurrection of believers in Revelation is posttribulational.

Rapture Terminology

The "Skeleton in the Closet" of Pretribulationism

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

"Technical terms" are nouns or descriptive noun phrases that are understood by the intended audience to refer to specific things even without explanation within the context. For example, the word "rapture" in modern prophetic speech is understood to refer to the coming of Christ for His Church. We do not normally need to refer to the context in which the word "rapture" might be found in modern Christian books to find out what "rapture" means. We simply assume the writer was referring to the coming of Christ for His Church. The word "tribulation" is another word that has taken on a technical meaning in modern Evangelical jargon. However, in the Bible, "tribulation" alone is not a technical term, because it is frequently used of troubles in general and not merely THE "tribulation." When the Bible means to indicate THE "tribulation," the words "great tribulation" are used (cf. Rev. 7:14).

In English, we use the definite article (the) sometimes to distinguish between a technical term and a non technical term. My usage of the word "tribulation" above demonstrates this. By my adding "THE" to tribulation, we understand a distinction between general "tribulation" and a specific "tribulation" known to us. However, this is not always the case in Greek.

What can make a term a technical term is it's repeated (or frequent) reference to the same thing or event in Scripture. Also, a term that is not clearly explained in the context shows that the writer assumed his readers knew what it meant. There was therefore common knowledge of technical terms between writer and reader. Such terms are not hard to spot and identify. We can discern technical terms from Scripture by their LACK of explanations within the context (the writer ASSUMES that the hearer or reader would understand the term). Secondly, by the EXCLUSIVE (or nearly exclusive) usage of the term in reference to a same event.

We have excluded the word "tribulation" from being a technical term in Scripture because it is often used of tribulations in general, without referring to THE "tribulation." Therefore, we need to review the CONTEXT where this word is found in order to decide if it is referring to THE "tribulation" or to some other kind of "tribulation." Because of this, we cannot ASSUME that when "tribulation" alone is used it means THE "tribulation." We therefore cannot rightly use the following verses to prove that the rapture is posttribulational, as some have mistakenly done.

John 16:33

33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Acts 14:22

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

However, the over-all usage of technical terms in contexts dealing with the second coming weigh heavily in favor of the posttribulation position (and against all other rapture views including pre-wrath). These terms were understood by the first century believers to refer to a particular coming of the Lord without explanations in the context of being pre- or post-tribulational. Terms like, *The Day of the Lord, The Day of Christ, The Day of Jesus Christ, The Day of the Lord Jesus, The Day of the Lord Jesus Christ, The Day of God*, were all understood without any clarification. These terms were used by Paul and others with the full expectation that their readers knew that they referred to a specific single event. For example:

Phil 1:10

*10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till **the day of Christ**.*

Phil 2:16

*16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in **the day of Christ** that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.*

Paul assumed his readers knew what "day" he was speaking about. He did not explain in either verse whether this day was the coming of Christ BEFORE or AFTER the tribulation. He assumed his readers knew that the "Day of Christ" was the day for which they were watching and waiting. Therefore, it is right to associate it with the rapture (but not necessarily a pretribulation rapture). However, in 2 Thess. 2:1-3, Paul indicated that the Antichrist must come BEFORE the "Day of Christ." So, IF "Day of Christ" was a technical term, it is a POSTTRIBULATIONAL technical term, and the above verses must therefore refer to a rapture that is posttribulational.

Paul used other variations on the name of Christ, when referring to His "Day," as the future time for which believers watch and wait.

1 Cor 1:8

8 who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in **the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

2 Cor 1:14

14 (as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also are ours, in **the day of the Lord Jesus.**

Phil 1:6

6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until **the day of Jesus Christ;**

All of these terms are given without explanation. Logically, all refer to the same "day," because in each case this "day" seems to be the day on which believers had placed their hope, i.e., Christ's coming for His Church.

Likewise, the term "Day of the Lord" is simply another variation on the name of Christ. It is His day (Luke 17:24). The term is used in several contexts, each time the writer expected his readers to understand the specific day to which he referred without giving any explanation (pre- or post-tribulational). This is very problematic for pretribulationists. If the Apostles were pretribulationists (expecting two future comings of Christ), they would need to specify to their hearers or readers whether they were referring to a pre- or post-tribulational coming of Christ. Also, the term "Day of the Lord" was used repeatedly in the Old Testament in reference to Christ's posttribulational coming to set up His Kingdom (see: Isa. 13:1-13, Joel 3:9-17, Zech. 14:1-6). The Day of the Lord is unquestionably AFTER the tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:29 & Acts 2:20). Yet, in 1 Thess. 5:1,2, Paul used the term 'Day of the Lord' for the rapture.

Pretribulationists in the past (not so much anymore) tried to draw a distinction between the "Day of Christ" (pretribulation rapture) and the "Day of the Lord" (posttribulation coming). However, as pointed out above, this distinction fails because we find the term "Day of Christ" placed AFTER the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:1-3) and the term "Day of the Lord" referring to the day for which Christians watch (1 Thess. 5:1,2). Either the day for which Christians are watching is the posttribulation event, or else these are not technical terms. But, if they are not, then the passages are utterly confusing, because the writer ASSUMED that his audience KNEW which day he meant. The pretribulationist is forced to the awkward conclusion that Paul sometimes used the terms "Day of Christ" and "Day of the Lord" indiscriminately to refer to BOTH the (alleged) pretribulation rapture and posttribulation coming, and expected his audience to decipher which he meant with no clues whatever in the context!

The Elusive Search for a Biblical Pretribulation Rapture Technical Term

There is a conspicuous lack of a single technical term in the Bible for a pretribulation rapture (as distinct from the second coming). Pretribulationists have frantically searched for one, but always come up short. Having failed the "Day of Christ/Day of the Lord" distinction, many have tried to draw a distinction between the "rapture" and "revelation" of Christ. Yet, when we test ANY kind of alleged technical term in Scripture, the Bible fails to produce a single consistent technical term that could be applied to a pretribulation rapture that is not clearly applied to the posttribulation coming. Why? The obvious answer is the rapture is not distinct from the second coming, but is part of the same event! And the New Testament writers had no need to distinguish between two separate comings.

The modern word "rapture" is the word most often used as a technical term today by pretribulationists. Their uniform use of this term demonstrates the absolute necessity of having SOME kind of technical term for the alleged pretribulation rapture if it is indeed a distinct event. But, this word is NOT a technical term in the Bible. The word "rapture" is from the Latin text, and is found in the following verse.

1 Thess 4:17

*17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up** [Greek - harpazo, Latin - rapiemur] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

However, this term CANNOT be taken as a technical term for an alleged pretribulation rapture because:

- it is a verb and not a noun in Scripture
- it is usually used of other things in Scripture besides the catching up of believers at Christ's coming (cf. Matt. 11:12, Matt. 12:29, Matt. 13:19, John 6:15, John 10:12,28,29, Acts 8:39, Acts 23:10, 2 Cor. 12:2,4, Jude 1:23, Rev. 12:5). Only once is it used in connection with Christ's coming.

Other proposed technical terms also fail to refer exclusively to a supposed pretribulation event, but are also used in clearly posttribulation contexts.

As pointed out already, pretribulationists have tried to distinguish between "rapture" and "revelation." The word "rapture" fails the test for the above reasons. But, how does the term "revelation" stack up as being exclusively posttribulation in order to distinguish the posttribulation coming from an alleged pretribulation coming)? If the pretribulation theory were true, we would expect that the term "revelation" would ONLY be used of the posttribulation

event (as opposed to the alleged pretribulation rapture), and NEVER of the day Christians anticipate. Yet, this is not the case.

There are three main Greek nouns used in Scripture for the coming of Christ.

1. parousia (Strong's #3952) simply means "coming" or physical "presence."
2. epiphaneia (Strong's #2015) means "appearing" or "brightness" with emphasis on His glory.
3. apokalupsis (Strong's #602) means "revelation" or "unveiling."

All of these are nouns used as technical terms in Scripture, while assuming that the reader understands the coming to which the words refer. However, the Scriptures use each of these terms for BOTH the Christians' hope AND the posttribulation event. The obvious conclusion is they are the same event.

Jesus' COMING (Parousia) as our hope: 1 Cor. 15:23, 1 Thess. 2:19, 1 Thess. 4:15, 1 Thess. 5:23, 2 Thess. 2:1, James 5:7,8, 2 Pet. 3:4, 1 John 2:28

Jesus' COMING (Parousia) as the posttribulational event: Matt. 24:3,27,39, 1 Thess. 3:13, 2 Thess. 2:8

Jesus' APPEARING (Epiphaneia) as our hope: 1 Tim. 6:14, II Tim. 4:1,8

Jesus' APPEARING (Epiphaneia) as the posttribulational event: 2 Thess. 2:8, Titus 2:13

Jesus' REVELATION (Apokalupsis) as our hope: 1 Cor. 1:7, 1 Pet. 1:7,13, 1 Pet. 4:13

Jesus' REVELATION (Apokalupsis) as the posttribulational event: 2 Thess. 1:7

The bottom line is this: Posttribulationists can rightly claim ALL of the following terms as technical terms referring to the one and only future coming of Christ: *Day of Christ, Day of Jesus Christ, Day of the Lord Jesus, Day of the Lord Jesus Christ, Day of the Lord, parousia (His coming), epiphaneia (His appearing), & apokalupsis (His revelation)*. Pretribulationists are forced to abandon all of these as technical terms for the supposed pretribulation rapture (because they are all used at least once in a clear posttribulation context). Instead they wrongly use a verb (harpazo - "caught up") as a noun (rapture) in order to INVENT a non-biblical technical term for their alleged pretribulation coming that is supposed to be distinguished from the second coming (with absolutely no precedent in Biblical usage). That there is no Biblical term for an alleged pretribulation coming should give pretribulationists considerable pause that they may be forcing the Scriptures to fit into their preconceived theory.

Misuse of the Word "Church" as a Technical Term

A second abuse of biblical terminology by pretribulationists is their false and misleading usage of the word "Church." Their usage is governed by the dispensational parameters they have erected. To a pretribulationist, the "Church" is strictly a technical term referring to Christians saved after Pentecost and prior to the tribulation. Believers prior to Pentecost were not part of the "Church" nor are those saved after the beginning of the tribulation. Hence, the term "Church age" (an utterly nonbiblical term) has been coined to delineate the parameters of the pretribulationists' fabricated "Church" on earth. But, once again, the Scriptures transgress the pretribulationists' jargon. Or more accurately, pretribulation jargon transgresses the Scriptural precedents and norms of terminology.

Jesus gave instructions in Matthew 18:17 regarding Church discipline, within a book that pretribulationists strenuously claim is not related to the "Church," and was written prior to the Church being established in their dispensational scheme. Stephen, in his defense before the Sanhedrin in Acts 7:38, referred to the Jewish believers under Moses as "the Church in the wilderness." In Hebrews 2:12, Paul quoted Psalm 22:22, which speaks of the Old Testament Jews in worship, as "the Church." In most English Bibles, this Psalm is translated "congregation" rather than "Church." However, the quote was from the Greek version of the Old Testament used by the early Church called the Septuagint (LXX). The New Testament writers frequently quoted this version in their New Testament books, even many times where it reads differently from the Hebrew Text we have today. In the LXX, the Greek word for "Church" (ekklesia) is found repeatedly in the Old Testament, usually referring to the people of God (Israel). Since the Apostles and the early Christians to whom they wrote used this version, and since this version uses "Church" (ekklesia) for the Old Testament saints repeatedly, it is not likely that the early Christians had the same understanding of this term that modern pretribulationists have fabricated. Once again we find pretribulationists forced to use artificial technical terminology that is NOT in agreement with biblical precedent and common usage of the early Church. We don't let cults or Catholics get away with such subtle shell games with biblical words, why do we permit it by pretribulationists? The simple fact is, the wrong usage of terminology by pretribulationists, and artificial distinctions in their jargon, are glaring indicators of a false system that is being forced on the Scriptures.

Eschatology of the Post-Apostolic Church

Copyright © Tim Warner

Revised May 2, 2008

In our series of articles on the rapture, we outlined the biblical basis for posttribulationism. Jesus' teaching to His Apostles-in-training, with its posttribulation rapture, formed the foundation for the eschatology of the Apostolic Church.

The eschatology of the post-Apostolic Church was the direct result of the labor of the Apostles. One big advantage the Early Christians had over us was their familiarity with Apostolic oral tradition. The Apostles not only wrote the New Testament books under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but they spent their lives teaching the Word of God to the next generation of Christians. A good illustration of the importance of oral tradition is found in 2 Thess. 2. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers about the "Restrainer" who was holding back the revelation of Antichrist. "*Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining.*" (2 Thess. 2:5-6). Unfortunately, Paul did not reveal the identity of the Restrainer in this passage, and we are left to guess just what he actually told the Thessalonians when he was with them.

The oral teaching of the Apostles, as well as the written Word of God, molded the thinking and theology of the earliest believers. And some of this personal instruction is reflected in the writings of the earliest of the Church fathers, who either knew the Apostles personally, or were taught by those who were linked to the Apostles. Below we have quoted Irenaeus and Hippolytus. Both of these men dealt with eschatology extensively, and both had a chain of linkage to the Apostle John who wrote Revelation. John personally disciplined several men, including Papius, Ignatius, and Polycarp, the famous martyr. Polycarp was Bishop of the Church of Smyrna under John's leadership, and was most likely the one to whom the letter to Smyrna was addressed in Revelation. Polycarp in turn disciplined Irenaeus, who later became Bishop of the Church at Lyons, Gaul (France). Irenaeus conveyed some very intriguing oral tradition that John passed down through Polycarp, and his other disciples, regarding the nature of the Millennium (including some sayings of Jesus). Irenaeus, in his work *Against Heresies, Book V*, was the earliest writer (who's works have survived) to deal with end-time prophecy in any great depth. So, in Irenaeus we have both extensive treatment of eschatology, and a high degree of credibility due to his direct linkage to the Apostle John's oral teaching.

Hippolytus, bishop of Portus, was a disciple of Irenaeus, and carried on his work of refuting heresies after Irenaeus' martyrdom. Hippolytus' eschatological work is in some ways more extensive than Irenaeus'. So, we see that there is an unbroken chain of men, who were directly influenced by the oral teaching of John, who had much to say about the end-times.

What better way to confirm our understanding of the Apostles than to examine their students! If our theory is correct, that a uniform rapture view can be traced from Jesus through the Epistles and Revelation, we would expect to find the same continuity in the writings of the post-Apostolic Church. On the other hand, if the pretribulation theory is correct, that Paul was given new prophetic insight of a "secret rapture," we would expect the post-Apostolic Church (especially Gentiles to whom Paul was sent) to embrace this new prophetic scheme, and to distinguish their eschatology from what Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse. If the post-Apostolic Christians display the kind of posttribulation expectancy consistent with Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse, then pretribulationists would be forced to the awkward conclusion that the Apostles failed miserably in transmitting sound Christian teaching to the very next generation!

We do not want to give the impression that the eschatology of the Early Church was uniform throughout. There was some controversy, mainly concerning whether the Millennium should be understood literally. The earliest writers seem to be consistent, understanding the Millennium as the literal reign of Christ and the saints on earth after the second coming. However, a few North African writers, with links to the heretical Alexandrian school, tended toward allegorical interpretation. A few of them thought the 70th week (but not the tribulation) was already fulfilled. These were Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Julius Africanus.

However, despite the apparent disagreement over the nature of the Millennium, and how to interpret Daniel 9:27, there was absolutely no controversy regarding the timing of the rapture. All saw a future tribulation, a literal Antichrist who would persecute the Church, and all were posttribulationists, seeing only one future coming of Christ after the tribulation.

Some of the writers we will cite carry greater weight than others, depending on their level of orthodoxy, and their closeness to Apostolic teaching. We present the following evidence only for its historical value, to illustrate how the next generations of Christians understood the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. Due to the natural tendency for error to creep in and compound over time, we have limited our evidence to the Ante-Nicene period (from the Apostles until A.D.325). Also, we have tried our best to be thorough. We have NOT selected only quotations that support our posttribulation rapture and ignored those that present something else. The writings of the early Christians universally support posttribulationism, and give absolutely no hint of pretribulationism.

IMMINENCE or EXPECTANCY?

One of the key elements of pretribulation thinking is the idea that Jesus could come at any moment, and no intervening prophetic events need occur prior to Jesus' coming. Some pretribulationist authors have claimed the early Christians believed Jesus' coming was imminent. THIS IS ABSOLUTELY NOT TRUE. While there are passages in the Church fathers that show they expected a soon return of Christ, we should not mistake this for belief in "imminence." The one thing that precludes an "any-moment" coming is their clear belief that intervening events must occur prior to the coming of the Lord for His Church. Yet, most were convinced the end-time scenario would unfold soon. Therefore, they had a healthy EXPECTANCY of the Lord's soon return, while NOT believing in "imminence."

Below is a quote from Irenaeus, Bishop of the Church at Lyons. In this excerpt, Irenaeus was speaking unapprovingly about a group of fellow believers who were enthusiastically trying to figure out the name of the Antichrist based on the value the Greek letters. (There were a few manuscripts of Revelation circulating that had an error in the number of the name of the Beast, 616 rather than 666). Their expectation was quite real, thinking that the end-time scenario — tribulation, Antichrist, second coming — would play out in the near future. But they were in error by using a corrupt manuscript with the erroneous number. In this section, Irenaeus was concerned both with this erroneous number, as well as their unhealthy eagerness to find a candidate who's name added up to the number of the Beast. Irenaeus' advice was to await the fulfillment of certain prophecies in Revelation, including the fall of the Roman Empire and rise of the ten kings, before they begin to speculate on who the Antichrist might be. Hence, it is obvious they did NOT believe the coming of the Lord was "imminent."

Irenaeus: (AD. 120-202)

"Moreover, another danger, by no means trifling, shall overtake those who falsely presume that they know the name of Antichrist. For if these men assume one [number], when this [Antichrist] shall come having another, they will be easily led away by him, as supposing him not to be the expected one, who must be guarded against. 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. ... It is therefore more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfillment of the prophecy, than to be making surmises, and casting about for any names that may present themselves, inasmuch as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned; and the same question will, after all, remain unsolved. ... But he indicates the number of the name now, that when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware who he is: ... 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."¹

Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) Anonymous, 1st Century

"Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ye ready, for ye know not the hour in which our Lord cometh. But often shall ye come together, seeking the things which are befitting to your souls: for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if ye be not made perfect in the last time. For in the last days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; for when lawlessness increaseth, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another, and then shall appear the world-deceiver as Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall do iniquitous things which have never yet come to pass since the beginning. Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and shall perish; but they that endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself. And then shall appear the signs of the truth; first, the sign of an out-spreading in heaven; then the sign of the sound of the trumpet; and the third, the resurrection of the dead; yet not of all, but as it is said: The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven."²

The Shepherd of Hermas: (Early 2nd Century)

"You will tell, therefore, those who preside over the Church, to direct their ways in righteousness, that they may receive in full the promises with great glory. Stand steadfast, therefore, ye who work righteousness, and doubt not, that your passage may be with the holy angels. Happy ye who

*endure the great tribulation that is coming on, and happy they who shall not deny their own life. For the Lord hath sworn by His Son, that those who denied their Lord have abandoned their life in despair, for even now these are to deny Him in the days that are coming."*³

Hippolytus: (AD. 170-236)

*"When the times are fulfilled, and the ten horns spring from the beast in the last (times), then Antichrist will appear among them. When he makes war against the saints, and persecutes them, then may we expect the manifestation of the Lord from heaven."*⁴

*"With respect to his name, it is not in our power to explain it exactly, as the blessed John understood it and was instructed about it, but only to give a conjectural account of it; for when he appears, the blessed one will show us what we seek to know. ... Wherefore we ought neither to give it out as if this were certainly his name, nor again ignore the fact that he may not otherwise be designated. But having the mystery of God in our heart, we ought in fear to keep faithfully what has been told us by blessed prophets, in order that when those things come to pass, we may be prepared for them, and not be deceived. For when the times advance, he too, of whom these things are said, will be manifest."*⁵

Cyprian: (AD. 200-258)

"For you ought to know and to believe, and hold it for certain, that the day of affliction has begun to hang over our heads, and the end of the world and the time of Antichrist to draw near, so that we must all stand prepared for the battle; nor consider anything but the glory of life eternal, and the crown of the confession of the Lord; and not regard those things which are coming as being such as were those which have passed away. A severer and a fiercer fight is now threatening, for which the soldiers of Christ ought to prepare themselves with uncorrupted faith and robust courage, considering that they drink the cup of Christ's blood daily, for the reason that they themselves also may be able to shed their blood for Christ. ... For there comes the time, beloved brethren, which our Lord long ago foretold and taught us was approaching, saying, "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things they will do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them." Nor let any one wonder that we are harassed with increasing afflictions, when the Lord before predicted that these things would happen in the last times, and has instructed us for the warfare by the teaching and exhortation of His words. Peter also, His

apostle, has taught that persecutions occur for the sake of our being proved, and that we also should, by the example of righteous men who have gone before us, be joined to the love of God by death and sufferings. For he wrote in his epistle, and said, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, nor do ye fall away, as if some new thing happened unto you; but as often as ye partake in Christ's sufferings, rejoice in all things, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." ⁶

The "Six Day" Theory Precludes "Imminence"

One important reason the Church Fathers could not have believed in an "any moment" coming of Christ, is the "six-day theory." Many of the early Church Fathers believed in the theory that the earth would continue for six thousand years under the curse. The Millennium would be the Sabbath of rest. Consequently, they tried to calculate the time since creation, by using the genealogies from the Old Testament, to calculate the approximate time of the Lord's coming. It is noteworthy that even some of the Church Fathers, who are alleged by pretribulationists to have believed in "imminence," taught this theory. This theory is totally incompatible with the idea of imminence.

Epistle of Barnabas (Late 1st Century)

"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." ⁷

Commodianus: (AD. 240)

"This has pleased Christ, that the dead should rise again, yea, with their bodies; and those, too, whom in this world the fire has burned [martyrs], when six thousand years are completed,..." ⁸

Irenaeus: (AD. 120-202)

"For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded. And for this reason the Scripture says: "Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their adornment. And God

brought to a conclusion upon the sixth day the works that He had made; and God rested upon the seventh day from all His works." This is an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year."⁹

Cyprian: (AD. 200-258)

"You have desired, beloved Fortunatus that, since the burden of persecutions and afflictions is lying heavy upon us, and in the ending and completion of the world the hateful time of Antichrist is already beginning to draw near, I would collect from the sacred Scriptures some exhortations for preparing and strengthening the minds of the brethren, whereby I might animate the soldiers of Christ for the heavenly and spiritual contest.... For he cannot be a soldier fitted for the war who has not first been exercised in the field; nor will he who seeks to gain the crown of contest be rewarded on the racecourse, unless he first considers the use and skillfulness of his powers. It is an ancient adversary and an old enemy with whom we wage our battle: six thousand years are now nearly completed since the devil first attacked man. All kinds of temptation, and arts, and snares for his overthrow, he has learned by the very practice of long years. If he finds Christ's soldier unprepared, if unskilled, if not careful and watching with his whole heart; he circumvents him if ignorant, he deceives him incautious, he cheats him inexperienced. But if a man, keeping the Lord's precepts, and bravely adhering to Christ, stands against him, he must needs be conquered, because Christ, whom that man confesses, is unconquered."¹⁰

Methodius: (AD. 260-312)

"For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday: seeing that is past as a watch in the night." For when a thousand years are reckoned as one day in the sight of God, and from the creation of the world to His rest is six days, so also to our time, six days are defined, as those say who are clever arithmeticians. Therefore, they say that an age of six thousand years extends from Adam to our time. For they say that the judgment will come on the seventh day, that is in the seventh thousand years."¹¹

Lactantius: (AD. 260-330)

"But we, whom the Holy Scriptures instruct to the knowledge of the truth, know the beginning and the end of the world, respecting which we will now speak in the end of our work, since we have explained respecting

the beginning in the second book. Therefore let the philosophers, who enumerate thousands of ages from the beginning of the world, know that the six thousandth year is not yet completed, and that when this number is completed the consummation must take place, and the condition of human affairs be remodeled for the better, the proof of which must first be related, that the matter itself may be plain. God completed the world and this admirable work of nature in the space of six days, as is contained in the secrets of Holy Scripture, and consecrated the seventh day, on which He had rested from His works. But this is the Sabbath-day, which in the language of the Hebrews received its name from the number, whence the seventh is the legitimate and complete number. For there are seven days, by the revolutions of which in order the circles of years are made up; and there are seven stars which do not set, and seven luminaries which are called planets, whose differing and unequal movements are believed to cause the varieties of circumstances and times.

