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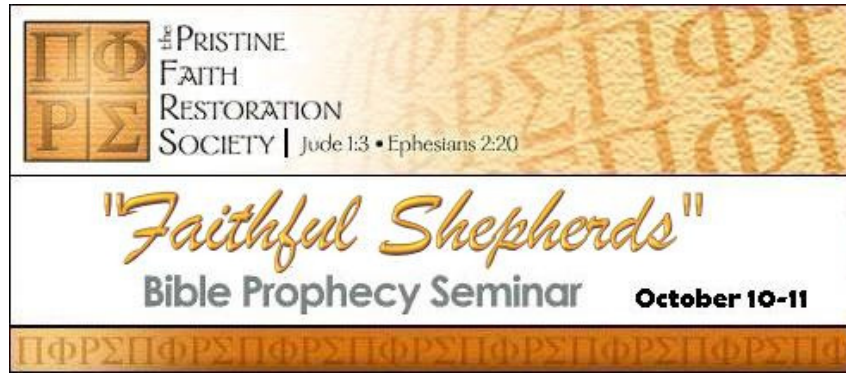
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Traditional vs. Progressive Dispensationalism

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Post-Tribulation Rapture vs. Pre-Tribulation Rapture

Read the Virtual Debate between Tim Warner, author and editor of **The Last Trumpet - Post-Trib Research Center**, and Dr. Thomas Ice, author and director of **The Pre-Trib Research Center**.

Preterism vs. Futurism

Read the debate between Tim Warner, author and editor of **The Last Trumpet - Post-Trib Research Center**, and Samuel Frost, preterist author, and pastor of **Christ Covenant Church**, Tampa Bay, Florida area.

Introduction & Methodology

By Tim Warner - Revised 11/2002

DESCRIPTION OF THE POST-TRIB RAPTURE VIEW

The "post-tribulation" rapture view is the belief that Jesus will return visibly and bodily to raise the dead Christians and gather together the living Christians at the end of a period of intense tribulation, called by Jesus "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21). The post-trib view is the only rapture view which sees only a single future coming of Jesus. All other rapture views, pre-trib, mid-trib, and pre-wrath, see the rapture and resurrection prior to the second coming of Jesus by months or years. While these rapture views see the rapture as a means to take the Church to heaven to escape God's wrath, the post-trib view sees the rapture as a mechanism to gather together believers from both heaven and earth in a single location with Christ, to be revealed with Him in glory to the world at His coming. Therefore, in a post-trib scenario, the rapture is an integral part of the second coming. Upon Jesus' descent from heaven, the angels will be dispatched by the trumpet blast and gather together Jesus' elect to meet Him in the air. Then the whole gathering of angels and saints are revealed to the world along with Jesus in a blaze of glory.

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HISTORY OF THE POST-TRIB RAPTURE VIEW

Despite a variety of Millennial views in Christian history, until the last couple of centuries, Christians were unanimously "post-trib." Historic pre-millennialists and amillennialists have always been post-trib. Only within modern dispensational pre-millennialism do we find the idea of a "rapture" distinct from the second coming. The evidence from early Christian literature is exclusively post-trib. A few popular contemporary authors have made claims about pre-tribulationism being found in the writings of the early Christians. And many Christians repeat these claims without question. However, the claims are blatantly false. We have documented the pre-trib revisionism of Church history 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 mid-tribulationism, 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 pre-tribulationism.

It is fair and accurate to say that, regardless of their views on the Millennium, the vast majority of those who have called themselves Christians held to a post-trib rapture and resurrection throughout Church history. They saw only a single future coming of Christ both to judge the "Man of Sin" and his followers, and to rescue the Church.

THE RAPTURE QUESTION IN MODERN TIMES

In many parts of the western world, especially the USA and western Europe, the pre-trib view supplanted the post-trib 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 the pre-trib view was the Scofield Reference Bible, which incorporated the dispensational / pre-trib scheme in the reference notes.

In the last several decades, there has been a considerable trend away from pre-tribulationism. I believe this trend is mostly due to individual Christians studying the Scriptures on their own and coming to the conclusion that the pre-trib view is simply not biblical. Another reason is the historical argument that post-tribbers have been increasingly advancing, that the post-trib view was exclusively the view of the early Church. Also, pre-tribulationism's recent roots have been exposed by the research of men like George Ladd, Robert Gundry, and especially Dave MacPherson.

The pre-trib establishment is taking this thinning out of their ranks very seriously. The **Pre-trib Research Center**, founded by Tim LaHaye, and currently headed by Thomas Ice, is dedicated to countering this trend and dealing with the powerful historical evidence that post-tribbers have put forward. Pre-tribbers are also responding 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 is a steady exodus of Christians from the pre-trib camp.

The Last Trumpet - Post-Trib Research Center is dedicated to providing Christian pastors and laymen the biblical and historical reasons for adopting the ancient rapture view of the Church. It is our contention that the pre-trib 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 on this website 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

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Den Sista Trumpeten
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La Trompeta Final
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 que viene pronto

post-trib 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.

WHY IT MATTERS WHAT YOU BELIEVE

In contemporary western Christianity, post-tribbers are looked upon with pity and suspicion. Some think we have a "martyr complex." Others think we are just troublemakers, wanting to rock the boat. Post-tribulationism just doesn't seem to fit in with the prosperous lifestyles of contemporary western Christianity. The lack of real persecution and hardship has led many to assume that this is the normal Christian life. But, according to Scripture, persecution, tribulation, and hardship, is the real "normal" Christian experience. The comfort western Christians have enjoyed for the last few generations is an anomaly that will soon come to an end. The theological "comfort zones" we have constructed around this anomaly are about to come crashing down.

For those who are honestly considering the various views of the rapture timing, and are open to God's leading regarding this issue, there is plenty of opposition ahead for you. The "rapture question" has been a hot potato issue in the recent past. In some cases, splitting churches. Christians who have abandoned the pre-trib view and been the least bit vocal about it have often found themselves being offered the "right foot of fellowship." Many pastors who have abandoned pre-trib have lost their churches, and missionaries have been abandoned by their mission boards and supporting churches because of their switch to the post-trib view. So, if you have no tolerance for hardship, you had better stop here. If you've got the guts to face the truth head on no matter what it is, then please continue.

Some say it really doesn't matter if Jesus is coming before or after the tribulation, as long as we are "ready." They think we should all just agree to disagree, and love one another. But, "ready" is a relative term! It begs the question, "ready for what?" There is a huge difference between being ready to be gently whisked away to heaven on a pillow, and being ready to become a martyr at the hands of Antichrist! Is surface harmony worth the risk of huge numbers of believers being caught totally unprepared spiritually, emotionally, and physically? What about the "many" believers whom Jesus mentioned in Matt. 24:9-13 who would fall away when the deception and persecution of the last days arrives? If Jesus' coming is several decades away, then perhaps the rapture debate is not all that critical. But, if Jesus is coming soon as the signs seem to indicate, one's views on the timing of the rapture are crucial to being prepared to be an overcomer in the difficult days before His coming.

Knowledge of what lies ahead motivates people to prepare. A rookie soldier, who knows he is about to be shipped to the front lines in a brutal war, will have a much different attitude about basic training than a new recruit who joined up to get a free education and a pension! The soldier who is about to engage the enemy knows his training may mean the difference between life and death. He learns survival techniques; he gets physically fit; he learns his weapons inside and out; he makes sure his weapons are in good working order; through countless hours of practice he becomes a marksman. He also prepares himself mentally for combat and the possibility of being a POW. His objective is clear; he is fully equipped; and he is mentally focused on getting the job done and coming home in one piece! On the other hand, the new peace-time novice, with big ideas of a comfortable career, could have a ho-hum attitude about basic training. If he is unexpectedly thrust into a fierce battle, he will find himself woefully unprepared. While staring down the barrel of the enemy's rifle is not the time to be fumbling around for your weapon's instruction manual. He might just conclude that this is not what he signed up for!

If it really doesn't matter what we believe about the last days, why did God devote such a large portion of His Word to end-time prophecy? Is it just filler



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material? Is it for intellectual entertainment? The answer is really quite simple. Prophecy was intended to provide the kind of motivation needed to turn flabby pew-potatoes into Christian soldiers. This website is an introduction to "basic training" for Christians, alerting them of the coming trials we will soon face in time to prepare themselves and their families spiritually and emotionally, and perhaps even physically at the proper time. And don't kid yourselves about your own or your family's ability to easily digest the emotional implications. Without strong spiritual character first, Christians who live at relative ease in the western world often react badly to the idea that they may soon face the Antichrist, and all the venom that hell can dish out on God's children.

METHODOLOGY IN BUILDING OUR BIBLICAL CASE

The Bible is the 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, 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 (that we know 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 not hop-scotch all over the Bible in order to interpret a passage. 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. This approach to interpretation is called the "historical" method.

We will also pay close attention to the grammar. It is important to understand that the mechanism for God's transferring knowledge to people is the use of nouns, pronouns, articles, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, conjunctions, and prepositions. The use of language has certain rules which must be followed if we expect to properly understand the original intent of the speaker or writer. And after all, **original intent** is the goal we are striving for in our study. Therefore, we will try our best not to violate the rules of grammar with our interpretations of Scripture. This approach is called the "grammatical" method.

Because we intend to follow the "grammatical - historical" methodology, we have built our case for the post-trib rapture progressively, avoiding logical fallacies. We assume that the original hearers were aware of older revelation,

never newer revelation. Let me give a couple of examples of sequential fallacies to illustrate the point, one fallacy made by some post-tribbers and one made by some pre-tribbers.

Post-trib fallacy: Some claim that when Paul wrote to the Corinthians of Jesus' coming at the "last trumpet," he meant the seventh trumpet in Revelation. The problem with this reasoning is Paul wrote in such a way that his readers would know what he was talking about. They had no idea of the seven trumpets in Revelation, because that was not revealed until several decades later. We should look backward in the prophetic record for "trumpets" with which to identify or compare the "last trumpet," rather than forward, because that is what the original audience was expected to do. Otherwise, we assume things that the original audience could not possibly know, and therefore would certainly not understand. Our premise is that the original audience was expected to understand what they were told.

Pre-trib fallacy: Some claim that Jesus taught a pre-trib rapture in John 14:1-3. Yet, nothing in that passage specifically indicates the "coming" is pre-trib, or is separate from the "second coming." Jesus had just told the same disciples to be watching for the signs of His coming "immediately after the tribulation" in Matt. 24, and to be expecting the coming of His Kingdom to earth in Luke 21. The only "coming" Jesus spoke of prior to this (and the only one in the Old Testament) is post-tribulational. Some pre-tribbers try to superimpose a pre-trib rapture in John 14, claiming that the passage fits the pre-trib scenario better, and conclude it is new revelation about the rapture. But, what would the disciples think of such an interpretation given their current understanding? Would they think Jesus was speaking of a new and different coming before the tribulation after He had just told them to watch for His post-trib coming two days earlier? Hardly!

These two examples illustrate the absolute necessity of keeping the original audience in view at all times in their particular historical setting. By doing this, we will guard ourselves against the typical fallacies committed by many students of Bible prophecy.

As you read the articles in the first section, you will notice that they follow a sequential path through the New Testament. It is beyond the scope of this website to do the same with Old Testament prophecy. However, 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 the level of 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.

Pre-tribbers often claim to be the champions of the "literal" method of interpretation. While literalism necessarily leads to a pre-millennial understanding of prophecy, it does not favor the pre-trib rapture view within the pre-millennial 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 pre-tribbers 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 24 elders in heaven *represent* the whole Church in heaven
- the 7 letters in Revelation *represent* 7 consecutive "church ages"
- Enoch's and Elijah's catching up are *types* of a pre-trib rapture

The articles on this website will prove conclusively that post-tribbers can far surpass pre-tribbers in holding to a consistent "grammatical - historical" or "literal" methodology. And a consistent literal methodology will necessarily lead to a post-trib rapture (within a pre-millennial framework).

The second major section of this website presents our historical argument from the post-Apostolic early Church. We do not claim perfection for the post-Apostolic Church, nor any of the early Christian writers. However, our intent is to demonstrate that the second generation Church was solidly post-trib, and that no hint of pre-tribulationism 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 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 was unanimously post-trib regarding the rapture. The implications of this fact are enormous. **If the pre-trib view is correct, the Apostles of Jesus were miserable failures in transmitting sound doctrine to the very next generation of Christians, and grounding them in the Word, since no hint of pre-tribulationism can be found in the post-Apostolic Church.** That means, the entire Church succumbed to a false view of the rapture virtually overnight, and no record can be found of any kind of resistance or rebuttal of this alleged post-trib error. 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 pre-tribulationism 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.

The third section of this website addresses the arguments advanced by the pre-trib side. Post-tribbers in the past have been accused of arguing our case by merely tearing down pre-trib, rather than advancing a positive presentation of the Biblical basis for our view. Unfortunately, this is a fair analysis in many cases. At **The Last Trumpet - Post-Trib Research Center** we intend to take the high road by first building our case from Scripture alone, then dealing with the historical arguments, and lastly providing our rebuttal of the pre-trib 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 to a post-trib understanding of the rapture. One of the reasons the pre-trib view cannot be correct is because it is derived from reading many ideas (some biblical and some not) into the text that the original hearers could not possibly know. Pre-tribulationism is the result of a long series of post-hoc arguments, and largely ignores the historical setting and progressive nature of prophecy. It is "reverse engineered" and forced onto the Scriptures rather than built progressively on a proper foundation. Because we have built our case progressively, you will benefit the most by reading the articles in sequence, at least in the first section titled **"Post-Trib Rapture."**

CHALLENGE TO PRE-TRIBBERS

If you are pre-trib, all we ask of you is to give us a fair hearing. As you consider our arguments from Scripture with an open mind, ask yourself the following questions. **"If the pre-trib rapture is true, where was it introduced in the progressive revelation of Biblical prophecy?"** Such a major event, that is not to be found in Old Testament prophecy or even in Jesus' own teaching, must have been unveiled to the Christian world at some point in time. When? Where? What passage of Scripture indicates this new radical departure from the rest of Bible prophecy? As you contemplate the historical evidence provided on this site, ask yourself this question. **"Why was the pre-trib rapture view 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 know nothing of it?

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As in the Days of Lot

Luke 17:20-37 Jesus First Speaks of His Second Coming

Tim Warner - Revised 11/2002

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THE NATURE OF THE COMING KINGDOM

Luke 17 is the first time Jesus spoke to His disciples about the second coming in any detail. If you look closely, you will see that the primary subject of this discourse was the coming and establishment of Christ's Kingdom. ([Click here](#) to read the entire discourse).

Luke 17:20-21

20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, ***when the kingdom of God should come***, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. (KJV)

The rest of this discourse is centered around the question of when and how the Kingdom will arrive. Jesus was responding to the Pharisees who demanded that He tell them when His Kingdom was going to come. Jesus told these same people that they would not inherit the Kingdom of God (Matt. 5:20, Matt. 21:43). Yet, here Jesus replied, "*the Kingdom of God is within you.*" The words "within you" are often misunderstood. A-millennialists point to this passage as proof that Christ's Kingdom is "spiritual" in the hearts of believers now rather than a physical coming Kingdom on earth. But, they misunderstand this passage because of a questionable translation of the Greek word "entos." While the KJV says "within you," this doesn't seem to make sense because the Pharisees were certainly not saved. In fact, they were trying to trap Jesus with His words. So, how could God's spiritual kingdom be within them? The 1611 KJV translators were not sure how best to translate this word, so they included a marginal note with the alternate reading, "among you." This is obviously the true meaning of the word in this context. It is translated "among you" or "in your midst" in various other translations. We can also see a parallel statement by Jesus in the following verse.

Matt 12:28

28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then ***the kingdom of God is come unto you.*** (KJV)

Here Jesus was referring to Himself as being the embodiment of the Kingdom at that time.

In Luke 17, Jesus was standing in a crowd of Pharisees who were antagonistic toward Him and the idea that He was the Messiah who would fulfill the Old Testament prophecies of the coming King, to sit upon the Throne of David, and reign over the nation of Israel. They demanded that He tell them when His Kingdom would come. In other words they were saying, "If you're the Messiah, where is your Kingdom?" Perhaps they were really implying, "you're not seriously going to overthrow the Romans and establish your Kingdom with this little band of disciples, are you?" Jesus responded by saying, "*the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation.*" In other words, you are not going to see it come. Jesus knew that His physical literal Kingdom would not come until His second coming. And He knew these antagonistic Pharisees were lost and would not be resurrected to inherit His Kingdom when it did come. While Jesus the Messiah was present in their midst, He was the embodiment of the Kingdom. That is why He said, "*the Kingdom of God is in your midst.*" He was saying, "hey, you're looking at the Kingdom of God!" Jesus Himself was all the "Kingdom" they were going to see.

Jesus did NOT mean the Kingdom of God will never "*come with observation.*" He meant His Kingdom

would not come in this manner YET, at His first coming. This is apparent from other statements by Jesus. For example:

John 18:36

*36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but **NOW is my kingdom not from hence.***

(KJV)

The key word here is "NOW." Jesus was saying that at His first coming His Kingdom would not appear as a physical Kingdom. The implication is that it will come later. Jesus did not deny the coming of His literal Kingdom. Rather, He taught that its arrival was delayed until His second coming. This fact is clear two chapters later when Jesus was speaking among a much more sympathetic crowd.

Luke 19:11

*11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because **they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.***

(KJV)

In the parable of the Talents that follows, Jesus indicated that He must go away leaving His servants in charge. But, He would return at some point "having received the Kingdom," and would then judge His servants. The rewards given to the faithful in His absence would be authority as rulers in His coming Kingdom.

The antagonistic exchange between the Pharisees and Jesus in Luke 17 occurred in the presence of the disciples who were also expecting the Messianic Kingdom to appear. Some of them were even concerned about where they would sit in relation to Jesus' throne in His coming Kingdom, [[Matt. 20:21-23](#)]. No doubt, Jesus' answer to the Pharisees caused them great concern. Jesus understood their concern and turned to reassure them.

*22 And he said **unto the disciples**, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.*

23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.

*24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be **in his day.***

*25 **But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.***

(KJV)

Jesus' strategy is quite obvious here. He told the Pharisees, who demanded that He produce His Kingdom as proof that He was the Messiah, that they would not see His Kingdom and that He Himself was the embodiment of the Kingdom standing in their midst. He Himself was all of the Kingdom they would see. Then, knowing the concern of His disciples, He turned to them to reassure them that His Kingdom would indeed come, and it would come in a blaze of glory at His **second** coming. But first, He had to accomplish the work of atonement.

DETAILS OF THE SECOND COMING

Following this, Jesus began for the first time to share with His disciples more of the details of His second coming.

Luke 17:26-30

26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

*27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until **the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.***

28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they

planted, they builded;

29 But **the same day** that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and **destroyed them all.**

30 **Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.**

(KJV)

Jesus emphasized the fact that the righteous will be delivered **the same day** the wicked are utterly destroyed. The sudden and total destruction mentioned by Jesus can only refer to the battle of Armageddon, when Jesus will destroy the Antichrist and his armies, [Rev. 19:11-21]. It cannot refer to a prolonged judgment such as the plagues of Revelation. Since the deliverance of the righteous will occur "the same day" the wicked are utterly destroyed, it is logical to place this supernatural deliverance immediately before the battle of Armageddon. This is precisely what Paul wrote in 1 Thess. 5:1-2, that Jesus' coming "*as a thief in the night*" will bring "*sudden destruction*" on the ungodly yet relief for Christians who are watching for His coming.

Jesus used both Noah and Lot as illustrations of the rescue of the righteous while the wicked are left to be destroyed. Notice from both illustrations, **it was the righteous who were relocated to safety, while the wicked were left in place to be destroyed.** In Noah's case, the righteous were **lifted up above the waters** in the ark while the wicked were left behind to drown. In Lot's case, the righteous were **escorted away by the angels** while the wicked remained behind to be pelted with flaming brimstone. These examples clearly illustrate how this passage should be understood. The righteous will be supernaturally rescued just before total destruction falls on the ungodly. Next, Jesus went into detail about how the righteous would be removed from the scene just before judgment falls.

Luke 17:31-37

31 *In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.*

32 *Remember Lot's wife.*

33 *Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.*

34 *I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the **one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.***

35 *Two women shall be grinding together; the **one shall be taken, and the other left.***

36 *Two men shall be in the field; the **one shall be taken, and the other left.***

37 *And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.*

(KJV)

This is the very first time the Scriptures record Jesus' description of the rapture for His disciples. Notice the righteous will be supernaturally "taken" from their beds, the fields, and at work, while the wicked will be left behind.

THE PLACE OF SAFETY

The disciples' curiosity prompted them to ask, "Where Lord?" [vs. 37]. They wanted to know where the righteous will be taken at the rapture. Noah had an ark, and was lifted up above the waters of destruction, where he viewed the devastation of the world by the flood. Lot was escorted by the angels to a place of safety, yet in full view of the burning of Sodom. The disciples wanted to know what they could expect when this scenario begins to unfold. Jesus' response was to paint a word picture that they were all quite familiar with. Many times the disciples had observed the birds of prey circling in the sky, hovering above while animals were being attacked by other animals. The birds would hover above the scene until all signs of life were gone. Then they would take the spoils. If we tie this word picture into Jesus' previous statement about the destruction of the wicked, the picture Jesus painted becomes quite obvious. At the battle of Armageddon, prophesied so clearly in several Old Testament [Zech. 14 & Joel 3], the Lord will destroy the wicked and the saints will take

the spoils [Dan. 7:18]. The carnage of the wicked will cover the landscape below, while the birds of prey hover in the sky above out of harm's way until the battle is over.

We see from these passages that the righteous, gathered from all around the world, will be brought to a single location. Where? In the clouds above the battle scene, where Jesus is going to wipe out the armies of the nations so He can establish Himself as King of all the earth. When the righteous are gathered they will hover above in the clouds like eagles while the carnage covers the landscape below all around Jerusalem. When the battle is over, the righteous will take the spoils. *"But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."* [Dan. 7:18]. On the Day of the Lord, after Jerusalem is attacked and rescued by the return of the Lord, *"your plunder will be divided among you."* [Zech. 14:1]

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RAPTURE

Luke 17 provides us with two very important facts, both of which require a post-trib rapture.

1. The righteous will be delivered **the same day the wicked are destroyed**.
2. Those who are "taken" (caught up in the air) will immediately proceed to the **location** in the clouds above the battle scene.

Revelation also places Christ's coming for believers at the time of Armageddon.

Revelation 16:15

15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.
(KJV)

Verse 16 above provides the context - the Battle of Armageddon. Yet, this is the coming for which Christians are instructed to watch.

PRE-TRIB DENIALS THAT LUKE 17 IS THE RAPTURE

Many pre-tribbers deny that Luke 17 describes the rapture, for obvious reasons. They claim those "taken" are the wicked, not the righteous. However, the context and the Greek words for "taken" and "left" argue against that view.

In the context, both examples of Noah and Lot show that the righteous were first supernaturally relocated to a place of safety and then the remaining wicked were destroyed. Jesus said it will be the same at His coming. At the rapture, the righteous will be caught up, then the wicked will be destroyed "the same day."

The Greek words for "taken" and "left" further strengthen this interpretation. According to Strong's Greek dictionary, the word "taken" #3880 means: *"to receive near, i.e. associate with oneself (in any familiar or intimate act or relation)."* Likewise, the word "left" #863 means: *"to send forth, ...forsake, lay aside, leave, let alone, ...send away...."* Obviously, the Lord Jesus will not receive the wicked unto Himself, and lay aside or forsake the righteous! Therefore, it is obvious that those **taken** are the righteous, and the wicked are **left** to be destroyed "the same day." The righteous are received by Christ to spare them the destruction that falls immediately on the ungodly who are left.

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NOTES:

Luke 17:20-37

20 Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered

them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation;
21 "nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."
22 Then He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.
23 "And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them.
24 "For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day.
25 "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.
26 "And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:
27 "They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.
28 "Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;
29 "but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.
30 "Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.
31 "In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back.
32 "Remember Lot's wife.
33 "Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.
34 "I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left.
35 "Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left.
36 "Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."
37 And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord?" So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."
(NKJ)[\[Back\]](#)

Matt 20:21-23

21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."
22 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able."
23 So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father."
(NKJ)[\[Back\]](#)



The Olivet Discourse

Matthew Twenty-Four & Mark Thirteen

Tim Warner - Revised 11/2002

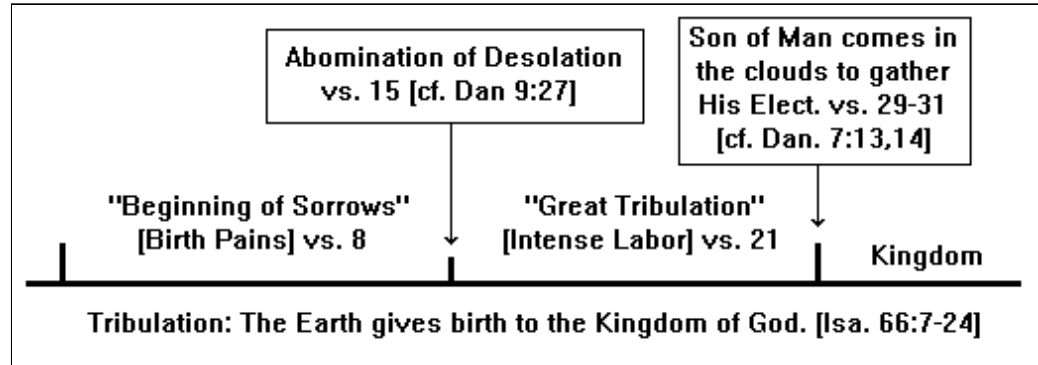
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Read entire chapter, [Matthew 24](#), [Mark 13](#)

The Importance of the Olivet Discourse

The Olivet Discourse, contained in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, is the most straightforward teaching regarding the end of the age found anywhere in Scripture, and is the

cornerstone of all New Testament eschatology. New Testament writers referred to, 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 from Peter's and Paul's teaching on the rapture, as well as from Revelation. Reliance on the Olivet Discourse by the Apostles is extremely important to the post-trib view, because it demolishes the pre-trib claim that this discourse does not concern the "Church." If the Apostles referred their Christian readers to the Olivet Discourse to answer their questions about the rapture, the connection between Jesus' eschatological teaching and Church doctrine is assured.



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 in the day before Jesus and His disciples went out to the Mount of Olives in the 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.

1. the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple
2. the scattering of the Jews among the nations *"until the times of the Gentiles"* are fulfilled
3. an upheaval among the nations
4. certain cosmic signs
5. Jesus' return to set up His Kingdom

It is significant to notice that in Luke's account, Jesus gave specific instructions to His disciples concerning their escape from the Roman siege of Jerusalem that came in AD70, some 40 years into this dispensation. The early Church historian, Eusebius, recorded that the early Christians heeded Jesus' warnings and 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 this discourse concern the

Church. Yet, in the 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 post-trib coming was near by watching the signs. He also told them to pray that they might be counted worthy to escape all these things. By observing HOW the early Christians escaped the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, 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 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, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

*38 Behold, **your house is left unto you desolate.***

*39 For I say unto you, **Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.***

(KJV)

Here again, Jesus has clearly separated the destruction of the Temple from His second coming to set up His Kingdom. Most 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 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 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.

(KJV)

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 clear that Jesus' elect

will be gathered from both earth and heaven [Mark 13:27]. Now, notice verse 33;

Matt 24:33

*33 So likewise ye, **when ye shall see all these things**, know that it is near, even at the doors. (KJV)*

Jesus' words clearly indicate that only after all of these signs He gave were fulfilled, could they expect Him to come.

There is a tremendous debate between pre-tribbers and post-tribbers about whether this "gathering" is for the Church. However, let me just suggest that you read this chapter, and take special note of all the places Jesus used the personal pronouns "you," "ye," "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** come in the first century. This fact is important in recognizing the continuity of the Olivet Discourse, and how it flows throughout the present age until the second coming.

Of course, pre-tribbers doubt that this passage refers to the followers of Jesus [the Church]. They think the disciples, in this chapter, represent another group, perhaps certain elect Jews in the tribulation. To settle this issue, I think the Great Commission is of utmost importance. Jesus told His disciples;

Matt 28:19-20

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

*20 **Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:** and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (KJV)*

We must bear in mind, that these are the same disciples who, just a few weeks earlier, asked Jesus about His second coming, and sat at His feet while He instructed them to watch for all the signs, and His gathering His elect "immediately after the tribulation." In the above passage, Jesus further commanded them to take His teaching into all the world and make converts. Of special note are the words; "teaching them to observe ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU." Jesus commanded these men to teach you and me everything He taught them. If we are to take Jesus seriously here, this must include His teaching in the Olivet Discourse, about watching for the signs of His coming after the tribulation. So, we see two important things from these passages;

1. Jesus never mentioned a pre-trib rapture before His coming in glory after the tribulation. He spoke of His disciples 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 pre-trib rapture, but instead included teaching concerning watching for His post-trib coming. [which included a post-trib rapture].

Compare the Olivet Discourse to the Great Commission in the following passages.

The Olivet Discourse	The Great Commission
<i>Matt 24:14</i>	<i>Matt 28:19</i>

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. (NKJV)	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, (NKJV)
Matt 24:3 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 the end of the age?" (NKJV)	Matt 28:20 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. (NKJV)

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 then, 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 these passages.

In Mark's account of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus ended with a clear warning, and instruction for Christians to watch for His post-trib coming.

Mark 13:24-27

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)

In my judgment, this passage shows that Jesus was speaking to the Church in the Olivet Discourse. Notice, His "leaving His house," refers to Jesus' ascension to heaven. He elsewhere told the disciples He was "going away," but would return for them. Next, He "gave authority to His servants," and, "to every man his work." This is unquestionably referring to the Great Commission, which was given to the Church. Then, He commanded them to "watch" for His coming. Again, there is absolutely no question that Jesus was referring to the period of time between His ascension and second coming, [or the "Church age" to borrow a pre-trib term]. He was referring to Christians when He said to "watch." The question then is, watch for what? The context answers this question in verses 24-27. We, as Christians, are to be watching for Jesus' coming "after the tribulation."

For an in-depth discussion of the Olivet Discourse, see our [verse by verse commentary](#) on Matthew 24.

[Go to: "In My Father's House"](#)

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NOTES:

Matt 24:1-51

1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

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 the end of the age?"

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

6 "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

8 "All these are the beginning of sorrows.

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

10 "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

11 "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

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

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.

15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

18 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

21 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it.

24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

25 "See, I have told you beforehand.

26 "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it.

27 "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

28 "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

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.

32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.

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

34 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take

place.

35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

37 "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

38 "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

39 "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

40 "Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.

41 "Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.

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.

45 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?

46 "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.

47 "Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods.

48 "But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,'

49 "and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards,

50 "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of,

51 "and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

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Mark 13:1-37

1 Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"

2 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately,

4 "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"

5 And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

6 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many.

7 "But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet.

8 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.

9 "But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.

10 "And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.

11 "But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

12 "Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

13 "And you will be hated by all men for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

14 "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

15 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house.
16 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his garment.
17 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!
18 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter.
19 "For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.
20 "And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.
21 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it.
22 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.
23 "But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.
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 heaven 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.
28 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.
29 "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near-- at the doors!
30 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.
31 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.
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!"
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In My Father's House

A Discussion of John 14

By Tim Warner - Revised 02/2002

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John 14

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye 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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

(KJV)

John fourteen one through three is sometimes quoted as evidence that Jesus taught a pre-tribulation rapture. Other pre-tribulationists believe the rapture was not revealed by Jesus at all. They believe Paul alone was the conduit for this revelation. Those who claim John fourteen teaches a pre-trib 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 pre-tribulationism and equally troublesome for post-tribulationism, **if it were true**. The post-tribulation view does not allow for the Church to go to heaven after the rapture, but directly into the Millennial Kingdom.

Presuppositions & Bias

One of the difficulties with the way this passage is interpreted is our own personal bias. If we believe in a pre-trib rapture, we naturally would look at this passage with a bias toward pre-trib. We might assume that since Jesus was referring to coming for His disciples, He had a pre-trib rapture in view. If we already believe that Christians are going to heaven after the rapture, we would be inclined to interpret *"My Father's House"* as heaven. But, if we have a bias toward the post-trib view, we would assume Jesus was referring to the second coming. If we are going to understand this passage correctly, we need to look beyond our own presuppositions, and look at John fourteen from the perspective of the disciples, whom Jesus was addressing. We all have presuppositions that we bring to a passage. The disciples themselves had presuppositions based on their Jewish upbringing and training in the Old Testament Scriptures, and based on Jesus' prior teaching. 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?"* It is clear from Jesus' own words in this very discourse that He was teaching His disciples ONLY what they could understand and digest at the time. He told them, **"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."** (John 16:12-13). Notice that 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 receive and 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 pre-tribulationists is how to reconcile these verses with the Olivet Discourse. That discourse, occurring only two days earlier, was a lengthy discussion of the last days and the second coming. There is no pre-trib 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 that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

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)

"That day" and "that hour" refer to Jesus' coming after the tribulation mentioned in the previous verses. The "*man taking a far journey*" was Jesus. He was about to return to heaven. That He "*gave authority to His servants and to every man his work*" refers to the Great Commission. Obviously, this concerns Christians, since the Great Commission was given to the 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 disciples, and passed on to us in succeeding generations as well. But, the point I would like to stress is the disciples' expectation from the Olivet Discourse was most certainly that Jesus would come back for them after the tribulation, not before.

Typically, pre-tribulationists disqualify the Olivet Discourse from any discussion of the rapture by claiming it is Jewish, and does not concern the Church. However, any reasoning they employ to disassociate the Olivet Discourse from the Church must also be applied to the Upper Room Discourse. Both were given to Jesus' disciples only two days apart, both in the midst of a Jewish setting. 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 this discourse from the Olivet Discourse, particularly since they were in the midst of observing the Jewish Passover? 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 pre-trib rapture based on John fourteen. Nor could John fourteen be simply further revelation, adding a pre-trib rapture to the scenario Jesus described on the Mount of Olives. The two ideas are mutually exclusive. 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 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 in 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 pre-trib rapture in John fourteen, He was directly negating everything He had just told them two days earlier!!!** If pre-tribulationists 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 whatsoever 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.

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 Millennial 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 all 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 seen 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 the Kingdom of God for His *"little flock."* In the verses immediately preceding the passage in question, Jesus' *"going away"* meant going to the cross. This is obvious from His remark to Peter about his denial.

John 13:31-14:3

31 Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

32 If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

*33 Little children, **yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.***

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

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

*36 Simon Peter said unto him, **Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.***

*37 Peter said unto him, Lord, **why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.***

*38 Jesus answered him, **Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.***

14:1 *Let not your heart be troubled: ye 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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*
 (KJV)

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 saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*
 18 *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.*
 19 ***This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.*** *And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*
 20 *Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?*
 21 *Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?*
 22 *Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry **till I come**, what is that to thee? follow thou me.*
 23 *Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?*
 24 *This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.*
 (KJV)

Notice that Jesus left open the possibility that John might live until the second coming. But, Peter 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 9:12,23-26

12 *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but **by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us....***
 23 *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*
 24 *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; **but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:***

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin **by the sacrifice of himself.**

(KJV)

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. "*Jesus saith unto her, **Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.***" (John 20:17). Jesus was not referring to His ascension, as 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' 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 activities 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 said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, **That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.**

21 **A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.**

22 **And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.**

23 And **in that day** ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.**

(KJV)

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 of Jesus? 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 pre-tribbers are correct, then 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 that 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' 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 and us, 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 beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

(KJV)

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 9:12,24

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. ...

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

(KJV)

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" to accommodate His disciples, or making the way for the disciples to occupy these abodes? Where is such an idea taught in Scripture? The fact is, this idea is completely foreign to Scripture, and is based solely on pre-trib 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. I can find 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 Temple is always in view. This includes the Tabernacle [1 Samuel 1:24], Solomon's Temple (2 Chronicles 2:1, 7:16), as specifically to 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 example.

Isa 2:2-4

*2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of **the LORD's house** shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*

*3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to **the house of the God of Jacob**; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

(KJV)

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 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them out of **the Temple**...*

*16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not **my Father's house** an house of merchandise.*

*17 And the disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of **thine house** hath eaten me up.*

(KJV)

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.

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 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 pre-trib 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 ye 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 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

*16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled **in the kingdom of God.***

17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

*18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, **until the kingdom of God shall come....***

28 Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.

*29 And **I appoint unto you a kingdom,** as my Father hath appointed unto me;*

*30 **That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.***

(KJV)

According to Luke's account, Jesus spoke of His Kingdom in the upper room and mentioned nothing of 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 Millennial Temple, ruling with Christ in His Kingdom.

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, wilt thou 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 was His return, apparently thinking He was about to streak through the sky gathering together all the elect. 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.

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 therefore 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 apartments connected to the Temple structure atop the Temple Mount as follows. *"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."*

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. *"And when he was come **into the temple, the chief priests and the elders** of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?"* (Matt. 21:23). 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. But they beat His servants, and killed His Son. The result was they were destroyed by the land owner, and the vineyard 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 say I unto you, **The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.**"* (vs. 43). But to His disciples Jesus said: *"Fear not, 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 Millennial 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" is purified Israel, with Gentiles adopted into Abraham's seed, forming one body of redeemed people.

I realize some may object to this view because there are certainly not enough "apartments" in the Kingdom Temple for the whole Church. But, as Luke's account indicates, Jesus was not speaking to all future Christians here, only His disciples. Certainly He did not mean for the whole Church to 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 temptations."* (Luke 22:28). All saints of God will reign with Him in His Kingdom. But, the disciples earned a special place, ruling from Christ's side in the Temple. Other believers who suffer for Christ 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 Millennium, there will not be dispensational distinctions. There is only one program for both Jew and Gentile. There will be only one body of redeemed people who were saved prior to Christ's second coming. This will include Old and New Testament saints. *"And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God"* (Luke 13:29). And again, *"When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (Matt. 8:10-12).

See our series on [Progressive Dispensationalism](#) for more regarding the dispensational ramifications. See our article [Jewish Wedding Customs & the Rapture](#) for a discussion of how John 14 relates to the Jewish Wedding Customs.

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:

1. the context in which Jesus was speaking to going away to be crucified
2. the disciples' familiarity with Old Testament references to the *"house of the Lord"*
3. Jesus earlier usage of the phrase *"My Father's house"*
4. Jesus instructions in the Olivet Discourse given only 2 days earlier
5. the parallel passage in Luke 22, which shows the context of the discussion was the coming Kingdom
6. the apparent implication of the Jewish wedding custom associated with the "Father's house" See our article [Jewish Wedding Customs & the Rapture](#).

I do not mean to imply that a mansion in the sky is unbiblical. God has prepared a city for us, the New Jerusalem, described in Revelation twenty-one. However, it will not be presented to us until the end of the millennium, (Rev. 21:2). The mistake is the idea that the words "my Father's house" in John fourteen refer to heaven or the New Jerusalem. There is no precedent in Scripture for this interpretation and all evidence of similar language points to the Temple in Jerusalem during the Kingdom age. The pre-trib view of these verses hangs entirely on assumptions which cannot be substantiated from other Scriptures, and flow counter to everything else Jesus taught His disciples.

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 raptured 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, Jesus said would be evicted and locked out of His Kingdom.

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Peter's First Sermon

Acts 2:16-21

Tim Warner - Revised 2/2002

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After Jesus gave the Apostles the Great Commission and ascended to heaven, they began preaching the gospel. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, delivered one of the most powerful sermons recorded in Scripture. In this sermon he masterfully tied together Old Testament prophecy with what Jesus taught in His Olivet Discourse.

Acts 2

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

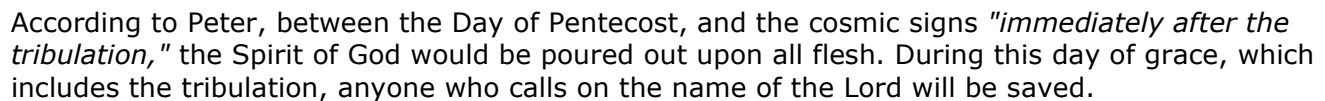
21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

(KJV)

This passage of Scripture is very important to a proper understanding of prophecy. It sheds a great deal of light on Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse, and Peter's application of Joel's prophecy demonstrates for us how Peter interpreted Jesus' teaching. Peter was present when Jesus taught the disciples about His coming. Jesus answered their question; *"what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"* [Matt. 24:3]. Peter knew from Jesus' teaching that the final sign, which will occur *"immediately after the tribulation,"* is the darkening of the sun and moon, [Matt. 24:29-31].

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 statement, *"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."*





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 the battle of Armageddon. Undoubtedly, Peter believed the "*end of the [age]*" would come "*immediately after the tribulation,*" just as Jesus taught him.

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Peter's Second Sermon

Acts 3:17-21

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In Acts three, we find a second sermon preached by Peter. The healing of the lame man at the gate of the Temple 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 the following statement.

Acts 3

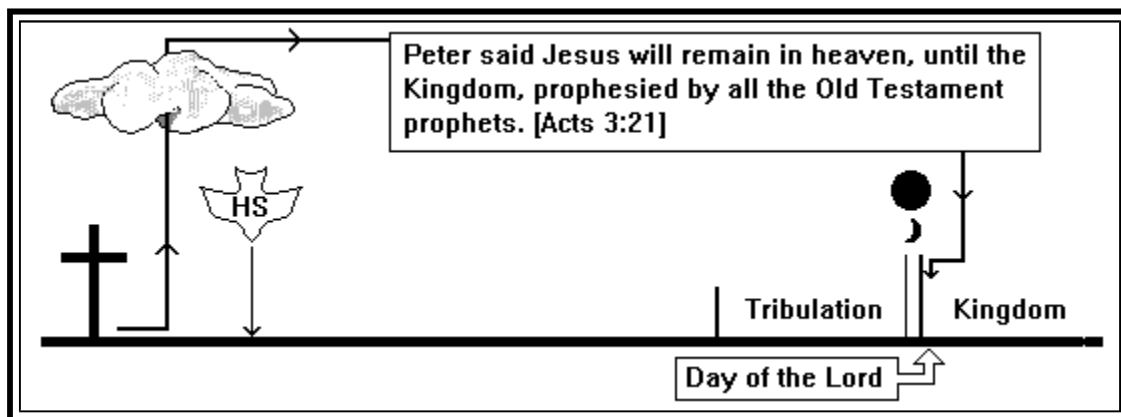
19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

(KJV)

The coming of the Messiah and His Kingdom was foretold by all the prophets. In fact, 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 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. There is no question this will occur at the post-tribulation coming of Christ.



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 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35 until I make thy foes thy footstool.

(KJV)

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 restore the earth, and destroy Christ's enemies. This 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.

Both of Peter's sermons display continuity with Jesus' teaching in Matthew twenty-four. 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.

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Peter's Epistles

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Tim Warner - Revised 2/2002

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For an in-depth study of 2 Peter 3 and the Day of the Lord, [Click here](#).

Lest someone think Peter might have changed his mind later, we find him still teaching believers to anticipate Christ's post-tribulation coming in glory in his Epistles, rather than a secret rapture. His testimony is consistent in both of his sermons and both of his Epistles.

1 Peter 1

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, (NKJV)

1 Peter 1

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; (KJV)

Peter encouraged believers to remain faithful to Christ until the "revelation of Jesus Christ." The word "revelation" is the Greek word "apocalypsis." This word is used of the second coming several times. Each time it has the idea of Christ's coming in glory, showing Himself to the world in all His awesome power. Paul gave a vivid picture of the revelation of Christ in the following verse.

II Thessalonians 1

*7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,
8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:
(KJV)*

Peter went on to warn believers of the coming trial, encouraging them to remain faithful, and partake gladly in suffering for Christ. Again he encouraged them to fix their hope on Christ's coming in glory and power, just as in the Olivet Discourse, [Matt. 24:29-31].

1 Peter 4

*12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:
13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.
(KJV)*

The "fiery trial" was a specific time of testing that would end with the revelation of Christ in glory. The King James Version, by using the definite article and future tense, ["the fiery trial which is to try you"], indicates it was a trial that would come in the future to try them all. Most likely, he was referring to the tribulation, 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. This

is definitely not a secret rapture. Christ's coming in glory is always post-tribulational, [Matt. 16:27, 24:20, 25:31, Mark 8:38,13:26, Luke 9:26, 21:27, 2 Thess. 1:9].

In his second Epistle, Peter devoted the entire third chapter to the second coming. He addressed the apparent delay in Christ's return from the perspectives of ungodly scoffers, and believers, longing for Christ's return. In verses 3-7, Peter wrote that this delay should not be interpreted by unbelievers that Christ is not coming. Then he told believers the reason for the delay.

2 Peter 3

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.
(KJV)

Notice, it does not say the Lord is longsuffering to the lost, but to us. He does not want any to perish. This strongly implies God 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.

Matthew 24

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.
(KJV)

Acts 1

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?
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.
(KJV)

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 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."

Acts 2

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:
(KJV)

Matthew 24

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:
(KJV)

Peter connected the expected coming of Christ for Christians with the coming of the "Day of the Lord" [Compare vss. 9&10]. And, he understood this to occur "immediately after the tribulation."

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." 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 post-trib setting, [Rev. 16:13-

16].

No hint of pre-tribulationism can be found in Peter's sermons or Epistles. He faithfully obeyed the command of Christ by repeating Jesus' teaching concerning the blessed hope of believers.

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The Last Trumpet

1 Corinthians 15:50-54

Tim Warner - Revised 2/2002

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Most pre-tribbers believe the pre-trib 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 distinct 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, as pre-tribbers suppose. 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.

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

In 1 Cor. 15, Paul wrote primarily of the resurrection of believers, and the fact that we will be raised "incorruptible." We do not have space here for an in-depth exegesis of this passage. However, I would like to point out three things that I believe connect this event to Jesus' post-tribulation coming 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" he is speaking of is the Millennial Kingdom. Since the purpose for this putting on incorruption is because our old bodies cannot inherit the Millennial Kingdom to reign with Christ, this implies that the change would occur at the beginning of that Kingdom. There is nothing here about going to heaven. Heaven is never spoken of as the "Kingdom of God." The context also clearly indicates Paul was referring to the Millennium, [see: vss. 22-28].

2. Paul said this will occur *"at the last trumpet"* [1 Cor. 15:52]. If we were to assume a pre-trib scenario, this "last trumpet" could not be last, because Jesus said He will sound the **trumpet** to gather His elect *"immediately after the tribulation"* [Matt. 24:31]. In order for it to be "last," it would seem to be identical with the trumpet of which Jesus spoke, thereby placing the resurrection of believers after the tribulation.

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

1 Cor 15:54

*54 So **WHEN** this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, **THEN** shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory.***
(KJV)

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

These three things connect this passage with the post-tribulational coming of Christ. What can pre-tribbers point to in this passage that would exclude this connection, or demonstrate the uniqueness of the Pauline "rapture" that pre-tribbers allege? Nothing at all! So far Paul's writings agree and harmonize with what Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse.

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Paul's Rapture View

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Tim Warner - Revised 2/2002

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Paul indicated to these Christians, and his main reason for addressing the resurrection / rapture, 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 of, and the timing of, the resurrection of the dead in Christ. Notice that Paul, in answering their question, 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 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

*14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus **will God bring with him.***

*15 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 [or precede] them which are asleep.*

I want you to notice that before Paul begins 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 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.*

These believers were already familiar with the Lord's descending from heaven, and the living believers being caught up in the clouds when the trumpet sounds. Paul simply placed the resurrection of the dead saints in the proper place in the sequence of events. In essence, Paul does this by saying that the dead saints will rise just before we are "caught up." So, it is apparent that the Thessalonians were 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. 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.

Matthew 24

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, when the trumpet sounds, and Jesus comes in power and glory, sending His angels to gather His elect, 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 Millennial 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. And, we also see Paul's relying on Jesus' Olivet Discourse. In the articles that follow, you will see 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.

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The "Day of the Lord"

1 Thessalonians 5:1-9

Tim Warner - Revised 2/2002

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In 1 Thess. 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 Thessalonians 5

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.
(KJV)

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. Pre-tribulationists claim the "Day of the Lord" includes the alleged pre-trib rapture and the entire tribulation. This allows them to reconcile 1 Thessalonians 5 with pre-tribulationism, 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 pre-tribulationists trying to stretch the Day of the Lord forward to include the entire tribulation and pre-trib 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 pre-trib 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 definite biblical 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 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, **before the great and terrible***

day of the Lord come.

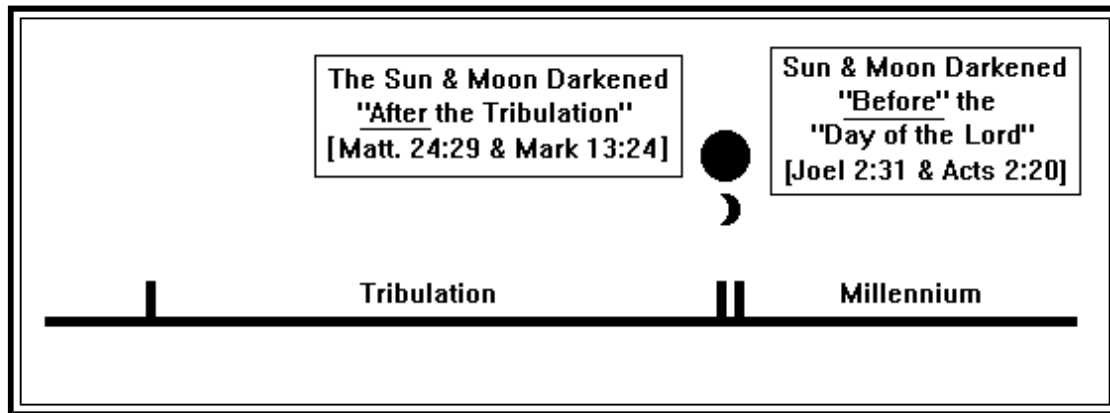
(KJV)

Matthew 24

29 **Immediately after the tribulation** of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, ...

(KJV)

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:

Isaiah 2

10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.

11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and 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 be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:...

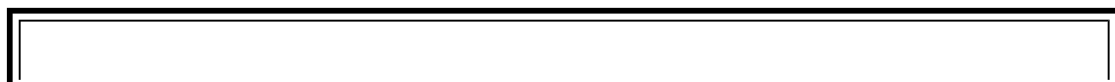
17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and **the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.**

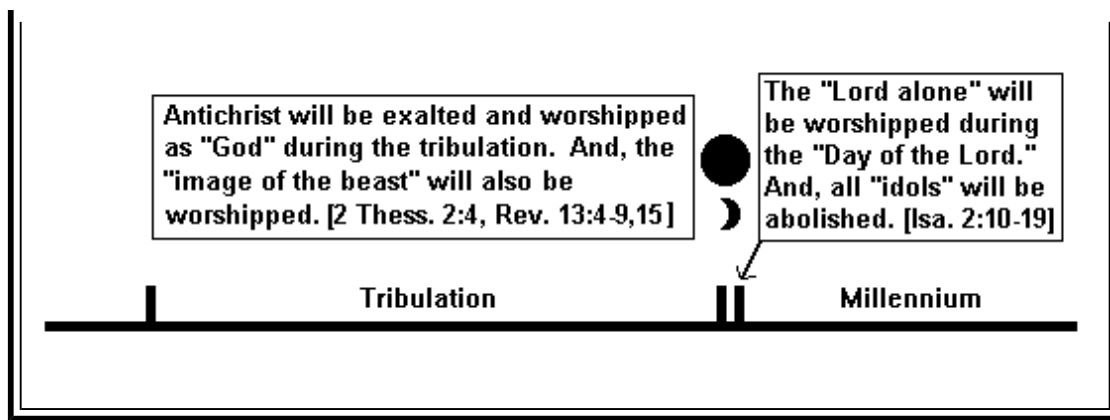
18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

(KJV)

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 pre-tribbers attempt to do. Furthermore, Paul made another clear statement which eliminates the possibility of the "Day of the Lord" including the entire tribulation and supposed pre-trib rapture.

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)

Most translations read "Day of the Lord" in verse 2. There is a variation in the Greek manuscripts here. Some ancient manuscripts read "day of Christ" and others read "day of the Lord." I don't want to get into a debate on which is correct. It really doesn't matter. If "Day of the Lord" is correct, the text indicates that the "Day of the Lord" comes after the tribulation, because events that occur during the tribulation, [the falling away and revelation of Antichrist], are said to come **before** the "Day of the Lord." If the "Day of Christ" is the correct reading, then this verse alone settles the pre-trib / post-trib debate, since the phrase "Day of Christ" is only used by Paul elsewhere to refer to the rapture of the Church. In this case, Paul is saying that the rapture cannot come until after the falling away and the Antichrist.

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 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.**

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

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

(KJV)

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 was coming as a *"thief in the night?"* 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. (NKJV)

Obviously, Paul was referring to Jesus' teaching! His reminding them of Jesus' "thief" illustration leads to the conclusion that he was confirming the chronology Christ gave. The following table shows 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 the disciples. In effect, he was applying the teaching of Jesus to them, connecting their "watching" for the rapture with Jesus' instructions to be watching for His coming "immediately after the tribulation."

Paul Referred to Jesus' Teaching	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 the Olivet Discourse, which only teaches a post-trib coming of Christ, to answer their questions about the rapture. This is substantial evidence that Paul taught a post-trib 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 pre-tribulationism, in my opinion. 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 pre-trib 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, are still saved to become the multitude of "tribulation saints." Therefore, Paul's statement that "they will not escape" is necessarily false if the pre-trib 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 Thess. 1, as we will see in the next article.

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We Rest After the Tribulation

2 Thessalonians 1:4-10

Tim Warner - Revised 2/2002

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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 Thessalonians 1

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

7 And to you who are troubled **rest with us, WHEN the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,**

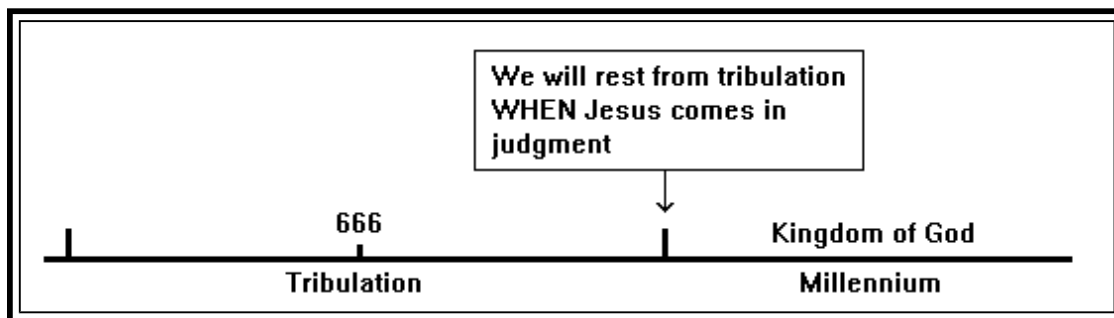
8 **In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:**

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

10 **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.

(KJV)

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 post-tribulational, the rapture must also be post-tribulational.



There is only one logical interpretation of this passage regarding the timing of the rapture. No one will deny this coming is "post-tribulational." No pre-tribulationist 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 their tribulations at that time. Paul was in effect telling them when their ordeal would end, at the post-tribulation coming of Christ in judgment. In a pre-tribulation 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" pre-tribulation 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 post-tribulational 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, [2 Thess. 1:10].

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Antichrist Comes First

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Tim Warner - Revised 1/2003

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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 pre-trib 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 pre-tribulationists 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	και	ημων	επισυναγωγης	επ αυτον
the coming	the Lord	our Jesus Christ	and	our	gathering-together	to Him

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	και	του	επισυναγωγης	ημων επ αυτον
					gathering-	

the coming the Lord our Jesus Christ **and the 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 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 always refers to His post-trib coming (Matt. 24:31, Mark 13:27, Luke 17:37). Therefore, there is every reason to believe that 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 (post-trib) 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

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. (See our article [The Pauline Authorship of Hebrews](#) for an in-depth discussion of the Pauline signature).

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 post-trib perspective, either reading is acceptable because post-tribbers view the "*day of Christ*" and the "*day of the Lord*" as being the same post-trib coming. However, pre-tribbers 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 pre-trib idea of "imminence" utterly impossible. *"Day of Christ"* is consistent with the post-trib scenario, and very problematic for the pre-trib scenario.

If the minority reading, *"the day of the Lord,"* is what Paul wrote, pre-tribbers are faced with the fact that this term is consistently used of Christ's post-trib coming. (See our article [The Day of the Lord Cannot Include the Tribulation](#).) 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 post-tribulational. Yet, here, Paul plainly connected the *"Day of the Lord"* with *"our gathering together unto Him"* (assuming this variant reading). Pre-tribbers have the same problem here as they have in 1 Thess. 5. The rapture is connected with a clear post-trib event - the Day of the Lord which occurs after the cosmic signs mentioned in Matt. 24:29-31.

Typically, modern pre-tribbers 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 pre-trib rapture, the entire tribulation, and the post-trib 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 pre-tribbers 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 now imminent.

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

The second problem in verse two is the proper translation of the word ἐνεστήκεν. The KJV and NKJV translate 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 enestêken hê hêmera tou kuriou|). Perfect active indicative of |enistêmi|, 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

Pre-tribbers 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 ἐνεστήκεν, 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

*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 the Olivet Discourse. The two things Paul said must come before the *"Day of Christ"* and our being gathered to Christ are two of the highlights of Jesus' Olivet Discourse.

PAUL - 2 things that precede the rapture	JESUS - 2 things that precede the 2nd coming
<i>"That day shall not come unless there come a falling away first..."</i>	<i>"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)]</i>
<i>"...and the Man of Sin be revealed, the son of perdition.... who sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God."</i>	<i>"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]</i>

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 pattern of Paul's conformity to the Olivet Discourse rather than teaching a pre-trib 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. In the table below, note the clear reliance of Paul on Jesus' teaching, highlighted through color coding of the same ideas.

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 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)

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 pre-tribbers, 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.

In summary, the coming of Christ for His people is not yet imminent. It cannot be considered imminent until after 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 pre-trib 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 pre-trib scenario. If the Thessalonians had previously been taught to expect a pre-trib rapture, and if they had been deceived into thinking the tribulation had begun and they were still here, how do you suppose a pre-trib Paul would have responded? The obvious answer is he would remind them that the rapture is pre-trib, 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 pre-trib rapture be "imminent" as pre-tribbers claim? Or, if pre-tribbers 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 pre-trib 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 pre-trib 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 also 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. (For a discussion of the Restrainer in verses 6-9, see our article, [The Restrainer](#)).

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[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. For more information on Sharp's six rules, [click here](#).

[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

Tim Warner - Revised 2/2002

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Titus 2:13

13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
(KJV)

This verse is so simple, yet so profound. It has strong implications regarding the timing of the rapture. In the KJV, 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 KJV is technically correct here, by translating the word "and" [Greek - **και**]. 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 **και** (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 **του μεγαλου Θεου και σωτηρος** ημων Χριστου Ιησου
Looking for **the blessed hope and appearing** the glory **the great God and Savior** of us Christ Jesus

Granville Sharp's rule I 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 shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.
(KJV)

Matt 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.

(KJV)

Mark 8:38

*38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, **when he cometh in the glory of his Father** with the holy angels.*

(KJV)

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.

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[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)

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. For more on Sharp's Rule, [click here](#).



The Rapture in Revelation

Revelation 14:14-20

Tim Warner - 01/1998

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One of the glaring weaknesses of the pre-trib rapture view, is that the book of Revelation does not place any coming of Jesus Christ before the tribulation. 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 the elect *"immediately after the tribulation."* [Matt. 24:29-31]. Pre-tribbers are forced to speculate where their alleged "rapture" fits into the whole scheme. The book of Revelation presents similar problems, moving from the seven letters to the churches, to the tribulation scenes, without mentioning any coming of Christ at all. Many pre-tribbers use allegorical interpretation in order to fabricate a pre-trib rapture, claiming that John's being caught up to heaven to see the future "represents" the Church being raptured. I am not going to deal with this type of argument in this article. [[Click here](#) to read "The Phantom Rapture in Revelation Four," for a discussion of the "John represents the Church" argument.]

Not all pre-tribbers believe John's being caught up to heaven represents the rapture. They recognize that this kind of fanciful - allegorical interpretation is not valid. However, they are still left with the glaring problem of no rapture before the tribulation. Some excuse this 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**. Jesus was speaking to the churches in all of the following verses. In each case he was speaking of His coming **for them**.

Revelation 2

25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

Revelation 3

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Revelation 3

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Revelation 22

7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Revelation 22

12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

Revelation 22

20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

In Christ's exhortations to the churches He mentioned the rapture at least six times in the above verses. In my judgment, this proves that **the coming of Christ for His Church** is indeed a crucial issue in Revelation. Pre-tribulationists are simply overlooking the obvious, that the rapture occurs in conjunction with Christ's coming at the battle of Armageddon. And, this is exactly the picture

Revelation paints.

Revelation gives only one 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 known to believers in the first century. Jesus' parable of the wheat and tares shows that both would grow until the time of "harvest" when the angels would separate the two at Christ's command. James 5:7,8 also describes the rapture in terms of a harvest, applying Jesus' parable to the Church.

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)

Here we see the delay leading up to the rapture 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 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto 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 that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

(KJV)

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 14:18-20

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

19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

(KJV)

Comparing Scripture with Scripture is a fundamental technique of good Bible study. This is especially apparent in Revelation where allusions to Old Testament prophecy 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 Revelation 14:17-20 is drawn directly from Joel 3:12-16. Compare these two passages for yourself. 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.

The Day of the Lord...	Sun & Moon Darkened	Armies Gathered	Winepress of Wrath	Second Coming	Kingdom Follows
...In Joel 3	verse 15	verses 9-11	verse 13	verse 12, 16	verse 7-21
...In Revelation 14	-	verse 18	verse 19	-	-
...In Revelation 19	-	verse 19	verse 15	verse 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.

The uniform teaching of Jesus, Peter, and Paul, the absence of a pre-trib rapture in Revelation, and Revelation's description of a dual harvest, makes a very compelling case for the post-trib 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. [For further study of this concept, see the series of articles, "The Chronology of Revelation" found on the main page].

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The First Resurrection

Revelation 20:1-6

Tim Warner - 01/1998

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In Revelation 20, John described the resurrected saints being given places of authority in Christ's Kingdom.

Revelation 20

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

*5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. **This is the first resurrection.***

6 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. (KJV)

The "first resurrection" which includes the tribulation martyrs is the only resurrection in the book of Revelation. Notice that 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 post-tribulational, 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 to 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! 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 post-tribulation 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.***

(NKJ)

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.*

(NKJ)

John 11:24

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

(NKJ)

Some pre-tribbers claim that this resurrection cannot occur at the rapture because it follows the second coming in chapter 19. 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 at that time. 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. 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 are already reigning with Christ, 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 the 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.

*"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;"*

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" (KJV) in verse 4 is the Greek word "edothē" (a form of "didomi" #1325). This verb tense points to an action that occurred in the past but has continuing results into the present. 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 describing 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

"ezesan" a form of "zao" (life). In this tense, the verb means the state of living after having been raised. Here are three other verses that use precisely the same verb in the same tense.

Luke 15:32

*32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and **is alive again**; and was lost, and is found.*

(KJV)

Rev 2:8

*8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and **is alive**;*

(KJV)

Rev 13:14

*14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and **did live**.*

(KJV)

As you can see, in every case this verb means a state of living AFTER having been raised, not 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, let's 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.

*"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, where John was narrating what he saw, to his regressing in order to explain who these people are, (the bracketed portion). The reason he mentioned "souls" was NOT because he saw "souls," but to identify some of the ones reigning on thrones as the "souls" he had previously seen under the altar at the 5th seal.

Rev 6:9-11

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were 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, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

(KJV)

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 position 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 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.

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Technical Terms Associated with the Rapture

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"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 is 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 its 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 the term 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 single 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 post-trib.

John 16:33

33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.
(KJV)

Acts 14:22

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.
(KJV)

However, the over-all usage of technical terms in contexts dealing with the second coming weigh heavily in favor of the post-trib 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 it being pre- or post-trib. For example, *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*. These terms are used by Paul and others with the expectation that their readers knew that they referred to a specific single event. For example:

Phil 1:10

*10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till **the day of Christ**;*
(KJV)

Phil 2:16

*16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in **the day of Christ**, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*
(KJV)

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 pre-trib 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 POST-TRIB technical term, and the above verses are referring to a post-trib rapture.

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 shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in **the day of our Lord Jesus Christ**.*
(KJV)

2 Cor 1:14

*14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in **the day of the Lord Jesus**.*
(KJV)

Phil 1:6

*6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until **the day of Jesus Christ**:*
(KJV)

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, ie, 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-trib). This is very problematic for pre-tribbers, because, if the Apostles were pre-trib (and expected two future comings of Christ, they would need to indicate to their hearers or readers whether they were referring to a pre- or post-trib event. Also, the term "Day of the Lord" was used repeatedly in the Old Testament in reference to Christ's post-trib coming to set up His Kingdom (see: Isa. 13:1-13, Joel 3:9-17, Zech. 14:1-6). And, it is clearly 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.

Pre-tribbers have in the past (not so much anymore) tried to draw a distinction between the "Day of Christ" (pre-trib rapture) and the "Day of the Lord" (post-trib 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 post-trib 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 pre-tribber 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) pre-trib rapture and post-trib coming, and expected his audience to decipher which he meant with no clue in the context.