Therefore, since all the works of God were completed in six days, the world must continue in its present state through six ages, that is, six thousand years. For the great day of God is limited by a circle of a thousand years, as the prophet shows, who says "In Thy sight, O Lord, a thousand years are as one day." And as God labored during those six days in creating such great works, so His religion and truth must labor during these six thousand years, while wickedness prevails and bears rule. And again, since God, having finished His works, rested the seventh day and blessed it, at the end of the six thousandth year all wickedness must be abolished from the earth, and righteousness reign for a thousand years; and there must be tranquillity and rest from the labors which the world now has long endured.... Perhaps some one may now ask when these things of which we have spoken are about to come to pass? I have already shown above, that when six thousand years shall be completed this change must take place, and that the last day of the extreme conclusion is now drawing near. It is permitted us to know respecting the signs, which are spoken by the prophets, for they foretold signs by which the consummation of the times is to be expected by us from day to day, and to be feared. When, however, this amount will be completed, those teach, who have written respecting the times, collecting them from the sacred writings and from various histories, how great is the number of years from the beginning of the world. And although they vary, and the amount of the number as reckoned by them differs considerably, yet all expectation does not exceed the limit of two hundred years. The subject itself declares that the fall and ruin of the world will shortly take place; except that while the city of Rome remains it appears that nothing of this kind is to be feared. But when that capital of the world shall have fallen,

*and shall have begun to be a street, which the Sibyls say shall come to pass, who can doubt that the end has now arrived to the affairs of men and the whole world? It is that city, that only, which still sustains all things; and the God of heaven is to be entreated by us and implored - if, indeed, His arrangements and decrees can be delayed - lest, sooner than we think for, that detestable tyrant should come who will trade-take so great a deed, and dig out that eye, by the destruction of which the world itself is about to fall. Now let us return, to set forth the other things which are then about to follow."*¹²

*"For six thousand years have not yet been completed, and when this number shall be made up, then at length all evil will be taken away, that justice alone may reign."*¹³

As is apparent from the preceding quotations, some believed they were only a hundred or so years from the second coming and the Millennium. Others believed the time was very near. Their was a serious problem with their calculations, however. They were all based on the Old Testament they were familiar with, the Greek Septuagint [LXX]. This version differs dramatically from the Hebrew text regarding the ages of the Patriarchs when they begat children, the LXX giving much longer life spans. For example, if you add up the life spans of the patriarchs in Genesis eleven, from the flood to the birth of Abraham, there was 292 years according to the Hebrew Masoretic text. But, according to the Septuagint, there was over 1,000 years. Consequently, the early Christians, using the Septuagint version, were off by about 1,500 years. Since they did not use the Hebrew Scriptures which give the correct years, they did not know the completion of the six thousand years was more than 1,500 years away. So they looked for the appearing of Antichrist and the signs that would signal Christ's return in their generation.

Theophilus: (AD. 115-181)

*"And from the foundation of the world the whole time is thus traced, so far as its main epochs are concerned. From the creation of the world to the deluge were 2242 years. And from the deluge to the time when Abraham our forefather begat a son, 1036 years. And from Isaac, Abraham's son, to the time when the people dwelt with Moses in the desert, 660 years. And from the death of Moses and the rule of Joshua the son of Nun, to the death of the patriarch David, 498 years. And from the death of David and the reign of Solomon to the sojourning of the people in the land of Babylon, 518 years 6 months 10 days. And from the government of Cyrus to the death of the Emperor Aurelius Verus, 744 years. All the years from the creation of the world amount to a total of 5698 years, and the odd months and days."*¹⁴

This author, calculating from the LXX, believed the second coming was still about 302 years away. This is hardly belief in "imminence." While some of the Church Fathers may have been a bit over enthusiastic about dates, or trying to figure out if any of their would-be rulers' names added up to 666, who can blame them? They were suffering terribly for the Faith. Many are making similar calculations today, but expect that the tribulation is still entirely future. We will reserve judgment on the "six thousand year theory," which seems possible based on the true Hebrew text genealogies, placing the end of the sixth millennium shortly after the year 2,000. However, we must not ignore the fact that the early Church Fathers could not have believed in "imminence" and still believe the six thousand year theory. Obviously, in their thinking, Christ would not return until the end of this predetermined period. They placed the tribulation in the future, and, as posttribulationists, they could not be looking for a pretribulation rapture before this time. The preceding quotations clearly indicate that they expected intervening events would occur before the Lord's coming. Therefore, they did not believe in "imminence," as defined by pretribulationists.

PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH BY ANTICHRIST

The early Christians unanimously believed the Antichrist would persecute the Church, and that the resurrection and gathering to Christ would occur at a single coming, after the tribulation.

Justin Martyr: (AD. 110-165)

"[T]wo advents of Christ have been announced: the one, in which He is set forth as suffering, inglorious, dishonored, and crucified; but the other, in which He shall come from heaven with glory, when the man of apostasy, who speaks strange things against the Most High, shall venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us the Christians, ... Now it is evident that no one can terrify or subdue us who have believed in Jesus over all the world. For it is plain that, though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to wild beasts, and chains, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but the more such things happen, the more do others and in larger numbers become faithful, and worshippers of God through the name of Jesus." ¹⁵

Epistle of Barnabas: (AD. 100)

"The final stumbling-block (or source of danger) approaches, concerning which it is written, as Enoch says, "For for this end the Lord has cut short the times and the days, that His Beloved may hasten; and He will come to the inheritance." And the prophet also speaks thus: "Ten kingdoms shall reign upon the earth, and a little king shall rise up after them, who shall subdue under one three of the kings." In the like manner Daniel says concerning

the same, "And I beheld the fourth beast, wicked and powerful, and the more savage than all the beasts of the earth and how from it sprang up ten horns, and out of them a little budding horn, and how it subdued under one three of the ten horns. ... We take earnest heed in these last days; for the whole (past) time of your faith will profit you nothing, unless now in this wicked time we also withstand coming sources of danger, as becometh sons of God. That the Black One may find no means of entrance, let us flee from every vanity, let us utterly hate the works of the way of wickedness." ¹⁶

Irenaeus: (AD. 120-202)

"In a still clearer light has John, in the Apocalypse, indicated to the Lord's disciples what shall happen in the last times, and concerning the ten kings who shall then arise, ... These have one mind, and give their strength and power to the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, because He is the Lord of lords, and King of kings. ... And they shall lay Babylon waste, and burn her with fire, and shall give their kingdom to the beast, and put the church to flight. After that they shall be destroyed by the coming of our Lord." ¹⁷

"But he indicates the number of the name now, that when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware of who he is:... 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 in 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." ¹⁸

"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 on 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 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." ¹⁹

The Shepherd of Hermas: (2nd Century)

*"You will tell, therefore, those who preside over the Church, to direct their ways in righteousness, that they may receive in full the promises with great glory. Stand steadfast, therefore, ye who work righteousness, and doubt not, that your passage may be with the holy angels. Happy ye who endure the great tribulation that is coming on, and happy they who shall not deny their own life. For the Lord hath sworn by His Son, that those who denied their Lord have abandoned their life in despair, for even now these are to deny Him in the days that are coming."*²⁰

"Twenty days after the former vision I saw another vision, brethren a representation of the tribulation that is to come. I was going to a country house along the Campanian road. Now the house lay about ten furlongs from the public road. The district is one rarely traversed. And as I walked alone, I prayed the Lord to complete the revelations which He had made to me through His holy Church, that He might strengthen me, and give repentance to all His servants who were going astray, that His great and glorious name might be glorified because He vouchsafed to show me His marvels. And while I was glorifying Him and giving Him thanks, a voice, as it were, answered me, Doubt not, Hermas; and I began to think with myself, and to say, What reason have I to doubt I who have been established by the Lord, and who have seen such glorious sights? I advanced a little, brethren, and, lo! I see dust rising even to the heavens. I began to say to myself, Are cattle approaching and raising the dust? It was about a furlong's distance from me. And, lo! I see the dust rising more and more, so that I imagined that it was something sent from God. But the sun now shone out a little, and, lo! I see a mighty beast like a whale, and out of its mouth fiery locusts proceeded. But the size of that beast was about a hundred feet, and it had a head like an urn. I began to weep, and to call on the Lord to rescue me from it. Then I remembered the word which I had heard, Doubt not, O Hermas. Clothed, therefore, my brethren, with faith in the Lord, and remembering the great things which He had taught me, I boldly faced the beast. Now that beast came on with such noise and force, that it could itself have destroyed a city. I came near it, and the monstrous beast stretched itself out on the ground, and showed nothing but its tongue, and did not stir at all until I had passed by it. Now the beast had four colors on its head-black, then fiery and bloody, then golden, and lastly white. Now after I had passed by the wild beast, and had moved forward about thirty feet, lo! a virgin meets me, adorned as if she were proceeding from the bridal chamber, clothed entirely in white, and with white sandals, and veiled up to her forehead, and her head was covered by a hood. And she had white hair. I knew from my former visions that this was the Church, and I became more joyful. She saluted me, and

said, Hail, O man! And I returned her salutation, and said, Lady, hail! And she answered. and said to me, Has nothing crossed your path? I say, I was met by a beast of such a size that it could destroy peoples, but through the power of the Lord and His great mercy I escaped from it. Well did you escape from it, says she, because you cast your care on God, and opened your heart to the Lord, believing that you can be saved by no other than by His great and glorious name. On this account the Lord has sent His angel, who has rule over the beasts, and whose name is Thegri, and has shut up its mouth, so that it cannot tear you. You have escaped from great tribulation on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt in the presence of such a beast. Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If then ye prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it, if your heart be pure and spotless, and ye spend the rest of the days of your life in serving the Lord blamelessly. Cast your cares upon the Lord, and He will direct them. Trust the Lord, ye who doubt, for He is all-powerful, and can turn His anger away from you, and send scourges on the doubters. Woe to those who hear these words, and despise them: better were it for them not to have been born. I asked her about the four colors which the beast had on his head. And she answered, and said to me, Again you are inquisitive in regard to such matters. Yea, Lady, said I, make known to me what they are. Listen, said she: the black is the world in which we dwell: but the fiery and bloody points out that the world must perish through blood and fire: but the golden part are you who have escaped from this world. For as gold is tested by fire, and thus becomes useful, so are you tested who dwell in it. Those, therefore, who continue steadfast, and are put through the fire, will be purified by means of it. For as gold casts away its dross, so also will ye cast away all sadness and straitness, and will be made pure so as to fit into the building of the tower. But the white part is the age that is to come, in which the elect of God will dwell, since those elected by God to eternal life will be spotless and pure. Wherefore cease not speaking these things into the ears of the saints. This then is the type of the great tribulation that is to come. If ye wish it, it will be nothing. Remember those things which were written down before. And saying this, she departed. But I saw not into what place she retired. There was a noise, however, and I turned round in alarm, thinking that that beast was coming. ²¹

Tertullian: (AD. 145-220)

"In the Revelation of John, again, the order of these times is spread out to view, which "the souls of the martyrs" are taught to wait for beneath the altar, whilst they earnestly pray to be avenged and judged: (taught, I say,

to wait), in order that the world may first drink to the dregs the plagues that await it out of the vials of the angels, and that the city of fornication may receive from the ten kings its deserved doom, and that the beast Antichrist, with his false prophet may wage war on the Church of God; and that, after the casting of the devil into the bottomless pit for a while, the blessed prerogative of the first resurrection may be obtained from the thrones; and then again, after the consignment of him to the fire, that the judgment of the final and universal resurrection may be determined out of the books. Since, then, the Scriptures both indicate the stages of the last times, and concentrate the harvest of the Christian hope in the very end of the world." ²²

"Now the privilege of this favor [the resurrection] awaits those who shall at the coming of the Lord be found in the flesh, and who shall, owing to the oppressions of the time of Antichrist, deserve by an instantaneous death, which is accomplished by a sudden change, to become qualified to join the rising saints; as he writes to the Thessalonians: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we too shall ourselves be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." ²³

Hippolytus: (AD. 170-236)

"It is proper that we take the Holy Scriptures themselves in hand, and find out from them what, and of what manner, the coming of Antichrist is; on what occasion and at what time that impious one shall be revealed; and whence and from what tribe (he shall come); and what his name is, which is indicated by the number in Scripture; and how he shall work error among the people, gathering them from the ends of the earth; and (how) he shall stir up tribulation and persecution against the saints; and how he shall glorify himself as God; and what his end shall be; and how the sudden appearing of the Lord shall be revealed from heaven; and what the conflagration of the whole world shall be; and what the glorious and heavenly kingdom of the saints is to be, when they reign together with Christ; and what the punishment of the wicked by fire." ²⁴

"With respect to his name, it is not in our power to explain it exactly, as the blessed John understood it and was instructed about it, but only to give a conjectural account of it; for when he appears, the blessed one will show us what we seek to know. ... Wherefore we ought neither to give it out as if

*this were certainly his name, nor again ignore the fact that he may not otherwise be designated. But having the mystery of God in our heart, we ought in fear to keep faithfully what has been told us by blessed prophets, in order that when those things come to pass, we may be prepared for them, and not be deceived. For when the times advance, he too, of whom these things are said, will be manifest."*²⁵

*"Now concerning the tribulation of the persecution which is to fall upon the Church from the adversary, John also speaks thus, "And I saw a great and wondrous sign in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, ... And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." That refers to the one thousand two hundred and threescore days (the half of the week) during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church.... These things then, being come to pass, beloved, and the one week being divided into two parts, and the abomination of desolation being manifested then, and the two prophets and forerunners of the Lord having finished their course, and the whole world finally approaching the consummation, what remains but the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from heaven, for whom we have looked in hope."*²⁶

Cyprian: (AD. 200-258)

*"[T]he Lord hath foretold that these things would come. With the exhortation of His foreseeing word, instructing, and teaching, and preparing, and strengthening the people of His Church for all endurance of things to come. He predicted and said that wars, and famines, and earthquakes, and pestilences would arise in each place; and lest an unexpected and new dread of mischiefs should shake us, He previously warned us that the adversary would increase more and more in the last times."*²⁷

"For you ought to know and to believe, and hold it for certain, that the day of affliction has begun to hang over our heads, and the end of the world and the time of Antichrist to draw near, so that we must all stand prepared for the battle; nor consider anything but the glory of life eternal, and the crown of the confession of the Lord; and not regard those things which are coming as being such as were those which have passed away. A severer and a fiercer fight is now threatening, for which the soldiers of Christ ought to prepare themselves with uncorrupted faith and robust courage, considering that they drink the cup of Christ's blood daily, for the reason that they themselves also may be able to shed their blood for Christ. For this is to wish to be found with Christ, to imitate that which Christ

both taught and did, according to the Apostle John, who said, "He that saith he abideth in Christ, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked." Moreover, the blessed Apostle Paul exhorts and teaches, saying, "We are God's children; but if children, then heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." ... For there comes the time, beloved brethren, which our Lord long ago foretold and taught us was approaching, saying, "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things they will do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them." Nor let any one wonder that we are harassed with increasing afflictions, when the Lord before predicted that these things would happen in the last times, and has instructed us for the warfare by the teaching and exhortation of His words. Peter also, His apostle, has taught that persecutions occur for the sake of our being proved, and that we also should, by the example of righteous men who have gone before us, be joined to the love of God by death and sufferings. For he wrote in his epistle, and said, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, nor do ye fall away, as if some new thing happened unto you; but as often as ye partake in Christ's sufferings, rejoice in all things, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." ²⁸

"Nor let any one of you, beloved brethren, be so terrified by the fear of future persecution, or the coming of the threatening Antichrist, as not to be found armed for all things by the evangelical exhortations and precepts, and by the heavenly warnings. Antichrist is coming, but above him comes Christ also. The enemy goeth about and rageth, but immediately the Lord follows to avenge our sufferings and our wounds. The adversary is enraged and threatens, but there is One who can deliver us from his hands. He is to be feared whose anger no one can escape, as He Himself forewarns, and says: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." And again: "He that loveth his life, shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal." And in the Apocalypse He instructs and forewarns, saying, "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, mixed in the cup of His indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever; and they shall have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image."

"For the secular contest men are trained and prepared, and reckon it a great glory of their honor if it should happen to them to be crowned in the sight of the people, and in the presence of the emperor. Behold a lofty and great contest, glorious also with the reward of a heavenly crown, inasmuch as God looks upon us as we struggle, and, extending His view over those whom He has condescended to make His sons, He enjoys the spectacle of our contest. God looks upon us in the warfare, and fighting in the encounter of faith; His angels look on us, and Christ looks on us. How great is the dignity, and how great the happiness of the glory, to engage in the presence of God, and to be crowned, with Christ for a judge! Let us be armed, beloved brethren, with our whole strength, and let us be prepared for the struggle with an uncorrupted mind, with a sound faith, with a devoted courage. Let the camp of God go forth to the battle-field which is appointed to us. Let the sound ones be armed, lest he that is sound should lose the advantage of having lately stood; let the lapsed also be armed, that even the lapsed may regain what he has lost: let honor provoke the whole; let sorrow provoke the lapsed to the battle. The Apostle Paul teaches us to be armed and prepared, saying, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against powers, and the princes of this world and of this darkness, against spirits of wickedness in high places. Wherefore put on the whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand in the most evil day, that when ye have done all ye may stand; having your loins girt about with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one; and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." ²⁹

Victorinus: (AD. ?-304)

"He speaks of Elias the prophet, who is the precursor of the times of Antichrist, for the restoration and establishment of the churches from the great and intolerable persecution." ³⁰

"The woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and wearing the crown of twelve stars upon her head, and travailing in her pains, is the ancient Church of fathers, and prophets, and saints, and apostles,..." ³¹

"He shall cause also that a golden image of Antichrist shall be placed in the temple at Jerusalem, and that the apostate angel should enter, and thence utter voices and oracles. ... [T]he Lord, admonishing His churches concerning the last times and their dangers, says: "But when ye shall see

the contempt which is spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place, let him who readeth understand." ³²

"[T]he thousand years should be completed, that is, what is left of the sixth day, to wit, of the sixth age, which subsists of a thousand years; after this he must be loosed for a little season. The little season signifies three years and six months, in which with all his power the devil will avenge himself under Antichrist against the Church." ³³

Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: (2nd or 3rd Century) Anonymous

"Be watchful for your life. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye like unto men who wait for their Lord, and when He will come, at even, or in the morning, or at cock-crowing, or at midnight. For at what hour they think not, the Lord will come; and if they open to Him, blessed are those servants, because they were found watching. For He will gird Himself, and will make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." Watch therefore, and pray, that ye do not sleep unto death. For your former good deeds will not profit you, if at the last part of your life you go astray from the true faith. For in the last days false prophets shall be multiplied, and such as corrupt the Word; and the sheep shall be changed into wolves, and love into hatred: for through the abounding of iniquity the love of many shall wax cold. For men shall hate, and persecute, and betray one another. And then shall appear the deceiver of the world, the enemy of the truth, the prince of lies, whom the Lord Jesus "shall destroy with the Spirit of His mouth, who takes away the wicked with His lips; and many shall be offended at Him. But they that endure to the end, the same shall be saved. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and afterwards shall be the voice of a trumpet by the archangel; and in that interval shall be the revival of those that were asleep. And then shall the Lord come, and all the saints with Him, with a great concussion above the clouds, with the angels of His power, in the throne of His kingdom, to condemn the devil, the deceiver of the world, and to render to every one according to his deeds. "Then shall the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous shall go into life eternal," to inherit those things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, such things as God hath prepared for them that love Him." ³⁴

FUTURIST or HISTORICIST?

Some Pretribulationist writers attempt to discount the views of the early Church by claiming they believed they were already in the tribulation. Yet, all of the writers considered the revelation of Antichrist to be entirely future, as well as the appearance of the two witnesses. They believed the Antichrist would defile and

rule from the Temple in Jerusalem. And remember, the Jews had been driven from Jerusalem and the Temple destroyed in AD. 70, and Roman law at the time forbid them from returning. These Church fathers expected that Rome would fall and be replaced by the ten kings. Then Antichrist would arise and take over the kingdom, the Jews would be restored back to Jerusalem, and Antichrist would rebuild the Temple. Only afterward would the Antichrist commit the "abomination of desolation," and then persecute the Church. They could not believe they were in the tribulation if they expected a series of events to occur before the Antichrist was revealed. They held a literal "futurist" view of Revelation, just as pretribulationists do today, minus the pretribulation rapture.

Hippolytus: (AD. 170-236)

*"As these things, then, are in the future, and as the ten toes of the image are equivalent to (so many) democracies, and the ten horns of the fourth beast are distributed over ten kingdoms, let us look at the subject a little more closely, and consider these matters as in the clear light of a personal survey. The golden head of the image and the lioness denoted the Babylonians; the shoulders and arms of silver, and the bear, represented the Persians and Medes; the belly and thighs of brass, and the leopard, meant the Greeks, who held the sovereignty from Alexander's time; the legs of iron, and the beast dreadful and terrible, expressed the Romans, who hold the sovereignty at present; the toes of the feet which were part clay and part iron, and the ten horns, were emblems of the kingdoms that are yet to rise; the other little horn that grows up among them meant the Antichrist in their midst; the stone that smites the earth and brings judgment upon the world was Christ."*³⁵

Some pretribulationist authors have implied that the reason the early Christians did not teach pretribulationism is because they were not as theologically sophisticated as modern scholars. They had not developed their doctrinal positions enough to realize a pretribulation rapture. They excuse this absurdity by claiming the early Christians were not really focused on prophecy. They allege the Church did not concern itself with eschatology until after the Reformation, when pretribulationism was allegedly "rediscovered."

This line of reasoning implies that correct theology comes from an evolutionary process. And, the Church is progressing and becoming more theologically sophisticated as time goes by. But, isn't the transmission of doctrinal truth from one generation to the next supposed to be fixed? Weren't the early Christians taught personally by the Apostles? Were the Apostles not as sophisticated theologically as today's scholars? Perhaps we flatter ourselves too much if we think we have arrived at truths unseen by the early Church. Did the Apostles transmit a crude system of theology that needed to be refined by later

theologians? The whole concept of evolving theology is absolutely anti biblical. Acts records that new converts continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, [Acts 2:42]. Paul told Timothy to faithfully transmit what he had been taught to other faithful men who could then be trusted to pass on pure doctrine to succeeding generations, [2 Tim. 2:1,2]. Paul also warned the Ephesian elders to guard what they had been taught because after the Apostles died, error was bound to dilute the pure doctrine of Christ and the Apostles, [Acts 20:28,29]. And Jude exhorted the brethren to "*earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered to the saints*" [Jude 3]. There was no eschatological vacuum in the early Church! And the extensive treatment of end-time prophecy by Irenaeus and Hippolytus demonstrate an extremely well developed understanding right from the beginning. If there is any need to advance in theology today, it is to get back to what Christ and the Apostles taught. Aside from the Scriptures themselves, the best evidence is to examine what the disciples of the Apostles believed and taught. Obviously, just as Paul warned, as time went on, and new generations of Christians were taught by the preceding generation, a degrading of pure doctrine occurred. Men brought in their own ideas, intentionally and unintentionally, diluting the true teaching of the Apostles. This degrading process is clearly demonstrated in the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, where tradition upon tradition has been heaped up, with the modern teaching hardly resembling the Apostle's doctrine. Of course, those of us who hold only the Bible as our final authority are better anchored than Catholics. But, it cannot be denied that theology has evolved even among non-Catholics. People still bring their preconceived philosophical ideas to their interpretation of Scripture.

At times, the evolution of theology has been checked by a revolution. This was clearly demonstrated in the Reformation. Over a millennia of Roman Catholic tradition was thrown off and Christians again began to search the Scriptures. As the masses became familiar with the written Word of God, they began to shed the false and cumbersome doctrines they had been fed. Most of the "new" doctrines the Protestants embraced were explicitly taught in the Scriptures, and in the writings of the early Church, so were not actually "new," just rediscovered. It is obvious, that the closer we can trace a doctrine back to the time of the Apostles, the more likely it is to actually be doctrine taught by the Apostles. This is especially true if a doctrine can be shown to be contiguous to the time of the Apostles. For example, widely accepted doctrines taught by Church leaders from the later decades of the first century, while the Apostle John was still alive and overseeing the local churches of Asia Minor, are more likely to have met with John's approval. If such doctrines can be shown to have been widely or universally accepted by faithful early Christian leaders who had ties to the Apostles, the likelihood is much greater that they are orthodox. Conversely, if a particular doctrine has no support in the early Church, and is even opposite the universally held view, then such doctrine is highly suspect! While we do not

consider linkage to the early Church to be proof of a doctrine's correctness, it does provide weighty supporting evidence. The essence of the posttribulation argument against pretribulationism on historical grounds is that any new doctrine is false doctrine. If it cannot be traced back to the inspired biblical writers, it is not "*the faith once delivered to the saints*," and we should not be "*contending*" for it!

Of course, some false doctrines were developed even in the first century, and were then passed to succeeding generations, so that they can be traced very far back in Christian history. However, in the early Church, this could not, and did not, occur without a strong reaction from orthodox believers. When serious false doctrines were developed, the large number of orthodox believers trained by the Apostles were a natural deterrent to the spread of these false doctrines, and sounded the alarm against them. The writings of the early Christians display ferocious attacks on new and false doctrines, and valiant defenses of the orthodox Faith. The five books of Irenaeus *Against Heresies* are a catalogue of the false teachings of the day and Irenaeus' refutation of them, based on the teaching of Scripture, and oral tradition passed down by the Apostles. In fact, much of the writings of the early Ante-Nicene Fathers are refutations of heresies. One of Irenaeus' arguments against these early heresies was that they had no traceable linkage to the Apostles. Irenaeus argued that the orthodox Faith could be traced back through the succession of ordained local Bishops in the local churches founded by the Apostles. These local churches were entrusted with both the original New Testament manuscripts as well as the oral teaching of the Apostles who founded and originally pastored them.

Since the early Christians who knew both the Scriptures and the Apostolic oral tradition were unanimously posttribulationist, it seems difficult to believe that they all had departed from the teaching of the Apostles without a single writer challenging them! Furthermore, it seems almost impossible to imagine that if pretribulationism was indeed taught by the Apostles, there should be no trace of it left in the very next generation of believers! The claim, that these early Christians were not theologically sophisticated, is utter nonsense, as anyone who has read their discourses can easily see. They quoted Scripture extensively, and brought together a well developed eschatology that depended on a literal interpretation of prophecy, and was premillennial, futurist, and posttribulationist.

Notes:

1. Irenaeus: *Against Heresies*, Book V, XXX
2. Didache: Chapter XVI
3. Shepherd of Hermas: 3rd Vision
4. Hippolytus, *Fragments from Commentaries*, II, 7
5. Hippolytus, *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 50
6. Cyprian: *Epistles of Cyprian*, LV, 1,2
7. Epistle of Barnabas, XV
8. *Instructions of Commodianus*, LXXIX

9. Irenaeus: Against Heresies V, XXVIII, 3
10. Cyprian: Treatise XI, 2
11. Methodius: Extracts From The Work on Things Created, IX
12. Lactantius: The Divine Institutes, Book 7, Chapter XIV, XXV
13. Lactantius: The Epitome of the Divine Institutes, Chapter 70
14. Theophilus to Autolytus, Book III, XXVIII
15. Justin Martyr: Dialog with Trypho, CX
16. Epistle of Barnabas, IV
17. Irenaeus: Against Heresies V, XXVI, 1
18. Irenaeus: Against Heresies V, XXX, 2, 4
19. Irenaeus: Against Heresies V, XXXV, 1
20. Shepherd of Hermas: 3rd Vision
21. Shepherd of Hermas: 4th Vision
22. Tertullian: On the Resurrection of the Flesh, XXV
23. Tertullian: On the Resurrection of the Flesh, XLI
24. Hippolytus: Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 5
25. Hippolytus: Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 50
26. Hippolytus: Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 60, 61, 64
27. Cyprian: Treatise VII, 2
28. Cyprian: Epistles of Cyprian, LV, 1,2
29. Cyprian: Epistles of Cyprian, LV, 7,8
30. Victorinus: Commentary on the Apocalypse, 7:2
31. Victorinus: Commentary on the Apocalypse, 12:1
32. Victorinus: Commentary on the Apocalypse, 13:13
33. Victorinus: Commentary on the Apocalypse, 20:1-3
34. Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Book VII, XXXI, XXXII
35. Hippolytus: Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 27,28

Double Talk

How Many Second Comings?

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised May 1, 2008

Dr. Thomas Ice, of the *Pretrib Research Center*, argued that differences in terminology in various second coming passages require a separate pretribulation rapture, distinct from the second coming.¹

Ice began with a discussion of what pretribulationists really need to prove. Not surprisingly, he sets the bar for his side extremely low.

"The pretribulationist must show that there is enough dissimilarity between clear rapture and clear second advent passages as to warrant the claim that the two kinds of passages could be speaking about two events which could occur at different times. The pretribulationist does not have to prove at this point . . . that the two events must occur at different times, but only that the exegetical data from rapture and second advent passages do not make it impossible for the events to occur at different times. If he can do that, the pretribulationist has shown that his view is not impossible. And, he has answered the posttribulationist's strongest line of evidence."

The burden of proof established here by Ice, even if met, would merely make pretribulationism possible but not proven or even probable. That really doesn't go very far in proving pretribulationism, or disproving posttribulationism. But, even if we allow such a low burden of proof, and if pretribulationists need to show *"only that the exegetical data from rapture and second advent passages do not make it impossible for the events to occur at different times,"* they are already in trouble in several major passages. Posttribulationists have frequently pointed out that the "first resurrection" is in a posttribulation context in Rev. 20, making another resurrection seven years earlier impossible. The "last trumpet" is associated with the rapture in 1 Cor. 15, making it impossible for this to occur 7 years before the great trumpet blown by Christ to gather His elect *"immediately after the tribulation"* in Matt. 24:29-31. The hope of relief from persecution is connected to the posttribulation event in 2 Thess. 1:4-10. And Paul wrote that at least two major events (one being the abomination of desolation) must occur before the rapture in 2 Thess. 2:1-3. Yet, when presented with these hard evidences, which *"make it impossible for the events to occur at different times,"* pretribulationists typically argue for two "last trumpets," and two "first resurrections," or bend the language in such a way as to force it to

accommodate their view. One could argue that the cosmic disturbances (sun and moon darkened) occur twice at different times, as some pretribulationists also do, in order to escape the problem of a posttribulation "Day of the Lord." If one is willing to take these kinds of liberties with the text, then it might be possible to meet the very low burden of proof that Ice has set for himself.

To his credit, in the rest of his article, Ice set out to do more than just show pretribulationism as a possibility. He set out to show that separating the rapture from the second coming is demanded by the evidence. His method was to point out alleged differences between the rapture and the second coming. Most of his arguments are based on certain details mentioned in a "rapture" passage that are not mentioned in a particular "second coming" passage. This is an argument from silence. He assumed that if something is not mentioned in a particular passage, it could not have occurred during that event. But, using precisely the same logic, one could argue that the synoptic Gospels and John present two different Jesus Christ's because the accounts are substantially different. John includes many things not mentioned in the synoptic Gospels, and they mention things that are missing from John. Yet, **merely looking for differences in two accounts does not indicate that they are referring to different things or events UNLESS the accounts are mutually exclusive**. That is, if the details of one account are impossible to harmonize with the details of another account, only then can it be said with any certainty that the accounts are describing two different things or events. Therefore, the burden of proof Thomas Ice really needs to meet is to show that the "rapture" and "second coming" are mutually exclusive, and cannot be harmonized into a single event.

Since both pretribulationists and premillennial posttribulationists agree on the general framework (that Scripture teaches Christ's second coming after a future tribulation and gathering of Jesus' elect at that time {cf. Matt. 24:29-31}), the burden of proof is on the pretribulationists to show:

- That Scripture clearly indicates ANOTHER coming of Christ before the second coming, or
- That Scripture demands, by mutually exclusive statements, the separation of the rapture from the second coming by a distinct period of time

While we can accept the possibility that certain things were kept secret or were not understood in ancient times, (as many pretribulationists say of their secret rapture), if this argument is employed, we need to see the POINT OF INTRODUCTION of the new (allegedly secret) concept in the progressive revelation of Scripture. It is not enough to show that the rapture COULD BE a distinct event not related to the second coming. We are attempting to discover what the prophetic Scriptures TEACH, not what the prophetic Scripture could permit or allow, if we turn them every which way but loose! The Scriptures PERMIT

the idea that the other planets are inhabited by people too. But, who is going to say that the Bible TEACHES such a thing? Therefore, even if we grant the possibility of the rapture being a "mystery" in the Old Testament, or even during Christ's earthly ministry, such a "mystery" must have been revealed at some point in time to the Church. And if so, there should be a clear explanation in the New Testament of what was once hidden. And, there must be a point of INTRODUCTION of the revelation of such a "mystery." Therefore, the burden of proof that pretribulationists must meet is to show that Scripture DEMANDS a pretribulation rapture distinct and prior to the events of the second coming and the tribulation. Ice also needs to identify the point in time when this new revelation emerged into the body of Christian teaching.

Ice cites the Trinity doctrine as being derived exclusively from inferences in another attempt at lowering the bar for his side. True enough, the Trinity is developed largely from inferences. However, the inferences that point to the Trinity are **necessary inferences**, even though the entire doctrine is not explicitly taught in one single passage. **What Ice and other pretribulationists must do is show that the Scriptures TEACH a pretribulation rapture. This can be done in either of two ways.**

First - **explicitly**, by plain statements of Scripture that the rapture is before the tribulation, or before any specific event that we know occurs during the tribulation. (Well known pretribulationists have already conceded that they cannot do this).

Second - **implicitly**, by showing that the rapture and second coming each contain details that are mutually exclusive (that cannot be harmonized).

Simply showing that the rapture and second coming COULD occur at different times proves nothing at all, and should convince no thinking person of anything. Further, in order to meet this burden, one must deal with the second coming passages exhaustively. While someone might pick and choose a couple of passages, that when compared, could permit a pretribulation rapture, if there are ANY passages at all that demand that the rapture is a part of the second coming, then pretribulationism must fall.

An additional "coming" of Christ, that they admit is nowhere taught in Old Testament prophecy, is a radical alteration of, or addition to, the progressive prophetic revelation of Scripture from Genesis to Malachi. If their pretribulation rapture is nowhere taught in the Old Testament, then they need to show where it is explicitly taught in the New Testament. Merely relying on inference regarding such an important doctrine illustrates the weakness of their case to begin with. But, if they are going to attempt to make their case from inferences alone, those inferences had better be air-tight. That is, each inference must be DEMANDED

by the context. Otherwise, when all is said and done, they have proven nothing at all.

Ice claims that posttribulationists are in the same boat, having to rely exclusively on inferences. He writes, *"Posttribulationists often contend that the pretribulation position is built merely built upon an assumption that certain verses 'make sense' if and only if the pretribulation model of the rapture is assumed to be correct. However, they often fail to make it clear to their readers that they are just as dependent upon assumptions as they say pretribulationists are. Their error stems from failure to observe actual biblical distinctions."*

Ice is simply incorrect here. Not only can posttribulationists give explicit teaching (using the grammatical - historical {literal} hermeneutic) that the rapture is posttribulational, but we can also give direct explicit teaching that precludes the possibility of a pretribulation rapture. Now that is setting the bar much higher for posttribulationists than Ice has done for pretribulationists! We have already provided the evidence for this in our first section, "Answers RE: the Rapture."

Arguments from Silence

When comparing Scripture with Scripture, Ice's repeated reliance on an "argument from silence" is not a valid proof of anything. "Mutual exclusivity" is the only valid way to prove the kind of dichotomy Ice is seeking to show between the rapture and second coming.

An "**argument from silence**," when comparing two passages, assumes that since one account leaves out something included in another account, the two accounts must be speaking of different things or events. But, this conclusion is illogical. Take two independent witnesses to a crime for example. When interviewed separately, would we expect both witnesses to reveal precisely all the same details? Would we conclude that because one witness' account had details not included in the other's, and vice versa, that they witnessed two different crimes? Of course not. Let's suppose one witness said that the perpetrator of a robbery wore blue jeans and sun glasses. The other witness said he had on a tee-shirt and tennis shoes. Are we forced to conclude that these are different crimes? No. All of these details COULD be true of the same person. The differences between the two accounts are easily explained by the fact that each witness observed or remembered different details, or saw things from a different perspective. Yet this is precisely the kind of argument Ice repeatedly used in his attempt to isolate the rapture from the second coming.

"**Mutual exclusivity**" is quite different. This kind of argument says that if the details of one account cannot be harmonized with the details of the other, then logically we must conclude that the events are different events. Let's take our above example. Two people witness a robbery. One witness says the

perpetrator was a black male with a gun, who drove away in a blue Nissan pickup truck. The other witness says it was a white male with a knife, who rode off on a bicycle. With these details, we should probably conclude that these two witnesses did not witness the same crime. Since one witness said the perpetrator was a black male, and the second witness said he was a white male, these details are mutually exclusive (each excludes the other). He cannot be both. The same applies to the weapon and the getaway vehicle. Mutual exclusivity is a way to implicitly prove something. An argument from silence proves nothing at all.

Before we address the specific issues Ice has raised, let's test these two approaches on a few rapture - second coming passages. First, compare two passages that both Ice and myself agree are posttribulation second coming passages, Matt. 24:29-31 and Rev. 19. In Matthew, we have "*the sign of the Son of Man*" appearing in the heavens. Nothing of the kind is mentioned in Rev. 19. We have Christ's sounding the trumpet, and dispatching His angels to gather Jesus' elect. Nothing like this can be found in Rev. 19. Conversely, in Rev. 19, we have Christ dressed in a garment dipped in blood, riding a white horse, with His army (probably angelic) in tow also dressed in white and on horseback. Nothing of the kind can be found in Matt. 24. If we apply Ice's argument from silence to these passages, we are forced to conclude that Matt. 24:29-31 occurs at a different time, and is completely distinct from the coming to battle in Rev. 19! But, Matt. 24:29 explicitly states that this coming occurs "*immediately after the tribulation.*" And, Rev. 19 chronologically places that coming immediately after the tribulation. What we have done here is TESTED Ice's method on a control group. This is the scientific method of testing a test to make sure the test is valid. It is done by applying the test to a situation where the correct results are already known beforehand. If the test results agree with what is already known beforehand, then that test COULD BE a valid test. If it fails in the control group, then it is NOT a valid test, and must be discarded. Any results gained from using a test that has failed when applied to a control group will be unreliable at best.

In our above test, we already knew that our control group of two passages both refer to Christ's posttribulation coming. If applying the test to those passages gave the same result, then the test could be valid. In this case, the test indicated that they are two completely different comings of Christ. Therefore, Ice's argument from silence is not a valid test. That leaves the mutual exclusivity test as the only valid way for Ice to show that the rapture occurs at a different time than the second coming.

When we use the mutually exclusivity test on the same two passages, what are the results? Do any of the details given in Matt. 24:29-31 preclude the details given in Rev. 19? No, not one. Even though there are several things unique to each passage, both can be harmonized together with all of their details intact.

We can combine the two accounts into a "harmony" just as we combine the four Gospels into a "Harmony of the Gospels." In this case, the scenario would go something like this: The sun and moon are darkened. The sign of the Son of Man appears in the sky. Heaven opens, Jesus and His army of angels descend to the atmosphere of the earth riding on white horses. When they arrive in the clouds, Jesus sounds the trumpet, and the army of angels fan out to *"gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of heaven to the uttermost part of the earth."* All the tribes of the earth mourn as they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Jesus then begins His descent to the Mount of Olives, and destroys the Antichrist and his armies. While the two accounts are quite dissimilar, they are NOT mutually exclusive. Therefore, since the results of the mutual exclusivity test agrees with what we already know to be true about these two passages (both are descriptions of Christ's posttribulation coming), our "mutual exclusivity" test passes as a potentially reliable test. Both passages are speaking of the same coming of Christ, and our test shows the same result.

Let's do a similar test on two passages that we all agree are "rapture" passages, 1 Cor. 15:50-54 & 1 Thess. 4:13-18. The result is known. Both passages speak of the same coming. In 1 Cor. 15, the resurrection of the body and changing of the living saints into incorruptible bodies are explicitly mentioned. Yet, there is no hint of the "translation" (catching up) of the saints, described in 1 Thess. 4. There are other notable differences as well. 1 Thess. 4 mentions the descent of the Lord, and the shout of Michael, neither of which are mentioned in 1 Cor. 15. Using Ice's argument from silence, we would be forced to conclude that 1 Cor. 15 is speaking of a different coming than 1 Thess. 4! But what of the fact that both passages make specific mention of the resurrection of the saints? Does that not connect the passages? Yes it does. But, the posttribulation coming is specifically said to have a resurrection too. So, any use of similarities to connect the passages also indicates that clear posttribulation passages are speaking of the same coming, too. The results of this test are the same as our comparison of Matt. 24 & Rev. 19. The mutual exclusivity test gives the results we know to be true, and the argument from silence once again fails to agree with the known results.

We must decide whether to connect these passages based on their similarities or else distinguish them based on their distinctive features. Just what should our rule be? Here's the rule that passes all of our control group tests. **If different accounts of Christ's coming do not contain any details that are mutually exclusive, there is no reason to distinguish them as different events. We should assume they are the same UNLESS "mutual exclusivity" demands otherwise.** Unless Dr. Ice employs this test alone in his attempt to distinguish the rapture from the second coming, his results mean nothing. Appealing to an argument from silence is meaningless.

This rule works fine in our control groups, is perfectly logical, and is therefore a valid rule. It works well for harmonizing 1 Cor. 15 and 1 Thess. 4 as both referring to the "rapture." It also works fine with our first "control group" when we compared Matt. 24 & Rev. 19. The problem for pretribulationists is this: When we consistently apply the only legitimate rule for determining whether two passages refer to the same event, that same rule also indicates that the rapture and second coming are not to be distinguished. There are no details given in an acknowledged "rapture" passage that are not compatible with details of any acknowledged "second coming" passages. All of these can be harmonized into a single account, taking into consideration every detail of every passage. I realize that some might be skeptical of such a bold claim. But, I assure you, if there were incompatible details, Dr. Ice, the executive director of the Pretrib Research Center, would have pointed them out. As any intelligent person would do when presenting their case, we would expect Dr. Ice to put forward his strongest arguments. Here they are.

Ice offers 13 examples of differences between the rapture and second coming. We'll take them in the same order.

"1. Translation of all believers, vs. No translation at all"

It is already obvious that Ice is relying solely on an argument from silence. He has identified 1 Thess. 4 as the "rapture" which specifically mentions the "translation" or "catching up" of believers. His point is that none of the passages he has identified as posttribulation include this detail.

Ice's argument is quite selective, picking only the "translation" (catching up) aspect. There is nothing here that is mutually exclusive with posttribulation passages. Therefore, Ice has proven nothing at all, except that he is using a faulty and selective criterion for judging these passages, and is ignoring the application of the same principle to other passages that prove the criteria he is employing completely wrong.

Furthermore, we have a clear passage that Ice would agree is posttribulation, which does indeed refer to the catching up of the saints after the tribulation. Matt. 24:29-31 and the parallel passage in Mark 13 state that "*immediately after the tribulation*" Jesus will come in the clouds of heaven, send forth His angels by blowing a trumpet, and they will "***gather together*** His elect" from both earth and heaven. How does Dr. Ice suppose the angels will gather the Elect from the four corners of the earth in Matt. 24? Unless this is done by air, the only alternative is for the angels to apply for passports and take ships, busses, trains, and automobiles. So, while Matt. 24:29-31 does not explicitly state HOW the angels will gather Jesus' elect, it is strongly implied that it will be by "catching up" (harpazo) just as 1 Thess. 4 mentions explicitly. So the one feature Ice has picked to distinguish his pretribulation rapture from the second coming is implicitly

taught in a clear posttribulation passage! Also, there is nothing in 1 Thess. 4's "catching up" that would exclude it being accomplished by the angels at Christ's signal using the "trump of God." This scenario is perfectly compatible with Matt. 24:29-31 as well as 1 Thess. 4. In fact, when comparing Matt. 24:29-31 to 1 Thess. 4:13-18, one cannot help but be struck by the apparent reliance of Paul on the words of Christ. There are quite a few details in common in both passages. Jesus spoke of His "coming in the clouds." So did Paul. Jesus spoke of the "trumpet." So did Paul. Jesus spoke of the angels. Paul mentioned at least Michael. Jesus spoke of the gathering of the elect. So did Paul. It is hard to believe that the Thessalonian recipients of Paul's letter would fail to notice this connection!

"2. Translated saints go to heaven, vs. Translated saints return to earth"

Here, Ice assumes what he is trying to prove. Where in any text of Scripture does it say that translated saints go to heaven? That is something Ice has merely assumed without providing any biblical proof. Surely, his "rapture" text in 1 Thess 4 does not suggest this. The saints are caught up into the "air," from then on to "ever be with the Lord." Where they go from their meeting place in the clouds is wholly dependent on where the Lord goes from there. This text does not say. This is clearly an attempt at using the "mutual exclusivity" argument. But, before such an argument can have any weight, Ice must first produce the passages (rightly interpreted) that state believers are destined for heaven after the "translation." He has not done so, nor can he do so. One cannot seriously argue that the facts are mutually exclusive if he has fabricated the facts! Therefore, once again, Ice has proven nothing.

"3. Earth not judged, vs. Earth judged & righteousness established"

Here, Ice again argues from silence. The passages he has identified as "rapture" passages do not mention the earth being judged at the coming of Christ for which the Thessalonians were waiting. Or do they? The one passage Ice and other pretribulationists rely most heavily on as being exclusively a "rapture" passage, is 1 Thess. 4:13-18. But, Paul did not stop speaking about the rapture in verse 18, but continued into chapter 5. Paul stated plainly that "sudden destruction" will overtake those who are not "watching" for this coming of Christ (which Ice has identified as the "rapture"). It will occur "as a thief in the night" (unexpectedly) for unbelievers, who will be met with "sudden destruction." But, because true believers will be watching, we will not be caught by surprise. "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that **this Day** should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess. 5:4). The same coming of Christ, just mentioned in chapter 4, will devastate the wicked with "sudden destruction." While Ice might want to stretch "sudden destruction" out for seven years of plagues, the word "sudden" hardly permits such a stretch. It is quite clear that the same coming for which the Thessalonians were watching with anticipation would bring "sudden destruction" on the wicked. Ice's own "rapture passage" defies his false dichotomy. Likewise,

when we examine 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10, we find that the coming of Christ, whereby He will provide "rest" from persecution for His suffering church, will occur **"when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day"** (2 Thess. 1:7-10). This alleged distinction by Ice again fails because the very text he uses for his "rapture text" in context disproves his assertion that the wicked are not to be judged at the time of the rapture. We have provided at least two passages that link the rapture with the sudden destruction of the wicked.

"4. Imminent, any-moment, signless, vs. Follows definite predicted signs including tribulation"

This argument is similar to the # 3 above. Ice's premise, that the Bible teaches the rapture is now "imminent," is false. This is an attempt at using "mutual exclusivity." If Ice could prove that the rapture is "imminent," then his point would be valid. But, he has not done so, nor can he do so. We will deal in depth with the "imminence" claims in the next article in this series. Ice has once again set up a false dichotomy.

"5. Not in the Old Testament, vs. Predicted often in Old Testament"

This is a circular argument, which is an illogical argument. Ice is asking us to assume what he is trying to prove — that the rapture and second coming are distinct events separated by a considerable period of time. But, if that assumption is false, and if there is only one coming of Christ yet future, then all of the Old Testament passages that speak of the coming of Christ refer to the same event. If Ice is suggesting that the "translation" of living believers is not specifically mentioned in these Old Testament passages, well, neither is it mentioned in 1 Cor. 15, as we have shown above! Neither is it mentioned in ANY OTHER passage that Ice would admit refers to the rapture! There is only one passage in the New Testament that explicitly refers to the "catching up" of the saints to the air (1 Thess. 4:17). And there is one more that strongly implies it, but this passage is clearly posttribulation (Matt. 24:29-31). At best, Ice can ONLY claim that the actual "catching up" of the living is not mentioned in the Old Testament. But, other details of the rapture most definitely do find their counterparts in Old Testament prophecy, including both the trumpet blast (Isa. 27:13) and the resurrection of the saints (Dan. 12:1-2).