The Elusive Search for a Biblical Pre-Trib Term for the Rapture

There is a conspicuous lack of a single technical term in the Bible for a pre-trib rapture (as distinct from the second coming). Pre-tribbers have frantically searched for one, but always come up short. Having failed the "Day of Christ/Day of the Lord" distinction, they 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 pre-trib rapture. 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 pre-tribbers. Their uniform use of this term demonstrates the absolute necessity of having SOME kind of technical term for the 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 the word found in the following verse.

1 Thess 4:17

*17 Then we which 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 so shall we ever be with the Lord. (KJV)*

However, such a word CANNOT be a technical term for an alleged pre-trib rapture because;

- a) it is a verb and not a noun in Scripture
- b) 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 pre-trib event, but are also used in clearly post-trib contexts.

As pointed out already, pre-tribbers 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 post-trib (to distinguish the post-trib coming from an alleged pre-trib coming)? If the pre-trib theory were true, we would expect that the term "revelation" would ONLY be used of the post-trib event (as opposed to the alleged pre-trib 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 post-trib 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 post-trib 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 post-trib 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 post-trib event: 2 Thess. 1:7

The bottom line is this: Post-tribbers 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*). Pre-tribbers are forced to abandon all of these as technical terms for the rapture (because they are used at least once in a clear post-trib context). Instead they wrongly use a verb (harpazo - "caught up") as a noun (rapture) in order to INVENT a non-biblical technical term for an alleged pre-trib 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 pre-trib coming should give pre-tribbers considerable pause that they may be forcing the Scriptures to fit into their preconceived mold.

Misuse of the Word "Church" as a Technical Term

A second abuse of biblical terminology by pre-tribbers is their false and misleading usage of the word "Church." Their usage is governed by the dispensational parameters they have erected. To a pre-tribber, 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" (a non-biblical term) has been coined to delineate the parameters of the "Church" on earth. But, once again, the Scriptures transgress the pre-trib jargon. Or more accurately, pre-trib jargon transgresses the Scriptural precedents and norms of terminology.

Jesus gave instructions in Matthew 18:17 regarding Church discipline, within a book that pre-tribbers strenuously claim is not related to the Church, and was written prior to the Church being established in the 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 pre-tribbers have. Once again we find pre-tribbers being forced to use artificial technical terminology that is NOT in agreement with the biblical precedent and common usage. We don't let cults or Catholics get away with such subtle shell games with biblical words, why do we permit it by pre-tribbers? The simple fact is, the wrong usage of terminology by pre-tribbers, and artificial distinctions in their jargon, are glaring indicators of a system that is being forced on the Scriptures.

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The Dispensational Foundations of Pre-Tribulationism

Tim Warner - 10/2000

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Pre-tribulationism is based on a system of interpretation called "dispensationalism." The word "dispensation" means to "dispense." The same Greek word is used in the New Testament for "stewardship." It carries the idea of a certain program or economy whereby God deals with mankind. (It does not directly refer to a period of time, as is commonly believed).

Dispensationalists see a progression of economies, but are not unanimously agreed on how many, or how to divide them. The simplest form of dispensationalism recognizes at least three separate dispensations, the Old Covenant, the Church age, and the Millennium. Almost all Christians accept some form of dispensationalism, even though they may not call themselves "dispensationalists," (if we mean by the term that God has dealt with people under more than one "economy" or "arrangement."

Not all dispensationalists are pre-trib. Some are mid-trib, pre-wrath, and even post-trib. However, the distinguishing characteristic of pre-trib dispensationalists is their belief in **a dual purpose and dual plan of redemption** in which the "Church" is separate from all other saints, in redemption, purpose, and destiny. This "dual purpose" theory, and segregation of the saints, within dispensational theology is what lays the logical foundation for a pre-trib rapture.

Pre-tribulationists have primarily allowed the "dual purpose" dispensational foundation to carry the weight of pre-tribulationism, rather than developing the pre-trib view from exposition of passages related to eschatology (the study of end-times). In essence, the pre-trib view is the only logical outcome of a "dual program" theory for Israel and the Church.

The question is, does the Bible teach a "dual purpose," "dual program," and "dual people of God?" Is this element of modern dispensationalism really Biblical or even necessary? Or is there a more holistic plan of redemption with a single people of God, manifest in different ways in different dispensations?

While many of the elements of dispensationalism were clearly taught by the Early Church, including the restoration of national Israel and a Millennial Kingdom, they did not segregate saints into two camps, Israel and the Church, or hold to "dual programs" or "dual destinies." During the earliest days of Christianity, the Church was primarily Jewish. Outsiders considered Christianity just another sect within Judaism, like the Pharisees or Sadducees. Early Messianic Christians believed they were the true Israel, and unbelieving Jews had been cut off from Israel and the covenants of God because of their unbelief. This contributed to the friction between early believers and their Jewish brethren, with unbelieving Jews persecuting the Jewish Christians at every turn. As missionary activity branched out from Jerusalem and Antioch, many Gentiles believed the gospel and were brought into fellowship as equal members with the Jewish Church. The embracing of Gentiles also irritated the unbelieving Jews almost as much as the Christian claim that Jesus was the Messiah. So, what we find in the first century is a theology that sees a clear continuity between many of the Old Testament promises and the Church. This is especially true of the promise of the "New Covenant" with Israel [Jer. 31:31-34].

After decades of the infant Church's persecution at the instigation of the unbelieving Jews, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans and the Jews scattered. Although the persecution

continued from the Romans, the pressure was off of the Church from the Jewish end. Many Christians couldn't help feeling a little superior to unbelieving Jews. After all, God had avenged them and demonstrated the triumph of Christianity over rabbinic Judaism. Jesus had predicted this catastrophe, showing that He was indeed the Son of God. As the Church grew over the next few centuries, being predominantly Gentile, this attitude began to develop into anti-Semitism in many local churches. We find Christian writers of the second and third centuries showing glimmers of scorn for the Jews. The Jewish and early Christian doctrine, that Messiah would come to restore Israel, fulfilling His Old Testament promises of a golden age, began to lose popularity among Christians.

This attitude gave birth to a fourth century heresy defined in Augustine's massive work, "The City of God." His interpretation held that God was finished with Israel. They had been rejected forever because they rejected Christ. The prophecies of the Old Testament, regarding a Millennial Kingdom with Jerusalem as the capital of the whole world, were reinterpreted symbolically, representing the Catholic "kingdom" of the "Church" in the present age. This system is known as "Replacement Theology" because the Old Testament prophecies are interpreted allegorically, and applied to the Gentile Church. So, effectively, the Church has usurped Israel's place and promises. The allegorizing of the Millennium and applying these passages to the present age of the Church is called "A-millennialism." Augustine replaced the Jewish "carnal" interpretation of a physical kingdom with his "spiritual" enlightened interpretation. In Augustine's view, when Jesus returns, this world will be destroyed and Christians will then enjoy heaven forever, with the Jews confined to hell. This view invited the subsequent persecution of Jews by the Roman Catholic Church for hundreds of years. It also became the theological excuse for the holocaust.

After the Reformation, most Protestants simply made a few modifications to Replacement Theology / A-millennialism, but continued to hold to its basic premise. However, some Protestants began to question the Catholic dogma. As Christians returned to a more literal interpretation of the Bible, many also returned to the ancient (pre-millennial) Christian view of prophecy, and the relationship between Christians and Jews. In this revived pre-millennialism, Christians were again seen as "adopted" into Israel, and unbelieving Israel temporarily "blinded" and separated from God, but soon to be restored. This is "historic" pre-millennialism, what the early Church believed prior to St. Augustine. Of course, historic pre-millennialism sees only one future coming of Jesus Christ, both to rescue the Church, and destroy the Babylonian system and the Beast (post-trib).

Out of the movement toward historic pre-millennialism, a new view began to take shape in the early 1800's. John Darby, of the Plymouth Brethren, developed a totally new approach to pre-millennialism. Darby's dispensational pre-millennialism featured this "dual programs" theory, keeping the Church entirely distinct from other saints, with Israel being God's "earthly people," and the Church being God's "heavenly people." According to Darbyism, the "Church age" is a parenthetical period in God's dealings with Israel. Typically, Darbyists like to say that "God's prophetic clock has stopped during this dispensation. It will resume when the Church is removed at the rapture." At that time God's dealings with man will revert back to the Old Testament economy. To them, the "Church age" began on the day of Pentecost, and will conclude just before God again deals with Israel, bringing judgment upon them in Daniel's seventieth week. The logical outcome of a "dual program" type of dispensationalism, is a pre-trib rapture. **If the "Church," as a completely distinct entity separate from Israel and its covenants and promises, began after the sixty-ninth week of Daniel, the "Church" cannot enter the seventieth week, because this is the time when God resumes His dealings with Israel, and begins the fulfillment of prophecy again relating to Israel. Therefore, a pre-tribulation rapture became a natural extension of Darby's theory, in order to provide the vehicle for the Church's exit just prior to God's dealing with national Israel again.**

While dispensationalism does indeed have a solid foundation, the "dual program" theory of Darbyism is its weakness, and will ultimately be its downfall. Many Christians have totally abandoned dispensationalism because of glaring problems, and the incompatibility of the "dual

programs" theory with the teaching of Apostles in the New Testament. In leaving dispensationalism completely, many have moved to Covenant Theology, A-millennialism, and Replacement Theology, totally abandoning the Millennial hope, and the future of the nation of Israel.

Dispensational thought is now in a state of radical change from within. Many dispensationalists have begun to see the serious flaws in the "dual program" theory. In the following articles, we will develop what has recently been called "Progressive Dispensationalism." Although the term itself was not coined until the late 1980s, the main elements of Progressive Dispensationalism were held by the early Church. This is the form of dispensationalism that I believe is biblical and balanced. Actually, progressive dispensationalism works with any rapture position, as long as it is pre-millennial and holds to a futurist view of the 70th week of Daniel. It does not require a pre-trib rapture, as traditional dispensationalism does. (This author is post-trib). But, neither does it require that one jettison pre-tribulationism. There are many pre-tribbers who hold to progressive dispensationalism. However, in my opinion, it is best suited for a post-trib understanding of the rapture, and it fits quite nicely with the post-trib view of the Olivet Discourse.

One attractive effect of the emergence of progressive dispensationalism is that many who had previously abandoned dispensationalism and pre-millennialism altogether, because of the glaring flaws in that system, are coming back to dispensationalism and pre-millennialism because progressive dispensationalism solves these problems. Even some non-dispensationalists are leaving a-millennialism and Covenant Theology for this form of dispensationalism. It is my belief that progressive dispensationalism will eventually displace traditional dispensationalism.

Of course, there are those who resist this movement, thinking that any move away from the "dual program" theory undermines the pre-trib rapture doctrine, that has become a test of orthodoxy in many circles. The pre-trib detractors are spreading fear that progressive dispensationalism leads to an "anti-Israel" mentality, or even to A-millennialism. I assure you, these charges are not true. Progressive dispensationalism holds the Jewish people in highest regard, recognizing them as God's natural sons, while Gentile believers are adopted sons. Progressives see a future for national Israel, just as traditional dispensationalists do. Progressives are pre-millennial, and are in no danger of becoming A-millennialists.

While much has been written on this topic, the vast majority of pro-PD material has been geared toward the seminary student and scholar, leaving the average layman and even many pastors in the dark. The following articles in this section are designed to lay out the essentials of progressive dispensationalism for you to evaluate in layman's terms.

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PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM 101

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METHOD OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Progressive Dispensationalism maintains the literal (normal) method of biblical interpretation as the default hermeneutic. Progressive Dispensationalists also rely heavily on the New Testament writers' interpretations and applications of Old Testament prophecy. This is more than simply applying a 'model' of interpretation based on a 'style' established by the New Testament writers. It is accepting their actual interpretations and applications of Old Testament prophecy at face value.

ARE PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISTS REALLY 'DISPENSATIONAL?'

Progressive dispensationalists are often accused of not being true 'dispensationalists.' This begs the question – what is a dispensationalist? Is a dispensationalist one who sees a series of 'dispensations' in God's dealings with mankind? Is a dispensationalist one who sees a future tribulation, followed by Christ's second coming to the earth to establish His Millennial Kingdom, with Israel inheriting the land promised her, and being head of the nations? Is a dispensationalist one who interprets Scripture literally? If these are what characterize dispensational beliefs, then surely progressive dispensationalists are true 'dispensationalists,' since we firmly hold to all of these things. Progressive dispensationalists therefore cannot rightly be charged with "replacement theology" – the belief that God is finished with Israel, and the Church has usurped all of the promises at Israel's expense.

DISTINCTIVES OF PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

Progressive Dispensationalists see a progression of dispensational economies in a single unfolding plan to redeem mankind. We acknowledge only one means of salvation for all time, by grace through faith. The effect of the sacrifice of Christ was retroactive for the Old Testament saints who died in faith [[Heb. 9:15](#)], **"that they should not be made perfect apart from us."** [[Heb. 11:40](#)]. It was God's original purpose *"that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth-- in Him."* [Eph. 1:10]. Paul was referring to an already accomplished union of Old Testament and New Testament saints. *"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."* [Eph. 3:14,15].

THE PRIMARY DIFFERENCE - 'PARENTHESIS' vs. 'PROGRESSION'

Traditional dispensationalists typically see the 'church age' as an interruption or parenthetical period in God's dealing with Israel. The church is seen as unrelated to Israel and the new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Believers of this dispensation are segregated from believers of other dispensations in purpose and destiny. Consequently, they see the new covenant as entirely future, concerning Israel during the Millennium. This segregation of saints is best seen in the concept of the 'Church' being exclusively the Bride of Christ to the exclusion of other saints. Progressive dispensationalists however believe the 'church age' is the fulfillment of certain promises in the Old Testament, regarding the new covenant, and salvation of Gentiles. Rather than being unrelated to God's program for Israel, the Church is an integral part of that program, and is currently participating in the new covenant promises in this dispensation. Progressive dispensationalists believe the New Covenant was inaugurated by Jesus Himself, by shedding His blood, [[Luke 22:20](#), [Heb. 8:6](#), [Heb. 9:15](#)]. Jeremiah prophesied the New Covenant would be made with Israel [[Jer. 31:31-34](#)]. A look at the Gospels shows the 'good news' was originally presented to Israel exclusively. In fact, when Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the gospel the first time He explicitly told them not to preach to Gentiles [[Matt. 10:5,6](#)]. Later we find Paul's acknowledgment of this fact with the words, *"to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* [[Rom. 1:16](#), [2:9,10](#)]. The crucial difference can be summed up as

whether the Church is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and whether saints of various dispensations should be seen as segregated.

JESUS INAUGURATED THE NEW COVENANT - ISRAEL NOT CAST ASIDE

God did not cast Israel aside, or withdraw the offer of the New Covenant because of Israel's rejection. Rather, Jesus established the New Covenant with a believing remnant of Israel, His Jewish disciples. Jesus said to them, ***"This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."*** [Luke 22:20]. In Romans 11, Paul argued strenuously that God has NOT cast Israel aside. *"I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. ... Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace."* [Rom. 11:1,2,5]. Paul's point is NOT that God's program for Israel has been suspended, as Traditional Dispensationalism teaches, or even that God is finished with Israel, as 'Replacement Theology' teaches. Rather, *"blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."* [vs. 25]. **Consequently, part of Israel was not blinded. It was with this remnant that Jesus established the New Covenant.**[[Rom. 11: 16-29](#)]

Paul concluded his thought in Romans eleven with the parable of the Olive Tree. Jews who did not accept Jesus were likened to natural branches broken off of the olive tree. That some natural branches remained in the tree, both before and after the unbelievers were broken off and wild branches grafted in, **demonstrates a CONTINUOUS status of believing Jews both before and after Christ.** The grafting in of the wild branches shows a uniting of Gentiles with the believing part of Israel. So, in effect, Paul has illustrated a continuation of God's fulfilling His covenants and promises with Israel in this dispensation, albeit with only a remnant. But, isn't that the way it has always been? Only a small remnant went into the 'promised land.' Only a small remnant returned from the Babylonian captivity. And only a remnant have received the New Covenant.

The fact that Gentiles of this dispensation partake in the Jewish covenants and blessings is clearly established in Scripture. For example, Paul encouraged the Gentile saints to collect an offering for their Jewish brethren in Jerusalem who were in need. ***"For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things."*** [Rom. 15:27]

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT AND THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

Some progressive dispensationalists believe the [Davidic Covenant](#) is also partially fulfilled during this dispensation, with Christ seated on David's throne at the right hand of the Father. This in no way diminishes His future reigning in the Millennium. However, this is NOT a crucial issue within progressive dispensationalism. Other progressive dispensationalists, including this author, agree with traditional dispensationalists that this covenant will only be inaugurated upon the second coming. On Palm Sunday, the crowds cried, ***"Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"*** [Matt. 21:9]. This was the crowd's acknowledgment that Jesus was the one to fulfill the Davidic Covenant, and they expected Him to assume the throne immediately, [see: [Luke 19:11](#)]. However, when the scribes and priests heard the crowd call Jesus the "Son of David" they were "sore displeased." A few days later, after Jesus' scathing denouncement of the Scribes and Pharisees, He said, *"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."* [Matt. 23:38,39]. Jesus implied that taking His seat as King of Israel, in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, was suspended until Israel repents as a nation. This will only occur at the second coming of Jesus, when they *"look on Him whom they have pierced"* [Zech. 12:10], and then *"all Israel shall be saved,"* [Rom. 11:26]. That the Davidic Covenant will only be inaugurated when Israel is restored is clearly stated in [Jeremiah 23:5-8](#).

PROBLEMS OF TRADITIONAL DISPENSATIONALISM RESOLVED IN PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

Major Problem #1 Old Testament Prophecy applied to the Church by New Testament writers.

If the present dispensation is a 'parenthesis' in God's plan for Israel, and the Church is not related to OT prophecy, we would not expect New Testament writers to apply Old Testament prophecy to the Church. Yet, there are many examples of this very thing. The most obvious example is the Day of Pentecost, where Peter interpreted the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Church as the direct fulfillment of [Joel 2:28-32](#). Notice, Peter said, *"this IS that which was spoken by the prophet Joel."* [[Acts 2:15-21](#)]. Peter's application of Joel fits right in with Progressive Dispensationalism. A few other noteworthy cases of Old Testament prophecy directly applied to the Church, are as follows: [Acts 10:43](#), [Acts 15:14-18](#), [Rom. 1:1,2](#), [Rom. 4:13-17,23,24](#), [Rom. 9:32,33](#), [Rom. 15:4,8-10](#), [2 Cor. 6:16-7:1](#).

Major Problem #2 The New Covenant, promised to Israel, is now in force.

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth regarding their observance of the Lord's Supper, as a reminder of Jesus' establishment of the New Covenant. *"In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, **"This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."** For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."* [1 Cor 11:25-26]. This would hardly be appropriate had the New Covenant not been inaugurated, or if it applied exclusively to physical Israel. Paul also saw himself as having a role in the spread of the New Covenant among the Gentiles. *"Who also made us sufficient as **ministers of the new covenant.**"* [2 Cor. 3:6]. Jesus was the *"mediator of a better covenant, which **was established** [past tense] on better promises"* [[Heb. 8:6-13](#)]. The writer then quoted [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) and applied the prophecy of the New Covenant to the Church. This is not to say that everything related to the New Covenant has been completely fulfilled. Jeremiah's prophecy said *"after those days ... all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them."* The universal acceptance of the New Covenant by Israel will only occur **after** the partial blindness is removed. With the Mosaic Covenant, most of the promises and benefits pertained to their dwelling in the 'promised land.' Yet, these promises were not realized by the very generation who received them! For more than 40 years they wandered in the wilderness. Does this mean the Covenant made at Mt Sinai was suspended while they wandered in the wilderness? No! They simply had to wait until they reached Canaan before they could enjoy the full benefits of this covenant put into place at Mt. Sinai. The same is true of Israel under the New Covenant. The 'promised land' of the New Covenant is the Millennial Kingdom.

Major problem #3 God Continues to Deal with Israel in this Dispensation.

Certain things have and are occurring in Israel's history since the Day of Pentecost that are the direct fulfillment of prophecy. This makes the traditional dispensational 'parenthetical' theory untenable.

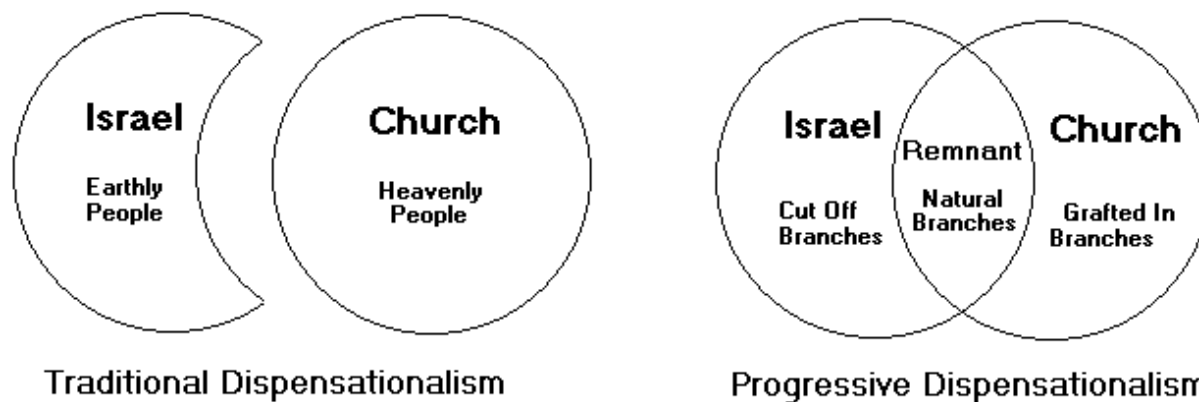
- a. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was the direct fulfillment of [Daniel 9:26](#).
- b. The regathering of Israel into their land is the likely fulfillment of [Ezekiel 37](#).
- c. God is also using the salvation of the Gentiles to provoke (unbelieving) Israel to jealousy. [[Rom. 10:18,19 & 11:11](#)].

Major Problem #4 Only a Remnant of Old Testament Israel is Saved.

Dispensationalists speak of "Israel" and the "Church" as two distinct peoples of God. While all true members of the "Church" are saved, and will be resurrected at the resurrection of the just, this is not the case with Israel. Traditional Dispensationalists are comparing apples to oranges here, when they refer to two different peoples of God. Israel is a "nation," not a spiritual entity. Dispensationalists fail to address the fact that the Old Testament promises to Israel will be fulfilled literally in the Millennium, but ONLY by the righteous remnant who are raised at the resurrection of the Just. [[Daniel 12:1-3,13](#), [Mal. 3:16 - 4:3](#), [Rom. 11:2-5](#)]. Most of Israel is lost. This has been true throughout their entire history. The unfaithful majority of Israel will not be resurrected or inherit anything in the Kingdom. Dispensationalists speak of "Israel" as a nation, yet they fail to clearly distinguish the believers from the unbelievers within Israel. Consequently, they speak of the Old Testament promises being fulfilled for "Israel" in the Millennium, yet imply that this is merely all the Jews still alive after the tribulation. They have forgotten about all of the saints of Hebrews 11 from the Old Testament, who will receive the literal fulfillment of those promises to Israel in the Millennium, **in resurrected bodies**.

Progressive dispensationalists have simply taken this fact to its logical conclusion. Jews saved after Christ are still as much "Jews" as are the patriarchs, and will still partake of the promises along with the patriarchs, **in resurrected bodies**. All saints make up the "Church." Yet, Jewish believers have special promises from the Old Testament that are not cancelled for them just because they happen to live after Pentecost.

Progressive dispensationalism maintains the distinction between Israel and the Church, not by segregating them into two separate "peoples of God." But, by nationality, and recognizing that one group is merely a nation, and the other a spiritual entity. Israel is a nation made up of believers and unbelievers. The Church is a spiritual organism made up of the remnant of Jewish believers and the remnant of Gentile believers. Consequently, we have three entities - the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God - the Church having members from both groups. The Jewish Millennial inheritance will be realized by the Jewish members of the Church. And the general promises of inheritance will be realized by the whole Church.



Major Problem #5 Multiple Plans of Salvation

Many traditional dispensationalists have devised different plans of salvation for Israel and the Church. Pre-tribulationists usually claim that during the tribulation, the plan of salvation will incorporate the Old Covenant in some way. Salvation for the Old Testament saints is seen as having to do with works along with faith. Progressive dispensationalists see only one means of eternal salvation, through the blood of Christ. All saints are united in Christ by the blood of Christ, regardless of whether they lived before or after the cross. Animal sacrifices "could never take away sin." For the Old Testament saints who died in faith, Jesus' blood sacrifice is retroactive for them, to purchase eternal redemption for them after the fact. Hence, Paul, in Hebrews nine proclaims, *"And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, **for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant**, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."* (Heb. 9:15). And after giving a list of some of these people of faith from the Old Testament, he writes, *"And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us."* (Heb. 11:39,40). Eternal redemption and the promise of eternal inheritance comes only through the blood of Christ via the New Covenant. Old Testament saints are brought into the New Covenant, and made complete along with us.

PAUL AFFIRMS THE BASIC PREMISE OF PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

That Paul did not hold to Traditional Dispensationalism or a 'parenthetical Church age' is clearly indicated in his defense before Agrippa. He saw his mission to the Gentiles as the fulfillment of Israel's hope! **"And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews."** [Acts 26:6,7]. Paul then recounted his conversion on the road to Damascus, and Jesus' sending him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. *"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ... "having*

*obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, **saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come-- "that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."*** [Acts 26:19-23]

DEVELOPING THE BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

1. [Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 8:6-13, 9:14,15, & 10:9-17](#). The New Covenant, promised to Israel is now in force.
2. [Matthew 21:33-44, Luke 12:31,32, & Luke 22:28-30](#). Since the rulers of the Jews rejected Jesus, the positions of authority in Messiah's Kingdom was taken from them and given to the Jewish Disciples.
3. [Matthew 8:11,12, Matt. 19:27-29, Luke 13:26-29, John 10:16, Hebrews 11:39,40](#). The Kingdom was also given to Gentile saints along with the believing Jewish remnant. (Notice the unified relationship between the Gentile saints and the Old Testament saints). All are 'one fold' and covered by the blood of Jesus.
4. [Romans 2:28,29, Romans 4:13-16, Romans 9:6-8, Hebrews 6:12-20](#). Real 'Jews' in this dispensation are those with a circumcised heart. As adopted sons of Abraham, Gentiles also receive the Old Testament promises.
5. [Romans 11:1-7, Romans 11:16-27](#). Not all Israel rejected Jesus Christ. The disciples and many other Jews believed. The rest were blinded. God fulfilled His "NC with the house of Israel" in the Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, and believing Gentiles were 'grafted in.'
6. [Romans 1:16, Rom 15:8-12,26,27](#). Jesus came to the Jews first. The Gentiles being added to the faithful remnant of Israel fulfills several Old Testament prophecies according to Paul, Psalm 18:49, Deut. 32:43, Psalm 117:1, Isa. 11:1,10. The Gentiles are partakers of the Jewish blessing, [vs. 26,27].
7. [Galatians 3:6-29](#). Gentiles are the adopted children of Abraham. Because we are 'in Christ,' we are heirs of the Old Testament promises.
8. [Galatians 4:4-7, Galatians 6:15,16](#). God established His New Covenant with THOSE WHO WERE UNDER THE LAW (Jews), then believing Israel received ADOPTED SONS (Gentiles). We now have the same blessings and promises as natural sons of Abraham.
9. [Ephesians 1:4-14, Eph. 3:14,15, Eph. 4:4- 10](#). Old Testament and New Testament saints are 'in Christ.' This union had already taken place prior to Paul's writing to the Ephesian church.
10. [Ephesians 2:11-22, Ephesians 3:4-6](#). Gentiles were formerly "*aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*" and "*strangers from the covenants of promise.*" Under the New Covenant we are "MADE NIGH" to Israel and are "fellow citizens," having become part of the "household of God." [see also Phil. 3:2,3]

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NOTES:

Heb 9:15

15 And for this reason **He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant** that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Heb 11:39-40

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,
40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Luke 22:20

20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Heb 8:6-8

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

8 Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Heb 9:15

15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Jer 31:31-34

31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--

32 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For

I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Matt 10:5-6

5 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans.

6 "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Rom 1:16

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Rom 2:9-10

9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;
10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Rom 11:16-29

16 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,

18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in."

20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.

21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

27 For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

28 Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.

29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Psalms 89:3-4

3 I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,
4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.
(KJV)

Psalms 132:11

11 The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.
(KJV)

Isaiah 9:6-7

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, **upon the throne of David**, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.
(KJV)

Luke 1:31-33

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.
32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: **and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:**
33 **And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.**
(KJV) [\[BACK\]](#)

Luke 19:11

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because **they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.**
(KJV) [\[BACK\]](#)

Jeremiah 23:5-8

5 "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.
6 In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.
7 "Therefore, behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that they shall no longer say, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,'
8 "but, 'As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.' And they shall dwell in their own land."
(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Joel 2:28-32

28 "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.
29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke.
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.
32 And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls.
(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

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.'
(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Acts 10:43

43 "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."
(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Acts 15:14-18

14 "Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.
15 "And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:
16 'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up;
17 So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things.'
18 "Known to God from eternity are all His works.
(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Rom 1:1-2

1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God
2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,
(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Rom 4:13-17

13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

14 For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect,

15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

17 (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed-- God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;

(NKJ)

Rom 4:23-24

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him,

24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Rom 9:32-33

32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

33 As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Rom 15:4

4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

(NKJ)

Rom 15:8-10

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,

9 and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name."

10 And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!"

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

2 Cor 6:16-7:1

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

17 Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you."

18 "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Heb 8:6-13

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as **He is also Mediator of a better covenant**, which was established on better promises.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

8 Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when **I will make a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--

9 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

11 "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

12 "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

13 **In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.**

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Jer 31:31-34

31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--

32 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Dan 9:26

26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and **the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.**

(KJV) [\[BACK\]](#)

Ezek 37:1-14

1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,

2 And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

4 Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the

word of the LORD.

5 Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:

6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.

9 Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

11 Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.

12 Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

13 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

14 And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.

(KJV) [\[BACK\]](#)

Rom 10:18-19

18 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

19 But I say, did Israel not know? **First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."**

(NKJ)

Rom 11:11

11 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, **to provoke them to jealousy**, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Dan 12:1-3,13

1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. ...

13 But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

(KJV)

Mal 3:16-4:3

16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard

it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.

(KJV)

Rom 11:2-5

2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

(KJV) [\[BACK\]](#)

Jer 31:31-34

31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--**

32 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

(NKJ)

Heb 8:6-13

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as **He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.**

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11 "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

12 "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will

remember no more."

13 **In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete.** Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.
(NKJ)

Heb 9:14-15

14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

15 And for this reason **He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death**, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.
(NKJ)

Heb 10:9-17

9 then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second.

10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
11 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,

13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.

14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

15 But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,

16 **"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"**

17 then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Matt 21:33-44

33 "Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.

34 "Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit.

35 "And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another.

36 "Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them.

37 "Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

38 "But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.'

39 "So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?"

41 They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

43 **"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.**

44 "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

(NKJ)

Luke 12:31-32

31 "But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.

32 **"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**
(NKJ)

Luke 22:28-30

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."

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Matt 8:11-12

11 "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.**

12 "But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

(NKJ)

Matt 19:27-29

27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?"

28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that **in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

29 **"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.**

(NKJ)

Luke 13:26-29

26 "then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.'

27 "But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'

28 "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, **when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.**

29 **"They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.**

(NKJ)

John 10:16

16 "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

(NKJ)

Heb 11:39-40

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

40 God having provided something better for us, **that they should not be made perfect apart from us.**

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Rom 2:28-29

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;

29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the

letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.
(NKJ)

Rom 4:13-16

13 For **the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.**

14 For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect,
15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, **so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.**

(NKJ)

Rom 9:6-8

6 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,
7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."

8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but **the children of the promise are counted as the seed.**

(NKJ)

Heb 6:12-20

12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who **through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

13 For **when God made a promise to Abraham**, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, **he obtained the promise.**

16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.

17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly **to the heirs of promise** the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,

18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.**

19 **This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast**, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Rom 11:1-7

1 I say then, **has God cast away His people? Certainly not!** For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

2 **God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.** Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying,

3 "Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life?"

4 But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

5 **Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.**

6 And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

7 What then? **Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.**

(NKJ)

Rom 11:16-27

16 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

17 And **if some of the branches were broken off**, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,

18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in."

20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.

21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

27 For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Rom 1:16

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, **for the Jew first and also for the Greek.**

(NKJ)

Rom 15:8-12

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, **to confirm the promises made to the fathers,**

9 and **that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name."**

10 And again he says: "**Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!**"

11 And again: "**Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!**"

12 And again, Isaiah says: "**There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope.**"

(NKJ)

Rom 15:26-27

26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.

27 It pleased them indeed, and **they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.**

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Gal 3:6-29

6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

7 Therefore know that **only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.**

8 **And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."**

9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"),

14 **that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**

15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.

16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.

17 And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.

18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

20 Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 **And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Gal 4:4-7

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

(NKJ)

Gal 6:15-16

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon **the Israel of God.**

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Eph 1:4-14

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,
5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,
6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.
7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace
8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,
9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,
10 **that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth-- in Him.**
11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.
13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,
14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.
(NKJ)

Eph 3:14-15

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
15 **from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,**
(NKJ)

Eph 4:4-10

4 **There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism;**
6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.
7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.
8 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men."
9 (Now this, "He ascended"-- what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?
10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)
(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

Eph 2:11-22

11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands--
12 that at that time **you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.**
13 **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**
14 For He Himself is our peace, **who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,**
15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in

ordinances, **so as to create in Himself one new man from the two**, thus making peace,
16 and **that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross**, thereby
putting to death the enmity.

17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

19 **Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,**

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone,

21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

(NKJ)

Eph 3:4-6

4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

6 **that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body**, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,

(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

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PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM 102

Tim Warner - 10/2000

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The Old Covenant

In the following diagrams, above the center line represents Israel, and below the line represents the Gentiles. Notice, in figure 1, Israel under the Old Covenant is divided into believers (light green) and unbelievers (tan). While the Scriptures still recognize all of the physical descendants of Jacob as 'Israel,' there is clearly a distinction to be made between the faithful remnant of Israel and the majority of the nation that rejected God and His covenant all throughout their history, [[1 Kings 19:13-15,18](#), [Mal. 3:13-18](#), [Matt. 23:29-33](#)].

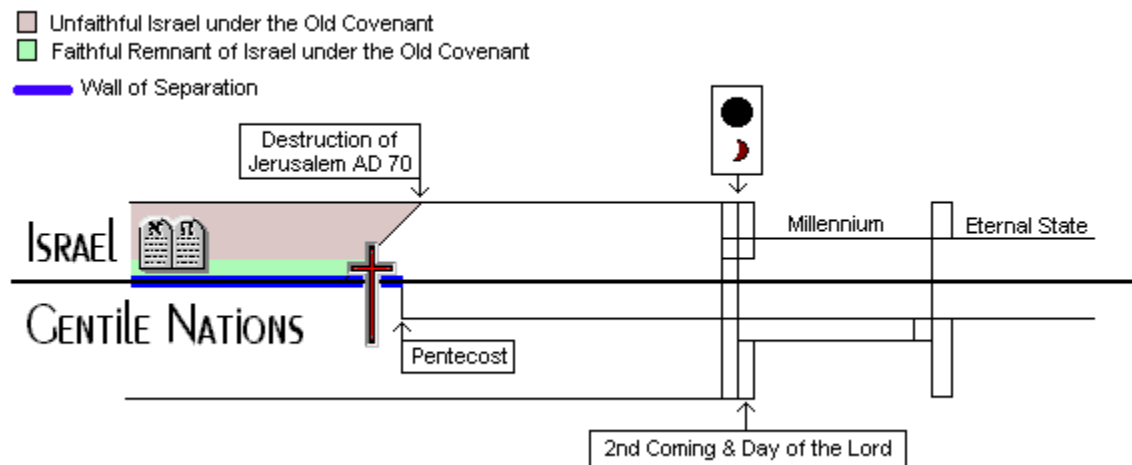


Figure 1

The New Covenant

The New Covenant was made with Israel, but only a small remnant embraced it by accepting Jesus Christ, [[Matt. 26:27,28](#), [Rom. 11:1-5](#)]. The faithful remnant of the Old Testament were justified at the time of Christ's death. His sacrifice retroactively atoned for the sins of the OT saints who died in faith, [[Heb. 9:15](#)]. They are therefore joined with us 'in Christ,' [[Heb. 11:39,40](#)]. Notice, in figure 2, the angled line represents the end of the Old Covenant. There was a gradual passing away of the Old Covenant over a period of 40 years (one generation), from the beginning of Jesus' ministry in AD30 until the destruction of the Temple in AD70. The writer of Hebrews wrote that the Old Covenant was made 'obsolete' by the New Covenant, and that it was in the **process** of passing away, [[Heb. 8:13](#)]. This was written shortly before AD70. So we have an overlapping of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant for one generation. Gentile believers are also included in the New Covenant, represented by the light blue section below the center line.

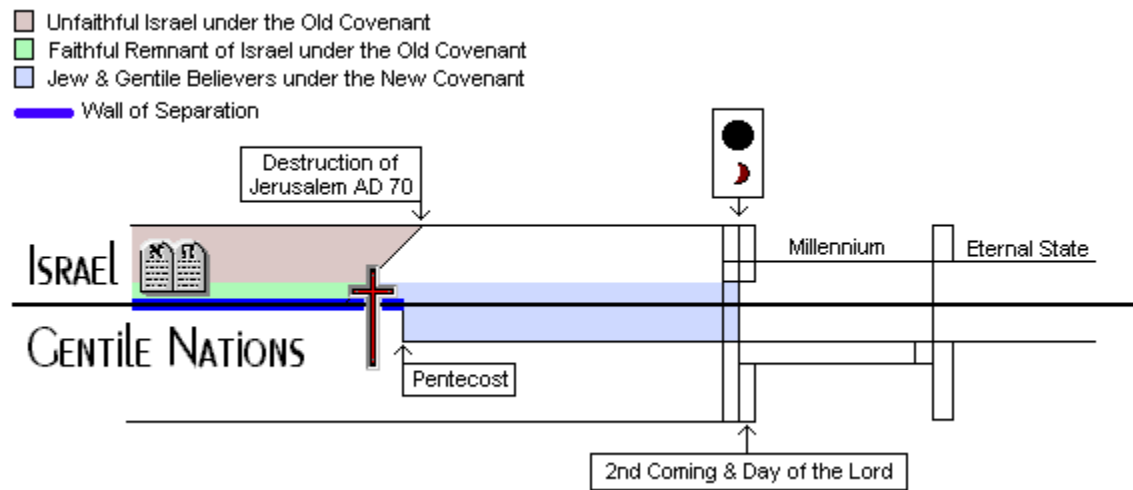
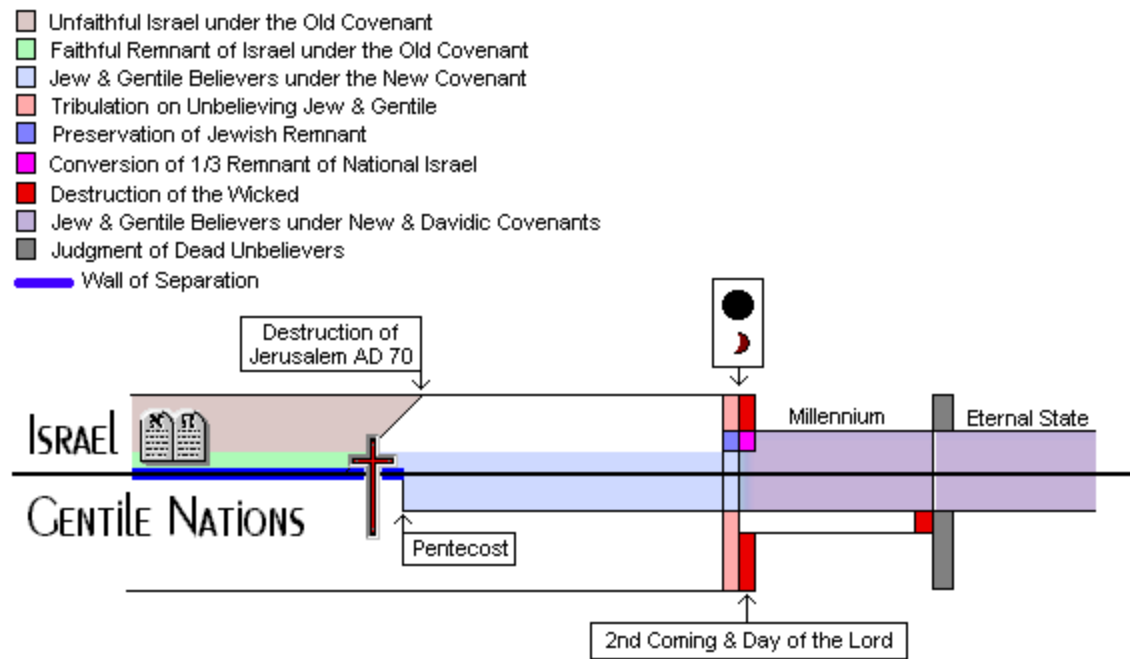


Figure 2

Things to Come - Tribulation, Day of the Lord, Millennium, Eternal State

At the end of the age, a brief period of 'great tribulation' will overtake the world. There will be three classes of people affected. In figure 3, the light pink represents unbelievers, both Jew and Gentile, that will suffer through this period. The light blue represents Christians in the tribulation. And the dark blue represents a remnant of Israel that will receive special protection and provision by God, even though they do not as yet believe the Gospel. [See: [Rom. 11:25-29](#), [Rev. 12:6,13-16](#)].

The 'Day of the Lord' follows the tribulation. This is the day of Christ's return. The hot pink section represents the remnant of unbelieving Israel that God supernaturally will protect in the tribulation. This remnant will resist the Antichrist, and be saved in a moment, when they see Jesus returning in power, the partial blindness being removed from their eyes, [[Zech. 12:9,10 & 13:1](#), [Joel 3:14-16,21](#), [Rom. 11:26,27](#)]. The Bible says this remnant of Israel will be 1/3 of the surviving nation at the end of the tribulation. The rest will be destroyed, [[Zech. 13:7-9](#), [Zeph. 1:4-18](#), [Mal. 3:13-4:3](#)]. (The 2/3 destroyed are probably those who worshipped the Anti-Messiah). The red sections represent those who will be destroyed at Christ's coming, both Jew and Gentile.



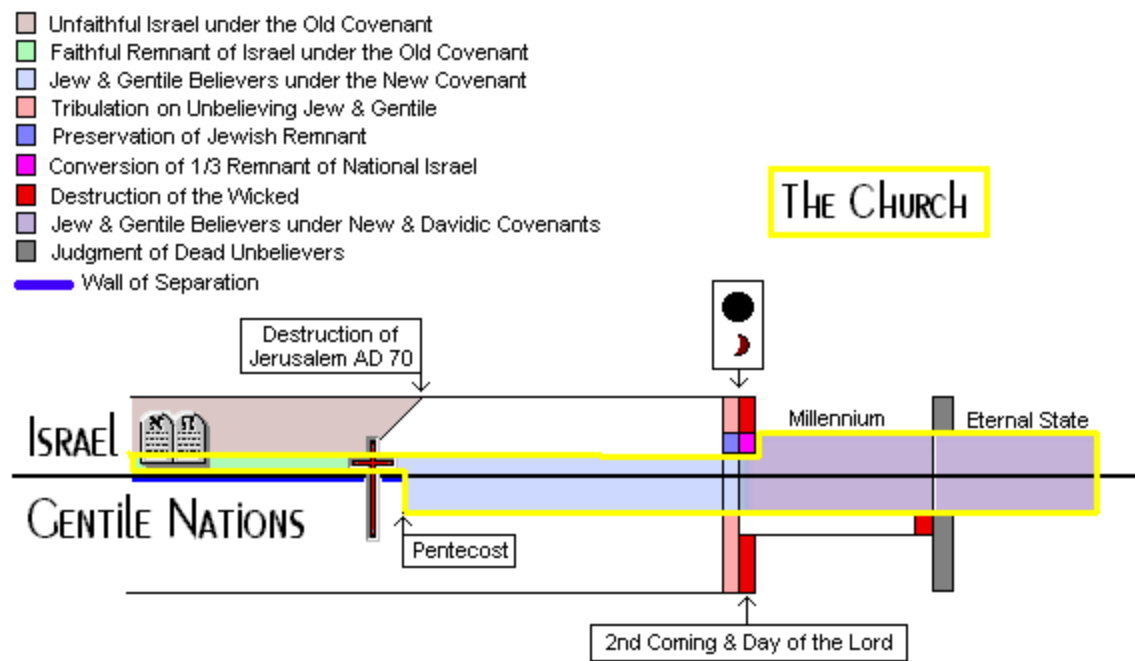
The purple sections represent both believing Israel and believing Gentiles. During the Millennium both will be under the full realization of the New Covenant (all of Israel will know God, having their sins forgiven [[Jer. 31:33,34](#)]), as well as the Davidic Covenant, when Jesus will rule the nations from Jerusalem, [[Jer. 33:14-17](#)].

The white section in the 'Millennium' represents a remnant of Gentile mortals who will survive the Battle of Armageddon, and enter the Millennium, [[Zech. 14:16,17](#), [Isa. 14:1,2](#)]. These are the 'nations' that Christ will rule with a 'rod of iron,' [[Rev. 19:14-16](#)]. This remnant will spawn the great army that will rebel against Christ at the end of the Millennium, [[Rev. 20:7-10](#)]. The dark grey section represents the Last Judgment of the dead unbelievers.

The Church

Traditional dispensationalists use the word 'Church' to distinguish believers between Pentecost and the rapture from all other saints. This contemporary dispensational meaning is absolutely contrary to biblical and historical usage. The Greek word 'eklessia' is NOT used in the Bible exclusively of New Testament believers. Steven referred to Israel as "*the **church** in the wilderness*" in [Acts 7:38](#). The writer of Hebrews quoted Psalm 22:22 (from the LXX), and used the Greek word 'eklessia' for congregation [[Heb. 2:12](#)]. Furthermore, the LXX - Greek translation (200BC) of the OT used by the Apostles and the early Christians - uses the word 'eklessia' many times in reference to the people of God in the Old Testament. Therefore, the early Christians who used this translation would NOT see this word as having exclusively post-Pentecost / pre-rapture connotations!

Progressive dispensationalists see the word 'church' (when used in the universal sense) in the biblical and historical context. Therefore, the universal 'Church' today is all saints of all ages, and includes ALL who's names are written in heaven [[Heb. 12:23](#)].



Some, no doubt, will object that Jesus referred to "my Church" in the future tense [[Matt. 16:18](#)]. This is true. However, the building of Jesus' 'Church' is in reference to the Old Testament believers being brought under the blood of Christ after the crucifixion [[Heb. 9:15](#)]. The very first act of Jesus after His crucifixion was to gather the OT saints into the New Covenant. This occurred prior to Pentecost. Both Jew and Gentile from all dispensations must be brought under the New Covenant in order to partake of eternal life. The 'Church,' from a New Testament perspective, includes all saints who possess eternal salvation. Paul wrote of "those in heaven" (OT saints) and "those on earth" (NT saints of the first century) as being joined together "in Christ" [[Eph. 1:9,10](#)]. That this joining of both the Old Testament and New Testament saints had already occurred when Paul wrote is seen from his use of the present tense when referring to this united group of saints as "the whole family" in both heaven and earth named after Christ [[Eph. 3:14,15](#)].

Physical Israel

All of the natural descendants of Jacob are seen as physical 'Israel' in the Bible. Progressive dispensationalists do not believe that Gentile believers replace Israel, and usurp Israel's promises and covenants. PDs continue to distinguish Israel as a nation to whom God has made many promises that will be literally fulfilled. Therefore, Israel is made up of both believers and unbelievers of all dispensations.

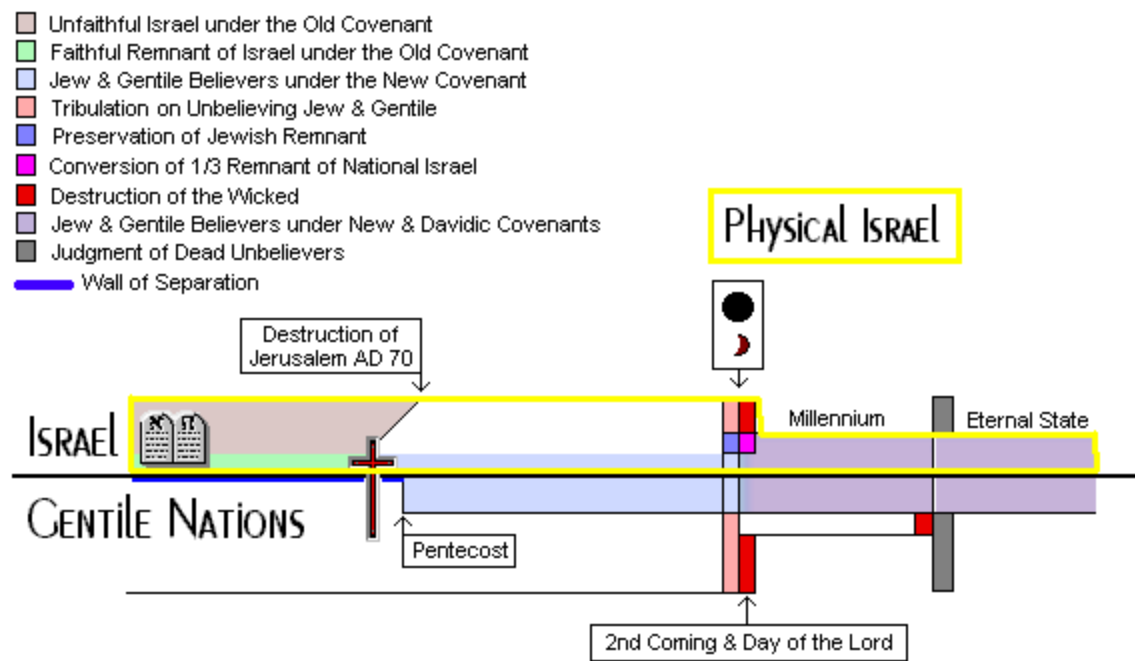


Figure 5

However, we must recognize that, while the covenants of God to Israel are unconditional (they will be realized by physical Israel no matter what individual Jews do), participation by individual Jews is conditional. Under the Old Covenant, individual Jews could either believe God and obey Him, or they could reject God's covenant and follow other gods (which many did). Likewise, once the New Covenant was introduced by Jesus, some Jews partook of the covenant by trusting Jesus, and some did not. At the end of the age, Israel's partial blindness will be removed and the remnant of Israel will believe and be restored to partake on both the New Covenant and the Davidic Covenant (Millennial Kingdom). Gentiles who believe the Gospel do not become 'Israel,' but only partake of Israel's covenants through being 'in Christ' [[Gal. 3:14,16,29](#)].

Spiritual Israel

There are a few places in the New Testament that refer to 'spiritual Israel' (Jews who are saved from all dispensations) as separate from physical Israel. The best illustration of this concept is found in Paul's epistle to the Romans.

Rom 2:28-29

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;
29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.
(NKJ)

Here Paul shows that to be a true 'Jew' **in God's sight**, it is not sufficient to merely point to one's heritage and the sign of circumcision. In Deut. 30:6, God said He would also circumcise the hearts of the Jewish people.

Deut 30:6

6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.
(KJV)

Likewise, God sometimes referred to the rebellious Jews as "uncircumcised in heart" [Lev. 26:41, Jer. 9:26]. Stephen repeated this accusation when addressing the Sanhedrin as "stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart," [Acts 7:55]. Paul's point was that the unbelieving Jews were "uncircumcised in heart" and this alienated them from the true Israel (the descendants of Jacob with whom God had fulfilled His promise in Deut. 30:6 to circumcise their hearts). Jews with "circumcised hearts" accepted Jesus as Messiah in Paul's day. Those with "uncircumcised hearts" did not.

Jesus also denied that the Scribes and Pharisees were "spiritual Israel," denouncing them as "*of your father the devil*" [John 8:39,44]. In the seven letters of Revelation, Jesus used even stronger language than this to deny that the Jews who persecuted Christians were truly of 'Israel' in God's sight, denouncing them as "*of the synagogue of Satan.*" [Rev. 2:9 & Rev. 3:9]. Finally, Paul spoke of the 'Israel of God' as a distinct entity within the Church [Gal. 6:15,16].

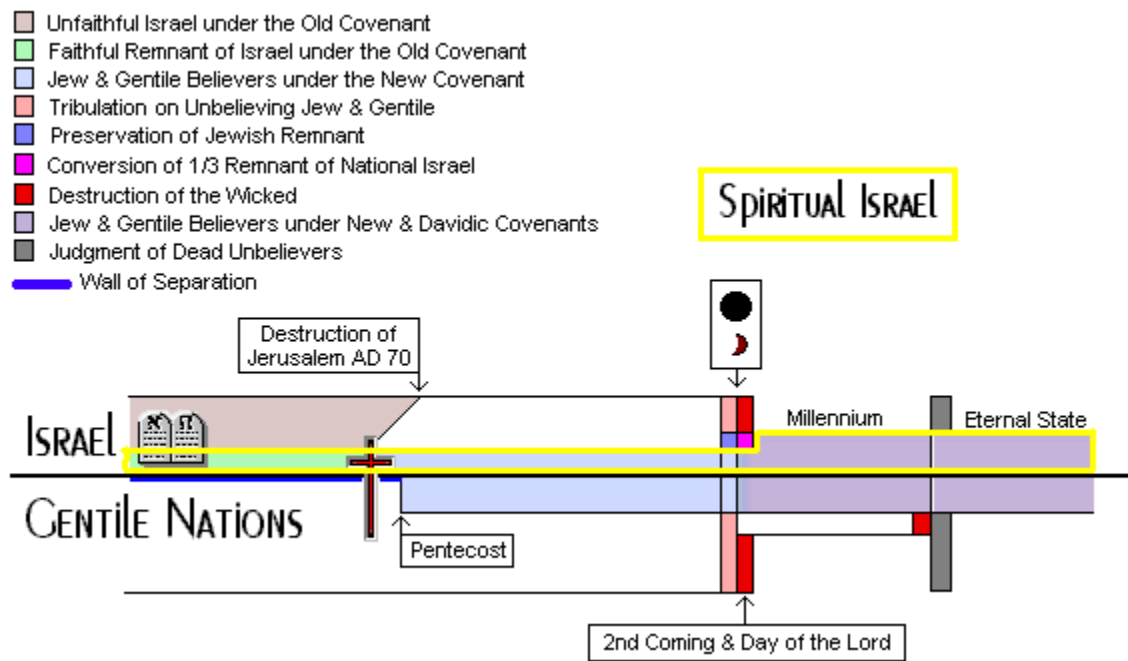


Figure 6

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[Go to: "That Prophet," and Israel's Division](#)



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NOTES:

IKing 19:13-15,18

13 So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

14 And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

15 Then the LORD said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when

you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. ...

18 "Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Mal 3:13-18

13 "Your words have been harsh against Me," says the LORD, "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?'

14 You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the LORD of hosts?'

15 So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; they even tempt God and go free."

16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name.

17 "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."

18 Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Matt 23:29-33

29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,

30 "and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'

31 "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

32 "Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt.

33 "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"

(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Matt 26:27-28

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

(NKJ)

Rom 11:1-5

1 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

2 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying,

3 "Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"?

4 But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

5 Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Heb 9:15

15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Heb 11:39-40

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,
40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Heb 8:13

13 In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Rom 11:25-29

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

27 For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

28 Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.

29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Rev 12:6,13-16

6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.

14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.

16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Zech 12:9-10 & 13:1

9 "It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

10 "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. ...

1 "In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

(NKJ)

Joel 3:14-16,21

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 the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. ...

21 For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.

(KJV)

Rom. 11:26,27

26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

27 For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Zech 13:7-9

7 "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion," says the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against the little ones.

8 And it shall come to pass in all the land," says the LORD, "That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but onethird shall be left in it:

9 I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

(NKJ)

Zeph 1:4-18

4 "I will stretch out My hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will cut off every trace of Baal from this place, the names of the idolatrous priests with the pagan priests--

5 Those who worship the host of heaven on the housetops; those who worship and swear oaths by the LORD, but who also swear by Milcom;

6 Those who have turned back from following the LORD, and have not sought the LORD, nor inquired of Him."

7 Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD; for the day of the LORD is at hand, for the LORD has prepared a sacrifice; he has invited His guests.

8 "And it shall be, in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel.

9 In the same day I will punish all those who leap over the threshold, who fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit.

10 "And there shall be on that day," says the LORD, "The sound of a mournful cry from the Fish Gate, a wailing from the Second Quarter, and a loud crashing from the hills.

11 Wail, you inhabitants of Maktesh! For all the merchant people are cut down; all those who handle money are cut off.

12 "And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in complacency, who say in their heart, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil.'
 13 Therefore their goods shall become booty, and their houses a desolation; they shall build houses, but not inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards, but not drink their wine."
 14 The great day of the LORD is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out.
 15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,
 16 A day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.
 17 "I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse."
 18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land.
 (NKJ)

Mal 3:13-4:3

13 "Your words have been harsh against Me," says the LORD, "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?'
 14 You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the LORD of hosts?
 15 So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; they even tempt God and go free.'"
 16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name.
 17 "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."
 18 Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.
 4:1 "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch.
 2 But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves.
 3 You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this," says the LORD of hosts.
 (NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Jer 31:33-34

33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.
 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.
 (KJV) [\[Back\]](#)

Jer 33:14-17

14 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will perform that good thing which I have

promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah:

15 'In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

16 In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'

17 "For thus says the LORD: 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel;

(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Zech 14:16-17

16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

(KJV)

Isa 14:1-2

1 For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.

2 And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.

(KJV) [\[Back\]](#)

Rev 19:14-16

14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

(KJV) [\[Back\]](#)

Rev 20:7-10

7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

(KJV) [\[Back\]](#)

Acts 7:38

38 This is he, that was in **the church in the wilderness** with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:
(KJV) [\[Back\]](#)

Heb 2:12

12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of **the church** will I sing praise unto thee.
(KJV) [\[Back\]](#)

Heb 12:23

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,
(KJV) [\[Back\]](#)

Matt 16:18

18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Heb 9:15

15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, **for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.**
(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Heb 11:39-40

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,
40 God having provided something better for us, **that they should not be made perfect apart from us.**
(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Eph 1:9-10

9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,
10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth-- in Him.
(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Eph 3:14-15

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,
(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Gal 3:14,16,29

14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. ...
16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. ...
29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
(NIV) [\[Back\]](#)

John 8:39,44

39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. ...
44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.
(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Rev 2:9

9 "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.
(NKJ)

Rev 3:9

9 "Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie - indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.
(NKJ) [\[Back\]](#)

Gal 6:15-16

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.
16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.
(NKJ) [\[BACK\]](#)

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Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

Introduction

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The Problem:

Even the casual student of Scripture is aware that the Old Testament and the New Testament present different approaches to how God deals with man. The Bible itself recognizes this. In John's prologue to his Gospel, he drew this distinction by saying, *"the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."* The book of Hebrews opens with a similar statement. *"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."* The entire book of Hebrews goes on to compare and contrast the "better covenant" with the Law given through Moses. Christianity must reconcile both Testaments in order to embrace the whole Bible as the Word of God. The apparent disparity between Testaments has led to the development of several theological systems.

Jesus and the Apostles handed down a complete system which harmonized both Old and New Testaments. However, from the very beginning men allowed their own human philosophies to color how they viewed the Scriptures. Just as Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, after his departure false teachers began to draw away disciples after themselves. Because of this, the early orthodox Christian churches found themselves competing with a variety of false pseudo-Christian cults, called Gnostics. They were forced to defend the Pristine Faith against these heresies springing up attempting to choke the Word of God and the primitive Church. While their struggle against heresies was difficult and often put the early Church in turmoil, it forced the orthodox Church to refine Christian apologetics, and put down in writing the oral teaching of the Apostles.

The Jewish Solution

The disparity between Testaments was not a problem for the Jews. They simply rejected Jesus Christ and the entire New Testament. To the Jews, the New Testament represented a false religion of the followers of an executed criminal. The "Father" Jesus proclaimed was not the God of Israel, in Jewish thinking. Moses was the final authority for the Jews. Jesus of Nazareth was an impostor.

The "Mystical" Solution - Gnosticism:

The Gnostics were a group of cult like sects who claimed to be Christian, yet rejected most of the Christian fundamentals. Some of these sects developed very early, while John was still alive. They multiplied greatly throughout the second century and became a real problem for the orthodox churches. Many of them found a home in Alexandria, Egypt, the center of philosophy and mystical thought. The prologue to John's Gospel (John ch. 1) and his first and second Epistles deal with an early form of Gnosticism. The Gnostics were mystics, heavily influenced by the Greek philosophers, particularly Plato. The Gnostic world view was vertical. That is, Greek thought viewed the cosmos as engaged in a dualistic struggle between heaven and hades, with the physical creation in the middle of this struggle. The primary premise of Gnosticism was that matter (the tangible creation and physical reality) is inherently evil. That is, the source of all evil that we see around us comes from physical matter. "Salvation" or escape from the influence of evil was to escape the physical creation. It was attaining to a higher spiritual heavenly reality which they called the "pleroma" (Greek for "fulness"). Gnostics viewed the earth and physical reality as the basest existence. Attaining the cosmic destiny by escaping the bondage of the physical creation was their ultimate goal. This goal

could be attained only through receiving mystical "gnosis" (hidden knowledge), and with the help of spiritual being called "Aeons."

Because Gnostics viewed the creation as corrupt and evil, they thought the Creator (the God of the Jews) was a defective God who imprisoned man with His laws and selfishly demanded worship. They claimed the God of the Old Testament was not the "Father" Jesus proclaimed, but a lesser god, a defective "Aeon." They got rid of the problem of harmonizing the Old and New Testaments with a dichotomy between "gods" who had completely different and conflicting "programs."

One of the best known Gnostic cults, followers of Marcion, claimed that only Paul's Epistles and Luke's Gospel were inspired. They used Paul's explanation of the "mystery" to claim that the new revelation of Gnosticism was not prophesied at all in the Old Testament. They flatly rejected the Old Testament concept of a restored creation and the Kingdom of God coming to earth. Rather, they envisioned a cosmic destiny for a special "elect," who, despite the bungling of the creator Aeon, had a divine spark within them. Because of their loathing of the material creation, they naturally denied the resurrection of the body, and a literal Kingdom of Christ on a restored earth. Gnostics relied heavily on allegorical interpretation of Scripture. To them, the real truths of Scripture were secret, meant only for this enlightened "elect." The secrets of Gnosticism were therefore not derived from the normal literal reading of the text of Scripture.

The Orthodox Solution - Chiliasm:

Early orthodox Christian writers denounced the Gnostic approach, and insisted on holding to what had been handed down by the Apostles. Irenaeus (AD120-202) wrote five volumes cataloging and refuting the beliefs of the various Gnostic cults. His approach was to demonstrate HARMONY between the Old Testament and New Testament. He proved from a multitude of Scripture citations and logical arguments that the present dispensation was prophesied in the Old Testament, and is the next step in a single progressive plan for the redemption of mankind. To the early orthodox Christians, the "mystery" was the Gospel contained in the Old Testament, hidden in such a way that it could not be understood until revealed by Jesus to His Apostles. Now, through the Church, it is being made known to all nations. It was no longer hidden.

The Gnostics sought to climb to a higher cosmic reality and to escape the lower physical creation through the accumulation of mystical knowledge. But, the orthodox Christians (and the Jews) had a horizontal world view. They viewed man's existence in consecutive ages within the created order. They believed the destiny of believers was Christ's coming eschatological Kingdom. Their hope was not a spiritual existence in the "pleroma," but the ***"restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began"*** (Acts 3:21). That is, the redemption of the physical creation at Christ's coming Kingdom. This theology was called "Chiliasm" (kil'-E-az-um) after the Greek word "chilia" (kil'-E-a) meaning "millennium." They were called this by later writers because they interpreted the 1000 year "millennium" in Rev. 20 literally.

Orthodox Christianity differed fundamentally from Gnosticism at its basic premise. That is, the creation was made by God, and was originally "good." God came into His creation, and began the restoration process through the incarnation of Christ, the God-man. The physical body of the Christian was destined for salvation. It was called "resurrection." Likewise, the rest of the creation was destined for renovation as well, in which resurrected mankind could enjoy intimate and tangible fellowship with the Creator.

The orthodox writers used the literal method of interpretation in both Testaments to support this position. Some of them also used "types" from the Old Testament as additional support, but not typically at the expense of the literal interpretation. (Sometimes this is confused with allegorical interpretation which claims non literal meanings at the expense of the literal meaning). They recognized that the "mystery" of which Paul wrote, was the Gospel contained in the Old Testament in enigmatic form so that it could not be understood until Christ came and revealed it to His Apostles, and then sent them out to all nations with the good news of the Kingdom.

Origen's Solution - Semi-Gnosticism:

The orthodox opinion about the creation and its destiny was not all that appealing to the educated Greeks. The idea that the material creation was to be redeemed, and the bodies of believers were destined for resurrection in a material form, was seen as silly to the intellectuals steeped in Greek philosophy. Origen, a third century Alexandrian writer, attempted to merge Christian orthodoxy with the same dualistic Greek philosophies that drove Gnostic thinking. Origen was skilled in Greek philosophy and Christianity. He attempted to make Christianity acceptable to students of Greek philosophy. In doing so, he went far beyond what the Apostles and prophets taught. He used an allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament to inject the philosophy of Plato into the Scriptures. Origen's theology had a familiar ring for Gentile Christians raised in the Greek culture steeped in philosophy, and seemed to harmonize the Bible with the familiar Greek poets. But, Origen's allegorical methodology subtly undermined the fabric of orthodoxy. By his skill in writing, his command of Greek philosophy, and his apparent zeal in winning over the intellectuals, Origen's influence began to sway Christian thinking away from Chiliasm.