"6. Believers only, vs. Affects all men"

These two things are not mutually exclusive. Paul states that the "dead in Christ" rise, and "we who are alive and remain" will be caught up. That means, only the saved are resurrected and caught up. Daniel does precisely the same thing in

Dan. 12:1-3. Only SOME of those who sleep in the dust will come forth at the resurrection of the just. Should we argue then that Daniel's resurrection is pretribulation because it affects only believers? If so, then we have an Old Testament passage that clearly speaks of the rapture, and Ice's last point is refuted. But, if the fact that only the righteous are raised in Dan. 12 does not exclude this passage from linkage to the posttribulation coming, then neither does any other that speaks of the effect of the rapture only on believers. As we pointed out already, in the main "rapture" passage (1 Thess. 4), Paul went on to say in the following verses that those not watching will be on the receiving end of "*sudden destruction*." And Paul was clearly still speaking of the SAME coming, because he warned believers to be watching for this coming (1 Thess. 5:1-9). The same principle applies to 2 Thess. 1:4-10. It is the SAME COMING of Christ that provides relief from persecution for the saints and destruction of the wicked! At best, all Ice can really claim is that SOME passages that speak specifically of the rapture do not mention the effect of this coming on the wicked. But, since other passages do so, his argument is not valid. Nor would it be valid even if no other passages made this connection, because it is still an argument from silence.

"7. Before the day of wrath, vs. Concluding the day of wrath"

The flaw in this argument is the same as #4. Ice has not proven his facts. How does he define the "Day of wrath?" He does not say. The Bible uses the term synonymously with the "Day of the Lord" (cf. Zeph. 1:14-15). Ice cannot produce from Scripture a coming of Christ BEFORE this "day of wrath." It can be easily shown that the Day of the Lord is after the tribulation (the day of Christ's coming) and is not identical to the tribulation. Zech. 14:7 indicates that the Day of the Lord has a "morning" and an "evening" just as the days of creation (which we accept as a literal 24 hour day for that reason). Creationists therefore must reject the idea that the "Day of the Lord" is an extended period of time. It also states that it is "one day." Zeph. 2:4 also mentions that the Day of the Lord has a "noon." Ice's argument simply cannot be proven from Scripture, and is therefore invalid.

"8. No reference to Satan, vs. Satan bound"

This argument is another case of "arguing from silence," and is easily disproved. There is only ONE passage that makes specific reference to Satan's being bound in relation to Christ's coming — Rev. 19-20. None of the other multitude of acknowledged posttribulation passages mention this detail. Are we to suppose that Rev. 19-20 is the ONLY passage in the Bible that refers to Christ's posttribulation coming? No. Then neither should we conclude that Satan is not bound immediately following the rapture in 1 Thess. 4 (just as we must assume so in Matt. 24:29-31). And since 2 Thess. 1:4-10 indicates plainly that our relief from persecution will come when Jesus comes to destroy the wicked, "*with His mighty angels in flaming fire*," and since there is no question that this event is parallel to what we see in Rev. 19 — Christ's coming with His angelic army to defeat the

Beast and his armies — we are forced to conclude that the rapture occurs immediately prior to the binding of Satan mentioned in Rev. 20:1-3. Besides, according to Rev. 20, the binding of Satan occurs after Christ's coming and not during it. We would not reasonably expect it to be mentioned in other passages that speak exclusively of His coming.

"9. Christ comes for His own, vs. Christ comes with His own"

The "for" vs. "with" argument meets the same fate as the rest. Ice's own "rapture passage" speaks of Christ's coming both "for" and "with" His saints **at the same coming**. Paul wrote those who "sleep in Jesus will God bring **WITH** Him" when He descends from heaven **FOR** the living (1 Thess. 4:14). What Ice and other pretribulationists fail to see is the single second coming of Christ has two parts. In the first part, Christ descends from heaven **with** His angels and the souls of those who "sleep in Jesus." This first descent is from heaven to the air, or just above the clouds. It is at this time He sounds the trumpet, raises the bodies of the dead saints, and catches up the living. All are assembled and "meet" Christ in the air. Then the whole multitude of risen and changed saints is displayed to the whole world in great glory against the backdrop of a darkened sun and moon, as they all descend with Him from the air to the Mount of Olives. In the posttribulation scenario, Christ comes **WITH** His saints who have died — the souls of those who "sleep in Jesus" accompanying His descent from heaven to the clouds above the earth. After then sounding the trumpet, raising the dead believers, and dispatching the angels to "catch up" the living who remain, He descends with ALL His saints to the Mount of Olives. The same coming from heaven to the clouds is **FOR** "we who are alive and remain." And it is **WITH** those who "sleep in Jesus." Then all the saints will be revealed to the world in glory with Christ, and descend with Him to the Mount of Olives. Once again, Ice has established a false dichotomy which cannot be sustained with Scripture. All the details can be easily harmonized into a single account.

"10. He comes in the air, vs. He comes to the earth"

This argument is really the same as the previous one. A two-step descent of the Lord explains both His coming to the air, and His coming to the earth. Christ's stop in mid-air to gather together His living elect is merely for the purpose of transportation and collecting the bodies of the dead in Christ from all over the globe. Gathering all the elect from the remote places of the earth to a single location, where we will be revealed to the world in glory with Christ at His coming, is a necessary step. The "rapture" is simply an integral part of the second coming. Coming to the air and coming to the earth are not mutually exclusive, but are easily harmonized into a single event. Any descent to earth demands coming to the air first. It certainly does not demand a different coming, as Ice suggests.

"11. He claims His bride, vs. He comes with His bride"

According to Rev. 19:7, the Bride has just "made herself ready" at the very close of the tribulation! That is when the people in heaven announce that the time for the "Marriage of the Lamb is come." According to A.T. Robertson: "Is come (*hlyen*). Prophetic aorist, **come at last**." The aorist tense implies a suddenness, completeness, or wholeness of the event. In this case, the time for the "marriage of the Lamb" has just arrived. Also, regarding the Bride's making herself ready, "made ready" is also aorist active indicative, implying she has just now finally made herself ready. Immediately, heaven opens and Christ descends. Contrary to what pretribulationists think, the marriage of the Lamb is not said to occur in heaven. The scene in the first part of Revelation 19 is that of the Groom about to depart to go and fetch His bride. That is the reason for the excitement and anticipation in heaven because, "The bride has made herself ready." The time for the marriage has finally come at the extreme end of the tribulation! If Christ had come to claim His bride at the beginning of the tribulation in Revelation, as Ice thinks, then why the seven year delay before she is finally ready to be married? It is much better to conclude that the exclamation at the very end of the tribulation, the Bride has "made herself ready" for the wedding, and the time for the "marriage of the Lamb" has finally arrived, both indicating a posttribulation wedding. If the Bride's becoming ready and the marriage are posttribulation, then the "claiming" of the bride at the rapture is more likely to be posttribulation as well. Otherwise we have the extremely awkward scenario of Christ's coming for His Bride seven years before she is ready for the wedding, and taking her into His house seven years prior to their being married! Once again, Ice has assumed what he is trying to prove. And his assumptions flow counter to the facts revealed in Revelation, and with the Jewish wedding customs.

"12. Only His own see Him, vs. Every eye shall see Him"

Where does Ice get the idea that only believers see Christ at His coming? No passage of Scripture says so. In fact, John anticipated the rapture with joyful expectation when he wrote, "Behold He comes with clouds! and every eye shall see Him..." (Rev. 1:7). Ice is fabricating "facts" in order to allege "mutually exclusivity" of other facts stated in Scripture.

"13. Tribulation begins, vs. Millennial Kingdom begins"

Where in Scripture does the tribulation follow the rapture? Again, Ice is fabricating his facts. Ice then makes the following statement; "John Walvoord concludes that these 'contrasts should make it evident that the translation of the church is an event quite different in character and time from the return of the Lord to establish His kingdom, and confirms the conclusion that the translation takes place before the tribulation.'" As we have shown, additional details provided by one passage but not another are not "contrasts." Nor are fabricated "details" that conflict with genuine details legitimate "contrasts." Also, even IF all of the above points were valid contrasts and proved that the rapture

and second coming will occur at different times, Walvoord's and Ice's conclusion from them is not valid. The pre-wrath view could absorb all of the above points as being true contrasts, and still maintain a pre-wrath rapture (being just a few months or weeks before the second coming). None of the above false contrasts, if true, would make the rapture seven years before the second coming, or necessitate a pre-70th week rapture.

Additional (Alleged) Distinctions

In this section Ice repeated some of the above points, and added a couple more. The first additional point was to appeal to the "rapture" as being a "mystery." He cites 1 Cor. 15:51-54 to support his claim. But, what does this passage mention? There is no rapture specifically mentioned in this passage! There is only the resurrection of the dead and changing of the living. By Ice's own standards, this should not be a "rapture" passage! Additionally, if the "mystery" was a pretribulation rapture, we would expect Paul to explain that the rapture is pretribulation after saying, "*behold I show you a mystery.*" But he does no such thing!

Ice has made two glaring errors here. First, the word "mystery" was not applied by Paul to the catching up of the saints, the coming of the Lord, the "rapture," the tribulation, or anything related to TIMING. Paul stated clearly what this "mystery" was that he was about to reveal. He wrote, "*Behold, I show you a mystery, **we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.***" That is the "mystery" according to Paul. Not all believers will die, but all will be changed. In other words, some will be changed via resurrection, but others will be changed without dying at all! Ice would have us believe that the "mystery" is that the rapture is pretribulation, and not the same coming as the second coming after the tribulation. But, without the rapture itself being mentioned, the tribulation, or the timing of any events, it is hard to support such an assumption. Paul would not tell the Corinthians, "*Behold, I show you a mystery*" and then utterly fail to explain to them what this "mystery" was! Rather, the "mystery" Paul wished to reveal to the Corinthians was merely a distinction between the resurrecting of some and the transformation without dying of others.

Secondly, the word "mystery" is consistently misrepresented by Ice and other dispensationalists. Scripture most often uses the term in the sense of something heard (or known) but not fully understood. Ice uses the term as something wholly unheard-of heretofore. Please see Mark 4:1-12 for a good example of "mystery" meaning something heard but not fully understood.

The second additional "contrast" cited by Ice has to do with John 14:1-3, where he interprets "*my Father's house*" as heaven, something not supported by Jesus' earlier usage of the term, "*My Father's house*" (cf. John 2:16:17), or with the

common expression in the Old Testament, "the house of the Lord" (cf. Isa. 2:2-4, Joel 3:18, Zech. 14:21).

Alleged Posttribulation Problems

Problem #1 — Ice writes: *"First, posttribulationism requires that the church will be present during the 70th week of Daniel (Dan. 9:24-27) even though it was absent from the first 69. This is in spite of the fact that Daniel 9:24 says that all 70 weeks are for Israel. Pretribulationism is not in conflict with this passage, as is posttribulationism, since the church departs before the beginning of the seven-year period."*

We agree that the New Covenant Church began after the end of the 69th week. But, why is it a problem that the Church is on earth in the 70th week? Is there some reason why God cannot work on a spiritual and national level at the same time? The destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in AD70, was included in the 70 weeks prophecy too (Dan. 9:26). And this was fulfilled some forty years into the "Church age." Ice's statement that the 70th week is for Israel also presents a non-existent problem. Surely, Ice will acknowledge that there is a large number of "tribulation saints" from every tribe and nation still on earth in the 70th week. Are they excluded from the 70th week on the grounds that they are not mentioned in the 70 weeks prophecy too? Will everyone on earth be raptured before the 70th week because it is for Israel? Does not Rev. 3:10 state clearly that the "hour of temptation," which pretribulationists take as the entire 70th week, will come upon "all them that dwell upon the earth?" These things prove that the 70th week is not EXCLUSIVELY a time for Israel, but others are involved as well, despite the fact that they are not specifically mentioned in Dan. 9. That Daniel's 70 weeks refer specifically to events related to Israel is to be expected, since the prophecy was given to Daniel in response to his interceding for his nation with prayer and fasting. If non-mention does not exclude the "tribulation saints" or "all them that dwell upon the earth," neither does it exclude the "Church."

Problem #2 — Ice writes, *"Second, posttribulationism must deny the New Testament teaching of imminency – that Christ could come at any-moment. Pretribulationism does not have a problem with these New Testament passages, since they believe that no signs must precede the rapture."*

We will devote the next article in this series proving that the Bible does NOT teach that the rapture is now imminent.

Problem #3 — Ice writes, *"Third, premillennial posttribulationism has no answer to their problem of who will populate the millennium if the rapture and second coming occur at the same time. Since all believers will be translated at the rapture and all unbelievers judged, because no unrighteous shall be allowed to*

enter Christ's kingdom, then no one would be left in mortal bodies to start the population base for the millennium. The pretribulation viewpoint does not have a problem at this point."

We most certainly do have an answer to this problem, a Biblical one to boot. For now, we need only mention one passage — Zech. 14:16-19 — which states plainly that there will be some heathen, who survive Armageddon, who will enter the Millennium in natural bodies. Who does Ice think Jesus will “rule with a rod of iron?” (Rev. 2:27, 12:5, & 19:15).

Problem #4 — Ice writes, *"Fourth, posttribulationism is not able to explain the sheep and goats judgment after the second coming in Matthew 25:31-46. As in the previous problem, how would there be any believers in mortal bodies, if they were raptured at the second coming, who would be available to enter into Christ's kingdom? Pretribulationism does not have such a problem."*

This is the same as the above problem, and is resolved by the same passages. There are most definitely others besides the "sheep and goats." Several passages refer to these others. We will devote a separate article to this question.

Problem #5 — Ice writes, *"Fifth, since Revelation 19:7-8 indicates that the church, Christ's Bride, is made ready to accompany Christ to earth (Rev. 19:14) before the second coming, how could this reasonably happen if part of the church is still on earth awaiting Christ's Advent? If the rapture of the church takes place at the second coming, then how does the Bride (i.e., the church) also come with Christ at His return? There would not be sufficient time for this to happen within a posttribulational sequence, but the pretribulation position has no such problem."*

The problem is really Ice's and pretribulationists. The text does not say the Bride has become **ready to descend to earth**. It says she has just made herself **ready for the wedding**. *"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for **the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.**"* And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:7-8). The Bride is not yet married to Christ in chapter 19. The above statement is made by the multitude in heaven in **anticipation** of the wedding, and the Groom leaving to fetch His bride. At the extreme end of the tribulation, the Bride has just become ready for the wedding, and the time has finally arrived for the wedding. In a posttribulation scheme, the final stages of the Bride's becoming "ready" is the last persecution of the overcomers in the tribulation. If the "Bridal" analogy is to follow Jewish custom, the Bride must *"make herself ready"* BEFORE the Groom comes to fetch her. Therefore, His coming to fetch the Bride should be AFTER Rev. 19:7-8 and not seven years before, as in Ice's scheme. Likewise, in the Jewish wedding, the marriage takes place immediately after the Bride has been fetched by the

Groom and brought to their future home. In Ice's scenario, the Groom fetches the bride seven years before she is ready, takes her to heaven (but not their future home as in the custom), and He is intimate with her for seven years before the wedding! Then after seven years of living with His bride, she finally makes herself ready for the wedding! Only after living with her for seven years does He marry her, and then instantly leaves with her from heaven to go back to the house of the bride! Ice and other pretribulationists have made havoc of the Jewish wedding customs that are clearly intended in this passage! On the other hand, the posttribulation view is perfectly consistent with the Jewish wedding customs, assumes nothing, but takes only what is plainly stated in the text.

Conclusion:

Ice's concluding statement is as follows: *"The distinctions between Christ's coming in the air to rapture His church are too great to be reduced into a single coming at the end of the tribulation. These biblical distinctions provide a strong basis for the pretribulation rapture teaching."*

We will leave the reader to decide if Ice has demonstrated those insurmountable distinctions. If not, he has not met the burden of proof which is clearly the responsibility of pretribulationists. We all agree on a posttribulation coming, a gathering of living saints (Matt. 24:31), and a resurrection of dead saints (Dan. 12:1-2 & Rev. 20:4-5) at the posttribulation event. In order for the pretribulation view to postulate another coming prior to the tribulation, Ice needs to show either by explicit teaching or by implicit requirements that the rapture MUST BE prior to the second coming. And even if he could successfully do so, that would only rule out a posttribulation rapture. In order to rule out the mid-trib and pre-wrath views, he needs to also show why the rapture MUST BE before the 70th week. In my opinion, he has done none of these things. What he has shown, in my opinion, is that the pretribulation view is based on faulty reasoning and fabricated evidence. It is certainly not the result of a consistent literal hermeneutic.

Notes:

1. Ice, Thomas, Pretribulation Perspectives Article, [THE RAPTURE AND THE SECOND COMING: AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION](http://www.according2prophecy.org/rapsec.html). <http://www.according2prophecy.org/rapsec.html>

Imminence

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised May 1, 2008

Like John Walvoord before him, Thomas Ice sees "imminence" as one of the key pillars supporting pretribulationism. He claims that non-pretribulationists "sense" that imminence assures the pretribulation view, and this is the reason for our "fiercely attacking" this pretribulation pillar. Ice writes:¹

"The New Testament teaching that Christ could return and rapture His church at any-moment, without prior signs or warning (i.e., imminency), is such a powerful argument for pretribulationism that it is one of the most fiercely attacked doctrines by pre-trib opponents. Non-pretribulationists sense that if the New Testament teaches imminency, then a pre-trib rapture is virtually assured."

But, as we shall see, "imminence" (as defined by Ice and other pretribulationists) is not taught in Scripture, but actually refuted by Scripture. "Imminence" is a fabrication of modern pretribulationism. It is a completely inaccurate representation of the kind of expectancy taught in Scripture. What pretribulationists have actually done is constructed an obstacle to posttribulationism, and then forced that obstacle on the Scriptures.

Ice's "Imminence" Fails His Own Test

Ice begins by citing Dr. Renald Showers' definition of "imminence." But, Ice and Showers have set the bar so high in order to exclude the posttribulation rapture, that the "rapture" taught in the Bible cannot possibly meet their criterion. According to Ice, *"Other things may happen before the imminent event, but nothing else must take place before it happens. If something else must take place before an event can happen, then that event is not imminent. In other words, the necessity of something else taking place first destroys the concept of imminency."*

In this statement, Ice has set pretribulationism up for certain failure. By defining "imminence" in this way, just one prophesied event prior to the rapture will completely "destroy the concept of imminence" as a biblical doctrine, and therefore kick the legs out from under pretribulationism.

Jesus' Prediction of Peter's Death

The Bible indicates that certain things **MUST** take place before the rapture. One such prophesied event was the martyrdom of the Apostle Peter **in his old age**. All of Paul's Epistles that Ice later cites, which teach "imminence" according to

him, were written while Peter was alive and well. Yet, Peter was told by Jesus that he would die a martyr's death in his old age (John 21:19). "...but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." Both Peter and Paul were martyred around AD66, some thirty-three years after Jesus made this prediction. If Peter was a fairly young man, say in his mid thirties, when Jesus spoke this, putting him at around 70 years old when he was finally martyred. Peter, Paul, and the early Christians expected Peter to live to an old age, to die, and be resurrected later at the resurrection of believers. As long as Peter was still fairly young and alive the rapture could not possibly be "imminent" by Ice's standard. Therefore, Paul knew Jesus' coming was not "imminent" while he penned the very Epistles that Ice claims teach "imminence." And Paul's readers, who knew Peter, fully understood that the rapture was not imminent as long as Peter was still around. Even Peter's death could not be said to be imminent while he was still a fairly young man, or while he was a free man, because Jesus prophesied martyrdom for Peter in his old age. Therefore, Jesus' prophecy about Peter's death defies Ice's definition of "imminence," and plainly indicates that the early Church could not have held to the kind of "imminence" that Ice espouses throughout the first thirty-three years of its existence.

The Great Commission Rules Out "Imminence"

Jesus sent the Apostles out to preach the Gospel to all nations. He gave them specific instructions to wait in Jerusalem for the "power." He also was very explicit that they were to begin in Jerusalem, move on to Samaria, and then to the remote Gentile nations.

Acts 1:7-12

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

(KJV)

Notice that world evangelism was the task assigned to Jesus' Apostles. The power that came on Pentecost was clearly linked to their obeying the Great Commission. It was therefore the Apostles' job, once they received power on the day of Pentecost, to obey Jesus' Great Commission. As we read Acts, we see that the Church did indeed do exactly as Jesus said. They began preaching in Jerusalem (Acts 2-7). Then in Samaria (Acts 8-9). And then finally to the Gentiles (Acts 10ff).

If Ice's definition of imminence is correct, Jesus could have come back at "any moment" after Pentecost, before they ever preached in Samaria or to a single Gentile! Is that what the Apostles expected, knowing that Jesus had commanded them to preach to the Samaritans, and to all nations? Hardly! They expected to get with the program and do as Jesus commanded them. Jesus could not have returned until at least a large portion of the events in Acts had occurred. That is, at least several years after Pentecost. Therefore, the rapture could not be "imminent" for quite some time after the Church was established.

Paul's Refutation of Ice's "Imminence"

Paul also wrote an extensive refutation of "imminence" because some of the early Thessalonian believers had mistakenly assumed that Jesus' coming was imminent. In his first Epistle to the Thessalonians Paul indicated that Jesus' coming would not catch them by surprise, something that could not be said if Jesus' coming would be completely unannounced (as Ice's "imminence" requires).

1 Thess 5:1-4

1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

(KJV)

This passage teaches that the wicked will be caught by surprise by Jesus' coming, but believers will NOT be surprised by Jesus' coming. "As a thief" is an expression borrowed from Jesus' Olivet Discourse, and indicates being caught totally by surprise. While Paul says plainly that it applies to the wicked, he also says that this does NOT apply to the "brethren." This is impossible in Ice's "imminence" (no warning) theory. Only by having some kind of idea when Jesus is coming can believers not be surprised "as a thief." And that warning comes in the form of the signs in Matt. 24.

Apparently, some of the Thessalonian believers did not understand this distinction, and were influenced by other sources indicating that Jesus' coming might be imminent. They were already enduring severe persecution, and Jesus' coming in the midst of persecution was indeed their "blessed hope." So, Paul wrote his second Epistle to correct this error.

In the first chapter, Paul unmistakably tied together their relief from persecution with the posttribulation coming of Jesus. In verse 7, Paul told them that their relief from persecution would come when Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His army of angels, to take vengeance on the ungodly. That is, their relief from persecution (not only the punishment of their persecutors) could be expected at the posttribulation revelation of Jesus Christ. That this relief was not imminent, but would be preceded by specific signs, was explained by Paul in the verses that follow.

II Thess 2:1-3

1 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;

(KJV)

The first thing we should note is verse 1 plainly links the "coming" of the Lord with our "gathering" together to Him, and establishes the "rapture" as the subject of this passage. Contrary to some pre-trib writers, the "coming" and "gathering" in verse 1 are not separate or unrelated events. This is indicated by the Greek grammar.

υπερ της παρουσιας του κυριου ημων Ιησου Χριστου και ημων επισυναγωγης επ αυτον

concerning the coming the Lord our Jesus Christ and our gathering-together to Him

The nouns "coming" and "gathering-together" are separated by the word "and" (kai). The first noun (coming) has the definite article and the second noun "gathering-together" does not. In Greek grammar (Sharps first rule), this normally indicates that both nouns are referring to the same person (with personal nouns) or a unity between impersonal nouns.² Only one event is in view here. Our "gathering together unto Him" is a part of Jesus' coming. The grammar Paul used

associates our being gathered with that coming. If Paul wanted to indicate two separate comings or events, he would have also used the definite article before the second noun (according to Sharp's sixth rule), as follows.

υπερ της παρουσιας του κυριου ημων Ιησου Χριστου και
της επισυναγωγης ημων επ αυτον

concerning the coming the Lord our Jesus Christ and
the gathering-together of-us to Him

The above grammatical structure would indicate two distinct events. Paul was writing about a single, compound event — the coming of Christ when we will be gathered together unto Him. The remaining sentences refer to this event — the rapture — which occurs at His coming.