While Origen acknowledged one God in both Testaments, he accepted the "cosmic destiny" ideas of Gnosticism, and opposed the eschatological physical Kingdom of Christ held by the orthodox writers before him. His world view was mostly vertical, like the Gnostics and Greek philosophers. Origen was a teacher, and head of the Alexandrian school. His theology was based on a teacher's mindset. Origen taught that the whole creation was a classroom for the education of mankind. God's interaction with man within the creation was a maturing process to make him fit for inhabiting his cosmic destiny. Origen believed souls existed prior to birth, but were sent to earth for training in the physical realm so they could excel in their "cosmic" roles after this training was ended. He denied the resurrection of the body for the saved. And he taught that in the end, everyone would be saved and achieve their cosmic destiny, including Satan himself!

Origen is considered the father of allegorical interpretation of Scripture at the expense of the literal meaning. Thanks to Origen, the allegorical interpretive methods, formerly used almost exclusively by Gnostics, became acceptable. It was Origen and his Alexandrian school that turned many of the churches away from the Pristine Faith to a hybrid orthodox - Hellenistic Faith. While Gnosticism itself, with its absurd speculations, was an external problem for the churches founded by the Apostles, Origen brought some of the subtle thinking and assumptions of Gnosticism into mainstream Christianity.

Augustine's Solution - Amillennialism:

Augustine (4th century) was no doubt strongly influenced by Origen, but was more orthodox. Unlike Origen, he maintained a physical resurrection of the body. In short, he developed what is now called "amillennialism." Augustine's world view was both vertical and horizontal. He saw history coming to a climax with the return of Christ. All men then either went to heaven or hell for eternity. Like Origen and the Gnostics, He did not believe in a future material Kingdom of Christ on earth, nor a redeemed and restored creation.

Augustine used a dual interpretive method. Very often he interpreted Scripture literally, and was quite orthodox in many areas. But, where Old Testament prophecy was concerned, especially regarding the restoration of the earth and Kingdom of God, he felt free to allegorize the Scriptures. Augustine's influence dominated Christianity from the fourth century, and still dominates both Catholicism and Reformed theology of mainline Protestantism. His cosmic destiny for the saved remains a staple of Christianity in the minds of many Christians.

Darby's Solution - Dispensationalism:

The Reformation overturned a great deal of Roman Catholic theology. But, the overall views of cosmology remained. Augustine's ideas that had endured for a thousand years continued in the Reformed churches. Things began to change, however, in the early nineteenth century. John Nelson Darby, founding member of the Plymouth Brethren, recognized the error of interpreting Old

Testament prophecy allegorically. He insisted on using a more literal method. However, he was once again faced with the original problem. God has dealt differently in the Old Testament with Israel than in the New Testament with the Church. The destiny of the redeemed according to the Old Testament was Christ's coming Kingdom, and the restoration of the creation. Yet, Darby had no reason to doubt Augustine's heavenly destiny concept for Church. Darby's solution was to claim a complete dichotomy between Israel and the Church. Up until Darby, Christians have always considered "the Church" to include all of the redeemed, including Old Testament saints. Darby devised two classes of "elect," an "earthly people" which was consistent with the Messianic Kingdom hopes, and a "heavenly people" which he thought was consistent with the "heavenly hopes" of the Augustinian view.

In our estimation, Darby did a lot of good by bringing the literal method of interpretation back into use regarding prophecy, and once again popularizing the ancient millennial view (what is today called "Premillennialism"). However, Darby was still influenced by his amillennial - Augustinian background in the Anglican Church. The "cosmic destiny" ideas that had been a staple of Christian theology since the 4th century, remained firmly fixed in Darby's thinking. By rediscovering the literal hermeneutic and applying it to the Old Testament, yet still holding the "cosmic destiny" ideas of amillennialism and using allegory when dealing with the "Church,"¹ Darby was forced to develop a dichotomy between Israel and the Church in order to explain two seemingly radically different destinies for the elect. We believe dispensationalism was a step in the right direction. But, Darby was mistaken to simply assume amillennialism's "cosmic destiny" for the Church, originally borrowed from Gnosticism. In order to harmonize his literal interpretation of the Old Testament and his Augustinian view of the New Testament, Darby was forced to adopt some of the dualistic thinking of one of Christianity's earliest heretics, Marcion. This included Marcion's view that Paul was exclusively the Apostle of the "mystery," and that the "mystery" had no basis whatever in the Old Testament Scriptures which concern a different people and program.² Darby did not, however, take this step to such an extreme as to divorce the God of the Jews from the God of Christians, as did Marcion. We are not the only ones to notice Darby's adoption of some of Marcion's thinking.

*"Marcion's teachings have points of similarity with the doctrine of dispensationalism, as taught by some later Protestants such as J. N. Darby (1800-1882). Both saw the true church, as they defined it, as being outside world history in a sense; both saw one law had been made for the Jews, and that Christians lived under a different law (or dispensation), that of grace."*³

PFRS' Solution - A Return to "Chiliasm" / Progressive Dispensationalism:

In keeping with the whole purpose of the Pristine Faith Restoration Society, which is to discover and restore the earliest Christian tradition, we naturally must promote and defend the earliest Christian view of the destiny of the redeemed. Our "system," if one must call it that, is a radical modification of Darby's Dispensationalism, called "Progressive Dispensationalism." Don't let the name scare you. It is simply a return to the "Chiliasm" of the early Church before the Greek influence overturned the ancient hope of a restored creation. Darby took the first major step, that of taking a literal approach to Old Testament prophecy. We are simply taking the next step that puts our theology in line with that of the early Church (and the Bible). Progressive Dispensationalism holds to a single progressive plan of redemption that includes Israel and the Gentiles, as well as the whole creation. It includes a single destiny for the redeemed — Christ's eschatological Kingdom and a restored creation. And it interprets the Old Testament promises to Israel literally, being fully realized in that coming physical Kingdom. Progressive Dispensationalism is able to use a consistent hermeneutic in both Testaments, and explain the differences between God's dealings with Israel as a nation and the whole Church as a redeemed body. Progressive Dispensationalism does these things exactly the same way Irenaeus did in the second century when he refuted Marcion and other Gnostics. It is by illustrating that the present "Church" was prophesied in the Old Testament, albeit in a kind of enigma (mystery). This mystery was explained to the Apostles by Jesus from the Old Testament Scriptures. Progressive Dispensationalism relies heavily on the actual interpretations of the Old Testament by the New Testament writers.

In the following articles, we will present the biblical arguments in support of Progressive Dispensationalism. These articles were written primarily for traditional dispensationalists, and will be best understood by those of that background (which is also the background of this author). However, amillennialists will no doubt also find them informative and helpful. Our approach is not to tear down competing systems held by other Christians. Rather, we intend to build our case from a positive exposition of the Word of God. Occasionally we will have to point out errors of other systems. Our premise is that this view is the oldest Christian view historically, and the view most consistent with the natural reading of both Testaments. The articles are listed in the left column. They are best read in sequence.

Notes:

1. In Darby's first article on prophecy, published in 1830, he wrote: *"First, in prophecy, when the Jewish church or nation (exclusive of the Gentile parenthesis in their history) is concerned, i.e., when the address is directly to the Jews, there we may look for a plain and direct testimony, because earthly things were the Jews' proper portion."* *"And on the contrary, where the address is to the Gentiles...there we may look for symbol, because earthly things were not their portion... When therefore facts are addressed to the Jewish church as a subsisting body ... I look for a plain, common-sense, literal statement.... On the other hand, as the church was a system of grace and heavenly hopes...it is...symbolized by analogous agencies."* [p. 35]. (J. N. Darby, On Days Signifying Years in Prophetic Language, Prophetic No. 1, The Collected writings of JND, compiled by William Kelly, p. 35. First appeared in The Christian Herald Dec. 1830, Dublin, Ireland)
2. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Bk. III, ch. XIII, 1
3. Clifton, Chas S., Encyclopedia of Heresies and Heretics, Barnes & Noble, 1992, p. 91



Progressive Dispensationalism In

Depth

The Kingdom Hope in the Old Testament

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The Ancient Hope of the Saints

The coming of the physical Kingdom of God to earth was the universal hope of the saints since the beginning, even before Israel was a nation. Even the oldest book in the Bible speaks of this hope. Job, who even predated Abraham, expected to be raised from the dead to witness the reign of Christ on earth.

Job 19:25-27

25 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

(KJV)

Long before the prophets wrote of the coming of God's Kingdom, King David showed that the Jewish people were already well acquainted with this hope. He wrote plainly, in Psalm two, of Christ's overthrowing the kingdoms of this world and establishing His Kingdom, with the "Son" ruling the nations "with a rod of iron" from Jerusalem. Other Psalms speak with equal clarity of the coming Kingdom, and its role as the inheritance of the saints.

Psalms 37:9,18,22,28,29,34

9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth....

18 The Lord knoweth the ways of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever....

22 For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off....

28 For the Lord loveth judgement, and forsaketh not his saints, they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever....

34 Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land, when the wicked are cut off thou shalt see it.

(KJV)

David was not speaking here of the Jews inheriting the promised land. They were already occupying the land of Israel. He said the righteous will inherit "the earth."

How can we account for this familiarity with the Kingdom hope by Job and David? Apparently it was passed down through oral tradition from generation to generation. Later it was more fully developed by the Prophets.

The Davidic Covenant

David was not Israel's first king. But he was the only King of Israel of which it was said that he was "a man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14, Acts 13:22). David was chosen by God Himself, through the prophet Samuel, and **anointed** King of Israel. The term "anointed" refers to a

ceremony whereby the King was consecrated to the Lord. It symbolized that this was the one chosen by God. David's anointing is described in 1 Samuel 16:13. From that time on, David was referred to as the Lord's "Anointed."

The term "anointed" in Hebrew is "Messiah." In Aramaic, it is "Messias." In Greek it is "Christos." When translated into English it is "Christ." This is important to understand because the promises in the Gospels that are claimed for Jesus are the promises from the Old Testament of the "Anointed," or the "Christ." Christ in the New Testament refers to the promised King of Israel, the one God promised to David in a covenant. God made a covenant with David that one from his seed would sit upon the Throne of Israel, and rule forever (2 Sam. 23:1-5, Psalm 89:1-4, Psalm 89:27-37). *"His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah."* (Psalm 89:36-37). The promised "Anointed one" of the seed of David, who would sit upon the "Throne of David" is further revealed in Isaiah. *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and **the government will be upon His shoulder.** And His name will be called wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever.** The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this"* (Isa 9:6-7 NKJ). This is clearly a prophesy of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Yet, He is clearly identified as the one to fulfill the promise to David, that one of his descendants would sit upon his throne and rule the nation of Israel forever. This is why the Jews anticipated the coming of "the Christ" (the Anointed King of Israel) who would sit upon the Throne of David, and rule forever.

Some have supposed that the "Throne of David" is some kind of cosmic kingship of Jesus, based solely on a few New Testament passages taken out of context. Yet, the term is used exclusively of Israel's kings, from the line of David, as a quick survey of its old Testament usage demonstrates, (cf. 2 Sam. 3:10, 1 Kings 2:12,24,45, Jer. 17:25, Jer. 22:2,4,30, Jer. 29:16, Jer. 36:30). Therefore, when Isaiah prophesied that the child born to Israel would *"sit upon the Throne of His father David, and of His Kingdom there will be no end,"* he referred to the political Kingdom of Israel. That is, the promised "Anointed" One would literally be the Everlasting King of the nation of Israel. The coming Kingdom, then, is inherently linked to the coming of the "Anointed," the "Christ." In fact, the term "Christ" as used of Jesus is used exclusively in reference to His being the anointed King of Israel destined to sit upon the Throne of David, and rule in His Kingdom forever. (More on this in the next article).

The Destiny of the Redeemed According to the Prophets

The central theme of most of Israel's prophets was the coming Kingdom. Isaiah contains several prophecies of the Kingdom. Chapter two begins with the following words:

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.

(NKJ)

Other chapters in Isaiah deal with this as well, such as Isaiah 25-26, Isaiah 34, and Isaiah 65-66. Notable passages in the other Prophets dealing with the coming Kingdom are Ezekiel 40-48, Joel 3, Zech. 14, and Malachi 4.

Most of these passages have been allegorized by those who deny a future literal Kingdom of God on

earth after the second coming. However, we believe that denying the plain sense of the text without any obvious indication in the context that God was speaking in a non-literal sense, is to deny the Word of God.

What makes some of these passages impossible to explain away with allegory are the clear references to known geography and landmarks in the coming Kingdom. A case in point is Ezekiel's prophecy of the future healing of the Dead Sea, with great fishing coming from what is today a lifeless body. According to Ezekiel, a spring of healing water will flow down from the Temple mount, creating a river that will empty into the Dead Sea. These waters will "heal" the Dead Sea.

Ezek 47:8-10

8 Then he said to me: "This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed.

9 "And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes.

10 "It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly many.

(NKJ)

One cannot allegorize this passage and remain faithful to sound rules of biblical interpretation. Specific future fishing spots at known locations are mentioned. The fish to be caught in the Dead Sea are just like what was at that time being caught in the "Great Sea" (Mediterranean Sea). There are other similar passages that prophesy physical changes to the landscape, including the splitting of the Mount of Olives with a great valley created from this catastrophic event (Zech. 14:1-9). The physical changes to the geography make it impossible to apply such passages to so called "spiritual" truths at the expense of the literal meaning of the words.

Probably the clearest prophecies of the coming Kingdom are found in Daniel. The terms, "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven" found in the Gospels originated with Daniel's prophecy of the coming Kingdom.

Daniel 2:44

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

(KJV)

The redeemed (saints) will inherit this Kingdom on earth as an everlasting possession.

Dan 7:13-14,18,27

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.***

18 'But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.'

*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.'***

(NKJ)

Another passage that proves this view beyond doubt is Zechariah 14. This passage begins by announcing "The Day of the Lord." It describes the second coming of Christ and His saints to earth, to

the Mount of Olives, destroying the armies gathered against Him (vs. 2-3). After this, *"the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be--" The LORD is one," and His name one."* (v. 9). This passage is crystal clear that the physical Kingdom comes to earth at the second coming of Christ to earth. What's more, it continues by describing physical changes that will occur at that time to the known landscape. *"All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin's Gate to the place of the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananeel to the king's winepresses. The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited"* (vss. 10-11). There is no way for a-millennialists to explain away the fact that the earth continues under the direct rule of Christ after the second coming.

The Old Testament ends with the following prophecy to the saints of Israel:

Mal 3:16-4:3

16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name.

17 "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."

18 Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

4:1 "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch.

2 But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves.

3 You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this," says the LORD of hosts.

(NKJ)

The Hope of the Resurrection

The idea of the resurrection of the body at the time the Kingdom of God is established on earth is clearly taught in the Old Testament. Job was the first to mention it. The passage we cited at the beginning of this article included the hope of the resurrection, and that Job would see God stand upon the earth with his own eyes even after his flesh is consumed (Job. 19:25-27). The resurrection is further described in graphic detail in another Kingdom passage, Isaiah 26:19. Daniel also described the resurrection of the body in order to inherit their possession in the Kingdom on the earth (Dan. 12:1-2). The whole point of a "resurrection" of the flesh of believers is to partake in a physical inheritance, the Kingdom of God. If the future inheritance is something apart from God's physical creation, then there is no point to resurrecting the flesh bodies of believers that have come from God's physical creation. For this reason, those who opposed the biblical idea of a future literal Kingdom on earth, and the restoration of the Creation, also denied the resurrection of the body. The mere fact of the promised resurrection of the body argues strongly for the physical Kingdom of God within this restored creation after the resurrection.

The "blessed hope" of the righteous throughout the entire Old Testament was the coming of the Kingdom of God to earth, and the restoration of all things, and the resurrection of the righteous dead. It was the promised coming of "the Christ" (Anointed King of Israel from the seed of David) who would rule the nations from Jerusalem, seated upon the Throne of David. The Old Testament consistently presents this hope to the people of God. As we will see in the next article, this promise is the central theme of the Gospel accounts of the nativity of Jesus Christ.



Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

The Kingdom Hope in the Gospels

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The Kingdom in the Birth Narratives

The first event featured in the New Testament was the birth of Jesus Christ. Interwoven into the birth narratives, in Matthew and Luke, references to Christ's coming Kingdom abound. There is more emphasis on the fact that Jesus, as the Messiah, would rule as King, than on His role as Redeemer.

The New Testament opens with the following statement. *"The book of the generations of Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham, the son of David."* (Matt. 1:1). This statement is meant to show that Jesus was the fulfillment of two distinct covenants. The title, "Son of Abraham" refers to the covenant God made with Abraham, that through one of His seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. This promise deals with the salvation of both Jew and Gentile, as fully explained by Paul in Galatians 3. The title, "Son of David," however, refers to the covenant God made with David, that one of his descendants would sit upon the Throne of David and rule the nation of Israel forever. Luke, in his narrative of Christ's nativity, records Gabriel's message to Mary as follows:

Luke 1:31-33

31 And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

*32 He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Highest: and **the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:***

*33 And **he shall reign over the house of Israel forever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end.***

(KJV)

The child Jesus was destined to rule over Israel, and His Kingdom will last forever. Gabriel was alluding to Isaiah's prophecy of the "Christ," the Anointed One.

Isaiah 9:6

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.

(KJV)

We stated in the first article that the term "Throne of David" was exclusively a reference to the political kingship of the nation of Israel. The kings of Israel from the seed of David all possessed "the Throne of David," (cf. 2 Sam. 3:10, 1 Kings 2:12,24,45, Jer. 17:25, Jer. 22:2,4,30, Jer. 29:16, Jer. 36:30). Therefore, Isaiah's prophecy that the child would sit upon the *"Throne of his father David,"* is a promise of a political King for the nation of Israel. That Gabriel cited this passage, and applied to the child in Mary's womb, proves that Jesus' destiny was to be the King of Israel.

In both of these prophecies, the birth of Christ was announced by proclaiming **His coming**

Kingdom. The angelic choir's announcement to the shepherds, "*Peace on earth,*" also referred to this Kingdom, (Luke 2:14). The wise men came looking for "*He that is born King of the Jews*" (Matt. 2:2). In fact, Herod's massacre of the infants was an attempt to stop the fulfillment of the Messianic Kingdom. Even John the Baptist's father prophesied of this hope.

Luke 1:68-74

*68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,
69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us **in the house of his servant David;**
70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:
71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;
72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;
73 The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,
74 **That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,**
(KJV)*

The reference to the Abrahamic Covenant, and Israel's living at peace, is an obvious reference to the Kingdom promises in the Old Testament.

"The Christ"

A big part of the birth narratives is the announcement of Jesus' being the promised "Christ." "*For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is **Christ** the Lord.*" (Luke 2:11). The title "the Christ" refers specifically to the Davidic Covenant. "Christ" is the English transliteration of the Greek "Christos," which means "Anointed." The Hebrew equivalent is "Messiah." The Jewish practice of anointing its kings with oil began with Israel's first King, Saul. "*Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said: 'Is it not because the LORD has **anointed** you commander over His inheritance?'*" (1 Sam. 10:1). After Saul's being deposed from the throne of Israel, David became "the anointed" in his place. "*Now the LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons'.*" (1 Sam. 16:1). When Samuel found David, he "anointed" him king of Israel. "*So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, '**Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!***" Then Samuel took the horn of oil and **anointed him** in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah" (1 Sam 16:12-13). From this point on, David was referred to as "the anointed" (cf. 2 Sam. 12:7, 2 Sam. 19:21, 2 Sam. 22:51, 2 Sam. 23:1, Psalm 18:50, Psalm 89:38,51, Psalm 132:10). The Hebrew texts of these passages use the word "messiah" (translated "anointed") in reference to David.

It is very important to keep in mind that the title, "the Anointed" (the Messiah - Hebrew, & the Christ - Greek) refers to the Kingship of the nation of Israel, stemming from the practice of pouring oil on the head of the King of Israel as a sign that he is God's chosen. The promised seed of David, who would sit upon David's Throne and rule the nation of Israel forever, became known as the expected "Messiah" (Hebrew), "Messias" (Aramaic), or "Christ" (Greek). The expectation of the Jewish people can be clearly seen in the following passage: "*One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated, the Christ).*" (John 1:40-41). Even the Samaritan woman at the well was awaiting the coming of this promised King of the seed of David. "*The woman said to Him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When He comes, He will tell us all things.'* Jesus said to her, '*I who speak to you am He.*" (John 4:25-26). Whenever you see the word "Christ" in the New Testament, the meaning is always the Anointed King of Israel promised to David. Peter explains it best in his Pentecost sermon. "*Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing **that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne.***" (Acts 2:29-30). If we keep in mind that whenever we see Jesus called "Christ"

in the New Testament, it refers to His role as Israel's promised King, we will get the proper sense of the text, and realize just how prevalent Jesus' Kingship of Israel really is in Scripture.

The Destiny of the Redeemed According to Jesus

When Jesus spoke of the destiny of the saved, He spoke only of His coming Kingdom. The resurrection of the righteous would be accomplished so they could participate in the Kingdom of the Christ. Jesus never spoke of an eternity in heaven for the saved. Nor did the disciples ever hear of such a teaching from Jesus, the Jewish leaders, or from the Old Testament. Jesus taught that the very Kingdom of the Christ, which the Jewish nation anticipated, based on the many Old Testament prophecies we discussed in the previous article, would be the reward and inheritance of the saved. There was not the slightest hint of heaven being the destiny of the redeemed.

Matthew 19:27-29

27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

*28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, **in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.***

29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

(KJV)

Jesus placed the "everlasting life" in His coming Kingdom. The reward for the followers of Christ will be the Kingdom of God, not heaven. While speaking to the scribes and Pharisees who rejected Him, Jesus said:

Matthew 8:11,12

11 And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

(KJV)

The "children of the Kingdom" were the Jews, to whom the covenants belonged. Jesus told the unbelieving Jews that they will end up in outer darkness and Gentiles will inherit the Kingdom prepared for the Jews. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were the patriarchs of the Jewish people. Yet, Gentiles will inherit their eternal reward. Notice the connection between the reward expected by the Jews and the promised reward of the Gentile believers. It is one and the same, the Kingdom of God on earth.

A word of explanation is required here because many assume that Matthew's use of the term "Kingdom of heaven" means the Kingdom is *in* heaven. The true meaning is that the Kingdom is *FROM* heaven. This phrase is used only by Matthew and is interchangeable with the phrase "Kingdom of God" used in the other Gospels and throughout the New Testament. This is easily demonstrated by comparing the parallel passages in the synoptic Gospels. In each case where Matthew recorded Jesus saying "Kingdom of heaven," the parallel passages in Mark and Luke recorded "Kingdom of God." From this we may conclude the phrases are interchangeable. Those who have developed doctrinal positions based on distinguishing these phrases are mistaken.

When Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God, He had in view the same Kingdom that was promised in the Old Testament, the Kingdom the Jews eagerly awaited. In fact both phrases (Kingdom of Heaven & Kingdom of God) are abbreviated from Daniel's primary "Kingdom" prophecy. *"And in the days of these kings shall **the God of heaven set up a kingdom**, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these*

kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44 KJV). The full title is **"The Kingdom of the God of heaven."** "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of heaven" were apparently shortened titles. But there is no question the Gospel writers used them interchangeably. We may conclude then, that in no way did Jesus mean to indicate that "heaven" was the location of His coming Kingdom, or that He would rule from heaven in some mystical way.

Jesus even taught this Kingdom, anticipated by the Jews from the Old Testament Scriptures, would also be the reward and destiny of the Gentiles who would be saved through the ministry of the Apostles. Speaking to the Jews who did not believe, Jesus said the following:

Luke 13:26-29

26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

27 But He shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

*28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, **when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.***

*29 And **they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.***

(KJV)

Notice the contrast to the Kingdom of God is hell. The Jews who rejected Christ will end up in hell while the Gentiles and Jews who accept Him will inherit the Kingdom of God promised to Israel in the Old Testament. Notice also our inheritance will be shared with the saints of the Old Testament. What inheritance was promised to the saints in the Old Testament? It was certainly not heaven! It was a land inheritance within the context of a restored creation. Jesus made no distinction in final destiny between the saints of the Old Testament and those of the New. When Jesus spoke of those from the east, west, north and south he included the whole world. Jesus was including us in the promise of inheritance in His Kingdom. The Kingdom, which Daniel wrote was "under the whole heaven," is to be the destiny, inheritance, and reward of Christians. The teaching of Jesus Christ, about His Kingdom being the destiny of the righteous, was not new. He simply reaffirmed the Old Testament teaching for His disciples.

Many of the Jews of Jesus' day made the same mistake that many Jews make today. Based on the fact that the Messiah would be Jewish, He would rule from Jerusalem, and the prophets of Israel predicted His Kingdom, they assumed that being "Jewish" was all that was required to enter that Kingdom. The Kingdom had lost its significance as the reward of the righteous, as Psalm thirty-seven and Daniel seven so clearly state. It had become only the hope of a political revolution to many Jews.

Jesus told Nicodemus, a Pharisee, who was well acquainted with the Kingdom hope, that an inheritance in Messiah's Kingdom was not automatic just because someone is Jewish. Nor could it be attained by the good works practiced by the Pharisees.

John 3:3,5

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....

5 Jesus answered, Verily verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

(KJV)

Nicodemus came to Jesus because of Jesus' claim of being the Messiah. Jesus did not tell him his concept of the Kingdom was all wrong, but how he could enter that Kingdom he so eagerly desired. Being "born again" is the only requirement. The Jews of His day who were not "born again" would not see the Kingdom of God because they would not be resurrected in the resurrection of the just.

Jesus Taught There Would be Two Comings

The Scribes and Pharisees only knew of one coming of Christ. They believed when He came He would deliver them from their Roman oppressors and establish the Kingdom of God. They knew of the prophecies about the birth of Christ, but it is obvious the religious establishment had no idea He must die for the redemption of the world, and there would be a long interval of time before He would set up His Kingdom on the earth.

The religious leaders were not the only ones of this opinion. The disciples and others believed this also. We find Jesus spending much time explaining that it was not yet time to set up His Kingdom.

Luke 19:11

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. (KJV)

Jesus had quite a crowd following Him as He walked from Jericho to Jerusalem. Many of them believed Jesus was the promised Christ. They apparently thought when they reached Jerusalem Jesus would establish His Kingdom. Jesus tried to correct this error in the following parable.

12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

Jesus was showing them He must first go away before the Kingdom of God would come.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

Here, Jesus instructed His followers to serve the Lord with the expectancy of His return.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

These were the Jews who at the crucifixion said, "away with this man crucify him".

15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

Jesus will judge His followers when He returns at His Kingdom. Now let's see what the rewards are.

16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, be thou also over five cities.

Since the rest of this parable appears meant to be taken quite literally, these rewards should also be taken literally. And why not? The crowns, mentioned in the Epistles, are for rulers in the Kingdom.

Unbelieving Jews Will be Excluded from Christ's Kingdom

We have seen that Jesus, when preaching the gospel, did not speak of heaven as the reward of the saved. Rather, He spoke of the same Kingdom promised to Abraham and his seed, and to David. We have also seen the hope of this Kingdom includes Gentiles, the adopted sons, as well as the believing Jews of Jesus' day. We are those who come from the east, west, north and south. Yet,

Jesus also warned unbelieving Jews that they would be cut off, and not inherit His coming Kingdom.

Luke 13:24-29

24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able.

25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye [unbelieving Jews] begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are;

26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye [unbelieving Jews] shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.

29 And they [believing Gentiles] shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. [brackets mine]

(KJV)

As believing Gentiles, we will inherit the Kingdom of God. The Jews who rejected Jesus will be weeping and wailing when they find a great gulf fixed between them, their father Abraham, and their Christ.

The self-righteous priests, scribes, and Pharisees were quite confident that they would have the highest positions in the coming Kingdom of Christ. In Jesus' parable of the husbandman who lent out his vineyard, Jesus angered them with the idea that this Kingdom would be torn from them and given to someone else.

Matthew 21:33-41

33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

(KJV)

The Jewish leaders were the husbandmen who wanted to seize the inheritance. Jesus made it clear that they were being disinherited by God and replaced by more faithful husbandmen. Those faithful husbandmen were Jesus' disciples.

Matthew 21:42-43

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

(KJV)

Jesus did not mean the Kingdom would be given to another nation besides Israel. He meant it would be given to a pure Israel, an Israel with the unbelievers removed. It would be given to a pure remnant of Israel with circumcised hearts. Notice what Jesus told the disciples.

Luke 12:32

32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.
(KJV)

The disciples, as Jews, replaced the priests, scribes and Pharisees, receiving the positions in the Kingdom that should have gone to them. Jesus made this clear to the disciples in the upper room.

Luke 22:15-20,28-30

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."

19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you...."

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."

(NKJV)

The disciples, as the new leaders of a purified Israel, without the unbelieving element, received the New Covenant and the most honorable places in the coming Kingdom of Christ, ruling beside Him from His Temple. The idea that God's programs for the "Church" and "Israel" are entirely separate, is not biblical. Christianity is the fulfillment of true biblical Judaism. The Church's firm foundation is Jesus Christ, the Jewish Messiah. The Apostles of the Church are Jewish, and received the Jewish New Covenant as their charter. Because the New Covenant was later broadened, and allowed Gentile inclusion into the Jewish Church, we now have the right to reign with the Jewish Messiah from His Jewish Temple, with the Jewish Apostles. *"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd"* (John 10:16 KJV).

Jesus stated plainly for His disciples that the Kingdom inheritance attached to the Gospel message is the same Kingdom proclaimed from the beginning of the world. *"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matt. 25:34 KJV).

In this article, we have seen a unity between the Old Testament and the teaching of Christ regarding the Kingdom of God. Jesus' teaching assumes a literal reading of the Old Testament prophecies of the Kingdom. Jesus never spoke of heaven as the destiny of any redeemed people. In the next article we will examine the Kingdom parables of Jesus.



Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

The Kingdom in Jesus' Parables

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THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF PARABLES

The Gospels contain several Kingdom parables. But, before we address the meanings of these parables, we need to first look at parables in general.

Matt 13:34-35

34 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them,

35 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

Matthew stated two important facts in the above verses. First, that Jesus spoke to the crowds exclusively by parables. That is, he did not teach them using plain literal speech. His teaching to them was through cryptic stories that needed to be interpreted before they could be understood. Neither did Jesus expound the meaning of His parables to the crowds. He left them to wonder what they meant, knowing that those with "ears to hear" would indeed hear and understand.

Second, this was in order to fulfill a specific Old Testament prophecy, Psalm 78:2. Jesus was the prophesied One, the one to reveal what had been a mystery up until this time, *"kept secret from the foundation of the world."* His parables were one of the ways Jesus began to reveal the mystery kept secret from the beginning.

After telling the parable of the Sower to the crowds, Jesus ended with His usual comment: (Mark 4:9). Mark recorded an interesting exchange between Jesus and the disciples immediately after His telling this parable. *"But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, 'To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them'."* (Mark. 4:10-12). *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

Jesus did not expound the meaning of His parables to the crowds or the religious leaders. Only when He was alone with His followers did He explain the meaning of these cryptic stories in plain language. The disciples asked Him why He did not teach the crowds plainly. Jesus' reply may seem strange to modern Christians. After all, didn't He come to offer salvation to the whole world? Yet, Jesus said the reason He did not teach the crowds plainly was because it was not for them to understand the mystery, but only for the disciples. Jesus used obscure language with the crowds and religious leaders *"so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them'."* (Jesus' quoting Isa. 6:9-10). In effect, Jesus left them in their self-imposed state of blindness for a reason. His parables were meant to conceal as well as reveal, depending on the audience.

Jesus did not come the first time to convert the whole nation of Israel to His message. Nor did He come merely as a reformer of Israel, or a radical rabbi. Neither did He come to offer them the

political Kingdom immediately if they would just believe on Him. He came to be "*despised and rejected of men*" (Isa. 53:3), and to be "*a ransom for many*" (Mark 10:45). Keeping the nation of Israel in the dark about the real reason for His first coming was a necessary part of God's redemptive plan. Jesus first had to be "*led as a lamb to the slaughter*" (Isa. 53:7). In Peter's first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he told the Jewish crowd that Jesus was "*delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God.*" Yet, they remained guilty. "*You have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put [Him] to death*" (Acts 2:23). The willful rejection of Jesus by the Jews was a crucial component in God's plan. Their being kept in the dark about the real purpose for Jesus' first coming was essential if His rejection and crucifixion were to proceed according to the plan of God.

As we read the Gospel accounts of Jesus' interaction with the religious leaders, it is increasingly obvious that Jesus provoked them on purpose. The closer we get to the crucifixion, the more blatant and stinging were Jesus' public rebukes of the scribes, chief priests, and Pharisees. Matthew 23 describes the climax of this antagonism, with Jesus' open denouncement of the religious leaders as "hypocrites" in front of the crowds of people gathered at the Temple for the Passover week's festivities. It is as though Jesus was encouraging them to reject Him and crucify Him (to the utter dismay of His disciples).

To those who chose to follow Him, Jesus said it was given to them to understand the mystery of the Kingdom. Jesus taught His true followers by parables, interpreting His own parables, and by plain teaching in literal terms. These are the ones who became Jesus' Church. These are the men that He later sent out to make converts of the Gentile nations, and teach them to "*observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*" (Matt. 28:20).

Jesus explained many things plainly to His disciples, including the events of His second coming. Yet, He did not expound the main reason for His first coming until the day of His resurrection. Yes, He told them on a couple of occasions that He must be killed, and would rise again the third day. But He did not explain why it was necessary for the Jewish Messiah to suffer and be rejected by the nation of Israel. Not until the Sunday of His resurrection did Jesus reveal the whole mystery to His disciples, including the reason it was necessary for Israel to reject Him. Luke, Paul's traveling companion, is the only one of the four Gospel writers to plainly tell about Jesus' revelation of the mystery to His disciples just before sending them out to the nations with the Gospel.

According to Luke, Jesus met two of the disciples walking on the road to Emmaus shortly after His resurrection. For the very first time He clearly explained the purpose of the crucifixion. They were still in mourning, not recognizing Him, nor understanding the reports of the empty tomb. As Jesus joined them, He asked why they were so glum. They recounted the story of the crucifixion, saying that they had believed Jesus was the Messiah of Israel. Jesus responded, "*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?*" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (Luke 24:25-27). Wouldn't you have liked to be privy to that sermon? Can you imagine walking with Jesus as He unveiled every Old Testament Scripture about Himself, and the reason for His suffering? The two disciples certainly were deeply moved by this speech. After reflecting on this incident, they said to one another, "*Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?*" (Luke 24:32). That same afternoon, Jesus appeared to the rest of the disciples gathered in Jerusalem. After their initial shock at seeing Him alive, and handling Him to be sure He was not a ghost, Jesus said to them, "*These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.*" And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, "*Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.*" (Luke 24:44-49).

Now it all began to make sense to the disciples. Those strange words and actions of Jesus the night of His betrayal, when He told them all to drink the wine as a symbol of His blood of the New Covenant, and eat of the bread as a symbol of His body broken for them, suddenly became clear. On this resurrection Sunday, Jesus took them through the entire Old Testament, explaining each and every prophetic Scripture that referred to Himself and the atoning work of the Messiah before entering into His glory. You can bet that the disciples spent considerable time soaking in the meanings of Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, and many other passages that are much more obscure. Yet, there they were, suddenly clearly understood by the disciples. The Messiah had to provide the atonement for sin. The New Covenant had to be inaugurated with the blood of the Messiah Himself, before He could enter into His glory, and rule in His coming Kingdom. All those animal sacrifices they had offered year after year were merely prophetic of Christ and His atoning work.

The mystery had been revealed by Christ through the prophetic Scriptures. It was there all along. But, it was not understood either by the religious leaders, the crowds, or even Jesus' own disciples. It had to be kept secret for one very important reason. Had all this gotten out before the crucifixion, God's eternal plan could have been derailed. Paul tells us why. *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."* (1 Cor. 2:7-8). The crucifixion was necessary. Therefore, secrecy from both the Jews and demonic powers was necessary until after Jesus was crucified. This is why Jesus spoke to the crowds and religious leaders in parables, and why when teaching His disciples he spoke plainly of His second coming, but not the reason for His first coming.

TWO KINDS OF KINGDOM PARABLES

Many Christians are not aware that there are two types of Kingdom parables. The first type refers to the Kingdom as something that starts very small, and eventually grows into something huge.

Matt 13:31-33

31 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field,

32 "which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

33 Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

In both of these parables, the Kingdom begins very small. A mustard seed is extremely small. Yet, a very large tree grows slowly from a single seed. Likewise, leaven is but a small pinch of powder, added to the dough. Yet, it eventually leavens the whole loaf during the baking process. Both of these parables indicate that the Kingdom would begin in a very small way, and grow over time into something very large.

Of course, this idea seems to conflict with premillennialism, which sees the Kingdom as coming exclusively at the second coming of Christ in a blaze of glory, and is immediately a universal Kingdom. How do we as premillennialists account for this? On the other hand, amillennialists cannot properly account for the other parables that place the Kingdom on earth after the judgment and second coming.

The reason for this apparent conflict is not because premillennialism is wrong. It is because of the failure of both premillennialists and amillennialists to understand the progressive nature of the Kingdom, and its coming to earth in stages.

The parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven both referred to Jesus' founding His Church. He started with only a small band of disciples. Yet, His Church has grown into a world-wide body with millions of believers. Eventually it will contain a remnant from every tribe, nation, and language on earth (Rev. 5:9). Yet, Jesus called this the "Kingdom," in the above parables, during

this gradual expansion in the present age.

Are we to assume then that the Kingdom has already come, and there is no future rule of Christ on earth, as amillennialists teach? Absolutely not! Jesus gave more Kingdom parables that fully support the premillennial understanding of the Kingdom. What many premillennialists have failed to see is that the Kingdom comes in two stages. First, it came as a seed. Jesus called out of Israel a little band of followers. He sent them out into the whole world to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 24:14). They were his "mustard seed," destined to produce a large tree. They were the "leaven," sent to leaven the whole "loaf" of mankind. Jesus' Kingdom came in a small way at first. Those who believed on Him, accepting Him as the Christ, the Son of God, willingly submitted to His rule over them personally. Believers have made Jesus Christ their King voluntarily, and seek to obey Him despite the fact that most of the world around us flatly rejects His dominion. In the present age, His Kingdom continues to grow, as more and more people submit to Him as their King. The goal of this ever expanding Kingdom now is to make some disciples from every nation and ethnic people. When we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we are praying and yearning for the goal of this process, when the whole world will bow before Him and submit to His authority as King of kings and Lord of lords.

However, that will not happen for everyone voluntarily. The current expansion of the Kingdom on earth will become large, as Jesus indicated in these parables. But, it will still only include a remnant from each nation. Once that occurs, Jesus will return in person, subdue all the nations, overthrow their armies, and establish His world-wide Kingdom in Jerusalem, taking His seat upon the Throne of David. Those who have voluntarily submitted to His rule in this age, and who have been faithful stewards, will rule with Him in the next over those nations. That is, we as Christians are now being trained and tested for positions of authority in His coming political Kingdom. This second phase of the Kingdom is the topic of the second kind of Kingdom parables.

There is no need to deal with all of the Kingdom parables, since they all teach similar things about Christ's second coming. Rather, we will deal with the one parable that contains by far the most information, the Wheat and Tares.

THE WHEAT AND TARES

Matt 13:24-30

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."'

This parable is critical, not only because of the clear end-time details, but because it covers the entire age in which we live. It is impossible to chop this parable up, and put its application outside of the "Church age," as pretribulationists are fond of doing with Jesus' teaching. The reason is that the wheat and tares are left to grow side by side from Jesus' time through the present age until the harvest — Christ's coming. Since the parable obviously includes this time in which we now live, the harvest necessarily concerns Christians.

Later in the chapter, Jesus explained this parable to His disciples as follows:

Matt 13:36-43

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!"

There are several important points we wish to make from this parable.

First, the one sowing the good seed is Christ Himself (v. 37). Jesus (not Paul) was the one to first proclaim the Gospel, and announce the initial coming of the Kingdom. The book of Hebrews, probably written by Paul, concurs. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him," (Heb. 2:3). Therefore, the "wheat" in this parable are Christians, from the time of Christ's disciples until the second coming.

Second, notice the "wheat" living among the tares are the "sons of the Kingdom." The field is the "world" — that is this present world system in which we live. Those of us who have received the Gospel and subjected ourselves to Christ our King, are now "sons of the Kingdom."

Third, the wheat and tares remain mixed together in the field until the harvest. There is no pre-tribulation rapture to remove the wheat seven years before the destruction of the tares. Both grow together until the harvest, and are harvested at the same time ₁. No one is taken to heaven ₂.

Fourth, when the harvest comes at the "end of the age," the angels "will gather out of His kingdom" all those wholly given to wickedness and lawlessness. The words, "out of His Kingdom," imply that the Kingdom was present during the former stage when the wheat and tares grew together. Yet, it is also present after the harvest. Jesus goes on to say, "the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Here we have a clear indication that the Kingdom is present on earth both before and after Christ's return, and the harvest at the end of the age. The purpose of the harvest is to eliminate those wholly given to wickedness, that is, the sons of Satan, planted by him. It is also to elevate the wheat to positions of authority, shining forth "as the sun" in the Kingdom. That is, to advance them to their positions as rulers of the earth in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent that the Kingdom parables teach a two-staged coming of the Kingdom to earth. The first stage began with Christ's earthly ministry, calling out of Israel a remnant to begin His Church. (The word "church" simply means a called out assembly, separate and distinct from the whole mass of humanity). His Kingdom grows now through the message of the Gospel. All who are willing can become "sons of the Kingdom" now. Christ rules His Church now, through our willing submission to Him as our King. But He does not rule the whole world. This is obvious from the fact that most of mankind is in open rebellion against Christ. Once there is a remnant of "sons of the Kingdom" from all nations, tribes, and ethnic peoples fit to rule the earth with Christ, He will return to harvest both the wheat and tares. The tares (those specifically planted by Satan to disrupt God's plan) will be destroyed, cast into everlasting punishment. But the wheat will be exalted to places of honor in the Kingdom. Finally, it is the angels who will perform the work of gathering both the wheat for reward, and the tares for destruction.₃

Notes:

1. Both are harvested at the "end of the age" (v. 39). However, in the parable, Jesus said the reapers were ordered to first gather the tares, bind them in bundles for the purpose of being burned (v. 30), and then gather the wheat in the barn. Nothing suggests that the tares were burned before the wheat is gathered into the barn, only bound in bundles. Jesus was using imagery familiar to the disciples who lived in an agricultural society. They were no doubt familiar with the common practice of separating wheat and tares at the time of harvest. The typical procedure was to gather the tares first, bind them in bundles, and leave them in the field. After harvesting the wheat, the fields were burned to get rid of the debris, including the tares left in piles of bundles. This scenario fits a posttribulation rapture perfectly. Joel 3:2, Zech. 14:2, & Rev. 16:12-16 indicate that the wicked opponents of Christ will be gathered and brought down to Jerusalem for the battle of the Day of the Lord. This corresponds to the gathering of the tares first — Satan's devoted followers bent on defeating Christ at His coming (see Rev. 19:19-21). The gathering of the wheat would then follow the gathering and binding of the tares. Finally, the wicked would be destroyed.
2. The concept of the righteous being taken to heaven when Christ returns is not taught in any of Jesus' parables or plain teaching to His disciples. It is a concept totally foreign to the Gospels. All of Jesus' Kingdom parables point to either the present state of the Kingdom on earth, or to the inauguration of Christ's political Kingdom at His coming. The inheritance of the righteous is always related to the Kingdom (eg. Matt. 8:11). Some have mistakenly supposed that Matthew's use of the term "Kingdom of Heaven" refers to heaven itself. But, the parallel passages in the other Gospels use the phrase, "Kingdom of God." Both terms are synonymous, meaning the Kingdom of God. Both terms are derived from Daniel's prophecy of the Kingdom in Dan. 2:44. "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed..." In reality, it is the Kingdom of the God of heaven, "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of heaven" for short. Many passages in Matthew make it clear that the "Kingdom of heaven" is what was promised to Israel (cf. Matt. 3:2, 4:17, etc). Also, the Sermon on the Mount equates inheritance of the "Kingdom of Heaven" with inheriting the earth. (cf. Matt. 5:3,5 & Psalm 37:9,11, 22). The idea is that the Kingdom of the God of heaven comes to earth from heaven.
3. That the angels gather the righteous at Jesus' coming is further established by Jesus in Matt. 24:31. *"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."* This is perfectly compatible with Paul's description of the rapture in 1 Thess. 4. Paul wrote that the living would be "caught up." The Greek word means "to seize, to carry off by force" (Thayer).



Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

"That Prophet" & Israel's Division

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Dispensationalists mistakenly think that God's program for Israel was suspended on the Day of Pentecost, and "the Church" was begun. Many non-dispensationalists think God's program for Israel was cancelled completely, by Israel's rejection of Jesus as Messiah. Both are wrong. When Jesus came, a prophesied change occurred within the nation of Israel. This was the direct fulfillment of a prophecy given through Moses. When the Law was given, Moses prophesied that another 'prophet' like him (Moses) would come bringing a new Law (Torah). Moses was God's prophet, delivering God's words to Israel. But, another prophet, like Moses, would come, bringing a new Law. Israel would forever be divided between those who would listen to "that prophet" and those who would not. Those who would not listen to "that prophet" would be cut off from Israel.

Deut 18:15-19

15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.

18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

(KJV)

The Jews of Jesus' day were keenly aware of this prophecy, since they revered Moses. When John the Baptist came preaching, the Jews thought that maybe he was "that prophet" of whom Moses spoke.

John 1:19-21

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. **Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.**

(KJV)

John 6:14

14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, **This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.**

(KJV)

Jesus identified himself as "that Prophet" when he rebuked the scribes and Pharisees in John 5:46,47, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

In Peter's second sermon, He also identified Jesus as "that prophet," and reminded the residents of Jerusalem that those who refused to listen to "that prophet" would suffer the wrath of God.

Acts 3:20-24

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

*22 **For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.***

*23 **And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.***

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

(KJV)

The judgment predicted on those of Israel who would not hear "that prophet" was twofold. It included their being broken off from the people of God, as Paul plainly describes in the parable of the Olive Tree in Rom. 11, and it also included the destruction of Jerusalem predicted by Daniel and Jesus (cf. Dan. 9:26 & Luke 19:41-44).

The Division of Israel Begins

John the Baptist came to prepare the way for "that prophet." Notice his prediction of the judgment on the unbelieving part of Israel, because of their rejection of "that prophet."

Matt 3:7-12

*7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, **who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?***

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

*10 And now also **the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.***

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

*12 **Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.***

(KJV)

John was referring here to Israel being separated into two camps. In verse 10, John spoke of the 'axe' being used to chop down those trees of Israel that were not bringing forth fruit. Notice in verse 8, he equated those who were truly coming to be baptized by Him as bearing fruit, and the Pharisees and Sadducees as bearing no fruit. So he refused to baptize them. He used another analogy in verse 12. The 'fan' that he spoke of was a tool used by those working on the threshing floor. Wheat was beaten or ground to remove the chaff from the kernels. Then the wheat was tossed into the air and the evening breeze would carry the chaff away, while the much heavier wheat kernels fell back to the floor. John used this analogy to depict what Christ was about to do with Israel, separate the wheat from the chaff.

Beginning with John's preaching, Israel had to choose between hearing "that prophet" who brought the new Torah, or insisting on following Moses only and rejecting "that prophet." As you know, MOST of Israel rejected Jesus. But, Jesus' disciples and a number of others heeded "that prophet." By their acceptance or rejection of "that Prophet," Israel was forever split into two camps. The believing camp who followed Jesus received the New Covenant, promised to Israel in Jer. 31:31-34. The unbelieving camp was "cut off" as Peter said in his sermon above. In Peter's other great sermon

in Acts 2, speaking to the "men of Israel," Peter pleaded with them to *"save yourselves from this untoward generation"* (Acts 2:40). He knew from both Old Testament prophecy, and Jesus' predictions in Luke 19:40-44 & Luke 21:12-24, that Jerusalem and the Jewish people were about to be destroyed, because they refused to listen to, and crucified, "that Prophet." This was fulfilled in AD70, when the Romans destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem.

God hardened the hearts of the majority of Jews in order for His plan to go forward. Jesus HAD to be rejected by the leadership in order to be crucified. Their rejection of Jesus was also part of God's plan for the Gospel going to the Gentiles. This hardening of the majority of Israel was actively going on all during Jesus' ministry. In fact, Jesus spoke to the crowds ONLY by parables in order to keep them in the dark.

Mark 4:9-12

9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

*11 And he said unto them, **Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:***

12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

(KJV)

Mark 4:33-34

33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.

34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

(KJV)

The parables were used by Jesus as a double-edged sword. They were illustrations for the disciples, that Jesus used to convey His points, and then explained them to them in plain language when they were alone. But, they were also used to CONFUSE the crowds, particularly the leadership of Israel. Jesus spoke to them in "riddles," just as Isaiah prophesied. Why? *"That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."*

As you can see, this division of Israel, and hardening the leadership, was a part of God's plan to bring about the crucifixion. God was not caught offguard by the Jews rejecting His Son. He planned it.

Peter acknowledged both God's sovereignty and Israel's stubbornness in the crucifixion of Christ, in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. We should not assume that God blinded the nation of Israel, and then damned them to hell with no opportunity to repent. Yes, God blinded them. But after the crucifixion He opened up the Gospel to ALL the Jews, INCLUDING those who were formerly blinded during Jesus' ministry. Peter's first sermon on Pentecost was to the nation of Israel. And 3000 Jews were saved that day in downtown Jerusalem.

Acts 2:22-24,36-39

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

*23 Him, **being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:***

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. ...

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom

ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you (Israeli Jews), and to your children, and to all that are afar off (Jews of the Diaspora), even as many (Jews) as the Lord our God shall call.

(KJV)

Here, Peter was addressing Jews of Israel (vs. 22) and also those of the Diaspora who had travelled from foreign lands for the feast of Pentecost (vs. 5). Many of these Jews had been in Jerusalem only 7 weeks earlier for the Passover, and had been part of the mob that cried "*away with him, crucify him.*" They had been blinded by "*the determinate council and foreknowledge of God,*" and had crucified Jesus. But, it was all according to God's plan. After Pentecost, the Holy Spirit convicted them through Peter's preaching, and 3000 were saved in one day! You didn't think this was just because of Peter's great preaching, did you? Peter preached again a little later, and 5000 more were saved. In fact, when you get to Acts 21, the Jerusalem church had grown to many thousands of believing Jews! Not bad for a "blinded" nation!

To the Jews First, then to the Gentiles

Right after preaching that Jesus was "that prophet" in his sermon above, Peter said the following in his invitation:

Acts 3:24-26

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

*25 **Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.*** (Gentiles)

*26 **Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.***

(KJV)

Peter's point here is that the covenants were Israel's. They should embrace them despite the fact that most of the nation was being cut off because they refused to listen to "that Prophet." Yet, Peter reminded them here that the covenant God made with Abraham also concerned the Gentiles. All nations would be blessed through the 'seed' of Abraham. Peter let them know that the opportunity to embrace the covenants given to Israel depended on their listening to "that Prophet," and that the opportunity they were afforded was given to them FIRST, before the Gentile nations would embrace the blessing of Abraham. It was only fitting that the natural sons should embrace the covenants first.

Paul wrote that the Gospel was "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16, Rom. 2:9,10). This is borne out historically in the Gospel accounts. When approached by a Gentile woman, Jesus said to her, "*I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" (Matt. 15:22-28). In Matthew 10, Jesus sent His disciples out preaching, telling them NOT to preach to the Gentiles, but ONLY to Israel. This was because the New Covenant was specifically promised to Israel (Jer. 31:31-34). Israel had to be offered the covenant, and given the opportunity to receive it first. Israel was divided, part rejecting the new covenant, and part accepting it.

Paul was a Jew. He was of the portion of Israel that believed, and received the new Torah of "that prophet." Yet, he lamented the fact that most of his nation was blinded, and did not receive the New Covenant. This is the theme of Romans 9, where Paul speaks of "election" of a remnant of Israel, and the rest of the nation being blinded.

Rom 9:1-18

1 *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,*
 2 *That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.*
 3 *For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:*
 4 *Who are Israelites; **to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;***
 5 ***Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came,** who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*
 6 ***Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:***
 7 ***Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.***
 8 ***That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.***
 9 *For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.*
 10 *And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;*
 11 *(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)*
 12 *It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.*
 13 *As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*
 14 *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.*
 15 *For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*
 16 *So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*
 17 *For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.*
 18 *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.*
 (KJV)



In the bold part above, Paul was making the point that only a portion of Israel received the promises. Contrary to what many think, he was not referring to Gentiles becoming "Israel." Gentile believers are NOT "Israel." When he said, *"they are not all Israel who are of Israel,"* he was saying that not all of those who descended from Jacob (whom God renamed "Israel") are the true "Israel." Only a **remnant** of those descended from Jacob were the true "Israel." In other words, Paul was limiting "Israel" to ONLY those Jews who listened to "that prophet," and received the New Covenant. Then he said, *"but in Isaac shall thy seed be called."* This is a reference to God's promise to Abraham. Remember, Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. But, both of Abraham's physical descendants did NOT inherit the promise. The promise proceeded through Isaac only, not Ishmael, even though both were the physical seed of Abraham. Paul used this as an example of the current situation. Israel was divided into two camps, the believers and the unbelievers. Paul was likening the unbelievers of Israel to "Ishmael" and the believing remnant to "Isaac." Next, he used Jacob and Esau as another example of the same point. Both were physical sons of Isaac, but only Jacob received the promises.

Paul then went on in the rest of the chapter to speak of God's election of the believing remnant of Israel, and his blinding the larger part of the physical seed of Jacob. Paul argued for God's justice in doing so.

Sometimes when Paul spoke to the Gentile believers, he did so, not from the perspective of being a generic "Christian," but from the perspective of being part of this special remnant of Israel. He recognized that being a Messianic believer had a certain advantage.

Rom 3:1-3

1 *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?*
 2 *Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*

3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? (KJV)

Paul's point here was that being a Jewish believer is advantageous in a certain way. That SOME of the Jews did not receive the New Covenant DOES NOT make the promise void. It merely excludes from the true "Israel" those who rejected it. He was implying that, just as the promise to Abraham went through Isaac, bypassing Ishmael, and then from Isaac through Jacob, bypassing Esau, the promise continues in the believing REMNANT of Israel - the Messianic believers of the first century - and bypasses the unbelieving majority of Jews. Paul made the same point in Rom. 11.

Rom 11:1-5

1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

*2 **God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.** Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,*

3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

*5 **Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.***

(KJV)

Paul thought of himself not merely as a generic "Christian," but as a Messianic Jew. Verse one demolishes the ant-dispensationalists claim that God is finished with Israel. But it also destroys the dispensationalists claim that God has set aside Israel. Notice that Paul counters the claim that God has cast away His people, Israel, by appealing to the fact that He (Paul) was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin. He then goes on to explain that a remnant of Israel was NOT cast off by God, but continue in the covenant relationship with God. Paul gave an Old Testament example from Elijah's day to show that this was really how it has always been with Israel. The majority of the nation has always been in unbelief. That is how it was in the wilderness, when Israel refused to go into the promised land.

Paul continued with the Olive Tree parable, a milestone passage that explains the continuity between the nation of Israel and the Church better than any other passage.

Rom 11:13-29

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

16 For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.

24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to

nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

(KJV)

There is a clear continuity here between the natural branches before and after Christ. The 'Olive Tree' was in existence long before Christ came. In fact, Paul borrowed this parable from Jeremiah 11,12, where the good olive tree was Israel, and the wild trees were the gentiles.

Jer 11:16-17, 12:1,2

*16 The LORD called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, **and the branches of it are broken.***

17 For the LORD of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger in offering incense unto Baal...

*12:1 Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of **the wicked** prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?*

*2 **Thou hast planted them**, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.*

(KJV)

Jeremiah was contending with the Lord here, because God was judging Israel harshly. As a good olive tree that God had planted, He was now breaking off the branches and burning the tree. This was in reference to God's judgment on Israel during the Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah reasoned that God's judgment was too harsh. After all, He had planted the other trees as well (the heathen nations), yet He seemed to prosper them and not judge them nearly as harshly as He was judging Israel.

This is the parable that Paul brings into Romans 11, but with a new twist. Once again, the branches were being broken off from Israel. These branches were the Jews who did not listen to "that Prophet." But, as is apparent, SOME of the natural branches remained in the olive tree. These are the Jews who listened to "that Prophet," like the disciples, and all of the Jews who were saved in Acts 2, and even Paul himself. Then, Paul speaks of branches from the wild trees being grafted in AMONG the natural branches. These are the Gentiles, who believed the Gospel after Israel had largely rejected Jesus. Notice the definite continuity between the Old Testament and New Testament saints implied by this passage. The Olive Tree was in existence before Jesus came. It contained many branches. The tree remains even after SOME of the branches were broken off, and others grafted in.

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he did so from this same perspective. Yet, much of Ephesians was designed to show Gentile believers that they (the wild branches) have become EQUAL in Christ to the Messianic believers (the natural branches). This does not mean there are no DISTINCTIONS, only no DIVISIONS or DISPARITY between the Jewish branches and the Gentile branches.

Eph 1:11-13

*11 In whom also **WE** have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of*

him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12 That **WE** should be to the praise of his glory, **who first trusted in Christ.**

13 In whom **ye also trusted, after that YE heard the word of truth, the gospel of YOUR salvation:** in whom also after that **YE** believed, **YE** were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (KJV)

Notice the distinction in verses 12 & 13 between "we" who are identified as those who "first trusted in Christ," and the "you also" who later "believed" and who were later "sealed." In these verses, when Paul spoke in the first person plural, he was including himself in those who "first trusted in Christ," (the Jewish remnant). When he switched to the second person plural in vs. 13, he was speaking of the Gentile believers of Ephesus. There is a clear distinction here between the Jewish remnant (the remnant of Israel drawn by Jesus {as per John 6}, and who believed the Gospel) and the Gentiles of the Ephesian church, who were included in Christ after most of Israel had been blinded, and had rejected Him.

How do we reconcile then the fact that Paul spoke of Israel being blinded "*until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,*" yet thousands of Jews being saved in Acts? Simply because God instigated the INITIAL blindness in order to carry out His plan. However, once the leadership of Israel committed themselves by crucifying Jesus, and persecuting the Church, they had begun down a road that was very hard to turn around. Pride took over. Paul says that the Gospel going to the Gentiles provoked Israel to jealousy (Rom. 11:11), and the Jewish nation could not turn back to Christ, because of a self-imposed 'blindness.' Instead, unbelieving Israel began to persecute the remnant of Faith.

Gal 4:21-5:1 21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

(KJV)



Progressive Dispensationalism In

Depth

The Abrahamic Covenant in Both Testaments

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After the flood, when mankind once again turned away from God to worship idols, God chose one man through which He would bring about His entire plan of redemption and restoration. That man was Abraham. God spoke to Abraham several times. The first was a promise to inherit a "promised land" if he would simply leave his home, and follow where God led him. Abraham obeyed, and took his family and belongings, and headed out to this unknown promised land.

Gen 15:6-8

6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

*7 And he said unto him, **I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.***

8 And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?
(KJV)

Notice that **God promised the land inheritance to Abraham Himself**, not only to his seed. God then made a covenant with Abraham, and promised to fulfill His covenant based on an oath. In the above verses, Abraham asked God for proof that He would fulfill His promise.

Gen 15:8-12,17-18

*8 And he said, Lord GOD, **whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?***

9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. ...

17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

(KJV)

In chapter 17, the Abrahamic covenant is further expanded upon.

Gen 17:1-8

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out

of thee.

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

8 **And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.**
(KJV)

The book of Hebrews specifically mentioned this passage in chapter 6, and explains that this same "hope" of the Abrahamic Covenant is the HOPE of believers. (text in blue are New Testament quotes of the Old Testament).

Heb 6:12-20

12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13 **For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,**

14 Saying, *Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.* [from Gen. 22:17]

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

17 **Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:**

18 **That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, *we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:***

19 ***Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;***

20 *Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

(KJV)

What is interesting about this passage is that the writer of Hebrews clearly places the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant as the future hope of believers. God gave Abraham two "immutable things" to confirm His promise -- the covenant sign, when the burning lamp passed between the pieces of the animal Abraham slaughtered, and God's own oath. These two things, according to the above passage, provide the "anchor of the soul" and the same "hope" for New Testament believers. There is no way to disconnect the two "immutable things" from the Abrahamic Covenant as well as the future hope of these Jewish saints without demolishing the context.

Non-dispensationalists usually argue that every aspect of God's promises to the Fathers (including Abraham) was fulfilled in Joshua's day. But this is a misunderstanding of Joshua. It is easy to make such a mistake, and this mistake was also taught by some of the Jewish rabbis at the time of Christ. Hebrews discusses this point precisely, explaining that Joshua had NOT brought Israel into the FULL possession of all the promises, but that a FUTURE fulfillment remains and is certain, particularly in relation to the everlasting possession of the land. (the "Sabbath" rest)

In Hebrews 3, the writer speaks about the Israelites at Kadesh Barnea, when they refused to enter into the land because of unbelief. He then warns Jewish believers not to follow the same example of unbelief. Following this, he clearly says that **Joshua did NOT bring Israel to the entirety of the realization of the promises to the patriarchs**. In the following passage from Hebrews 3-4, the writer cites Psalm 95 more than once to prove his point. He does not cite it from the Hebrew text, but from the Septuagint (LXX- Greek Old Testament). We know this because the word "Today" does not appear in the Hebrew, but does in the Greek. Here is the passage in question from the LXX.

Psalm 95:8-11

8 *To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, according to the day of irritation in the wilderness:*

9 *where your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works.*

10 Forty years was I grieved with this generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.

11 **So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.**

Now, here is how the writer of Hebrews applies this to the question of whether the entirety of the Abrahamic Covenant had been fulfilled in Joshua's day, or whether it concerns a future hope for Jewish believers.

Heb 3:15-4:11

15 while it is said: *"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."*

16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?

17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?

18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?

19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

4:1 **Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.**

2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

3 **For we who have believed do enter that rest,** as He has said: *"So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,"* [from Psalm 95:11 LXX above] although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: *"And God rested on the seventh day from all His works";* [from Genesis 2:2-3]

5 and again in this place: *"They shall not enter My rest."* [from Psalm 95:11]

6 **Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience,**

7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, *"Today,"* after such a long time, as it has been said: *"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."* [Psalm 95:8]

8 **For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.**

9 **There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.**

10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

11 **Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest,** lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

(NKJ)

The argument here is very clear. He argues from Psalm 95:8-11, that since God said to Israel through David, *"Today, if you hear His voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation"* (ie, at Kadesh Barnea), the implication is that there is still a FUTURE fulfillment, even in David's day, to be realized by Israel that was not accomplished through Joshua! In other words, the command for Israel in David's day NOT to repeat the Kadesh Barnea rebellion, implies that the inheritance is still future. In David's day, Israel was in the land and even had a king! Yet, the complete fulfillment of the promise remained FUTURE. **The writer of Hebrews goes on to state clearly that himself and his readers must strive to enter the very thing that the Jews were denied at Kadesh Barnea! Which was the possession of the land!** This is the same *"hope set before us"* in chapter 6.

Amillennialists usually deny any future fulfillment of the land promises based on the following passage in Joshua.

Josh 21:43-45

43 So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it.

44 The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.

45 Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.
(NKJ)

When Joshua wrote that all had been fulfilled that God spoke to Israel, he meant that they had indeed conquered the enemies and were presently in possession of the land. But, there is more to the Abrahamic covenant than to initially seize the land. The covenant refers to an EVERLASTING POSSESSION of the land. And this was a promise to **Abraham AND to His seed**. (Gen. 17:8). Abraham has never had one moments' possession of one square inch of the land!

Paul stated plainly in Gal. 3 that the promise to Abraham that "*in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*," only BEGAN to be fulfilled through the coming of Christ. Was that aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant completely fulfilled in Joshua's day? Hardly! This is proof that Joshua did NOT mean that every aspect of the covenant God made with Abraham was fulfilled entirely, ONLY that they had conquered the land and were currently in possession of it. They did NOT maintain possession of it, however, and were driven from the land twice. Yet, God had promised Abraham himself an everlasting possession and inheritance in that very land.

Paul, in Romans 4, says nearly the same thing.

Rom 4:13-16

13 **For the promise that he would be the heir of the world** was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.
14 For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect,
15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.
16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that **the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham**, who is the father of us all
(NKJ)

That Abraham, and his seed, would be "*heir of the world*" is the same as what David says in the 37th Psalm.

Psalm 37

9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, **they shall inherit the earth**.
10 For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.
11 **But the meek shall inherit the earth;** and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.
...
18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and **their inheritance shall be for ever**.
19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.
20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away....
22 **For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth;** and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. ...
29 **The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.** ...
34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and **he shall exalt thee to inherit the land:** when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.

There can be no question that this Psalm promised Israel a FUTURE inheritance while Israel was already dwelling in the land in David's day! This is why the writer of Hebrews keeps appealing to David in support of the FUTURE inheritance of the land! And this FUTURE inheritance of the land will occur when "the wicked are cut off." This agrees with a plethora of other Scripture from nearly all of the prophets, where there is prophesied a future Day of the Lord, when all the armies of the world will gather against Jerusalem. The armies will be defeated by the LORD, and then Israel will be restored. Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel put the resurrection of the just at this time (cf. Isaiah. 26:19,

Ezekeil 37:12, Dan. 12:1-2).