Verse 2 implies that these believers were "shaken in mind" or "troubled," due to some outside influence, a false epistle claiming to have been from Paul, which indicated that the "Day of Christ" was "at hand." There is no doubt that Paul was identifying the "Day of Christ" with the "coming" and "gathering" in verse one, and that he still had the rapture in view.

Some modern translations read "has come" (past) rather than "is at hand" (is imminent). However, the Greek Scholar A. T. Robertson agreed with the KJV rendering. In his "Word Pictures" Robertson wrote the Greek word translated "at hand" in verse 2 means "is imminent." *"Perfect active indicative of enisthmi, old verb, to place in, but intransitive in this tense **to stand in or at or near. So "is imminent" (Lightfoot). The verb is common in the papyri"*** (bold & underline mine). That the perfect tense is used implies the Thessalonians thought that Christ's coming had just become "imminent," or was already standing near or in close proximity. John Gill, the Baptist Greek and Hebrew scholar, had this to say in his commentary on this passage. *"**As that the day of Christ is at hand; or is at this instant just now coming on; as if it would be within that year, in some certain month, and on some certain day in it; which notion the apostle would have them by no means give into.**"* It was this mistaken idea of "imminence" that Paul sought to correct in this passage.

How did Paul refute this false expectation of "imminence" (or perhaps "immediacy") by the Thessalonians? It was by claiming that certain known signs must occur before "our gathering together unto Him." Verse 2 contains Paul's explanation of the mistake (thinking that the rapture was "imminent" or "immediate"), and in verse 3 Paul corrected their mistake. That day (the "coming" of Christ and our "gathering" together unto Him — the "Day of Christ") cannot come until after two signs occur — the apostasy and the revelation of

the Man of Sin. Paul then went on to explain how the Man of Sin will be revealed — sitting in the Temple claiming to be God. Both of these signs were major features of Jesus' Olivet Discourse in the same order (cf. Matt. 24:9-15), as events that must occur before His posttribulation coming. According to Paul, until the "apostasy" and the "Man of Sin" is revealed by sitting in the Temple of God, "*our gathering together unto Him*" cannot be imminent. Notice also that it is this very issue of a false sense of imminence that Paul warns, "*let no man deceive you by any means.*" I would suggest that the reader take Paul's advice.

Paul further explained the "apostasy" in other passages. He wrote of a future sharp increase in apostasy among the Church in "*the last days*," far beyond what they currently were experiencing (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1, 2 Tim. 3:1ff, 2 Tim. 4:3). Peter also wrote that scoffers would come "*in the last days saying, where is the promise of His coming*" (2 Pet. 3:3-4).

Therefore, we have definite prophecies by Jesus, Peter, and Paul that indicate certain things must occur before the rapture.

- Peter's growing old and becoming a martyr
- The Gospel being preached to the Samaritans and Gentiles
- The Apostasy in the last days
- The revelation of the Man of Sin
- Scoffers in the last days

According to Ice, "*if something else must take place before an event can happen, then that event is not imminent. In other words, the necessity of something else taking place first destroys the concept of imminency.*" Therefore, we may conclude, based on Ice's own criterion, that the rapture was not "imminent" while these things remained unfulfilled and while Paul's and Peter's Epistles were being written. If it was not imminent when the very passages that Ice claims teach imminence were being written, those passages cannot teach "imminence," otherwise, they would not have been true when delivered to the first century Christians, when the above things were still unfulfilled.

James' Parable of the Farmer

James 5:7-8

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

(KJV)

James used a parable of a farmer to illustrate how believers should await the coming of Christ. He pointed out that the farmer patiently awaits the time of harvest. He recommended that believers take the same approach as the farmer, patiently waiting for the coming of Christ. Is this an illustration of an "any moment" coming with no prior signs? Does a farmer expect the harvest "at any moment" during the entire year after planting? A farmer knows that there is an appointed time for the harvest, after the crop has matured. He patiently **awaits** the rainy season before harvest. In Israel, there were two main rainy seasons. The harvests followed these rainy seasons. Farmers never harvested their fields until after the rains. The **rainy seasons** in this parable are equivalent to the signs that must come prior to Christ's "harvest." While the coming of the Lord is drawing near (fast approaching), it is not "imminent" in the sense that nothing needs to occur first. If there are signs (rains) prior to the harvest for the farmer in James' parable, so too are there signs prior to Jesus' coming, before it can be considered "imminent." If the farmer knows that the harvest is not "imminent" during the growing stage, James expected his readers to realize that Jesus' coming would be delayed for a season as well. In fact, the whole point of this parable was to exhort them toward patience, because the Lord's coming was still some distance away.

Imminency in the New Testament - According to Ice

According to Ice, any New Testament passage that speaks of Christians **waiting for or watching for** Jesus' coming necessarily implies "imminence." In fact, this is the whole substance of Ice's entire "imminence" argument. Ice writes: *"Those verses stating that Christ could return at any moment, without warning and those instructing believers to wait and look for the Lord's coming teach the doctrine of imminence."*

First of all, we should dispense with the notion that any passage indicates Christ might come "without warning," because no passage makes such a claim. That is something Ice is forcing into the Scriptures. There are a variety of passages that speak of believers waiting and watching for Christ's coming. The question is, does "waiting" or "watching" imply that it could occur at any moment? Here are the passages that Ice claims teach "imminence" (as he has defined it) and his comments.

"1 Corinthians 1:7-'awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,'

1 Corinthians 16:22- 'Maranatha.'

Philippians 3:20-'For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;'

Philippians 4:5- 'The Lord is near.'

1 Thessalonians 1:10- 'to wait for His Son from heaven,'

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18- 'For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of {the} archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.'

1 Thessalonians 5:6- 'so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.'

1 Timothy 6:14- 'that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,'

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

Hebrews 9:28- 'so Christ . . . shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.'

James 5:7-9- 'Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. . . for the coming of the Lord is at hand. . . behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.'

1 Peter 1:13 - 'fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.'

Jude 21- 'waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.'

Revelation 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20- 'I am coming quickly!'

Revelation 22:17, 20- 'And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.' "

Look carefully at the above passages. Where do any of these passages claim or imply that no signs can precede Jesus' coming? Ice's entire premise is that one cannot wait or watch for an event unless it can occur "at any moment." That is simply a false premise. Ice writes; *"It is significant that all of the above passages relate to the rapture and speak of the Lord's coming as something that could*

occur at any-moment, that it is imminent. This is why believers are waiting for a person-Jesus Christ-not an event or series of events such as those related to the tribulation leading up to Christ's second advent in which He returns to the earth and remains for His millennial reign." Let's test Ice's logic here to see if it agrees with Scripture.

"Watching" Defined by Jesus

Jesus' posttribulation coming is clearly spoken of in precisely the same way, with instructions for "watching." In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus gave a whole series of signs that will precede and announce His coming "immediately after the tribulation." Yet, Jesus told His followers to WATCH for this coming!

Mark 13

14 But **when ye shall see the abomination of desolation**, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: ...

19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. ...

24 But in those days, **after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,**

25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

26 And **then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.**

27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. ...

33 Take ye heed, **watch and pray:** for ye know not when the time is.

34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to **watch.**

35 **Watch ye therefore:** for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

37 **And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.**

(KJV)

Since the context plainly indicates that Jesus commanded His followers to WATCH for His posttribulation coming, which will be announced by a host of signs, how can statements about "watching" or "waiting" in the Epistles imply that NO SIGNS can occur before Jesus comes? Should we not rather interpret the biblical kind of "watching" and "waiting" for Jesus' coming based on biblical precedent, rather than on some imaginary concept of "imminence" proclaimed by pretribulationists?

Imminence and Pretribulationism

Ice's conclusion is that the Scriptures he listed prove pretribulationism because they prove "imminence" which is compatible only with pretribulationism. He writes; *"As we consider the above passages, we note that Christ may come at any moment, that the rapture is actually imminent. Only pretribulationism can give a full, literal meaning to such an any-moment event."* Yet, the passages Ice cites could just as easily indicate that Christians were doing exactly what Jesus said in Mark 13, watching for His posttribulation coming *"immediately after the tribulation."* If "watching" does not require Ice's kind of "imminence" in Mark 13 or Matt. 24, neither does "watching" require "imminence" in the Epistles. This is particularly so because the readers of Paul's Epistles were no doubt familiar with the discourse of Christ.

Pretribulationists have difficulty imagining how one can "watch" and "wait" for an event that will be preceded by prior signs. But, not only did Jesus command His followers to "watch" for an event that would be preceded by signs, but He also gave the perfect illustration in the same discourse. Jesus referred to some of the signs that must occur first as **"the beginning of birth pains"** (Matt. 24:8 & Mark 13:8). He spoke of the events that follow the abomination of desolation as **"great travail"** (Matt. 24:21/Mark 13:19). The imagery Jesus used for His coming, and the brief period of tribulation prior to it, was a pregnant woman giving birth. The pains of labor and childbirth are certainly not pleasant. A woman does not look forward to or "wait" for the time of labor. But, she most certainly awaits and looks for the birth of her child with eager anticipation! Is she aware that the birth will come after a short period of travail? Of course! But, she looks beyond the labor pains to the moment when she can hold her child in her arms. "Watching" and "waiting" for Christ's return in Scripture has to do with anticipation and placing our HOPE in Jesus' coming, not merely a sequence of events. Paul wrote, *"But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it"* (Rom. 8:25). The focus of our HOPE and our JOY is Jesus' coming, regardless of whether there are prior signs or not. We WATCH for the thing in which we place our HOPE. This is how Jesus described His coming. And it is how the early Christians "watched" and "waited" for Jesus' coming as their HOPE of deliverance. Unless we define "watching" and "waiting" for Christ's coming as Jesus did, we can easily be misled by such seemingly logical (but anti-biblical) arguments.

Ice claims that *"other rapture views must redefine imminence more loosely than the New Testament would allow. Dr. Walvoord declares, 'The exhortation to look for 'the glorious appearing' of Christ to His own (Titus 2:13) loses its significance if the Tribulation must intervene first. Believers in that case should look for signs.'"* But, Walvoord's and Ice's "imminence" is not what the Bible teaches, as we have proven from Jesus' own words about WATCHING for His coming. Since Jesus gave a series of signs, He clearly taught that WATCHING for His coming includes paying attention to the signs He gave that will immediately precede His coming.

As a woman eagerly watches for, and awaits the day she will give birth, yet is keenly aware of the signs that will precede it, so to must we await and anticipate the coming of Christ, while being aware of the signs Jesus gave us. Jesus taught that His coming would BECOME imminent at some point in the future, but that it was NOT imminent at that time. When would it become "imminent?" Only after the signs He predicted come to pass. After giving the series of signs and describing His coming afterwards, Jesus said this:

Matt 24:32-33

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.

(KJV)

Jesus used a fig tree to illustrate the relationship of signs to "imminence." The disciples could tell when summer was "imminent" by watching for the signs of the fig trees sprouting leaves. In the same manner as the disciples observed the fig tree as a sign of summer, Jesus said they should know when His coming is "imminent," or "*near, even at the doors.*" It will be imminent after the signs come to pass. Within this context Jesus went on to instruct them to WATCH for His coming. Therefore, the New Testament concept of WATCHING and WAITING for Jesus' return places the focus on our hope (His actual coming), while at the same time including the expectation that the signs will signal His coming, indicating when it becomes "imminent." Only after we see all these things come to pass is Jesus' coming "*near, even at the doors.*"

No "Blessed Hope" without Imminence?

Ice attempts to denounce the posttribulation hope of a rapture as no hope at all. Ice writes, "*The New Testament exhortation to be comforted by the Lord's coming (John 14:1; 1 Thess. 4:18) would no longer have meaning if believers first had to pass through any part of the tribulation. Instead, comfort would have to await passage through the events of the tribulation. No, the church has been given a "Blessed Hope," in part, because our Lord's return is truly imminent.*"

I for one would like to hear Thomas Ice explain to an expectant mother that her "hope" of holding her child in her arms is no hope at all because she must first experience labor. Another major problem with this argument is that the Church was already experiencing great persecution when these Scriptures were written. Ice is writing from a Western mindset, where the ease of living for Christians is an anomaly, not consistent with the history of true Christianity. Our modern lifestyle is NOT the normal Christian experience according to Jesus. He said that "*in the world you will have tribulation*" (John 16:33). Paul told the churches that "*we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God*" (Acts 14:22). The

Thessalonian believers were comforted in their tribulation by Paul's encouragement that they would rest from their troubles "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire" (2 Thess. 1:4-10). One of the reasons Jesus' coming was the "blessed hope" was because He would rescue believers out from among severe persecution and trouble. Going through the events of Matt. 24 was not a foreign concept to the early Church (as it is to Ice and most Western Christians). They were already suffering intense persecution and martyrdom. Tribulation may seem foreign to western Christians because we live in relative ease and comfort. By comparison, going through the tribulation is repulsive. But, not so for the early Church. Therefore, the problem Ice raises here for the posttribulation view is really a reflection of our peculiar western culture and ease of lifestyle. Christians living in China today, or in other places where Christians are persecuted, would not buy Ice's argument for one second. In fact, a good case can be made **that the more difficult the situation, the more "blessed" the "blessed hope" becomes.** The term "blessed hope" was not coined in the midst of a bunch of stylishly dressed Christians sitting on padded pews in an air conditioned mega-church, singing "praise and worship" songs. It was coined during Paul's imprisonment, and amidst the intense suffering of the early Church. Perhaps we would be closer to the truth if we say that the more comfortably we live now, the less "blessed" the hope of Jesus' coming becomes. The more tribulation we endure, the more "blessed" that hope becomes. I assure you, the "blessed hope" is far more "blessed" for Christians in Chinese prisons than for Americans seated on padded pews. If we are going to stick to the grammatical historical interpretation of Scripture, we must interpret these kinds of statements in their historical setting of great persecution for the Church, and not from our modern western mindset.

Maranatha!

Lastly, Ice claims the word "maranatha" implies imminence. He writes, *"The early church had a special greeting for one another, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 16:22, which was "Maranatha!" Maranatha consists of three Aramaic words: "Mar" ("Lord"), "ana" ("our"), and "tha" ("come"), meaning "our Lord, come." As with other New Testament passages, Maranatha only makes sense if an any-moment or imminent coming is understood. Such an understanding supports the pre-trib position."*

As with Ice's other statements, it is his false assumption that "watching" or "waiting" for Jesus' coming requires his brand of "imminence" that is the problem. He has ignored the precedent in the Olivet Discourse, where Jesus fully explained "watching," and has substituted an artificial criterion nowhere taught in Scripture. His whole argument is defective because his claim that the Bible teaches an "any moment" coming is not true. His faulty claim that "watching" and "waiting" require his "any moment, no prior warning" kind of anticipation, skews not only the Scriptures, but also his interpretation of the writings of the Early

Church Fathers. (Ice and other pretribulationists claim some of the early Christian writers believed in "imminence" because they too spoke of "watching" and "waiting.") Ice is forcing an UNBIBLICAL kind of "imminence" into "watching" and "waiting," which distorts both the New Testament as well as the Early Church writings. Not only does the New Testament (the Olivet Discourse in particular) refute Ice's "imminence," but so do the writings of the Early Church Fathers. They also spoke of "watching" yet at the same time clearly wrote that certain events MUST occur first. Rather than Ice defining what "watching" and "waiting" mean from the precedent set by Jesus, he forces his own fabricated meaning into the text, and then tells you that the rapture MUST be pretribulationist because "watching" means "any moment," and "any moment" only works in a pretribulation scenario! He does the same with the early Church writings. He finds a few passages where they spoke of watching for Christ's return, and insists that this means they thought Jesus could come at "any moment." He ignores the same writers' plain statements that clearly indicate they expected many things to occur first. For example, the Roman Empire must fall, the ten kings must rise to power, the Church must be persecuted by the Antichrist, the Jewish Temple must be rebuilt with the Antichrist defiling it, etc. And how do pretribulationists reconcile both kinds of statements in the writings of the early Church? Could it be that perhaps the early writers understood "waiting" and "watching" as Jesus explained in His Olivet Discourse? No. Instead, these pretribulation writers indicate that the early Christians were just too stupid to realize that Jesus' coming could not be "imminent" when it would be preceded by signs!

What Ice and other pretribulationists have done is constructed reverse engineered an argument "imminence." His definition of "imminence" is NOT derived from Scripture itself, but is custom tailored to fit the pretribulation view and exclude all other rapture views. Then it is forced on the Scriptures. Ice proclaims his "imminence" to be a biblical doctrine, and tries to prove the pretribulation rapture by injecting his definition of "imminence" into several passages that speak of "watching" for Christ's coming. My challenge to Dr. Ice is to explain how Jesus could instruct His followers to be watching for His posttribulation coming immediately after telling them a series of signs that will precede it.

In contrast, the posttribulation view establishes what "watching" really means from Scripture first (from Jesus teaching in the Olivet Discourse). And then interprets the rest of the Scriptures that refer to "watching" based on this foundational understanding. And amazingly enough, this is also in perfect alignment with what the early Christians wrote as well.
Maranatha!

Notes:

1. Ice, Thomas, Perhaps Today: The Imminent Coming of Christ.
<http://www.according2prophecy.org/perhaps.html>

2. Granville Sharp's sixth rule reads as follows: "And as the insertion of the copulative *kai* between nouns of the same case, without articles, (according to the fifth rule,) denotes that **the second noun expresses a different person, thing, or quality, from the preceding noun, so, likewise, the same effect attends the copulative when each of the nouns are preceded by articles**, as in the following examples - (John 1:17, John 2:22, John 11:44, Col. 2:2, 2 Tim. 1:5, 1 Pet. 4:11)." [Remarks on the uses of the Definite Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament; Granville Sharp, 1778]

Note that Sharp's sixth rule applies to both personal and non-personal nouns. Some have argued that the first rule does not apply at all to non-personal nouns, and cannot be used to show unity. However, Daniel B. Wallace has done an exhaustive study of these constructions and concluded that at the lowest level, even with impersonal nouns, the article - substantive - *kai* - substantive "always indicates at least some sort of unity." [Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, p. 270]. Frequently the unity being expressed in such constructions with impersonal nouns indicates the later noun is a subset of the former. In this case, the "coming" of Christ is the larger event, with the "gathering together" of the elect being a component or subset of it.

The Source of the Corruption of Apostolic Eschatology

Copyright © Tim Warner

And Trypho to this replied, "... 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? ..."

*Then I answered, "... I admitted to you formerly, that I and many others are of this opinion, and 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. ... For I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines by 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.*

AD 150 – Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho (a Jew), chapter lxxx

Controversy over eschatology seems to have emerged quickly after the death of John. Those known to have linkage to the Beloved Disciple held consistently to "chiliasm," the Greek word for "millennialism." Today they would be called "premillennialists" (although they were certainly not "dispensationalists"). In fact, all of the earliest Church Fathers of the first and second centuries, whose eschatology can be discerned with any degree of certainty, were chiliasts.¹ They awaited the restoration of the creation at the coming of Christ, and His reigning over the nations from Jerusalem. The physical body is of this creation, and therefore must be resurrected in order to partake of the new order.

The above quote from Justin Martyr shows that this was not the unanimous opinion of all Christians in the second century. Some Christians held to a heavenly destiny, and rejected the resurrection of the flesh because it was of this present creation. In this article we will attempt to show that this thinking was borrowed from Greek philosophy. Justin indicated that "*right minded Christians on all points*" held to chiliasm with its bodily resurrection. He accused those who disagreed of following "*the doctrines of men.*" We agree with Justin's assessment, both with regard to the fact that many disagreed with his chiliasm, and that the source of their wrong eschatology was the opinions of men, because the rest of the evidence supports his claim.

That chiliasm was the earliest view, the dominant view, and was held by those who had close associations with the Apostles, can be demonstrated from the earliest writings.

Irenaeus also, student of John's disciple, Polycarp,² claimed that the Apostles handed down chiliasm as an eschatological system.³ Another disciple of John's, Papias, who had personal contact with several of the original twelve Apostles, wrote five volumes outlining the Apostolic teaching of chiliasm. This included some of Jesus' oral tradition regarding His coming Kingdom. Irenaeus was familiar with Polycarp's oral teaching of John's eschatology, and with Papias' five books.⁴ It is from Irenaeus that we get the most detailed treatment of the eschatology of the second century Church, since his writings have survived, while those of Papias have only survived in a few fragments quoted by other writers. His witness is the most important because of his access to sources close to the Apostles. Other early chiliasts, who treat eschatology just as extensively, but who did not have this kind of access to original sources, were Justin, Tertullian and Hippolytus.

This raises an important question: If "chiliasm" was indeed what the Apostles handed down, why did Justin indicate that "*many Christians believe otherwise*" only a half century after John's death? The answer to this question is not hard to find.

There was an inherent resistance to the concept of resurrection of the flesh (and a restored creation) within Greek culture. We see this first at Athens when Paul was mocked for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁵ The concept of a bodily resurrection was later challenged within the Corinthian church,⁶ just a few miles from Athens. Resistance to the concept of resurrection of the flesh and restoration of the physical creation were the direct results of Greek philosophical thinking.

The Greeks typically viewed physical matter as corrupt.⁷ Consequently, the physical substance of man defiles his soul by the close association of the soul with the body.⁸ Salvation, to the Greek mind, involved escaping the matter of the physical creation. Resurrection would not be beneficial, but counterproductive, since the soul would remain trapped within physical substance and continue to be corrupted by it. Likewise, living within a physical creation was corrupting to the soul. For this reason the Greeks of Athens mocked Paul's preaching regarding Jesus' resurrection. The Corinthian church was in danger of abandoning the Apostolic Faith for precisely the same reason. The error of the Corinthians gives us our first glimpse into the corruption of the Apostolic Faith by the intrusion of Greek philosophy. After Paul's martyrdom, the same thinking led to the rise of Gnosticism within the churches, which John had to directly confront in his Epistles and the prologue to his Gospel. When this

radical dichotomy between “flesh” (corrupt) and “spirit” (good) led some to propose that “Jesus” the man was separate from “Christ” a Divine being that descended upon Him at His baptism, John went on the attack, and sought to root it out of the churches. This is the reason for his statements regarding those who do not confess that “Jesus is the Christ.”

In his Dialogue with Trypho (a Jew) quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Justin alluded to “*many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians,*” yet follow the doctrines of men, denying the resurrection of the flesh, the restoration of the creation, and the believer’s inheritance within it. The doctrines of men, to which Justin referred, were the human theories of the Greek philosophers. While Justin was not willing to denounce these Christians as heretics, because they had not gone to the extremes of Gnosticism regarding the person of Christ, he felt pretty strongly that the Greek philosophical arguments needed to be expunged from Christian theology.

*“Considering, therefore, even such arguments as are suited to this world, and finding that, even according to them, it is not impossible that the flesh be regenerated; and seeing that, besides all these proofs, the Savior in the whole Gospel shows that there is salvation for the flesh, **why do we any longer endure those unbelieving and dangerous arguments, and fail to see that we are retrograding when we listen to such an argument as this: that the soul is immortal, but the body mortal, and incapable of being revived? For this we used to hear from Pythagoras and Plato, even before we learned the truth.**”*

Justin, On the Resurrection, X

In Justin’s opinion, Christianity was “retrograding” by entertaining “such arguments as are suited to this world,” those of Pythagoras and Plato. The arguments Justin was here refuting were those of Christians who sought to interpret the Scriptures through the lens of the Greek philosophers.

The Greek mindset resisted the renovation of the creation for the same reason it rejected the resurrection of the body, looking instead for a more mystical inheritance in the heavens, something borrowed from Greek philosophy and paganism. The early orthodox Christian apologists argued for the resurrection of the body as part of a greater scheme to restore the entire Creation at the second coming of Christ.⁹ The body is of this physical creation, and its resurrection in a perfect state was consistent with God’s plan to redeem the earth from the curse, and to dwell among men.

Like Justin, Irenaeus was aware of some otherwise “orthodox” Christians who denied these doctrines, choosing instead to adopt the philosophies of the Greek “heretical discourses.”