Jesus Himself quoted Psalm 37:11, when He said in Matt. 5, "*the meek shall inherit the earth.*"

Hebrews 11 explains the promise in no uncertain terms.

Heb 11

*8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place **which he would receive as an inheritance**. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

*9 By faith **he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country**, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;*

10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The most important point here is that the inheritance promised to Abraham was the very land in which he sojourned, living as a foreigner in tents with his son Isaac, and grandson, Jacob. Also, the promise was that he, Abraham, would inherit the land, not only his distant offspring.

Regarding the "city" for which Abraham looked, keep in mind that the city now called "Jerusalem" is on the location of what was called "Salem" in Abraham's day. It included Mt. Moriah, where Abraham offered up Isaac. *Melchisedek* was the "*King of Salem*" in Abraham's day. Abraham met Melchisedek (Gen. 14:18), and who brought Abraham bread and wine. Abraham lived in this land God promised him as a "*stranger and pilgrim*." He was looking for the city built by God. Isaiah 65 describes the rebuilding of the present city of Jerusalem by the hand of God.

Isa 65:18-25

*18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, **I create Jerusalem** a rejoicing, and her people a joy.*

*19 And I will rejoice **in Jerusalem**, and joy in my people: and **the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying**.*

20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.

21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

*25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all **my holy mountain**, saith the LORD.*

(KJV)

Abraham was looking for this city, which, according to the context, would be on the location of Salem currently in Abraham's day. Hebrews 11 continues:

*13 These all [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob] died in faith, **not having received the promises**, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

The writer of Hebrews plainly says that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did NOT realize the promise while they were still alive. The implication is clearly that their receiving the inheritance was still future.

The translation "*earth*" is unfortunate. The problem is that our modern understanding of "*earth*" as the third planet from the sun was not the understanding of the term when Hebrews was written. That is not the Biblical meaning of "*earth*." The Greek (and Hebrew) word translated "*earth*" in Scripture means "*land*." It says absolutely NOTHING about the planet. It CAN be used of ALL the land, meaning the whole surface of the planet. Or, it is commonly used of a specific piece of land, like a country. It is used many times of the "*land*" God promised Abraham. The best way to illustrate this is to refer to the very first time the "*earth*" is defined in Scripture.

Gen 1:10

*10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.
(KJV)*

As you can see, "*earth*" is distinguished from "*sea*." That "*land*" is the best rendering in Hebrews 11:13 is clear from the context, which is speaking about where Abraham lived as a pilgrim and stranger -- the LAND that he would afterward receive as an inheritance. So, the implication that seems to come from our modern English translations, that Abraham was a "*pilgrim and stranger*" on this planet, looking to be whisked away to heaven, is completely foreign to both the context and the rest of Scripture. The text says that Abraham was a stranger and pilgrim on the very **land** that God promised to give him afterward.

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

"*Those who say such things*" refers to Abraham's saying that he was a pilgrim and stranger in the land that he was to afterward receive as his inheritance. The word "*homeland*" means a *permanent residence*. In other words, what Abraham sought, while living as a pilgrim and foreigner in the land God promised to give him afterward, was a permanent residence. ie, the fulfillment of the promise to inherit that very land forever.

15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

The phrase, "*they seek a better country*," does NOT refer to heaven, as amills claim. The word "*better*" demands a contrast to something else. We must ask, "*better than what?*" The context supplies the answer -- the country Abraham left, Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham LEFT Ur when God told Him, seeking a "*better*" country, a "*heavenly*" country, a country God would show to Him. The "*heavenly country*" is NOT heaven, it is the "*promised land*" (from the Nile to the Euphrates). The word "*heavenly*" is NOT a noun, it is an adjective. It describes a QUALITY, not a location. It is "*heavenly*" because God is going to recreate and restore it, as per Isaiah 65-66.

Heb 11:39-40

*39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, **did not receive the promise,**
40 God having provided something better for us, that **they should not be made perfect apart from us.***

Notice that the writer of Hebrews plainly says that these died in faith, not yet having received the fulfillment of the promise. He explains the reason -- that God wanted to perfect or complete "*us*" (Jewish believers to whom Hebrews was written) along with Abraham and the patriarchs. Abraham's receiving the fulfillment of the promise is still future!

The whole theme of Hebrews is perseverance in the Faith so that his readers would inherit the Abrahamic promise, the everlasting possession of the land! While the language is colorful, "*heavenly country*," etc, it clearly refers to what is prophesied by the prophets. It cannot be "*heaven*" because the "*better country*" of which Abraham sought is NOT heaven. It cannot be "*heaven*" because

Hebrews says plainly that Abraham lived in this land as a pilgrim and stranger.



Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

Origins of the "Heavenly Destiny" Concept

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Where did the idea of an eternity in heaven come from? Certainly not from Judaism, from which Christianity sprang! There is no such concept in the Old Testament. As we saw in the article on the Kingdom hope in the Gospels, it definitely did not come from Jesus' teaching, and therefore could not have been part of the Gospel Jesus commanded to be taken into all the world. The hope of believers according to Jesus was the Kingdom of God to come here on earth at His coming.

Traditional Dispensationalists believe the 'heavenly destiny' idea was part of the 'mystery' revealed through Paul. But, where did Paul depart from what Jesus taught? He did not! He built on Jesus' teaching. Dispensationalists have no clear statement of Paul's to indicate a heavenly destiny for the Church.

The idea of a heavenly destiny was common in the first century among pagans schooled in Greek philosophy. It entered Christianity gradually, after the deaths of the Apostles, through the incorporation of elements of Gnosticism. The Gnostics taught that matter was evil, and the creation was a mistake, made by a lesser 'god' who sought to imprison mankind in physical bodies, and demand their worship. The 'Christian' form of Gnosticism held that Jesus came from the supreme God to free mankind from this evil physical realm, in which he had been trapped by the lesser 'god' whom the Jews worshipped. Jesus' mission was to show mankind the way to a higher heavenly reality (not atone for sins). Salvation was attained through levels of 'gnosis' (the Greek word for 'knowledge'). Through the attainment of supernatural knowledge of various 'mysteries,' converts were supposed to advance through stages (helped along the way by certain spirit guides) until one reached the 'pleroma,' the Gnostics' version of 'heaven.' Since the material world was evil, Gnostics denied the resurrection of the body as well. Being freed from the bonds of earth and the material cosmos, so they could soar into the heavens, was the hope of the Gnostics.

Justin Martyr was an orthodox Christian writer who lived in the early second century. He strongly opposed the 'heretics' who promoted the 'heavenly destiny' concept. To the early orthodox Christians, the physical resurrection of the body in order to reign in Christ's physical earthly kingdom was the orthodox Faith handed down by the Apostles.

*"Moreover, I pointed out to you that **some who are called Christians, but are godless, impious heretics, teach doctrines that are in every way blasphemous, atheistical, and foolish.** But that you may know that I do not say this before you alone, I shall draw up a statement, so far as I can, of all the arguments which have passed between us; in which I shall record myself as admitting the very same things which I admit to you. For I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines [delivered] by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this [truth], and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; **who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven;** ... 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." (Justin, Dialogue with Trypho, LXXX)*

The first century orthodox Christians definitely continued to expect the Jewish hope of the Millennial Kingdom, and the resurrection of the body in order to reign in Christ's physical Kingdom, as the

destiny of all the saved [1].

Irenaeus was the pastor of the church in Lyons, Gaul, a student of Polycarp, the disciple of John, and a martyr for the Faith. He made it his life's work to refute the Gnostic sects, with their 'heavenly destiny' ideas, and denial of the resurrection of the body. Irenaeus wrote five volumes called, *Against Heresies*. In his fifth volume, Irenaeus soundly refuted the Gnostic idea of a heavenly destiny, by proving that the hope of the saved is the Kingdom of God on earth, and the resurrection of the body to reign with Christ.

*"And again he says, "Let him be taken away, that he behold not the glory of God." And when these things are done, he says, "God will remove men far away, and those that are left shall multiply in the earth." "And they shall build houses, and shall inhabit them themselves: and plant vineyards, and eat of them themselves." For all these and other words were unquestionably spoken in reference to the resurrection of the just, which takes place after the coming of Antichrist, and the destruction of all nations under his rule; in [the times of] which [resurrection] the righteous shall reign in the earth, waxing stronger by the sight of the Lord: and through Him they shall become accustomed to partake in the glory of God the Father, and shall enjoy in the kingdom intercourse and communion with the holy angels, and union with spiritual beings; and [with respect to] those whom the Lord shall find in the flesh, awaiting Him from heaven, and who have suffered tribulation, as well as escaped the hands of the Wicked one. ... Now all these things being such as they are, cannot be understood in reference to super-celestial matters; "for God," it is said, "will show to the whole earth that is under heaven thy glory." But in the times of the kingdom, the earth has been called again by Christ [to its pristine condition], and Jerusalem rebuilt after the pattern of the Jerusalem above, of which the prophet Isaiah says, "Behold, I have depicted thy walls upon my hands, and thou art always in my sight,"" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Bk. V, ch. XXXV).*

The only 'heavenly' ideas they had were related to a series of levels of reward in the Millennium. Irenaeus claimed that the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven, and the most worthy saints will inhabit this city (apparently hovering in the sky {heavens}). Others will inhabit the earthly city of Jerusalem, as well as the paradise earth (after being restored). Yet, all would be a part of this Kingdom, and Christ would be seen both in the New Jerusalem and on the earth.[2] He saw the Millennium as preparatory for final dwelling, where the New Jerusalem would set down on the earth, after its complete renovation at the end of the Millennium.

*"For as it is God truly who raises up man, so also does man truly rise from the dead, and not allegorically, as I have shown repeatedly. And as he rises actually, so also shall he be actually disciplined beforehand for incorruption, and shall go forwards and flourish in the times of the kingdom, in order that he may be capable of receiving the glory of the Father. Then, when all things are made new, he shall truly dwell in the city of God. For it is said, "He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And the Lord says, Write all this; for these words are faithful and true. And He said to me, They are done." And this is the truth of the matter." (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Bk. V. ch. XXXV)*

Although Gnosticism itself was largely purged from the Church by early Christian apologists, like Justin, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus, certain subtle elements of Gnostic thinking remained in some quarters, particularly Alexandria, Egypt. The central hermeneutic of Gnosticism, allegorical interpretation, survived and found a haven with the Alexandrian writers, Clement and Origen. Because of the influence of the Alexandrian school, the Millennial hope was gradually displaced entirely as Greek philosophy continued to invade Christianity in a much more subtle form. The doctrine of heaven, as the final destiny, began to penetrate mainstream Christianity in the late second and third centuries thanks largely to the wide influence of Origen's writings. He made liberal use of the allegorical method of interpreting prophecy. Origen saw the physical existence on this planet as only a temporary detour in a mystical spiritual existence [3]. The physical creation, while not being 'evil' like the overt Gnostics imagined, was considered a temporary classroom for mankind, through which he was to become more mature until no longer needing the physical realm

as his tutor. Our earthly existence in the physical realm was sort of an interaction with physical things which are meant as illustrations of spiritual realities[4]. In short, we are all living in a continuous stream of parables. The idea is, learn the lesson of the physical parable, and then you are ready to shed the physical and live in the spiritual realm in heaven. Hence Origen saw no need for a resurrection of the body, and opposed the orthodox view of the physical Millennial Kingdom. Origen's views gained some popularity among the early Church, but certainly not wholesale endorsement. Many of the bishops considered him a heretic. Below is a quote from Origen, outlining his 'heavenly' scheme.

*"...when, notwithstanding all things have been made subject to Christ, and through Christ to God (with whom they formed also one spirit, in respect of spirits being rational natures), then the bodily substance itself also being united to most pure and excellent spirits, and being changed into an ethereal condition in proportion to the quality or merits of those who assume it (according to the apostle's words, "We also shall be changed"), will shine forth in splendor; or at least that when the fashion of those things which are seen passes away, and all corruption has been shaken off and cleansed away, and when the whole of the space occupied by this world, in which the spheres of the planets are said to be, has been left behind and beneath, **then is reached the fixed abode of the pious and the good situated above that sphere**, which is called non-wandering, as in a good land, in a land of the living, which will be inherited by the meek and gentle; to which land belongs that heaven (which, with its more magnificent extent, surrounds and contains that land itself) which is called truly and chiefly heaven, in which heaven and earth, the end and perfection of all things, may be safely and most confidently placed, — where, viz., these, after their apprehension and their chastisement for the offenses which they have undergone by way of purgation, may, after having fulfilled and discharged every obligation, deserve a habitation in that land; **while those who have been obedient to the word of God, and have henceforth by their obedience shown themselves capable of wisdom, are said to deserve the kingdom of that heaven or heavens**; and thus the prediction is more worthily fulfilled, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;" and, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven;" and the declaration in the Psalm, "He shall exalt thee, and thou shalt inherit the land." For it is called a descent to this earth, **but an exaltation to that which is on high. In this way, therefore, does a sort of road seem to be opened up by the departure of the saints from that earth to those heavens**; so that they do not so much appear to abide in that land, as to inhabit it with an intention, viz., to pass on to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, when they have reached that degree of perfection also." (Origen, De Principis, Bk. II, ch. 4)*

The keen reader will no doubt pick up on Origen's mention of a 'purgetory' in preparation for this heavenly abode. One can clearly see in Origen's ideas what soon became official Roman Catholic dogma.

*"And so also to those who shall deserve to obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, that germ of the body's restoration, which we have before mentioned, **by God's command restores out of the earthly and animal body a spiritual one, capable of inhabiting the heavens**; while to each one of those who may be of inferior merit, or of more abject condition, or even the lowest in the scale, and altogether thrust aside, there is yet given, in proportion to the dignity of his life and soul, a glory and dignity of body, — nevertheless in such a way, that even the body which rises again of those who are to be destined to everlasting fire or to severe punishments, is by the very change of the resurrection so incorruptible, that it cannot be corrupted and dissolved even by severe punishments." (Origen, De Principis, Bk. II, ch. 10)*

As you can see, Origen admits a resurrection of the body for the unsaved, so they can suffer the torment of damnation. But, for the 'saved,' he envisioned a spiritual existence (similar to the Gnostics), and a heavenly destiny (as did the Gnostics). In the following quote, it becomes increasingly clear where the modern dispensational 'heavenly destiny' ideas came from.

"For which reason, now, we may also see of a truth that all the doctrines of the Jews of the present

*day are mere trifles and fables, since they have not the light that proceeds from the knowledge of the Scriptures; whereas those of the Christians are the truth, having power to raise and elevate the soul and understanding of man, **and to persuade him to seek a citizenship, not like the earthly Jews here below, but in heaven.***" (Origen, Against Celsus, Bk. II, ch. V)

Origen's ideas were in direct opposition to the earlier orthodox writers, Justin and Irenaeus. While Justin called 'heretics' so-called Christians who forsook the Jewish idea of an earthly physical Kingdom of God, Origen called the idea of an earthly Kingdom 'fables.' He thought the hope of a physical Kingdom was absurd, and also denied the resurrection of the body for the saved, same as the Gnostics.

In the fourth century, Augustine was more successful in popularizing the heavenly destiny idea, making it mainstream Christian (Catholic) doctrine. He tended toward Origen's allegorical interpretation, but toned down the system to make it less objectionable to orthodox Christians [5]. Unlike Origen, Augustine admitted the resurrection of the body. The heavenly destiny concept was a staple of the a-millennial view that grew out of Origen's and Augustine's allegorical methods of viewing Scripture.

"Augustin proceeds to a special election of a people of God from the corrupt and condemned mass; he follows their history in two antagonistic lines, and ends in the dualistic contrast of an eternal heaven for the elect and an eternal hell for the reprobate,..." (Philip Schaff, Preface to The City of God)

Traditional Dispensationalism's Partial Return to the Ancient Faith

Traditional Dispensationalism originally grew out of a return to futurist pre-millennialism. In doing so, it threw off some of Augustine's concepts held by both Roman Catholicism and the Reformers, particularly regarding Israel. The main objection early dispensationalists had was the allegorizing of the Old Testament prophecies related to Israel. But, it seems they did not really challenge the a-millennial ideas regarding the heavenly destiny of the Church. This partial abandonment of Augustine's views presented a paradox for them - how to reconcile a physical Kingdom promised to Israel with the idea of a heavenly destiny for the saved.

The solution devised by the early dispensationalists was a kind of 'dichotomy' (absolute division) between the Old Testament program, which was seen as Jewish and earthly, and a New Testament program for the Church, which was seen as heavenly.

Taking the 'dichotomy' approach to solving the seeming conflict between Old and New Testament programs is really nothing new. Faced with a God in the Old Testament who seemed to have one program, and a God in the New Testament who seemed to have a completely different program, the early Gnostic sects imagined that the God of Israel was not the same Father God whom Jesus proclaimed, but a lesser god.[6] They envisioned a total 'dichotomy' between the God of Israel with His 'carnal' (physical - which they termed 'animal') program, and the Father Jesus proclaimed, who had a much more heavenly minded (spiritual) program for those who had knowledge (gnosis) of the mystery.[7] The followers of Marcion (one of the more well known Gnostic sects) went so far as to claim that Paul alone received the revelation of the "mystery," not foreseen in the Old Testament, or revealed to the other Apostles.[8]

One of Irenaeus' tactics in refuting the Gnostics was to illustrate the continuity between the Old and New Testament programs. He did this by citing Old Testament prophecy fulfilled in the Church (that is, specific prophecy about this present dispensation), and citing New Testament passages that linked the present dispensation with the past one.[9] He also appealed to the agreement between Old Testament prophecy and New Testament prophecy regarding eschatology.[10] He proved with many quotations of Scripture that the Apostolic writings concerning the Church were in perfect alignment, and even depended upon, the goal of Old Testament prophecy regarding Israel. The goal of both Testaments was the same, and the destiny of the redeemed from both Testaments was a

horizontal hope, the Millennial Kingdom of Christ on earth, not a vertical hope, ascending to heaven. [11] The 'mystery' was not seen as a parenthetical Church age, but the whole hidden plan of God to redeem mankind through the atoning sacrifice of Christ and the Gospel being proclaimed to the nations. It was hidden within the Old Testament Scriptures, and revealed by Jesus and the Apostles. [12] Therefore in Irenaeus' mind, one God was interacting with man through a single program, and the Church consisted of all of the redeemed. God's unfolding plan for mankind's salvation was manifest through a series of **progressive dispensations**, according to Irenaeus.[13] This was the orthodox Faith of all the local churches in the second century, from Germany to Lybia, from Gaul to Egypt. And it was the tradition passed down by the succession of "faithful men," the elders of the churches founded by the Apostles.[14]

The 'chiliasm' (millennialism) of the early orthodox Christian Church knew nothing of a 'heavenly destiny' for the Church distinct from God's program for Israel. The early Christians' hope was identical to that of the Patriarchs, the Prophets, and all the saints of Hebrews eleven, an inheritance in the coming physical Kingdom of God on earth. The 'Church' was seen as all of the redeemed from every dispensation. While most may not be aware of this, **progressive dispensationalism is largely a return to the basic pre-millennialism of the early orthodox Church**. Darby threw off some of the Augustinian thinking predominant in Protestantism, particularly where it concerns the nation of Israel. But, it is my personal belief that he did not go far enough, and continued to entertain 'mystical' thinking regarding the Church, begun by the Gnostics, toned down by Origen, and made mainstream by Augustine. Darby should have gone all the way back to Apostolic theology found in those who had personal linkage to Apostolic oral tradition, like Justin, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus. He should have abandoned the 'heavenly destiny' idea of the Gnostics, Origen, and Augustine, and embraced the 'chiliasm' handed down to the second generation Christians by the Apostles. Instead, he fell into the same trap as the Gnostics 1500 years earlier, and imagined a dichotomy between the Old Testament program for Israel and the New Testament program for the 'Church.'

Notes:

- [1] Chadwick, Henry. The Early Church. Penguin Books, pp.77,78,83
- [2] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Bk. V, ch. XXXV,XXXVI
- [3] Chadwick, p.104
- [4] Origen, De Principis, Bk. II, ch. XI
- [5] Schaff, Phillip. The Post Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2. Preface to Augustin's The City of God. p.5
- [6] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Bk. I, ch. XXIV, 2,4
- [7] ibid, Bk. I, ch. VI, 1-2
- [8] ibid, Bk. III, ch. XIII, 1
- [9] ibid, Bk. I, ch. X, 3, Bk III, ch. XII, Bk. IV, ch. VIII, IX-XII, XXI-XXV
- [10] ibid, Bk. V, ch. XXV-XXVI
- [11] ibid, Bk. V, ch. XXXII - XXXV
- [12] ibid, Bk. III, ch. XII, 9, Bk. IV, ch. IX, 3, Frag. XXXVI
- [13] ibid, Bk. IV, ch. IX, 3, ch. XXVI
- [14] ibid, Bk. I, X



Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

Israel's Role in God's Redemptive Plan

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The strength and primary feature of Progressive Dispensationalism is its ability to explain the overall purpose of God for mankind in a single unified plan. God's plan to redeem mankind flows through a series of progressive dispensations. The nation of Israel was chosen by God as a conduit to reveal Himself and His plan, through His interaction with them as a people. The eventual goal was to call out of every nation a people unto Himself. Remember how a teacher might take one student in the class, bring him up to the front, and use him as an illustration for the whole class? This is what God did with the nation of Israel, using one nation to illustrate His character, and to provide an example for the rest of the nations. Because of this, the Gentile powers (like Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Cyrus) were forced to acknowledge that the God of Israel was sovereign in the affairs of man. Because of God's singling out this nation, Israel was put under scrutiny, and bore a heavy burden of responsibility. And Israel was held to a much higher standard than the rest of the Gentile nations.

1 Cor 10:11

*11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.
(KJV)*

Israel was entrusted with the written Words of God. She was given a much heavier burden to bear regarding holiness and obedience to God, than the Gentile nations surrounding her. Jeremiah complained to the Lord using the original 'Olive Tree' metaphor (Jer. 11:15-15 & 12:1-2). He compared Israel to a good Olive Tree whom God had planted. Yet, God was judging Israel harshly, breaking off the branches. Jeremiah reasoned that God had planted the other trees too (Gentile nations), but couldn't understand why God was judging Israel harshly, and didn't seem to judge the pagan practices of the Gentile nations. Jeremiah didn't understand the unique role of Israel among the nations.

Throughout Israel's history, there has always been a believing remnant, and the unbelieving majority, just like every nation today. The promises to Israel in the Old Testament were conditional. The Jews were told repeatedly that the promises depended on their keeping God's covenant with them. Each generation of Israelites had its faithful remnant, and unfaithful majority. It was through the faithful remnant that Israel retained its connection to the covenants and promises. For this reason, at the resurrection, not all of the Jews will be raised to inherit the Kingdom. This is clear in Daniel 12:1,2, where the angel told Daniel that MANY of his people who sleep shall awaken to everlasting life. But the rest to eternal damnation. The promises to Israel did not depend solely on being the seed of Abraham, but also having the faith of Abraham, and maintaining one's connection to the covenants and promises through faith. This is what Hebrews 11 teaches, by recalling the great men of Faith from Israel's history, and telling us that they held on to the promises through faith.

In the New Testament, the connection between the Jews who believed and the Old Testament promises remains intact. By believing the Gospel, a Jew did not, or does not, sever his ties with the Patriarchs, or the promises of God to Israel, as Traditional Dispensationalism teaches. He is not

merely a generic 'Christian.' He is a Christian, but still has the same hope as his forefathers, being a part of the Israel - the head of the nations - in the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. The land inheritance promised to the twelve tribes in Ezekiel remains for all of the twelve tribes who are raised in the resurrection of the just. That includes the division of the land of Israel by tribe, and the granting of land by 'lot.' I mentioned the practice of casting 'lots' to divide the land by family, because the Bible clearly says that this is how God commanded it to be done in Joshua's day. And, it will be the same in the Millennium. The proof is in Daniel 12, where the closing verses are a personal message to Daniel. He would die, but would be resurrected to stand in his 'lot' at the end of the 1290 days of great tribulation. This shows that the inheritance of the Old Testament saints after being raised is indeed the land promises. The land inheritance is NOT merely for the surviving Jews of the tribulation, as many Traditional Dispensationalists teach. It is for saints in resurrected bodies.

That Israel (including Jewish Christians) is to enjoy specific literal promises in the Millennium is not to say that the Gentile believers are slighted. It is only that Israel's inheritance is much more explicitly explained in Scripture. All believers will be rewarded and receive an inheritance in Christ's Kingdom here on earth. It is simply that God told the Jews in much greater detail what theirs would be. Jesus even told the disciples, who were to be the elders of the Church, that their position in the Kingdom would be to eat at Christ's table, and sit on twelve thrones as governors, ruling each the twelve tribes of Israel.

Regarding the role of Gentile believers, the world is a very big place, particularly once the followers of the Antichrist have been removed. The land of Israel is a small place. Remember the parable of the Talents? The reward for faithful service now is authority in Christ's Kingdom over various cities. National distinctions will remain in the Kingdom even for the saved in resurrected bodies. The land promises will be realized by all of believing Israel. But, just as national distinctions do not create an issue within the Church in this dispensation, neither will they in the next. Do we get all worked up about national distinctions between the Church in Russia and the Church in the USA, or China? No. We are one body in Christ despite such national distinctions. Why should such distinctions (not divisions) get us worked up in the Millennium? The Word of God plainly shows that national distinctions will extend through all eternity. Speaking of the New Jerusalem, God says...

Rev 21:24

*24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.
(KJV)*

The Church is not really an extension of Israel. The Church is the believing remnant of Israel and the believing remnant of all the other nations, joined in one body. It is just that God has singled out Israel for a place in history of greater responsibility, but also great blessing. The blessings come as the result of the covenants. Israel under the Law provided the example for the whole class (the nations). We saw through God's dealings with Israel as a nation a microcosm of His dealings with all of mankind. It is a demonstration of God's character and holiness, and why He cannot tolerate sin, for the whole class to see and learn.

In the present dispensation, the New Covenant was offered to Israel, as Jeremiah prophesied. Some of Israel received it. But, as always, the majority of Israel remains in unbelief. At Kadesh Barnea, when they failed to go into the promised land, the majority separated themselves from the blessings of the Covenant. So it was with the Jewish majority who rejected Christ. But, the Gentiles are 'brought nigh' to the blessings promised Israel. The same KINDS of blessings are ours through faith. So, the Church is not really an extension of the nation of Israel (although it could be viewed as an extension of the believing remnant of Israel). Israel is simply the conduit for the blessings to flow to the remnant of faith from all the nations. Israel is partially blinded in this dispensation, so that the nations can sort of catch up and partake in God's redemptive plan. The Great Commission provides for the Good News to be proclaimed to all the nations, while Israel for the most part is

held back. But, at the proper time, ALL Israel (one whole generation) will come into the Church in a single day, when the blindness is lifted, and they "look on Him whom they have pierced."

Each dispensation contains a microcosm of the next dispensation. What is seen in limited form in one dispensation is fully developed in the next. After the tower of Babel, and the division of the population into nations by the confounding of the languages, God's redemptive plan began to gather steam. It started with one man and his family, Abraham. The promises were limited to one man, then to his son Isaac, his son Jacob, and then to the twelve tribes. Under the Law of Moses, God began to deal with a whole nation as a unit, as a microcosm of His future plan. 'Israel' under the Law was an illustration of God's dealings with the whole world in the next dispensation. Rather than the remnant of one nation being solely the people of God, the remnants from all the nations become the people of God (the Church) in this dispensation. In the age to come, the remnants of faith from all the nations will rule the earth (no longer being a remnant, and evil will be kept under wraps by Christ's ruling Kingdom. In the eternal state, all evil will be eliminated from the earth, and the entire population of the earth will be limited to the redeemed. God's Kingdom will go on forever with the nations of the redeemed.

This is also the process whereby God's creation is being progressively made holy. While the whole world was pagan at the time of Babel, God started with one man of faith, Abraham. From Abraham was produced a nation, Israel. From Israel was produced a remnant of holy people (a perculiar people, a holy nation). In the present dispensation, righteousness further displaces evil by God's calling a remnant from among the Gentile nations, joining them to the remnant of Israel, creating the 'Church.' At the end of this dispensation, God will force the whole population of the world to either choose Him or the Antichrist. At the coming of the next dispensation, those who worship the Beast will be removed, and the present little remnant (the true Church) will rule the world with Christ! In the final eternal dispensation, evil will be banished entirely.

All of this has been made possible by God's using Israel as His channel to reveal Himself and His plan, as a living example of His interaction with man, and as the conduit for the salvation of the remnant from all of the nations, and to bring forth one from Abraham's seed (Jesus Christ) through whom all can inherit eternal salvation. For this reason, Israel will be the head of the nations in the Millennium.



Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

The "Mystery" Revealed by Jesus

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Many Christians are aware of some difficulties regarding the interpretation of Old Testament passages by New Testament writers. Probably the most famous problematic passage is Matthew's quote of Isaiah 7:14.

Matt 1:22-23

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

(KJV)

Isaiah 7:10-17

10 Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying,

11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.

12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

13 And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?

14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

15 Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

16 For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

17 The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria.

(KJV)

Isaiah 7:14 is a difficult passage regarding context. Yet, Matthew most definitely indicates that Jesus' birth is the fulfillment of this prophecy. How can this be when it is abundantly clear that Isaiah's prophecy concerned Ahaz and the Assyrian captivity? Some try to cut Matthew some slack, and claim that he really didn't mean to indicate the real fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. If so, he used a very poor choice of words, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying..."

This raises three possibilities.

1. Matthew was mistaken (the Jewish claim)
2. We are misunderstanding Isaiah's context.
3. Matthew knew something that Jews and most Christians do not know.

If #1 is correct, then the whole New Testament is suspect, and Christianity as a whole is cast into doubt.

If #2 is correct, it would mean that the normal grammatical/historical approach to interpretation does not work in this case. The literal grammatical/historical approach would indicate that this prophecy be fulfilled during the lifetime of Ahaz. But, according to Matthew, it was fulfilled centuries later. Therefore, there must be another hermeneutic involved besides the grammatical/historical approach, or else we are left with #1 only.

The answer is #3. Matthew knew something that Jews and most Christians do not know. That is the 'mystery' hidden in the Scriptures of the Prophets.

The Old Testament contains an additional hidden message besides the normal surface message. This hidden message is NOT seen using the normal grammatical/historical method. This is not to diminish the grammatical/historical hermeneutic. It is the foundation of all good exegesis of Scripture, both Old Testament and New Testament. And we are NOT at liberty to abandon it. However, we must also recognize a special hermeneutic employed by both Jesus, and the Apostles under the inspiration of the Spirit, in order to reveal the "mystery" from the Old Testament Scriptures. In order to hide the 'mystery' within the text of the OLD TESTAMENT, certain literary devices, which transgress the normal hermeneutical methods, were employed by God.

A good example of this is Psalm 22. There is no question that this Psalm is in reference to Christ's crucifixion. It was cited in the Gospels in connection with the crucifixion. But, a purely grammatical interpretation forbids this from being a prophecy of Christ, because David spoke in the first person singular. The normal grammatical reading of Psalm 22 indicates that David was describing his own sufferings. Ditto for Psalm 16:10, where David wrote, *"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption,"* speaking in the first person singular. Yet, Peter tells us in his first sermon that this was a prophecy of Christ, since David was dead and buried. Was Peter mistaken? Was he misinterpreting this Psalm while preaching in the power of the Spirit? From a purely grammatical standpoint, yes he was!

How can we account for these Messianic prophecies, where the NEW TESTAMENT writers seem to transgress the normal rules of interpretation? Were they all mistaken? Is Christianity really based on bad exegesis of the Jewish Scriptures? Is Judaism really the true Faith? Or is there something wrong with our use of the grammatical/historical hermeneutic? The answer is the latter.

Luke 24:13-48

13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

25 **Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: 26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?**

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, **Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?**

33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.

41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.

43 And he took it, and did eat before them.

44 And he said unto them, **These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.**

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

(KJV)

The 'mystery' was hidden within the text of the OLD TESTAMENT Scriptures. It was not understood using the normal grammatical/historical approach to interpretation. There was a missing ingredient, REVELATION directly from the Spirit of God. Jesus had to OPEN their understanding so they could understand the Scriptures. The two on the road to Emmaus, received this revelation from Jesus as He expounded every OT passage to them that concerned the 'mystery.' Their hearts burned within them as He opened the Scriptures to them. Ditto for the rest of the disciples meeting behind closed doors. It was this revelation of the Mystery that enabled Peter to tie together many prophecies from the Psalms with Jesus Christ in His Pentecost sermon.

This begs the question, why would God hide the mystery within the OT writings? Why make something so obscure? Paul tells us why.

1 Cor 2:7-8

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 **Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

(KJV)

That the mystery was hidden in this manner was absolutely necessary for the Jews to reject Jesus, and for the crucifixion to occur. Even Satan didn't get it. The crucifixion of Jesus was inspired by Satan Himself, when he entered into Judas. By God's hiding the 'mystery' in the Scriptures, He was able to turn the tables on Satan. God actually used Satan as a tool to carry out the crucifixion.