*“Since, again, **some who are reckoned among the orthodox** go beyond the pre-arranged plan for the exaltation of the just, and are ignorant of the methods by which they are disciplined beforehand for incorruption, **they thus entertain heretical opinions.** For the heretics, despising the handiwork of God, and not admitting the salvation of their flesh, while they also treat the promise of God contemptuously, and pass beyond God altogether in the sentiments they form, affirm that immediately upon their death they shall pass above the heavens and the Demiurge, and go to the Mother (Achamoth) or to that Father whom they have feigned. Those persons, therefore, who disallow a resurrection affecting the whole man, and as far as in them lies remove it from the midst [of the Christian scheme], how can they be wondered at, if again they know nothing as to the plan of the resurrection?”*

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book V, xxxi

*“Inasmuch, therefore, as the opinions of certain [orthodox persons] are **derived from heretical discourses**, they are both ignorant of God’s dispensations, and of the mystery of the resurrection of the just, and of the [earthly] kingdom which is the commencement of incorruption, by means of which kingdom those who shall be worthy are accustomed gradually to partake of the divine nature; and it is necessary to tell them respecting those things, that it behooves the righteous first to receive the promise of the inheritance which God promised to the fathers, and to reign in it, when they rise again to behold God in this creation which is renovated, and that the judgment should take place afterwards. For it is just that in that very creation in which they toiled or were afflicted, being proved in every way by suffering, they should receive the reward of their suffering; and that in the creation in which they were slain because of their love to God, in that they should be revived again; and that in the creation in which they endured servitude, in that they should reign. For God is rich in all things, and all things are His. It is fitting, therefore, that the creation itself, being restored to its primeval condition, should without restraint be under the dominion of the righteous; and the apostle has made this plain in the Epistle to the Romans, when he thus speaks: “For the expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation has been subjected to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; since the creation itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.”*

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book V, xxxii

The linkage between the restoration of the creation, the resurrection of the flesh at Christ’s coming, and Jesus’ own bodily resurrection as the prototype for ours, was viewed by these early orthodox Christians as a consistent and indivisible

body of Apostolic truth. The main cause for deviation from this truth was pressure from Greek philosophy, and its mixture with Christianity, as the Gospel spread throughout the Hellenized world.

Modern day amillennialists claim that the “chiliasm” of the early Church was not handed down by the Apostles, but was borrowed from the Jews. While it is true that some of the Jews had a similar eschatology, it is difficult to imagine how it would have so thoroughly permeated the early Greek church unless it was directly taught by the Apostles. A careful reading of the early writers shows that their defense of “chiliasm” and refutations of the “heavenly destiny” concept (which they associated with Gnosticism and Greek philosophy), were based on the literal exposition of Scripture, and not on Jewish tradition. Further, it is clear that the same writers held the Jewish interpretations of Scripture in contempt. This is particularly evident in Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho (a Jew), from which we drew our excerpt at the beginning of this chapter. Justin was a converted philosopher, having studied under several schools of Greek philosophy. Yet, coming to Christ, he rejected these philosophies. In his discussion with Trypho, he also repeatedly pointed out the blindness of the Jewish teachers and their interpretations.¹⁰ Having rejected both the Greek philosophies as well as the Jewish misinterpretations of Scripture, how can we account for his strong chiliasm, and that of all the other early Christian apologists, unless it was indeed handed down by the Apostles? The pressure from his former philosophical pursuits would have led him towards amillennial tendencies, which are consistent with Greek philosophy. Yet, he argued against such. He also solidly refuted Trypho, a Jew, and explained the errors of the Jewish teachers regarding many Scriptures. It is not logical to suppose that Justin (or any of the other early apologists) would blindly follow a purely Jewish idea without clear Apostolic precedent and support from the Old Testament Scriptures. On the other hand, it is easy to see how an Apostolic “chiliasm” could quickly evolve into proto-amillennialism as Greek believers refused to abandon their own worldview and presuppositions, preferring to view Scripture through a Greek philosophical lens. This is the real cause of the corruption of Apostolic eschatology. And it clearly shows which view was Apostolic, and which was a perversion of the truth.

Notes:

1. There have been many attempts by amillennialists to prove otherwise. However, all such attempts either confuse “chiliasm” with modern dispensationalism, or read into the text more than is warranted. The strongest argument from amillennialists concerns the Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus, chapter X.

*“For God loved men for whose sake He made the world, to whom He subjected all things that are in the earth, to whom He gave reason and mind, whom alone He permitted to look up to heaven, whom He created after His own image, to whom He sent His only begotten Son, **to whom He promised the kingdom which is in heaven, and will give it to those that have loved Him.**”*
(Lightfoot Translation)

The Greek reads, “οἷς τὴν ἐν οὐρανῷ βασιλείαν ἐπηγγείλατο, καὶ δώσει τοῖς ἀγαπήσασιν αὐτόν.”
(<http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/apostfaths/diognetus.html>)

The literal rendering of the phrase in question is, "the kingdom which is in heaven." Whether the writer meant the inheritance of the saints will be "heaven" itself, or "the Kingdom which is in heaven" now will come to earth at the second advent, cannot be ascertained from this epistle. This statement is consistent with chiliasm if we understand that Christ's Kingdom, which is now in heaven, will come to earth in physical manifestation at the second coming, as Jesus instructed us to pray: "Thy Kingdom, come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Historic premillennialists have taught that the Kingdom which is present now in heaven, in the sense that believers are subject to Christ who rules His Church from heaven, will be fully manifest on earth at the second advent, when Jesus will reign over all the nations from Jerusalem. The epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus is consistent with this view. It is therefore not proof of early proto-amillennialism, since these words are consistent with both chiliasm and amillennialism. All other alleged proofs of proto-amillennialism, in the first or second century writers, are equally compatible with historic chiliasm, as held by Justin, Irenaeus, and others.

2. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book III, iii, 4

3. "The predicted blessing, therefore, belongs unquestionably to the times of the kingdom, when the righteous shall bear rule upon their rising from the dead; when also the creation, having been renovated and set free, shall fructify with an abundance of all kinds of food, from the dew of heaven, and from the fertility of the earth: as the elders who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, related that they had heard from him how the Lord used to teach in regard to these times." Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, xxxiii, 3

4. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, xxxiii, 4

5. Acts 17:32

6. 1 Corinthians 15:12

7. Gnosticism was the natural outcome of the early blending of Christianity and Greek philosophy. The Gnostics appealed to allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures to deny all of the promises of bodily resurrection, the restoration of the physical Creation, etc.

8. "They who maintain the wrong opinion say that there is no resurrection of the flesh; giving as their reason that it is impossible that what is corrupted and dissolved should be restored to the same as it had been. And besides the impossibility, they say that the salvation of the flesh is disadvantageous; and they abuse the flesh, adducing its infirmities, and declare that it only is the cause of our sins, so that if the flesh, say they, rise again, our infirmities also rise with it." (Justin, On the Resurrection, II)

"But following our order, we must now speak with respect to those who think meanly of the flesh, and say that it is not worthy of the resurrection nor of the heavenly economy, because, first, its substance is earth; and besides, because it is full of all wickedness, so that it forces the soul to sin along with it." (Justin, On the Resurrection, VII)

9. "If therefore the great God showed future things by Daniel, and confirmed them by His Son; and if Christ is the stone which is cut out without hands, who shall destroy temporal kingdoms, and introduce an eternal one, which is the resurrection of the just; as he declares, 'The God of heaven shall raise up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed,' — let those thus confuted come to their senses." (Irenaeus, Book V, ch. xxvi, 2)

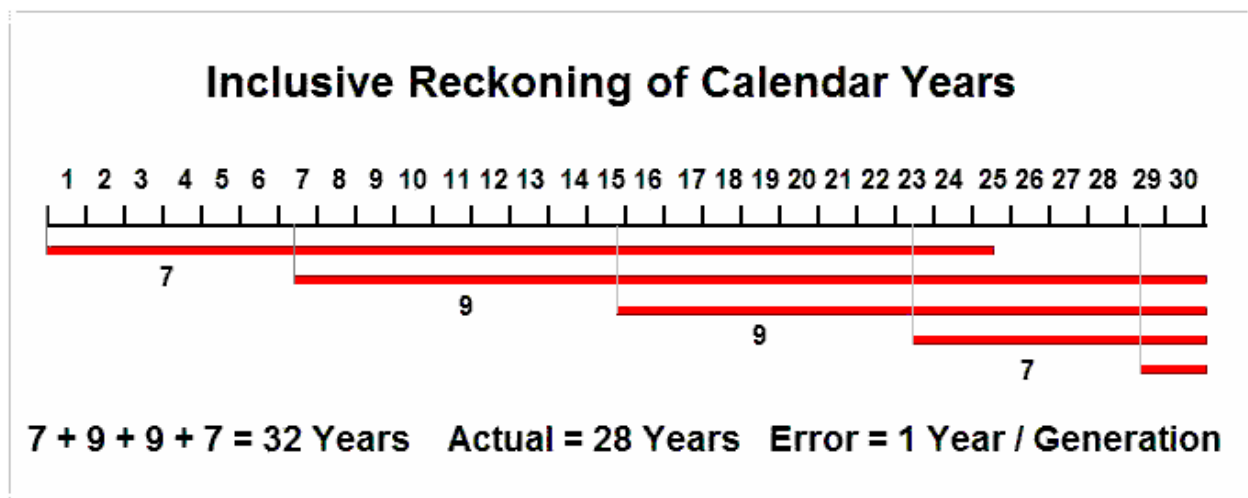
10. "I excuse and forgive you, my friend," I said. "For you know not what you say, but have been persuaded by **teachers who do not understand the Scriptures...**" (chapter 9); "Then I answered, "... be not confounded, nay, rather remain still more zealous hearers and investigators, despising **the tradition of your teachers, since they are convicted by the Holy Spirit of inability to perceive the truths taught by God, and of preferring to teach their own doctrines.**" (chapter 38); "**But I am far from putting reliance in your teachers,** who refuse to admit that the interpretation made by the seventy elders who were with Ptolemy [king] of the Egyptians is a correct one; and they attempt to frame another." (chapter 71); "He shall raise all men from the dead, and appoint some to be incorruptible, immortal, and free from sorrow in the everlasting and imperishable kingdom; but shall send others away to the everlasting punishment of fire. **But as to you and your teachers deceiving yourselves when you interpret what the Scripture** says as referring to those of your nation then in dispersion, and maintain that their prayers and sacrifices offered in every place are pure and well-pleasing, learn that **you are speaking falsely,** and trying by all means to cheat yourselves." (chapter 117); "I quoted from the words of Jeremiah the prophet, and Esdras, and David; but from those which are even now admitted by you, which **had your teachers comprehended, be well assured they would have deleted them, as they did those about the death of Isaiah,** whom you sawed asunder with a wooden saw." (chapter 120); "**But they are cisterns broken, and holding no water, which your own teachers have digged,** as the Scripture also expressly asserts, 'teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' And besides, **they beguile themselves and you,** supposing that the everlasting kingdom will be assuredly given to those of the dispersion who are of Abraham after the flesh, although they be sinners, and faithless, and disobedient towards God, which the Scriptures have proved is not the case." (chapter 140). It seems that the early chiliasts had the same opinion of the Jewish interpretations as Jesus did, "blind guides."

Corrections to Ussher's Genealogical Chronology

By Tim Warner © answersinrevelation.org

The common dates, from Creation to Abraham, are too long by one year per generation. The common calculation of genealogies wrongly assumes that a child was born on his father's birthday, and that years lived are counted from birthday to birthday. This method cannot give accurate dates, because a child might be born anytime within the twelve months of the year given as the age of the father. No such allowances are provided in the method Ussher used to calculate the Genesis genealogies.

It is clear that Moses intended to give accurate information for the purposes of calculations. The only way to do this would be counting the number of **calendar years** (from the date of creation – Tishri 1) during which a person lived. Moses used "inclusive reckoning," meaning that he reckoned any part of a calendar year during which a person lived as a year of his life. Even if he was born in the last month of the year, that year would be counted as his first year. When New Years' day (Tishri 1) came, everyone living was reckoned to be another year older. Genesis records that Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born. Seth was born within the 130th calendar year of Adam's life. That means Adam's 130th year and Seth's 1st year were the same calendar year. For this reason, when totaling the genealogies, one year must be subtracted for every generation.



In the above diagram, Adam's life is represented by the top red line. Seth is represented by the next line, etc. The numbers at the top are calendar years from Creation. We have greatly shortened the duration of their lives for illustrative purposes.

Our genealogy would read that Adam was 7 years old when Seth was born. Seth was 9 years old when Enos was born. Enos was 9 years old when Cainan was born. Cainan was 7 years old when Mahalalel was born, etc. The traditional calculation would be to just add up all these numbers. However, the correct method is to add each generation to the previous, and subtract 1. Ussher's date for Creation, 4004 BC, should be reduced by 19 years, one year for each generation from Adam to Abraham. Assuming the rest of Ussher's chronology to be correct, the date for creation by our calculation is **Tishri 1, 3985 BC**.

Name	Lifespan	Age @ Son's Birth	Lived AC (Corrected)	Correction
1. Adam	930	130	0 – 930 (0 – 930)	0
2. Seth	912	105	130 – 1042 (129 – 1041)	- 1
3. Enos	905	90	235 – 1140 (233 – 1138)	- 2
4. Cainan	910	70	325 – 1235 (322 – 1232)	- 3
5. Mahalalel	895	65	395 – 1290 (391 – 1286)	- 4
6. Jared	962	162	460 – 1422 (455 – 1417)	- 5
7. Enoch	365	65	622 – 987 (616 – 981)	- 6
8. Methuseleh	969	187	687 – 1656 (680 – 1649)	- 7
9. Lamech	777	182	874 – 1651 (866 – 1643)	- 8
10. Noah	950	503	1056 – 2006 (1047 – 1997)	- 9
11. Shem	600	100	1559 – 2159 (1549 – 2149)	- 10
Flood	1	600	1656 – 1657 (1646 – 1647)	
12. Arphaxad	438	35	1658 – 2096 (1657 – 2085)	- 11
13. Salah	433	30	1693 – 2126 (1681 – 2114)	- 12
14. Eber	464	34	1723 – 2187 (1710 – 2174)	- 13
15. Peleg	239	30	1757 – 1996 (1743 – 1982)	- 14
16. Reu	239	32	1787 – 2026 (1772 – 2011)	- 15
17. Serug	230	30	1829 – 2049 (1803 – 2033)	- 16
18. Nahor	148	29	1849 – 1997 (1832 – 1980)	- 17
19. Terah	205	130	1878 – 2083 (1860 – 2065)	- 18
20. Abram (75)	175	100	2008 – 2183 (1989 – 2164)	- 19

The first day of Creation was on the first day of the year – Tishri 1 (Rosh Hashanah, on the new moon). It began at evening (“the evening and the morning were the first day”).

The Fall and expulsion from Eden took place on Tishri 10 (Yom Kippur). The mandatory fast on this day in the Law was to mourn Adam's sin and the fall of man, and looks forward to his final redemption. The 6000 years must be counted from the fall, not from Creation. If the Fall took place the same year as Creation (3 days after God rested), then the 6000 years will expire on Tishri 10, 2016. ($6000 - 3985 = 2015 + 1$ (BC/AD conversion) = 2016). However, the Fall could have occurred any year from Creation (3985BC) to within 20 years of Seth's birth (3875BC). Therefore, the 6000 years could expire on any Yom Kippur between AD 2016 and AD 2126.

The “Sons of God” and the “Daughters of Men”

By Tim Warner, Copyright © answersinrevelation.org

For two millennia, some Christians have taught that just prior to Noah’s flood, angels descended from heaven and mated with human women, producing a hybrid class of beings. This story is allegedly taught in Genesis six. But, its real source is a Jewish document written in the intertestamental period. This book purports to be written by Enoch (whom God transported to heaven).

There is no question that acceptance of this theory has been widespread among Christians from very early on, and it currently has an impact on eschatological teaching, particularly among some of the more sensationalist prophecy gurus. Several of the early Church fathers taught it. A few opposed it. It remains popular today. Some go so far as to claim that fallen angels are still mating with humans, and producing hybrid offspring. UFO abductions are even claimed to be cases of fallen angels taking human women for their perverse pleasures. However, to date no hybrid babies seem to have been produced by women who claim to have been abducted by aliens.

An examination of this topic, using sound biblical exegesis and investigative principles, is critically necessary if Christians are to avoid deception, particularly as it relates to the study of eschatology. Another insidious danger lurks in the pressure among Christians to adopt the “Book of Enoch” as Scripture. This article is an attempt to deal with this topic using sound exegetical principles in all of the major passages involved in the debate. The place to begin is Genesis.

I. Understanding the Genesis Context

Genesis was written as the introduction to the “Book of the Law” (Torah). Its purpose was to give the children of Israel a concise history of where they came from, and their special character as the covenant people of YHVH. It traces the major events of God’s interaction with man from the creation of the world to His covenant with Abraham. Genesis ends with the Israelites in Egypt, looking forward to their inheritance in the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses even included God’s prophecy to Abraham that his descendants would be oppressed by another nation, but that He would miraculously deliver them.¹

1. Gen. 15:13-14

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

Genesis was no doubt written some time during the forty years the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. The original “Book of the Law,” containing Genesis through Deuteronomy, was placed in the tabernacle beside the ark of the covenant.²

In his historical narrative, Moses outlined the fall of man, his expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the curse upon creation, and the corruption of humanity. Yet, God did not leave Adam in a hopeless state. The “curse” contains a promise of eventual deliverance.

Gen 3:15 NKJV

*5 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between **your seed and her Seed**; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”*

This is a prophecy of two distinct “seeds.” The seed of the woman is Christ.³ The seed of the serpent is Antichrist.⁴

After this, God blessed Adam and Eve with two sons. Yet, the fallen nature of man quickly became evident with Cain’s murder of his brother, Abel. As a consequence, God put a curse on Cain, and he and his family were separated from the rest of humanity. “Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth. ... Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.” (Gen. 4:14,16). Moses proceeded to trace one line of Cain’s separated genealogy through six generations, down to Lamech. Moses informs us that Lamech was also a murderer.⁵

The names of Cain’s descendants reveal quite a bit about each generation of fathers. Irad means “fugitive.” Mahujael means “smitten by God.”⁶ Methusael means “I am man, who (or where) is God?”⁷ Immediately following Moses’ linkage between the murderers Lamech and Cain, we find the following account.

Gen 4:25-26 NKJV

25 And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, “For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.”

*26 And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. **Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.***

2. Deut. 31:26

3. Rev. 12:1-6

4. 2 Thess. 2:3

5. Gen. 4:23

6. <http://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Mehujael.html>

7. <http://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Methusael.html>

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

There is no question that Moses intended to draw a contrast between Cain's descendants and Seth's descendants. The statement, "*then men began to call on the name of the LORD,*" has been the subject of much discussion. If Moses meant "men" in general, and simply wished to mark a point in time, we would expect him to include this statement in the previous genealogy of Cain. Furthermore, it would imply that previously Adam and Seth had not called upon the name of the Lord. The very next verses begin the genealogy of Adam, through Seth, and down to Noah, mentioning again the birth of Seth and Enos. There is no reason for Moses to give the account of Enos' birth to Seth twice unless the first mention of his birth in the above passage was meant to give context to the statement that immediately follows, "*Then men began to call on the name of the Lord.*" Our conclusion from the context is that the "men" referred to by Moses were the sons of Seth, and that something significant began with Seth's son, Enos, and his descendants.

The clause "call upon the name of," in the Hebrew text is ambiguous because the preposition can mean, "on," or "by," ("call on the name of" or "call by the name of"). The KJV illustrates this uncertainty with a marginal note giving the alternate reading, "*or, 'to call themselves by the name of the LORD'.*" This is the sense also of the same clause in Isaiah 44:5, "*another shall call himself by the name of Jacob.*"

Some scholars have understood this statement to refer to the practice of naming children with compounds of the Lord's name. This was a common practice of the Jews later. Many names in the Bible contain compounds of YHVH (eg. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah), and Elohim (eg. Samuel, Daniel, Ezekiel). However, the statement clearly has "the name of YHVH" here and not "the name of Elohim." So, any such compound birth names would have to be compounds of YHVH, if compound birth names was meant. A search of the names listed in Cain's and Seth's genealogies fails to produce a single name that is a compound of YHVH.

There are a few names that are compounds of Elohim. Two of them appear in Cain's genealogy. Mehujael (smitten by God) no doubt had reference to the curse put upon Cain, which Mehujael's father apparently considered to be generational. One can easily see the anger and resentment in such a name. And this was apparently passed on, because Mehujael named his own son, Methushael (I am man, who is God?). The Hebrew word used for "man" here is "math," most often used for men capable of combat. Certainly, Moses' reported these names to impress upon his Israelite audience that this race of men was not only cursed, but remained in open rebellion against God, and bitter about the curse of their forefather, Cain. In contrast, we find both humility and hope in the names of the descendants of Seth. Enos means "mortal," no doubt in recognition of man's fallen condition and his impending death. Mahalalel means

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

“praise of God.” Noah means “rest,” “relief,” or “comfort.” In any case, there are no names in either genealogy that are compounds of YHVH. Therefore, there must be another sense in which *“men began to call themselves by the name of the YHVH.”*

The Septuagint resolves the puzzle for us. An accurate English translation of the LXX is as follows: *“And to Seth, to him also was born a son, and he called his name, Enos. This one hoped, therefore he called to himself the name of the Lord God.”*

The Jewish translators of the Septuagint did not understand this passage to refer to birth names given to children. Rather, the sense is that because of Enos’ hope in God’s promise, he **called unto himself** “the name of YHVH.” The most natural interpretation that agrees with both the Hebrew and LXX is simply that Enos and his descendants began to call themselves collectively by the name of YHVH. The people of YHVH, as distinguished from the rest of the population, began to call themselves by God’s covenant name – YHVH. In practice, this would mean referring to themselves as “the sons of YHVH” or the “people of YHVH.”

The concept of a segregated people of YHVH was familiar to the Israelites to whom Moses wrote. They were distinguished by exactly the same terminology.

Deut 28:9-10 NKJV

9 “The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways.

*10 Then all peoples of the earth shall see that **you are called by the name of the LORD**, and they shall be afraid of you.*

2 Chron 7:14 NKJV

*14 if My people **who are called by My name** will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

In the Bible, the terms, “called by the name of YHVH” and “sons of YHVH” are synonymous, always referring to a covenantal people separated unto God, and distinct from the rest of the population.

Deut 32:6 NKJV

*6 Do you thus deal with the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? **Is He not your Father**, who bought you? Has He not made you and established you?*

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

Deut 32:19 NKJV

19 "And when the LORD saw it, He spurned them, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters.

Deut 14:1-2 NASB

1 "You are the sons of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave your forehead for the sake of the dead.

2 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

Isaiah 43:5-7 NKJV

5 Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, And gather you from the west;

6 I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, And My daughters from the ends of the earth —

7 Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."

Being "sons of YHVH your God" and being "called by the name of YHVH" were synonymous in the minds of the Israelites. This is a critical component to understanding Moses' hotly disputed comments in chapter 6, where we will turn our attention next.

II. The "Sons of God" and the "Daughters of Men"

Gen 6:1-3 NKJV

1 Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them,

*2 that **the sons of God** saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.*

3 And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

The meaning of the term, "sons of God," is hotly disputed. Some derive the sense from Job, where the same term refers to angels three times. One of the problems with that theory is there is no evidence that the Israelites, for whom Moses wrote Genesis, had any knowledge of the book of Job, or even that it existed at that time. No doubt, Job lived before Moses, as is evidenced by his great age.⁸ But, the internal evidence from the

8. Job 42:16

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

book of Job argues for a much later date, written from the land of Israel after the conquest.⁹ Job was not likely known by Moses' audience. But, more importantly, in section VIII of this paper, we will demonstrate that the "sons of God" reading in Job is faulty. The Greek Septuagint version has the true reading, as proven from the book of Hebrews.

That the "sons of God" refers to humans and not angels is plain from God's immediate reaction to the "sons of God" taking wives from among the "daughters of men." God said, "*My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.*" The crime was committed by "the sons of God." If they were angels, why would God react against men of flesh? The Septuagint translates God's reaction this way: "*And the Lord God said, 'My Spirit shall certainly not remain among these men for ever'.*" The antecedent for "these men" is the "sons of God" in the previous verse. This is a telling statement, because it clearly shows that the "sons of God" were men and not angels, and that they had a covenant relationship with YHWH, because His Spirit had remained among them collectively. God's Spirit remaining among His covenant people is also clearly seen with the covenant people of Israel.

Haggai 2:4-5 NKJV

4 "Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel," says the LORD; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the LORD, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the LORD of hosts.

5 'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'"

Isa 63:11 NKJV

11 Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying: "Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit within [among] them,

9. Job lived in the land of Uz (Job 1:1), which is identified as "Moab" (Jordan) in Jer. 25:20 & Lam. 4:21. The author of the book wrote that Job "*was the greatest of all the people of the East.*" (Job 1:3). Since "the east" is a relative term, it places the writer west of Uz where Job lived. This would put the author of the book across the Jordan river in the land of Israel. Consequently, the writing of the book would have been after the conquest of this land under Joshua. Also, the reference to "Satan" as a proper name (Job 1:6) was unknown to the Israelites until about the time of the Babylonian captivity (cf. 2 Sam. 24:1 & 1 Chron. 21:1, Zech. 3:1-2). For these reasons, the writing of the book of Job should be dated after the conquest of Canaan, perhaps as late as the Babylonian captivity, even though Job himself lived much earlier. The Israelites would have no knowledge of Job or this book when Genesis was written. Consequently, it would not likely provide a frame of reference for the term, "sons of God," in Gen. 6. Furthermore, it is not very likely that Moses would leave the interpretation of the words "sons of God" to chance, relying on the hope that his audience would be familiar with the book of Job. It is much more credible to gain an understanding of the term from what Moses had written thus far, and from the Israelites' own experiences at Mt. Sinai and their wilderness wanderings.

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

Paul stated, in Romans 8:14, that *“as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”* The collective presence of the Holy Spirit is one of the distinguishing marks of the “sons of God.” I do not believe it is a coincidence that when the “sons of God” rebelled, God reacted by saying, *“My Spirit shall certainly not remain among these men forever.”*

Those who claim that angels mated with human women also claim that their offspring were angel-human giants. These are supposed to be super-human god-like creatures. The book of Enoch, from which this “tall tale” originated, says that they were “three thousand ells” in height.¹⁰ An “ell” is a synonym for a cubit, roughly the distance of the elbow to the fingertip (18”). That would make these “giants” about four-thousand five-hundred feet tall if the Book of Enoch is correct! But, even excusing such an absurdity, the text of Genesis does not support the idea that “giants” were the result of the marriages between the “sons of God” and “daughters of men.” Let’s look carefully at the text.

Gen 6:4 NKJV

*4 **There were giants** on the earth in those days, **and also afterward, when** the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.*

The text says plainly that the “giants” already existed when the “sons of God” took wives from the “daughters of men.” Therefore, the “giants” (Heb. “nephilim”) are not angel-human hybrids. Further, the word rendered “giants” means “bully” or “tyrant” according to Strong’s Hebrew lexicon. Its usage elsewhere in Scripture clearly proves that it is not limited to people before the flood, nor does it refer to angel-human hybrid creatures. Sometimes it describes large people. Other times it refers only to violent or intimidating warriors or rulers.

What then is meant by the terms, “mighty men of old” and “men of renown?” The term “mighty men of old” indicates they were strong, violent, or intimidating men from ancient times. The term, “ancient times,” no doubt, was meant by Moses to contrast the more recent use of the term, “nephilim,” which the unfaithful spies claimed to have seen in Canaan¹¹, and for which reason the Jews failed to take possession of the land. God punished them with forty years of wandering in the wilderness, during which time Genesis was written by Moses.

10. Book of Enoch, 7:3

11. Numbers 13:33

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

The term, “men of renown” is a bit more interesting. It could simply mean “men of reputation.” But, the Hebrew actually says, “mortals of the name.” Remember, Seth’s son was named “Enos,” meaning “mortal” (from a verb that means sickly). No doubt Seth named his son “Mortal” out of his recognition of the fallen state in which he lived under the curse. Yet, this “Mortal” (Enos) is the one who *“hoped, therefore calling to himself the name of the Lord God.”* God pronounced the coming judgment: *“My Spirit will not remain among these men forever,”* prophesying of His impending judgment 120 years before the flood.

By the time God took notice of the departure of the “sons of God” to pursue the “daughters of men,” all of Noah’s ancestors named in the genealogy were dead except his father, Lamech, and his grandfather, Methuseleh. Enos himself lived until the year, 1140 after creation, only 396 years before God pronounced judgment, and Noah began building the ark. No doubt, when the ancient fathers of Seth’s tribe began to die off, the godly influence began to wane, and eventually the younger generations saw no need to keep their godly covenantal line distinct from the general population. And when they took wives from amongst those in rebellion against God, their children were heavily influenced by their mothers and her side of the family. They were “sons of God” in name only, they no longer followed the Lord. Consequently Moses called them, “mortals with the Name.” That is, while they carried the name of YHVH, as their forefather Enos originated, their character as “mortal” or “sickly” began to dominate. While the fathers who took foreign wives may not have degraded significantly morally, their offspring certainly did, and became just as violent and corrupt as the rest of mankind.

With this in mind, it becomes obvious why Moses would include this story in Genesis. The Law that he delivered to the Israelites commanded that they refrain from taking wives from among the nations for the very same reason, because these women would cause their husbands and children to depart from the Lord. Moses included this as a major reason for the flood, to show to the Israelites just how serious God was about this.

Some have argued that such a distinct line of people smacks of racial superiority. Our answer is simply that it is no different than the Jewish nation. The people of Israel are God’s covenant people after the flood. While genetics is a component, the New Testament makes it very clear that genetics is not the major component, but a minor one. The real concern for keeping Israel from taking foreign wives had nothing to do with DNA or genetics, but everything to do with preserving the worship of YHVH generationally. The Jews were permitted to take wives of people they had conquered in war. Their gods were deemed to have been defeated by YHVH. In fact, Rahab was such a woman, and ended up in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. The Israelites were forbidden

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

to take wives from their unconquered neighbors because they worshipped foreign gods, and would corrupt their husbands and children with idolatry.

The reason the Sethite covenant people and the Israelite covenant people were segregated was to preserve the truth of God and worship of YHVH generationally, from father to son, rather than genetically in one's DNA, as a special elite race. And when the Sethites violated this principle, the result was exactly the same as when the Israelites violated it. First, the succeeding generations became increasingly corrupt, and then God's judgment came.

Deut 6:6-9 NKJV

6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The last generation of the first covenant people of YHVH, among whom His Spirit dwelled, did not remain faithful. Noah and his sons were chosen by God, because of Noah's faithfulness, to preserve the "sons of God" and true worship of YHVH. Had God delayed His judgment, the rate of decay of the "sons of God" would no doubt have left no one still proclaiming the true worship of YHVH within just a few more generations. So, God acted to eliminate all the rest, even all the other "sons of God," sparing only this one family for a new beginning. And it was from a descendant of one of Noah's sons (Shem) that God called Abraham and established His covenant with him and his descendants after him, ultimately bringing about the One who would crush the Serpent's head.

III. The "Sons of God" in 1 Peter

There are two verses in 1 Peter that have baffled Christian commentators. Whenever this occurs, it is almost always because they are assuming certain presuppositions that are wrong, or else they do not fully understand the historical context. Yet, if we understand these two verses in light of what we have learned from Genesis, the difficulty disappears completely. Both verses appear very close to each other, and are clearly related. The chapter division is unfortunate. We have highlighted the seemingly difficult verses in bold.

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

1 Peter 3:18-4:6 NKJV

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,

20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

21 There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism(not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

4:1 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

6 For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

Scholars have struggled to understand what Peter meant by Christ having preached to “the spirits in prison,” because this group was clearly limited by Peter to those who were “disobedient” while Noah prepared the ark. The usual explanation is that the language is figurative, and that the “preaching” was actually done by Noah. Others view this as Jesus’ preaching in hades between his death and resurrection, but are at a loss to explain why Peter limited it to only those of Noah’s day. Catholics use this as evidence for Purgatory. But again, why the limitation to Noah’s building the ark?

Similar problems are evident in handling 4:6. Some claim that it shows people are given a second chance after death. Others take the phrase “those who are dead” figuratively, and suppose Peter meant people who are lost. The problem is that Peter would not use the word “dead” in verse 5 literally, and then immediately use the same word figuratively in the very next sentence. All of these explanations strain the limits of

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

sound exegetical principles. If our interpretation is correct, it should flow easily from the text without forcing, and make sense with the limitations Peter placed on this group.

The “spirits in prison” in 3:19 are the “sons of God” who did not listen to Noah’s warnings about the coming flood, and consequently died along with the wicked in that judgment. The word translated “prison” simply means to guard. It is used of the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks.¹² In 2 Peter 2:5, Peter referred to Noah as a “preacher of righteousness.” To whom did Noah preach? No doubt, it was to his relatives of the line of Seth. Some of them had taken pagan wives. Others may not have been guilty of this, yet they did not believe Noah’s warnings of the coming judgment, and refused to go into the ark. Note in 3:20, “...while the ark was being prepared, *in which* [ark] a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.” Salvation from physical death was secured only by entering the safety of the ark. Most of the “sons of God” who were “called by the name of YHVH” did not enter the ark, and died along with the wicked.

Peter then compared Noah’s ark to baptism. Why? Peter was writing to Jewish believers. And their own “flood” was on the horizon, the coming destruction of Jerusalem prophesied by Daniel and Jesus. Peter had been preaching that his Jewish brethren needed to “*be saved from this perverse generation.*” Then those who gladly received his word were baptized.” (Acts 2:40-41). Christian baptism was to the Jewish covenant people what Noah’s ark was to the first covenant people of YHVH – the only means of escaping the impending judgment.

All of the sons of Seth, the first covenant people of God, perished in the flood except eight people who were safe in the ark. The NKJV says those to whom Jesus preached had been “disobedient” during the time Noah was preparing the ark. The Greek word actually means, “unconvinced” or “unbelieving.” They did not believe judgment was coming, and consequently lost their lives. Yet, they were still in a covenant relationship with God, as is evidenced by their being called by the name of YHVH.

Paul informs us in Romans 11 that for the sake of the patriarchs “all Israel will be saved,” even though at the present time they are enemies of the Gospel. God deals with His covenant people differently than he deals with the general population. And this is why Jesus made a special point of preaching the Gospel to those who were unconvinced that judgment was coming when Noah was preaching and building the ark.

Chapter 4 verse 6 says, “For *this reason* the Gospel was preached to those who are dead...”

12. Luke 2:8

What reason? The answer is given, “that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in spirit.” That is, that they might take part in the resurrection of the righteous.

IV. The “Sons of God” in Revelation

Revelation 14:1-5 NKJV

*1 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having **His Father’s name written on their foreheads.***

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.

3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

*4 **These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.***

5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

This passage takes on new meaning when we approach it from the perspective of the first covenant people. Consider the four identifying markers:

- They are a fairly small number, 144,000.
- They possess the Father’s name.
- They were “not defiled with women.”
- They are the “firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.”

What is **the only group in the Bible** that could fit all four of these identifying markers? It is the faithful tribe of Seth through his son, Enos.

1. They are a small number, 144,000: The sons of Seth through Enos were one tribe spanning only eight generations, from Enos to Noah. If each son, beginning with Enos, had six sons, and about half of the last generation took foreign wives from the “daughters of men,” the total number of faithful sons of Seth through Enos (who “were not defiled with women” – the “daughters of men”) would be about 144,000 men. (Traditionally, a multitude is counted by the number of adult males).¹³

13. Matt. 14:21, Matt. 15:38

All other covenant people number in the millions.

2. They possess the Father's Name: The first covenant people are specifically said to have "called themselves by the name of YHVH."

3. They were "not defiled with women": Until the last generation before the flood, the sons of Seth were "not defiled with women" who were outside of God's covenant people. The Bible teaches that "marriage is honorable." There is only one way, according to Scripture, that "women" defile God's people. And that is when God's covenant people take wives from among those who are not God's people.¹⁴

4. They are the "firstfruits unto God and the Lamb." No group after the flood can claim to be the "firstfruits." This term refers to the practice of the Jews of bringing a token offering to God from the very beginning of their harvest. Clearly the very first covenant people, "called by the name of YHVH," uniquely qualify for this title.¹⁵

Assuming the identity of this group of 144,000 to be the faithful sons of Seth, the statement that they were "not defiled with women" clearly implies that they are from among a larger group, some of which were "defiled with women." The language strongly implies that these are the "sons of God" in Genesis who did not take foreign wives. No other group is distinguished in the Bible in this way. Therefore, the "sons of God" in Genesis are men, not angels.

V. Angels Are Not Equipped to Procreate

Reproduction was designed by God. The first man was called "Adam," which means "earthling," because he was made from the dust of the ground. Angels are not of this creation. When God formed all of His creatures, He limited their reproduction compatibility to the opposite gender of the same "kind." Even today, breeding is only possible within a particular "kind." Dogs and cats cannot breed. Humans and animals cannot cross breed. The reason is the DNA is not compatible. Angels are not only of a different "kind," they are not even of this physical creation.

Furthermore, reproduction is not a function of angels, only creatures of this creation. God designed the genders with the necessary equipment to produce offspring. Jesus clearly stated that angels do not "marry or are given in marriage."¹⁶

14. Exodus 34:11-16

15. Methodius (AD 260-312) Discourse VII, v. "For consider what confidence Seth had towards God, and Abel, and Enos, and Enoch, and Methuselah, and Noah, the first lovers of righteousness, and **the first of the first-born children** who are written in heaven, being thought worthy of the kingdom, as a kind of **first-fruits** of the plants for salvation, coming out as early fruit to God."

16. Luke 20:34-36

VI. The Source of the “Fallen Angels” Myth – The Book of Enoch

The myth of fallen angels procreating with women is no doubt ancient. The first known mention among the Jews comes from the Book of Enoch, written around 200 – 100 BC. It is an apocalyptic piece, typical of certain groups like the Essenes. The writer of this book falsely claims to be Enoch, with parts of it written under the name of Noah. It contains many fanciful and ridiculous claims. Enoch is allegedly caught up to the angelic realm, where he is shown many things, even becoming a go between for the fallen angels and God. They beg for mercy through Enoch, but are refused and condemned to eternal punishment. In his travels in the angelic realm, Enoch is shown how the solar system works in minute detail. There are so many things in this book that border on the absurd, it is incredible that so many Christians think it should be included as Scripture. No doubt those who think this have not read through the book, but only heard a few excerpts from it. Some of the more preposterous claims are as follows:

- The offspring of these angels were "3000 ells" in height. An "ell" is a synonym for a cubit. It is the length between the elbow and fingertip, about 18". So, these giants were about 4,500 feet tall!¹⁷
- These supposed "great giants" began eating all of men's food, and when that quickly ran out, they began eating all the people, birds, and animals (meat was not "food" before the flood). Then, when those provisions became scarce, they started eating each other!¹⁸
- The Book of Enoch claims that "*The women also of the angels who went astray shall become sirens.*"¹⁹ "Sirens" are pagan mythological creatures, birds with the faces of women, whose singing seduces sailors.
- The earth is flat, the heaven is a hemisphere that rests on the edges of the earth.²⁰
- The sun is carried across the sky in a chariot blown by the wind. At dawn, it comes through a window in the sky in the east, and then sets through a window in the west. Then once the sun sets in the west, it takes a hard right turn, and moves around the earth by way of the north until it gets back to its place in the east, where it repeats the cycle daily.²¹
- The revolution of the stars causes lightening. Other stars change their form into lightening.²²
- God has a place of torment for punishing some of the stars of heaven because they failed to rise in the night sky at their appointed times.²³ Like the pagans, the writer of Enoch thought the visible stars were living beings.

17. Book of Enoch, 7:2

18. *ibid.* 7:3-5

19. *ibid.* 19:2

20. *ibid.* 33:1-3

21. *ibid.* 72:1-5

22. *ibid.* 43:2, 44:1

23. *ibid.* 18:14-16

Other blatant inaccuracies:

- There are exactly 364 days to a solar year.²⁴
- The last judgment would occur 70 generations from Enoch. That puts it at about 110 BC.²⁵ (It was 77 generations from Adam to Christ).

The book of Enoch is a blend of Jewish apocalypticism, paganism (evident in the claim that the wives of the fallen angels became “sirens” and the similarity of the “fallen angels” to pagan gods), and even Eastern mysticism. “*And all the waters shall be joined with the waters: that which is above the heavens is the masculine, and the water which is beneath the earth is the feminine.*”²⁶

VII. Jude and the Book of Enoch

It is commonly taught that Jude quoted the Book of Enoch as Scripture, and he taught that angels mated with human women. The first claim is supported by Jude’s alleged quote of chapter one of the Book of Enoch.

Jude 14-15 NKJV

14 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

While these words do indeed appear in the first chapter of the Book of Enoch, this is not proof that Jude quoted from this book. Rather, it only indicates that both Jude and the author of the Book of Enoch were familiar with a genuine prophecy of Enoch. No doubt, the author of the Book of Enoch included a genuine prophecy of Enoch’s to add credibility to his book of fiction. It is important to note that Jude did not say, “it is written,” but “Enoch prophesied saying...” This very likely referred to an oral tradition.

The second claim is that Jude made reference to angels committing fornication with women. This claim is drawn from a misreading of Jude 1:5-7.

24. Book of Enoch 74:12

25. *ibid.* 10:12

26. *ibid.* 54:8. For more information regarding the masculine and feminine principles of Eastern Mysticism, see the following website: <http://www.transpersonal.com.au/masculine-feminine.htm>

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

Jude 1:6-7 NKJV

6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;

*7 as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them **in a similar manner to these**, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

The key clause is “in a similar manner to these.” The demonstrative pronoun, “these,” needs an antecedent. And those who promote this myth claim the antecedent is “the angels” in verse 6. While this is a grammatical possibility, it is not the only possibility. A careful reading of verses 3-19 shows that Jude used the demonstrative pronoun “these” seven times. And in every case, “these” referred back to the apostates in verse 4. Jude also identified the apostate teachers as being sexually immoral people six times. They “turn the grace of God into lewdness” (v. 4). They “defile the flesh” (v. 8). They “corrupt themselves” like “brute beasts”(v. 10). They walk “according to their own lusts” (v. 16). They are “sensual persons” (v. 19).

In verse 7, Jude wrote: “As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them, **in a similar manner to these**, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh...” The demonstrative pronoun “these” refers to the apostate men whom Jude was warning his readers about, whom he had described as being sexually perverted. He merely likened the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to the apostates of his day, not to angels.

While Jude did mention angels that fell, he did not identify their sin as being sexual. Their sin was that they “*did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode.*” The Greek word translated “domain” refers to rank. The fact that Scriptures identifies some angels as “arch-angels” strongly implies that the angelic realm is organized by rank. The Greek word translated “abode” means one’s house or assigned station. Essentially, the sin of these angels according to Jude is that they violated their rank and left their assigned stations. This strongly implies a revolt or mutiny of some sort.

We learn from Revelation 12 that Satan “drew” a third of the angels who became his own angels.²⁷

27. Rev. 12:4&7

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

Jesus also referred to “the Devil and his angels,” as though some angels had rebelled against God and chosen a new allegiance to Satan.²⁸ And these are no doubt the ones to which Jude referred.

A careful reading of Jude 4-8 identifies the sin of the angels in verse 8. First, notice that Jude was comparing the apostate teachers to three examples of rebellion against God, and God’s reaction to all three.

- The Israelites at Kadesh Barnea: *“the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.”* (v. 5)
- The Angels who sinned: *“who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day”* (v. 6)
- The Sodomites: *“having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”* (v. 7)

Then in verse 8, he likened the sin of the apostate teachers to all three of these sins, in reverse order.

Jude 8 NKJV

*8 Likewise also these dreamers **defile the flesh** [Sodomites], **reject authority** [angels], and **speak evil of dignitaries** [Israelites].*

Each of these three examples were guilty of one of the sins summarized in verse 8. The Sodomites “defile the flesh.” The sin of the angles was that they “reject authority.” The sin of the Israelites was that they spoke evil against God and the authority of Moses when they refused to go into the land. Joshua and Caleb brought back a good report. But the other ten spies convinced the people otherwise.

Num 13:30-14:4 NKJV

30 Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”

31 But the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.”

32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature.

28. Matt. 25:41

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

33 *There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."*

1 *So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night.*

2 *And **all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron**, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!*

3 *Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"*

4 *So they said to one another, "**Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.**"*

The sin of the Israelites was that **they spoke against the Lord and against his appointed ruler – Moses**. Jude contrasted the Israelites' arrogance with Michael's humility. "Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" Jude's point was to show a stark contrast between Michael and the Israelites' respect for authority. In Michael's dispute with Satan over Moses' dead body, he did not even speak evil of Satan! Yet, the Israelites spoke evil of Moses himself while He was carrying out his divinely appointed office! Never mind his dead body!

It becomes quickly apparent, from the structure of Jude's argument, that the sin of the angels was not sexual at all, but rebellion against their appointed rank and dominion. In no way did Jude endorse the myth found in the Book of Enoch, that angels took human wives and produced giants.

VIII. Angels are Not "Sons of God"

The only verses in the Bible that call angels "sons of God" are three verses in Job. And this occurs only in the modern Hebrew text. The much older Greek Septuagint does not refer to angels as "sons of God" in Job or anywhere else. And as we have already seen, the Septuagint has proven quite helpful and reliable regarding this issue.

Genesis 6:2 LXX

2 *ιδόντες δὲ **οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ** τὰς θυγατέρας τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὅτι καλαί εἰσιν, ἔλαβον ἑαυτοῖς γυναῖκας ἀπὸ πασῶν, ὧν ἐξελέξαντο. (the sons of God)*

Job 1:6 LXX

6 *Καὶ ἐγένετο ὡς ἡ ἡμέρα αὕτη, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἦλθον **οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ Θεοῦ** παραστῆναι ἐνώπιον τοῦ Κυρίου, καὶ ὁ διάβολος ἦλθε μετ' αὐτῶν. (the angels of God)*

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

Job 2:1 LXX

1 Εγένετο δὲ ὡς ἡ ἡμέρα αὕτη καὶ ἦλθον οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ Θεοῦ παραστῆναι ἔναντι Κυρίου, καὶ ὁ διάβολος ἦλθεν ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν παραστῆναι ἔναντίον τοῦ Κυρίου. (**the angels of God**)

Job 38:7

7 ὅτε ἐγενήθησαν ἄστρα, ἤνεσάν με φωνῇ μεγάλῃ πάντες ἄγγελοί μου. (**all the angels of mine**)

Nowhere in the entire Greek Old Testament or Greek New Testament are angels referred to as the “sons of God.” It must be remembered that in Hebrew culture and the Scriptures “sons” automatically implies an inheritance.

Every Old Testament quotation in the book of Hebrews is from the LXX. In Hebrews, Paul argued strongly for a dichotomy between the sons of God and angels. His argument rests entirely on the fact that the Greek LXX nowhere refers to the angels as “sons of God.”

Heb 1:5-7,14 NKJV

5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You”? And again: “I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son”?

6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” [Deut. 32:43 LXX, this statement does not appear in the Hebrew text]

7 And of the angels He says: “Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire.” ...

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? [lit. “those about to become heirs of salvation”]

Notice in verse 14 Paul wrote that ALL angels are servants to the real sons of God, that is, the “heirs” of God. The angels are NOT “heirs” of God and are therefore not “sons of God.”

Paul’s entire point in this passage rests on the Greek Old Testament. Had he or his audience been familiar with the reading we find in our modern Hebrew text of Job, they would have immediately challenged his argument, that angels are not sons of God.

Heb 2:5-18 NKJV

5 For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.

6 But one testified in a certain place, saying: “What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him?”

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands.

8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing **many sons** to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them **brethren**,

12 saying: "I will declare Your name to **My brethren**; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."

13 And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and **the children** whom God has given Me."

14 Inasmuch then as **the children have partaken of flesh and blood**, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16 For indeed **He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham**.

17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made **like His brethren**, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

There is no question that Paul drew a clear dichotomy between the angels of God and the "sons" of God. Jesus Christ was "the Son of God," and those who are in Christ are also "sons of God" and "children of God." Paul's point in verses 16-17 is that angels are not Jesus' "brethren" and are therefore not "sons of God." Jesus and believers are all "brethren" (fellow "sons" and "daughters" of God). He is the "only begotten Son of God" because He was literally conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit. We are "sons of God" by adoption. The angels could never be "sons of God." And this passage proves it beyond a shadow of doubt. Paul's entire point rests on the fact that the Old Testament always distinguishes between the "sons of God" and the "angels of God." We are therefore compelled to follow the readings in the LXX (particularly in Job), otherwise Paul's whole argument is destroyed.

Time and time again, the Greek Old Testament (LXX) proves superior to the Masoretic Hebrew text in those places where the text reflects on the person of Christ,²⁹ and many other important doctrines of Scripture. As noted earlier, the book of Hebrews quotes the LXX exclusively, and several of the points made in Hebrews depend on the Greek version, and cannot be made from the Hebrew text in existence today.³⁰

IX. Josephus & the Sons of Seth

The Jewish historian, Josephus, is frequently quoted in support of the “fallen angels” theory. Unfortunately, he is almost always quoted out of context. A careful examination of his work shows that Josephus held the theory that is espoused in this paper. Note the following facts from Josephus’ quotation below:

- The sons of Seth were a righteous line that feared the Lord.
- They lived apart from the rest of the population.
- This tribe was known for the science of astronomy.
- They built two massive “pillars” in Egypt, and encoded in them their knowledge and wisdom for humanity after the flood.
- The 8th generation (Noah’s generation) became apostate
- The cause of their apostasy was that their fathers had taken foreign women.
- Noah preached repentance to these men, but they rejected his message.

“Now this Seth, when he was brought up, and came to those years in which he could discern what was good, became a virtuous man; and as he was himself of an excellent character, so did he leave children behind him who imitated his virtues. All these proved to be of good dispositions. They also inhabited the same country without dissensions, and in a happy condition, without any misfortunes falling upon them, till they died. They also were the inventors of that peculiar sort of wisdom which is concerned with the heavenly bodies, and their order. And that their inventions might not be lost before they were sufficiently known, upon Adam’s prediction that the world was to be destroyed at one time by the force of fire, and at another time by the violence and quantity of water, they made two pillars, the one of brick, the other of stone: they inscribed their discoveries on them both, that in case the pillar of brick should be destroyed by the flood, the pillar of stone might remain, and exhibit those discoveries to mankind; and also inform them that there was another pillar of brick erected by them. Now this remains in the land of Siroiad to this day.”

29. Compare Psalm 22:16 in the Hebrew and LXX. The Hebrew says, “As lions, they surround my hands and my feet,” while the LXX has, “they pierced my hands and my feet.”

30. See my article, “The Kingdom Hope in Hebrews,” <http://www.oasischristianchurch.org/articles/hebrews.pdf>

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

*Now this posterity of Seth continued to esteem God as the Lord of the universe, and to have an entire regard to virtue, for seven generations; **but in process of time they were perverted, and forsook the practices of their forefathers**; and did neither pay those honors to God which were appointed them, nor had they any concern to do justice towards men. But for what degree of zeal they had formerly shown for virtue, they now showed by their actions a double degree of wickedness, whereby they made God to be their enemy. **For many angels of God accompanied with women, and begat sons that proved unjust**, and despisers of all that was good, on account of the confidence they had in their own strength; for the tradition is, that these men did what resembled the acts of those whom the Grecians call giants. But Noah was very uneasy at what they did; and being displeased at their conduct, persuaded them to change their dispositions and their acts for the better: but seeing they did not yield to him, but were slaves to their wicked pleasures, he was afraid they would kill him, together with his wife and children, and those they had married; so he departed out of that land.”³¹*

According to Josephus, the sons of Seth remained faithful to God for seven generations. But, the 8th generation (Noah's generation) forsook the practices of their forefathers and became vile. Josephus tells us the major cause of the apostasy of the 8th generation of Seth's sons. "**For many angels of God** ³² *accompanied with women, and begat sons that proved unjust, and despisers of all that was good, on account of the confidence they had in their own strength; for the tradition is, that these men did what resembled the acts of those whom the Grecians call giants.*" The little word, "for," introduces and explanation of what comes before. The clause, "*for many angels of God accompanied with women...*" is an explanation of "*in the process of time they were perverted, and forsook the practices of their forefathers.*" Josephus DID NOT use the term "angels" here in reference to celestial beings, but to the sons of Seth! This is proven by the next statement. "*But Noah was very uneasy at what they did; and being displeased at their conduct, persuaded them to change their dispositions and their acts for the better.*" Did Noah preach repentance to fallen angels? Hardly! He preached to his relatives who were taking foreign wives and producing ungodly offspring! It is also important to notice that Josephus tells us why the term "nephilim" was used in this passage. It had to do strictly with actions, not size.

It is virtually certain that Josephus used the term "angels" in reference to the sons of Seth and not heavenly beings. So, the question is, why? The term "angels" in Scripture simply means "messenger." It is used of men many times in Scripture. The "angels" of the 7 churches" in Revelation are the messengers each church sent to bring correspondence to John on Patmos. In Matt. 11:10, John the Baptist is called "αγγελον."

31. Josephus, Antiquities, Book I, ch. 2-3.

32. Compare "angels of God" to 2 Chron. 32:15-16 LXX. The same term refers to the prophets.

James 2:25 refers to the spies who encountered Rahab as “αγγελουζ.” It is used in this sense in the LXX as well, for example:

Gen. 32:3,6 LXX

3 And Jacob sent messengers [αγγελουζ] before him to Esau his brother to the land of Seir, to the country of Edom....

6 And the messengers [αγγελοι] returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and lo! he comes to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.

In what sense would Seth's sons be called “messengers?” That is answered in Josephus' previous comments that the tribe of the sons of Seth built the two “pillars” to survive the flood in order to preserve all of their knowledge and wisdom. They were “messengers” [αγγελοι] to the generations after the flood, according to Josephus! ³³ These two monuments are most likely mentioned in Isaiah's prophesy of the Kingdom.

Isaiah 19:19-20 NKJV

*19 In that day there will be **an altar** to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, **and a pillar** to the LORD at its border.*

20 And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt.”

X. The Early Church

It is indisputable that some of the early Christians believed the “fallen angels” view. The earliest Christian writers to espouse this theory were Justin and Tertullian. However, it was by no means the universal view of early Christianity.

Origen (AD 185-254), writing against Celsus, pointed out that Celsus had derived “fallen angels” theory from the Book of Enoch, not Christian documents. “For he does not appear to have read the passages in question, nor to have been aware that the books which bear the name Enoch do not at all circulate in the churches as divine...”³⁴ That the meaning of the “sons of God” taking the “daughters of men” was somewhat disputed in the early churches is clear a few sentences later. Origen wrote, “that even before us [that is the Christians] there was one who referred this narrative to the doctrine regarding souls, which became possessed with a desire for the corporeal life of men, and this, in metaphorical language, he said, was termed ‘daughters of men’.”³⁵

33. It is believed by some that the two “pillars” mentioned by Josephus in Egypt, which were still seen in his day, are the Great Pyramid and the Sphinx. Both date to about the time of the flood. The Great Pyramid contains a great deal of precise astronomical data, not the least of which is its precise orientation to the points of the compass, something virtually impossible to achieve merely by observing the stars.

34. Origen, Against Celsus, Book V, liv

35. *ibid.* lv

Here Origen seems to argue for a metaphorical understanding of the passage. Yet he admits uncertainty, “but whatever may be the meaning of the ‘sons of God desiring to possess the daughters of men,’ it will not at all contribute to prove that Jesus was not the only one who visited mankind as an angel.”³⁶ He then repeated his charge that Celsus was quoting from the Book of Enoch, a document not held as authoritative in the Christian churches. “Then mixing up and confusing whatever he had at any time heard, or had anywhere found written – whether held to be of divine origin among Christians or not – he adds ... (as from the book of Enoch without naming it).”³⁷

Alexander of Alexandria (AD 300), the orthodox bishop who excommunicated Arius for his heretical view claiming Jesus Christ was a created being, clearly did not hold the “fallen angels” view. In fact, in arguing against Arius’ heresy, he used Genesis 6:1-4 to prove that Jesus was the only one who could genuinely be called God’s “Son,” all other “sons of God” being adopted human beings (exactly as we have articulated in our treatment of Hebrews in section VIII of this paper). Alexander wrote, “Moreover, in the Psalms the Saviour says: ‘The Lord hath said to Me, ‘Thou art my Son’.’ Where, showing that He is the true and genuine Son, He signifies that there are no other genuine sons besides Himself.”³⁸ Alexander continues by showing that other mentions of “sons of God” refer to humans who are sons by adoption. “Wherefore, the only begotten Son of the Father, indeed, possesses an indefectible Sonship; but the adoption of rational sons belongs not to them by nature, but is prepared for them by the by the probity of their life, and by the free gift of God. And it is mutable [corruptible] as the Scripture recognizes, “For when the sons of God saw the daughters of men, they took them wives, etc.”³⁹ Alexander considered the “sons of God” in Genesis 6 to be “adopted” sons of God who had received this adoption as “the free gift of God.” He used their fall as evidence that “adopted” sons do have a changeable nature. We should also point out that the belief in angelic “sons of God” was largely responsible for the rise of the Arian heresy. Arius held that Jesus and the angels were similarly “sons of God” by creation. And the church’s subsequent denouncement of this myth was largely because it so readily led to Arianism.

An earlier work, titled, *The Recognitions of Clement*, claimed to be the work of Clement of Rome who lived in the first century. The authorship is disputed by some scholars. However, it certainly predates Origen, since he quoted parts of it.³⁸ That would place it somewhere between AD 70 and AD 230.

36. *ibid.*

37. *ibid.*

38. Alexander, *Epistles on the Arian Heresy*, Epistle I, 8

39. *Recognitions of Clement*, Introduction

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

*“All things therefore being completed which are in heaven, and in earth, and in the waters, and the human race also having multiplied, in the eighth generation, **righteous men**, who had lived the life of angels, being allured by the beauty of women, fell into promiscuous and illicit connections with these.”*⁴⁰

Finally, Julius Africanus (AD 200-245) was aware of both points of view.

*“When men multiplied on the earth, the angels of heaven came together with the daughters of men. In some copies I found “the sons of God.” **What is meant by the Spirit, in my opinion, is that the descendants of Seth are called the sons of God on account of the righteous men and patriarchs who have sprung from him, even down to the Savior Himself; but that the descendants of Cain are named the seed of men as having nothing divine in them, on account of the wickedness of their race and the inequality of their nature, being a mixed people, and having stirred the indignation of God. But if it is thought that these refer to angels, we must take them to be those who deal with magic and jugglery, who taught the women the motions of the stars and the knowledge of things celestial, by whose power they conceived the giants as their children, by whom wickedness came to its height on the earth, until God decreed that the whole race of the living should perish in their impiety by the deluge.**”*

It is apparent that the early Christians were far from unanimous in accepting the “fallen angels” myth or the authority of the Book of Enoch.

Conclusion

Our conclusion from all of the evidence is that the “sons of God” in Genesis six were the descendants of Seth.

- This view is best supported by the context of Genesis 1-6.
- It was clearly the view held by the LXX translators, since they always distinguished between “angels” and “sons of God.” They referred to the “sons of God” in Genesis 6:2 as “these men” in the next verse. And the LXX translators are at least as ancient as all known sources which promote this myth.
- Paul’s argument in Hebrews, drawing a clear dichotomy between angels and “sons of God,” proves our case beyond doubt.
- This view answers some historically problematic texts in 1 Peter and Revelation.
- It was the opinion of some of the earliest Christians. Whether it was the majority opinion is impossible to say, and irrelevant to the question.

40. Recognitions of Clement, ch. xxix

When Was Revelation Written?

By Pastor Tim Warner, Copyright © answersinrevelation.org

The date of the writing of Revelation has been hotly disputed by preterists. Preterism is the belief that all prophecy has been fulfilled, including the second coming of Jesus Christ, which is alleged to have occurred in a non-physical sense in AD 70. Christian tradition has placed John's exile to Patmos during the reign of the emperor Domitian (AD 81-96). Not until the rise of preterism has this been challenged.

The dispute over the date of the composition of Revelation is a crucial one. If it was composed by John after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, preterism is at once refuted. Revelation is a prophetic book, predicting the coming of Christ in the future. A post-AD70 date makes equating the coming of Christ with the destruction of Jerusalem utterly impossible.

There is no question that Revelation was written while John was a prisoner of the Roman state, exiled to the prison island of Patmos. That much can be gathered from the first chapter of Revelation. *"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."*¹

There were only two Roman emperors who persecuted Christians on a large scale in the first century, Nero and Domitian. The other Emperors were either indifferent to Christianity, or did not consider it a serious threat to Rome. The first Roman persecution under Nero took place in the decade of the 60s, just before the fall of Jerusalem. Nero was responsible for the deaths of both Peter and Paul in Rome in AD 67, Peter by crucifixion, and Paul by being beheaded.

There is no record of Nero's banishing Christians to Patmos, only his brutality against the Christians of Rome. It was Nero who made a sport of throwing Christians to the lions for the entertainment of the crowds, and who burned many at the stake along the road leading to the Coliseum merely to light the entrance.

After Nero's death Rome left the Christians alone until the rise of Domitian to power in AD 81. Although not as cruel and insane as Nero, Domitian had many Christians killed, the property of Christians confiscated. Scriptures and other Christian books were burned, houses of Christians were destroyed, and many of the most prominent Christians were banished to the prison island of Patmos.

All ancient sources, both Christian and secular, place the banishment of Christians to Patmos during the reign of Domitian (AD81-96). Not a single early source (within 500 years of John) places John's banishment under the reign of Nero, as preterists claim. All modern attempts to date Revelation during Nero's reign rely exclusively on alleged internal evidence, and ignore or seek to undermine the external evidence and testimony of Christians who lived about that time, some of whom had connections to John.

Eusebius the Christian historian, living only two hundred years after Domitian's reign, gathered evidence from both Christian and secular sources that were still extant at the time (some of which are no longer extant today). All of the sources at Eusebius' disposal placed the date of John's Patmos exile during the reign of Domitian. Eusebius' earliest source was Irenaeus, disciple of Polycarp, disciple of John. But he also used other unnamed sources both Christian and secular to place the date of the Patmos exile of Christians during Domitian's reign (AD 81-96).

*"It is said that in this persecution [under Domitian] the apostle and evangelist John, who was still alive, was condemned to dwell on the island of Patmos in consequence of his testimony to the divine word. Irenaeus, in the fifth book of his work Against Heresies, where he discusses the number of the name of Antichrist which is given in the so-called Apocalypse of John, speaks as follows concerning him: 'If it were necessary for his name to be proclaimed openly at the present time, it would have been declared by him who saw the Revelation. For it was seen not long ago, but almost in our own generation, at the end of the reign of Domitian.' To such a degree, indeed, did the teaching of our faith flourish at that time that even those writers who were far from our religion did not hesitate to mention in their histories the persecution and the martyrdoms which took place during it. And they, indeed, accurately indicated the time. For they recorded that in the fifteenth year of Domitian Flavia Domitilla, daughter of a sister of Flavius Clement, who at that time was one of the consuls of Rome, was exiled with many others to the island of Pontia in consequence of testimony borne to Christ."*²

While Eusebius quoted Irenaeus' statement, notice that he also indicated that other secular histories at his disposal accurately indicated the banishment of Christians to Patmos occurred during Domitian's reign. Eusebius continues:

"Tertullian also has mentioned Domitian in the following words: 'Domitian also, who possessed a share of Nero's cruelty, attempted once to do the same thing that the latter did. But because he had, I suppose, some intelligence, he very soon ceased, and even recalled those whom he had banished.' But after Domitian had reigned fifteen years, and Nerva had succeeded to the empire, the Roman Senate, according to the writers that record the history of those days, voted that Domitian's horrors should be cancelled, and

that those who had been unjustly banished should return to their homes and have their property restored to them. It was at this time that the apostle John returned from his banishment in the island and took up his abode at Ephesus, according to an ancient Christian tradition.”³

Here again Eusebius mentioned an ancient Christian tradition, but did not quote his sources, that placed John's return from exile on Patmos after Domitian's fifteen year reign, and Nerva's rise to power (AD 96).

There is more early evidence, both explicit and implicit, from other early writers prior to Eusebius. Victorinus, bishop of Pettaw (Italy), agreed with Irenaeus. That Victorinus did not rely on Irenaeus for his information is clear from the fuller details of his statement not referenced by Irenaeus.

*“‘And He says unto me, Thou must again prophesy to the peoples, and to the tongues, and to the nations, and to many kings.’ He says this, because **when John said these things he was in the island of Patmos, condemned to the labor of the mines by Caesar Domitian.** There, therefore, he saw the Apocalypse; and when grown old, he thought that he should at length receive his quittance by suffering, Domitian being killed, all his judgments were discharged. And John being dismissed from the mines, thus subsequently delivered the same Apocalypse which he had received from God.”⁴*

A little farther, Victorinus again made the same claim.

“The time must be understood in which the written Apocalypse was published, since then reigned Caesar Domitian; but before him had been Titus his brother, and Vespasian, Otho, Vitellius, and Galba.”⁵

Clement of Alexandria (AD150-220) recounted a story about John shortly after his return from exile, while a very old man.

*“And that you may be still more confident, that repenting thus truly there remains for you a sure hope of salvation, listen to a tale, which is not a tale but a narrative, handed down and committed to the custody of memory, about the Apostle John. For when, **on the tyrant's death, he returned to Ephesus from the isle of Patmos,** he went away, being invited, to the contiguous territories of the nations, here to appoint bishops, there to set in order whole Churches, there to ordain such as were marked out by the Spirit.”⁶*

The expression “the tyrant's death” can only refer to the death of either Nero or Domitian, the only two “tyrants” that ruled in the first century. Eusebius related that

upon the death of Domitian, the Roman senate voted to release those exiled by Domitian. This seems to parallel Clement's statement above. However, the above statement *could* refer to Nero, except for one fact. In the story that Clement related, he clearly stated that John was a very old and feeble man. John was still relatively young when Nero died.

The story is about a young new convert whom John entrusted to a certain elder to disciple in the Faith. The man had formerly been a thief and robber. Upon John's return from exile on Patmos, he heard that this young man had returned to his old life of crime. Upon hearing this, he sharply rebuked the elder in whose custody he had left him. John immediately set out for the place where this robber and his band were known to lurk. Upon reaching the place, he was assaulted by the band of robbers. He demanded of them to take him to their leader. They brought John to the very man whom John had formerly won to Christ, and left in the custody of the elder. When the young man saw John approaching, he began to run away. John began to run after him, calling, *"Why, my son, dost thou flee from me, thy father, unarmed, old? Son, pity me. Fear not; thou hast still hope of life. I will give account to Christ for thee. If need be, I will willingly endure thy death, as the Lord did death for us. For thee I will surrender my life. Stand, believe; Christ hath sent me."* John then explained to him that forgiveness and restoration was still possible. Clement then stated, *"And he, when he heard, first stood, looking down; then threw down his arms, then trembled and wept bitterly. And on the old man approaching, he embraced him, speaking for himself with lamentations as he could, and baptized a second time with tears, concealing only his right hand. The other pledging, and assuring him on oath that he would find forgiveness for himself from the Savior, beseeching and failing on his knees, and kissing his right hand itself, as now purified by repentance, led him back to the church."*⁷

From this account we see that upon John's release from exile on Patmos, he was a feeble old man. John was most likely in his teens or early twenties when Jesus called him. He and his brother James were working with their father as fishermen (Matt. 4:21-22). Assuming John was in his twenties, he would have been in his eighties in AD 96. If he was in his teens when Jesus called him, he would have been in his seventies at the end of Domitian's reign. However, if the "tyrant" referred to by Clement was Nero, then John would have still been fairly young by the time of Nero's death, perhaps in his forties or early fifties. He would hardly be spoken of as a feeble old man by Clement.

That John lived until after the reign of Domitian is also shown by Irenaeus' repeated references to his own mentor, Polycarp, being John's disciple.⁸ Polycarp was born in AD 65, and died in AD 155. He was five years old when Jerusalem was destroyed. He was two years old when Nero died. His being tutored by John therefore must have been at

least a decade after the destruction of Jerusalem, and more likely two or three decades afterward.

More than one early writer mentioned the persecution of the Apostles under Nero. They spoke of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, but made no mention of John's exile during this persecution.

As is obvious to the unbiased reader, the early external evidence that Revelation was written under the reign of Domitian is indisputable. No evidence exists, from the first three centuries of Christian tradition, placing the composition of Revelation during the reign of Nero. Nor is there any evidence (Christian or secular) that Nero exiled any Christians to Patmos.

The familiarity of John and his readers with Temple worship in Revelation is alleged to indicate that both he and his readers relied on personal first hand knowledge of Temple worship in Jerusalem. According to preterists, this implies that the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing when Revelation was written.

However, this argument is flawed at its very foundation. The Old Testament is full of the same Temple imagery. Any Gentile Christian familiar with the Old Testament (LXX) would be sufficiently familiar with the Temple imagery. Furthermore, familiarity with the New Testament book of Hebrews would also be sufficient. Even a cursory reading of Revelation reveals that John's visions and comments reference Old Testament prophecy on virtually every page.

Ezekiel saw a future Temple in his prophetic visions.⁹ Yet, his visions occurred during the Babylonian captivity years after Solomon's Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Many of those who returned after the seventy year captivity to rebuild the Temple had never seen Solomon's Temple, or observed its rituals.¹⁰ Their familiarity with the Temple was based solely on the Torah and scrolls like Ezekiel's and Daniel's.

The Temple destroyed by the Romans has been gone for nearly 2000 years. No one in the last 1900 years has seen it. If preterists' claims are correct, we should not be able to understand Revelation or write about Temple worship today because we have no personal first-hand knowledge of the Temple and its rituals. Such a position is absurd, since our knowledge of the Temple comes from the Scriptures. Neither the writing nor understanding of Revelation requires or implies first hand knowledge of the Temple. The Old Testament is sufficient. John certainly was himself familiar with the Temple, having been there with Jesus on several occasions. And his readers were well trained in

the Old Testament Scriptures. There is therefore no good reason to suppose that the Temple must have been still standing for John's readers to understand the book.

That John was told in his vision to "*measure the Temple and them that worship therein*,"¹¹ is likewise no indication that the Temple was still standing in Jerusalem. This prophetic vision clearly parallels Ezekiel's vision.¹² Ezekiel saw his vision during the Babylonian captivity, fourteen years after Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple.¹³ Yet, in his vision, Ezekiel was taken to Jerusalem, shown a glorious Temple far larger than Solomon's Temple, and proceeded to record all the measurements of the Temple in great detail. John saw his prophetic Temple vision during Domitian's reign (AD 81-96). It is obvious that the command given John in chapter 11 to "*measure the Temple*" was meant to parallel Ezekiel's vision. Since Ezekiel saw his Temple vision fourteen years after the first Temple had been destroyed, there is every reason to conclude that the same situation existed when John wrote Revelation. Ezekiel's Temple vision and prophecy was clearly intended to portray a future rebuilt Temple. Ezekiel did not see the former (Solomon's) Temple that had been destroyed, or a Temple that was currently standing. Therefore, John's vision of the Temple in Jerusalem should be seen in the same way, being a prophetic portrayal of the Temple that will indeed be rebuilt.

That this is how the early Christians understood Revelation, even after the destruction of the Temple, is clear from their claims that the Temple in Jerusalem would be rebuilt and would be the seat of the Antichrist in the last days.¹⁴

Preterist attempts to date Revelation before the destruction of Jerusalem fail on both internal and external evidence. This failure is indicative of their whole system, which is forced upon the Scriptures, and in this case, upon history as well. Preterist scholarship on this question is clearly agenda driven.

Notes:

1. Rev. 1:9
2. Eusebius, Bk. III, ch. xviii
3. *ibid.* ch. xx
4. Victorinus, Commentary on the Apocalypse, XI
5. *ibid.* ch. XVII
6. Clement, Who is the Rich Man that shall be Saved, XLII
7. *ibid.*
8. Irenaeus, frag. ii
9. Ezek. 40-44
10. cf. Hag. 2:3
11. Rev. 11:1-2
12. cf. Ezek. 40:3ff & Rev. 13:1-2
13. Ezek. 40:1
14. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Bk V, XXV, i-ii, Bk. V, XXX, iv, Hippolytus, On Daniel, II, xxxix, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, vi, Appendix to the Works of Hippolytus, XXV