Throughout the Gospels you can see that Jesus intentionally kept the Jews in the dark about what was really going on, while giving some light to His disciples.

Mark 4:10-12

10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

11 And he said unto them, **Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God:** but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

(KJV)

God drew only a remnant of the Jews during Jesus' ministry, the rest were hardened. They could not see the Messianic prophecies using the normal interpretive methods. Jesus spoke to them in parables, so they could not understand. Paul explained the reasons for this in his parable of the Olive Tree in Romans 11.

In hindsight, through the revelation of Jesus, we can perceive Messianic prophecies interwoven all throughout the Old Testament. Some are fairly plain, like Isaiah 53 (but not altogether, since Philip had to explain to the Ethiopian Eunuch what Isaiah was writing about). Others are quite obscure, like Psalm 22 and Isaiah 7:14. Some are seen in types, such as the sacrifices all being allegories of Christ. Others appear to combine Christ's first and second comings into one. Yet, to those willing to believe, the big picture comes clearly into focus through revelation, as we stand amazed at the flood of prophecy of Christ in the Old Testament. To the carnal minds, with a veil over their eyes, the Torah's and the Prophets' testimony to Christ remain hidden out of sight. That Jesus is the Messiah cannot be proven from the normal grammatical/historical approach to Old Testament prophecy. But, to those who have ears to hear, the evidence is overwhelming.

This is the 'mystery' that Paul speaks of so often in his epistles. Some claim that it was unique to Paul. Nothing in the Scriptures hints at such a thing. In fact, Paul plainly said that the Mystery was revealed to the 'Apostles' (plural), (Eph. 3:5).

John the Baptist was the first to shed some light on the Mystery, when he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," making the connection between Jesus and Isaiah 53. Jesus gave further revelation to His disciples, through personal instruction, and explaining the parables. But, not until after the resurrection did He open their understanding so they could understand the Scriptures, and expound every single prophecy in the Old Testament concerning His coming. From this point on, the Apostles were able to connect the Old Testament prophecies with Jesus' first coming. Peter's sermons in Acts 2 and Acts 3 are filled with these kinds of interpretations of Old Testament prophecy.

It was this hidden wisdom of God, hidden from the bulk of Israel but revealed to the Church, that

caused Paul to erupt in thanksgiving!

Rom 11:33-36

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

(KJV)



Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

Paul & The "Mystery"

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"Paul himself also — after that the Lord spoke to him out of heaven, and showed him that, in persecuting His disciples, he persecuted his own Lord, and sent Ananias to him that he might recover his sight, and be baptized — 'preached,' it is said, 'Jesus in the synagogues at Damascus, with all freedom of speech, that this is the Son of God, the Christ.' **This is the mystery which he says was made known to him by revelation**, that He who suffered under Pontius Pilate, the same is Lord of all, and King, and God, and Judge, receiving power from Him who is the God of all, because He became 'obedient unto death, even the death of the cross'." (Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, 12:9)

"True knowledge, then, consists in the understanding of Christ, which Paul terms **the wisdom of God hidden in a mystery**, which 'the natural man receiveth not,' the doctrine of the cross; of which if any man 'taste,' he will not accede to the disputations and quibbles of proud and puffed-up men, who go into matters of which they have no perception. For the truth is unsophisticated; and 'the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart,' as the same apostle declares, being easy of comprehension to those who are obedient." (Irenaeus, Frag. xxxvi)

The Meaning of "Mystery" in Scripture

There are several passages where Paul refers to the "mystery" kept secret since the world began. This has been taken by dispensationalists to mean something not at all contained in the Old Testament. But, the word "mystery" does not normally mean something totally unheard of, but something not understood. Thayer's Greek lexicon says of the word "mystery," *"in the Scriptures, a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding."* Thayer also points out that in rabbinic writings, *"it denotes the mystic or hidden sense: of an OT saying, Eph. 5:32."* The word "mystery" merely implies something enigmatic, contained in the Old Testament Scriptures in cryptic language, but the meaning withheld until Christ revealed it to His disciples.

There are many cases in the New Testament as well as the Greek Old Testament (LXX) where the word "mystery" is used. In each case it refers, not to something totally unknown, but to something not understood without divine revelation. Here is one such passages where the context plainly defines the word "mystery" for us.

Mark 4:10-12,33-34

10 But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable.
 11 And He said to them, **"To you it has been given to know the mystery** of the kingdom of God; but **to those who are outside, all things come in parables,**
 12 **"so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand;** lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them.' "
 33 And with many such parables He spoke the word to them [the crowds] as they were able to hear it.

34 *But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.*
(NKJ)

A "mystery" according to Jesus was an enigma, a kind of riddle, known but not understood without revelation from God. Jesus' parables were heard by the people, but the meaning was purposely withheld from them. They HEARD the parables, but they did not really HEAR them. They SAW, but could not really SEE. This is what Jesus calls a "mystery." Therefore, Jesus' parables remained a "mystery" to the Jews because they were not privy to the interpretations. In contrast, Jesus **revealed** his parables privately to His disciples, because it was given to them to understand the mystery.

Carrying this concept into Paul's use of the word "mystery," we see that there is no reason to conclude that the "mystery" is wholly missing from the Old Testament Scriptures and prophecies to Israel.

The Meaning of "Revealed" in Scripture

Paul commonly used the word "revealed" in relation to the present status of the "mystery." What does "revealed" mean? The most common definition is "uncovered" or "unveiled." This too implies it was formerly "hidden" in the sense of not being understood, rather than wholly unknown.

Matt 10:26-27

26 *"Therefore do not fear them. For **there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.***

27 *"Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.*

(NKJ)

Matt 11:25

25 *At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that **You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.***

(NKJ)

In both of these passages, Jesus was referring to something understood by some but not by others. When something is "revealed" means we have full understanding and knowledge. This term is used of Christ's coming as well. Paul told the Thessalonians that Jesus will be "revealed from heaven with His mighty angels" (2 Thess. 1:7). Was Jesus someone never before known? No. But, He has been unknown by most of the world. Paul told the Thessalonians that the "mystery of iniquity" would be "revealed" when the Restrainer moves out of the way (2 Thess. 2:7-8). Is the "mystery of iniquity" something completely unknown prior to the appearance of Antichrist? No, Paul informed the Thessalonians of this 2000 years ago. When "revealed" is used in apposition to "mystery," it is quite obvious that the writer means something known but not fully understood is to be fully made known to the understanding. This is the consistent application of these terms in Scripture, and should guide our understanding of Paul's explanation of the "mystery."

The Source of Dispensationalism's "Mystery Program"

Traditional dispensationalism is entirely dependent on a false view of the "mystery" Paul preached. At the beginning of this paper we provided two quotes from Irenaeus, second century pastor and martyr, explaining the early Church's understanding of the "mystery." In short, the "mystery" was the Gospel contained in the Old Testament in enigmatic form. Irenaeus was the chief Christian apologist against the heresies of Gnosticism. The Gnostics severed the Old Testament from the New, and the God of the Jews from Jesus and the Father. They held perverted views of Christ and the Gospel. You may be surprised to discover that the view of the "mystery" held by traditional dispensationalists today is the same view some of the Gnostic cults held in Irenaeus' day. The idea

that the "mystery" Paul preached was something revealed to him alone, and was not known or proclaimed until Paul, is not only taught by traditional dispensationalists, but was also taught by the Gnostic heretic, Marcion.

*"With regard to those (the Marcionites) who allege that **Paul alone knew the truth, and that to him the mystery was manifested by revelation**, let Paul himself convict them, when he says, that one and the same God wrought in Peter for the apostolate of the circumcision, and in himself for the Gentiles. Peter, therefore, was an apostle of that very God whose was also Paul; and Him whom Peter preached as God among those of the circumcision, and likewise the Son of God, did Paul [declare] also among the Gentiles. For our Lord never came to save Paul alone, nor is God so limited in means, that He should have but one apostle who knew the dispensation of His Son. And again, when Paul says, 'How beautiful are the feet of those bringing glad tidings of good things, and preaching the Gospel of peace,' he shows clearly that it was not merely one, but there were many who used to preach the truth. And again, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, when he had recounted all those who had seen God after the resurrection, he says in continuation, 'But whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed,' acknowledging as one and the same, the preaching of all those who saw God after the resurrection from the dead." (Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, 13:1)*

The Achilles' Heel of Traditional Dispensationalism

If there is one passage that is most problematic for traditional dispensationalism's "mystery Church age" it is the following.

Rom 16:25-26

*25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to **the revelation of the mystery** kept secret since the world began*

*26 **but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures** has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith (NKJ)*

Paul plainly stated that the "mystery" was currently being revealed "*by the prophetic Scriptures.*" While grammatically the term "prophetic Scriptures" COULD refer to the Epistles of the Paul as some dispensationalists claim, the term itself certainly does not demand it or even imply it. An examination of the use of the word "Scriptures" in the rest of the New Testament reveals that in every single case "Scriptures" refers to the Old Testament. Sometimes it is argued that in this case the absence of the definite article means Paul was not speaking of the Old Testament. But, there are other cases in the New Testament where "Scriptures" appears without the article also. In ALL of these cases the Old Testament Scriptures are definitely in view in the contexts. The grammatical difference in the passages where no article is used is due to the use of an adjective to modify "Scriptures." For example, Rom. 1:2 has "holy Scriptures" without the article; 2 Tim. 3:16 has "all Scripture" without the article; and 1 Pet. 1:20 has "prophetic Scriptures" again without the article. In all three cases the contexts plainly indicate the writer had the Old Testament Scriptures in view. This is no different that what we have in Rom. 16:26 with "prophetic Scriptures." In all three cases mentioned, there is no article, and "Scriptures" is preceded by an adjective (exactly as in Rom. 16:26).

That Paul has in view the Old Testament Scriptures as revealing the "Mystery" is clear from a comparison of this passage with his opening comments in Romans. Interestingly, Paul's very first statement in Romans is virtually identical to his very last statement in this Epistle.

Rom 1:1-5

1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, **separated to the gospel of God**

2 **which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,**

3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,

4 and **declared to be the Son of God with power** according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship **for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,**
(NKJ)

Rom 16:25-27

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to **my gospel** and **the preaching of Jesus Christ**, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began

26 but now has been made manifest, and **by the prophetic Scriptures** has been **made known to all nations**, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, **for obedience to the faith--**

27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.
(NKJ)

Note that Paul's very FIRST point in his Roman epistle is identical to his very last point in the very same epistle. Lets compare these first and last passages of the Roman Epistle point by point. Both refer to the Gospel and Paul's commission to the Gentiles.

1. In ch. 1 he refers to himself as being "*separated unto the Gospel of God,*" and in ch. 16 he says "*my Gospel,*" both statements connecting Paul himself to the Gospel.

2. In ch. 1 he says this Gospel was "*promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,*" and in ch. 16 he says the same Gospel has been manifest "*by the prophetic Scriptures.*"

3. In ch. 1 he indicates the dissemination of this Gospel among the Gentiles "*for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,*" and in ch. 16 he says, "*made known to all nations ... for obedience to the faith.*"

Also notice that Paul plainly equated the "mystery" with the Gospel in 16:25. Therefore, there is no escaping the conclusion that the "mystery" was contained in the Old Testament!

There is another reason to think that this passage eliminates Paul as being the first to comprehend or proclaim the mystery. Notice:

Rom 16:25

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to ***my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ***, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began
(NKJ)

The bold part above is translated from the Greek as follows:

το ευαγγελιον μου και το κηρυγμα Ιησου Χριστου
the gospel (of) me **and the** preaching (of) Jesus Christ

The first thing we should observe from the grammar is the use of the definite article with "kai," the Greek word usually rendered "and." Typically, when "kai" (and) separates two nouns, and both nouns also have the definite article, they are referring to two different things. This is from the

Granville Sharp rule, defined 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. If only the first noun has the article, the second noun refers to the same person or thing referred to in the first." (Vaughn and Gideon, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979, p. 83.)

Granville Sharp himself defined his sixth rule 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.**"*

In this case, we have Paul's GOSPEL and the PREACHING of Jesus Christ. Since both "Gospel" and "preaching" have the definite article, Paul was listing these as separate things. If Paul meant "the preaching ABOUT Jesus Christ," he would not have used the definite article before "preaching," because the Gospel Paul preached WAS the preaching ABOUT Jesus Christ. He would have written as follows:

το ευαγγελιον μου και κηρυγμα Ιησου Χριστου
the gospel (of) me **and** preaching (of) Jesus Christ

Paul meant to distinguish his own Gospel preaching from *"the preaching of Jesus Christ"* by his use of the definite article.

The second thing we should observe is the construction of the phrase, *"the preaching of Jesus Christ."* In Greek, it is "το κηρυγμα Ιησου Χριστου." "The preaching" (το κηρυγμα) is in the accusative case, meaning "preaching" is the object of the verb, and not "Jesus Christ." Instead, "Jesus Christ" is in the genitive case, meaning "of" or belonging to (used as a possessive). In other words, it is properly translated "Jesus Christ's preaching." That this is the correct rendering can be shown from the following verse which uses exactly the same construction in the Greek.

Matt 12:41

41 "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.
(NKJ)

Here, we also have the definite article, "preaching" is in the accusative case, and "Jonah" in the genitive case. Once again, we could properly translate this "Jonah's preaching." The context clearly bears out this rendering as correct (rather than "the preaching ABOUT Jonah"). The same thing applies in every case in the NT where "the preaching" appears in the accusative case followed by someone identified in the genitive case (cf. Luke 11:32, 1 Cor. 2:4, 1 Cor. 15:14).

Consequently, we could translate Rom. 16:25 as follows; *"Now to Him who is able to establish you, according to my gospel and Jesus Christ's preaching, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began."*

Of course, if Paul was speaking of Jesus' own preaching about the mystery, where is that recorded in Scripture? The answer is in Luke 24. The day of Jesus' resurrection, He fully revealed the "mystery" to His disciples. First, He revealed the mystery to two of them on the road to Emmaus. Later that afternoon He revealed the mystery to the rest of them as they met together. That Paul was referring to Jesus' revealing the mystery to His disciples seems fairly obvious from a comparison of Rom. 16:26-26 with Luke 24.

Rom 1:1-5

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

2 (**Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,**)

3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

4 And **declared to be the Son of God with power**, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, **for obedience to the faith among all nations**, for his name:

(KJV)

Rom 16:25-26

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and **the preaching of Jesus Christ**, according to **the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began**

26 but now **has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations**, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, **for obedience to the faith**

(NKJ)

Luke 24

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And **beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.**

44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

45 **Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,**

46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

47 And that **repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 And ye are witnesses of these things.
(KJV)

What we have here is the "revelation of the mystery" directly by the preaching of Jesus Christ to His disciples out of the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures. You can see the "revelation" of the mystery in the statement, "then opened He their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures." This was a supernatural act of Jesus Himself, coupled with His own expounding every Old Testament passage that spoke of Him. Prior to this, the disciples did not clearly understand any of these Old Testament passages, and neither did the Jewish leadership. And it was further hidden from the Jews by the parables of Jesus. Yet, just seven weeks later, Peter preached his first sermon, and did a masterful job of expounding the Psalms in such a way that they revealed Jesus death and resurrection! Peter had a good grasp of the "mystery," because his understanding had been opened, and he paid attention to "the preaching of Jesus Christ" as He began at Moses and the prophets, and expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Notice also in the quote above from Luke 24, that the ultimate goal of Jesus' revealing the mystery to His disciples was so that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations" (Luke 24:47). Notice the similar language of Paul, "made known to all nations ... for the obedience of faith." Can there be any doubt that Paul was referencing Luke 24? And Paul's statement that the revealing of the mystery was "by the prophetic Scriptures" is exactly what Luke records that Jesus first did! He expounded ALL of the "prophetic Scriptures" contained in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, everything concerning Himself. This explains why Paul used the words "prophetic Scriptures" instead of "Scriptures of the prophets." The latter phrase implies a limited scope only to the section of the Old Testament the Jews called "The Prophets" (Isaiah-Malachi). But, Luke says Jesus revealed the prophetic things concerning Himself from the Law of Moses, the

Prophets, and the Psalms. While the Law of Moses is not normally indicated by the term "the Prophets," it is most certainly included by the term "prophetic Scriptures." Jesus expounded from all of the "prophetic Scriptures" (from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms) the things concerning Himself! That even the Psalms are prophetic about Christ is easily demonstrated from Peter's preaching seven weeks later in Acts 2&3.

Luke was Paul's traveling companion, and his written Gospel was used as an aid in Paul's missionary activity. So, it is no surprise that Paul cited Luke here, or at least both cited the same oral tradition.

So that you don't consider my interpretation of Rom. 16:25-26 to be my own "private interpretation," I offer the commentary of John Chrysostom (AD 347- 370), preacher of Antioch and Constantinople, whose native tongue was Greek, and who was in a much better position to interpret the ancient Greek than modern scholars.

*"And after saying, 'to stablish,' he proceeds to give the mode of it, 'according to my Gospel;' and this was what one would do to show that as yet they were not firmly fixed, but stood, though with wavering. Then to give a trustworthiness to what he says, he proceeds, **'and the preaching of Jesus Christ; that is, which He Himself preached.'** But if He preached it, the doctrines are not ours, but the laws are of Him. And afterwards, in discussing the nature of the preaching, He shows that this gift is one of much benefit, and of much honor; and this he first proves from the person of the declarer thereof, and then likewise from the things declared. For it was glad tidings. Besides, from His not having made aught of them known to any before us. And this he intimates in the words, 'according to the revelation of the mystery.' And this is a sign of the greatest friendliness, to make us share in the mysteries, and no one before us. 'Which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest.' For it had been determined long ago, but was only manifested now. How was it made manifest? 'By the Scriptures of the Prophets.' Here again he is releasing the weak person from fear. For what dost thou fear? is it lest thou depart from the Law? This the Law wishes, this it foretold from of old." (John Chrysostom, Homily XXVII)*

And here is the commentary of John Gill, Greek and Hebrew scholar of the 18th century.

*"The apostle calls the Gospel his, not because he was the author of it, or the subject of it; but because he was the minister of it; it was that Gospel which he was sent and qualified to preach, and did preach fully and faithfully, and which he explains by the following clauses: **and the preaching of Jesus Christ: being that Gospel which Jesus Christ himself preached,** for which he was anointed and sent, and which first began to be spoken by him in its power and purity, and in such a manner as it never was before or since: and of which he also is the subject; it treats of his person, offices, righteousness, blood, sacrifice, and salvation; and which when preached aright is done in his name, by his authority, through gifts, grace, and strength received from him, and with a view to his glory: it follows as a further explanation of it, according to the revelation of the mystery; by which is meant, not, as some think, only the calling and conversion of the Gentiles through the preaching of the Gospel, though what is said of it well agrees with it; see (Ephesians 3:3-5) ; nor merely the mystery of Christ's incarnation and redemption by him; but the whole Gospel, and all the truths of it, which is often in Scripture called a "mystery"." (Rom. 16:25-26)*

Paul wrote that the mystery was being made known to the nations by the "prophetic Scriptures." And that it was revealed both by his preaching of the Gospel, as well as Jesus Christ's own preaching. The mystery was contained in the Old Testament Scriptures as an enigma. It was hidden using certain grammatical devices which are clearly uncovered for us in Peter's sermon in Acts 2. The "mystery" was made know by revelation (opening their understanding) and by the preaching of Jesus to His disciples from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Jesus then sent them to the Gentile nations with this message. When Paul referred to "my Gospel" and "Jesus Christ's preaching" he was speaking of the TWO channels the revelation of the mystery had taken. The first channel was orally from Jesus to the other eleven Apostles, who then also preached to the Gentile nations. The second

channel was through Paul by special revelation (Eph. 3:3- 4). In Paul's case, special revelation was necessary because he was not first a disciple of Jesus, learning these things from Him in person. All of these things prove that the "mystery" is not some secret "Church age" or separate body of "elect." It was the whole plan of God to redeem mankind, not only the Jews, but the Gentiles as well. And that all of the redeemed would be joined in one body, "in Christ."



Progressive Dispensationalism

In Depth

The Church in the Old Testament Part I - The LXX, Psalm 22 & Hebrews 2

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The Greek word translated "Church" in the Bible is "ekklesia." It means "a called out assembly." It is found 112 times in the Greek New Testament. In all 112 cases, except Matt. 16:18, Acts 7:38, 1 Cor. 10:32, Eph. 1:22, Eph. 3:10, Eph. 5:23-32, Col. 1:18,24, Heb. 2:12, Heb. 12:23, "ekklesia" refers to local churches. Of these few exceptions, one of them refers specifically to Israel in the Old Testament (Acts 7:37), and another is a quote of an Old Testament prophecy about the Church (Hebrews 2:12).

Acts 7:37-38

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

*38 This is he, that was in **the church in the wilderness** with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:*
(KJV)

Dispensationalists typically define the "Church" as a unique body, founded on Pentecost (a Jewish Feast day), completely separate from the nation of Israel. Yet, in Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin, he referred to Israel after the exodus as "the Church in the wilderness." Why would Stephen violate the alleged dispensational parameters by referring to Israel as "the Church?"

Most of the early Christians could not read Hebrew. They used a Greek translation of the Old Testament made by 70 Jewish scribes about 200 years before Christ. The early Christians and Jews called it "*The Version of the Seventy*." Today it is referred to as the "Septuagint" (meaning 70) or simply by the Roman numerals "LXX." In the first century, the Greek LXX was the common Bible of the Jewish synagogues and the early churches. But the Jews of Judea primarily used the Hebrew Scriptures. The Apostles frequently referred to the LXX and quoted it extensively in the New Testament. In fact, it has been demonstrated that the New Testament writers quoted the LXX more frequently than the Hebrew Old Testament. [1] While the LXX was defective in some places, it was still used extensively by the Apostles and the early Christians because it was written in the common Greek and could be read by the average Christian as well as the Jews of the western Diaspora (Asia Minor and Europe). Copies were plentiful and relatively cheap, while copies of the Hebrew Scriptures were usually only found at the synagogues within Israel itself and the eastern Diaspora (Syria and Persia), and were very expensive. [2]

In Acts 7:37, the reason Stephen referred to Israel as "the Church" was because of his familiarity with the LXX. He was referring to passages like the following.

Deuteronomy 9:10

*10 And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the LORD spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of **the Church**.*

(LXX)

Deuteronomy 18:16

16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of **the Church**, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

(LXX)

There are many more cases in the LXX where the whole assembly of Israel, when they were gathered to worship, is called "the Church" in the LXX. In fact, the Greek word "ekklesia" (Church) is found 73 times in the LXX Old Testament, almost as many times as in the Greek New Testament. So, the early Christians who spoke Greek had this background as their understanding of the word.

Jesus Sings in the Midst of the Church

Psalm 22:14-22

14 (21:14) I am poured out like water, and all my bones are loosened: my heart in the midst of my belly is become like melting wax.

15 (21:15) My strength is dried up, like a potsherd; and my tongue is glued to my throat; and **thou hast brought me down to the dust of death.**

16 (21:16) For many dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked doers has beset me round: **they pierced my hands and my feet.**

17 (21:17) They counted all my bones; and they observed and looked upon me.

18 (21:18) **They parted my garments among themselves, and cast lots upon my raiment.**

19 (21:19) But thou, O Lord, remove not my help afar off: be ready for mine aid.

20 (21:20) Deliver my soul from the sword; my only-begotten one from the power of the dog.

21 (21:21) Save me from the lion's mouth; and regard my lowliness from the horns of the unicorns.

22 ¶ (21:22) **I will declare thy name to my brethren: in the midst of the church will I sing praise to thee.**

(LXX)

Hebrews 2:9-12

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

10 For it became **him**, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect **through sufferings.**

11 For **both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one:** for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

12 Saying, **I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.**

(KJV)

Psalm 22:18 is a direct prophecy about the New Testament Church. And Paul clearly interpreted it as such in Hebrews 2. In the context, Paul was speaking of the **whole body of believers being joined in Christ**. This is a unique feature of the New Testament Church. He wrote in verse 10 of Christ as "*the captain of their salvation.*" In the next verse he wrote that all of the redeemed are

one in Christ, our Captain. He next quoted Psalm 22:22 from the LXX in support of this point. Psalm 22 is a clear prophecy about Christ's crucifixion. David wrote this Psalm in the first person singular as though it was about him. Yet, it is clearly about Christ and interpreted as such by Matthew (cf. Matt. 27:35 & Psalm 22:18). It is as though Jesus Himself was speaking. David wrote, *"they pierced MY hands and MY feet."* They parted *"MY garments"* and cast lots for *"MY raiment,"* etc..

We should take note of a very important fact here. This Psalm, properly interpreted, violates the grammatical historical method. A strict grammatical historical reading of this Psalm leads to one conclusion only. David was writing about his own suffering, because he wrote in the first person and past tense. However, any true believer can see that this Psalm is really a prophecy about Christ. We have a clear example here of HOW the "mystery" was hidden in the prophetic Scriptures. In this case, the Holy Spirit inspired David to use a grammatical device to disguise this prophetic Psalm, and hide its meaning from the Jews.

Since there is no question that this is a Psalm about Christ, and since it is written in the first person, it is clear that prophetically, Christ Himself is speaking in this Psalm. When we get to verse 22, the same person (Christ) is still speaking prophetically. He says, *"in the midst of the Church will I sing praise to thee [the Father]."* Notice in Paul's quotation he also clearly indicated that Jesus was the speaker in Psalm 22:22 (not David). Paul wrote that "He (Jesus) is not ashamed to call them (Christians) brethren, saying..." and then quoted this Psalm as the words of Christ. This is consistent with the previous verses of Psalm 22 where Christ is definitely the speaker despite David's writing the words in the first person. Why would Paul quote this Psalm about Christ's singing in the midst of the Church to support his point about believers being one in Christ? The only possible explanation is that Psalm 22:22 is actually a prophecy of the union of the Church with Christ! Otherwise, Paul simply messed up his dispensational divisions, and butchered Psalm 22! Therefore, contrary to the traditional dispensational claim, the Church of Jesus Christ (His body) is directly prophesied in the Old Testament.

NOTES

[1] See the following Website: [Notes on the Septuagint](#)

[2] For a thorough discussion of the LXX and its influence on early Judaism and Christianity, see Alfred Edersheim's [The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, ch. II.](#)



Progressive Dispensationalism

In Depth

The Church in the Old Testament Part II - The Precious Corner Stone & Sure Foundation

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Isaiah 28 concerns a prophecy about the Jews' *"covenant with death:"* the league they made with the Romans to put Jesus to death. It also refers to the pitiful condition of the Jewish leadership at the time of Christ. It prophesies God's judgment on Israel which occurred in AD70. It also includes the prophecy of "tongues" which first occurred on Pentecost. It refers to Jesus as the foundation stone of the Church. It also refers to the Church as those who put their trust in Him.

A. The Condition of the Jewish leadership

Isaiah 28 mentions the *"scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem"* (vs. 14). These were the scribes and Pharisees, along with the chief priests. Isaiah paints a picture of the Jewish leadership as drunken priests who *"have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way. ... they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean."* (vss. 7-8).

B. The Judgment of God on Israel

This prophecy also predicts the judgment of God on Israel because of their league with the Romans to put Jesus to death. *"Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves"* (vs. 15). The Jewish leaders sought to appease the Romans by crucifying the King of the Jews. But, in the end, it was the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem and put an end to the priesthood. Their sacrificing Jesus to keep peace with the Romans failed them in AD70 (John 11:49-53). *"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; **when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it**"* (vss. 17-18).

C. "Tongues" as the Sign of God's Impending Judgment on Unbelieving Israel

Interestingly enough, the manifestation of "tongues" among Christians, from the Day of Pentecost until AD70, was the sign of God's impending judgment. *"For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken"* (vss. 11-13). Paul quoted this passage in 1 Cor. 14 when explaining the purpose of tongues as a gift of the Spirit. Paul wrote, *"In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe"* (1 Cor. 14:21-22). By citing this passage Paul was explaining that Isaiah's prophecy of tongues, as the sign of God's impending judgment on unbelieving Israel, was being displayed in the churches. It was a sign to the

unbelievers of Israel that their judgment was coming.

Isaiah even prophesied what believers would say in these foreign languages. Acts records that the Jews in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost heard *"the wonderful works of God"* in all these foreign tongues. What were these wonderful works of God? Isaiah tells us. *"For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. **To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.**"* On Pentecost, the disciples spoke in the foreign languages known to the Jews of the Diaspora who had gathered for the feast of Pentecost. Peter and the others speaking in tongues said, *"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest;"* and *"this is the refreshing."* What "rest?" What "refreshing?" The Gospel, of course. Jesus said:

Matt 11:28-30

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

(KJV)

D. The Foundation Stone of the Church

In this prophecy, Isaiah also described the manner in which Jesus taught the Jewish people during His ministry. *"But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken"* (vs. 13). It may seem odd that the Word of the Lord being delivered line upon line, and precept upon precept, would be for the purpose of their falling backward, and being *"broken, and snared, and taken."* But, that is exactly what Jesus said was the reason He spoke to the Jewish nation in parables, *"that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them"* (Mark 4:12). Israel was partially blinded so that the crucifixion could occur. But, a remnant of Israel trusted in Him. Isaiah wrote, ***"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste"*** (vs. 16).

New Testament Quotations

The Precious Corner Stone - The Sure Foundation of the Church

Isa 28:4-18

4 And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

5 In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,

6 And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

7 But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the

1 Cor 14:21-22

*21 In the law it is written, **With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.***

22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.
(KJV)

Rom 9:30-33

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles,

priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. 8 For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.

10 **For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:**

11 **For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.**

12 **To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.**

13 But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.

15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, **Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.**

17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

(KJV)

Isaiah 8:14

14 And **he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of**

which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

33 As it is written, **Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.**

(KJV)

Rom 10:9-13

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the scripture saith, **Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.**

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

(KJV)

1 Cor 3:11

11 For other **foundation** can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

(KJV)

Eph 2:19-20

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon **the foundation** of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;**

(KJV)

1 Peter 2:4-8

4 To whom coming, **as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men**, but chosen of God, **and precious**,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up

offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
(KJV)

Psalm 118:21-23

21 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.

22 **The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.**

23 This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

(KJV)

spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, **Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.**

7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, **the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,**

8 And **a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence**, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

(KJV)

In Rom. 9:33, Paul combined Isaiah 28:16 & Isaiah 8:14 into a single sentence. Peter also cited both passages in 1 Pet. 2:4-8. We will develop Isaiah 8 more thoroughly in part III.

Isaiah 28 speaks of Israel in two ways. There is the unbelieving majority including the rebellious leadership. And there is the remnant. Verse 5 calls them "the residue of his people." While judgment was coming on the rebellious nation, the Lord would be "a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty" for the remnant of Israel. The New Testament teaches that this remnant is the Church, as we will see later in this series.

Once again we see the New Testament writers freely applying to the Church Old Testament prophecy given specifically to Israel. The above passages deal particularly with the birth of Jesus' Church in the midst of unbelieving Israel, with the core of the Church consisting of the remnant of Israel who put their trust in "the precious corner stone." The rest of Israel was headed for judgment through the agency of the very ones with whom they made their league - the Romans.



Progressive Dispensationalism

The Church in the Old Testament

Part III - Jesus & the Church in Isaiah 8

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In Part II of this series, we examined Isaiah 28 and the several quotations of it in the New Testament. In doing so, we saw that Paul and Peter quoted both Isaiah 28 and Isaiah 8 together in reference to the Church. In Part III, we will examine this link, and also connect it with Part I, where Paul quoted Psalm 22 in Hebrews 2, also applying it to Jesus and His Church.

The theme of Isaiah 8 is the same as Isaiah 28. It speaks of the birth of Jesus' Church, and the impending judgment on the part of Israel that refuses to accept Jesus. As in Isaiah 28, the judgment that would befall the Jewish leadership is again linked to the league the Jews had with the Romans. God warns His faithful remnant of Israel through Isaiah not to put their trust and security in the Romans (as their leaders did), but in Him alone. *"Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread."* (vss. 12-13).

Isaiah says the Living Stone will be *"for a sanctuary"* in Israel for those who believe. But, for those who refuse, He will be *"a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem"* (vs. 14). This division of Israel is clear in the following verse, where part of the nation stumbles, but not all. *"And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken"* (vs. 15).

In my opinion, the next three verses contain one of the most exciting prophecies in the entire Old Testament. After describing the stumbling of the Jewish leadership, Isaiah writes, *"Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion"* (vss. 16-18). This passage is the only place in the Old Testament where the word "disciples" is used. And there is no question that it refers to Jesus and His disciples. The words *"I and the children the LORD has given me"* is a reference to Jesus and the disciples, and all those who believed on Jesus. You can see clearly in this passage how the birth of Jesus Church was from among the nation of Israel. The believing part of Israel flows into the Church, while the unbelieving part is headed for judgment. That this is definitely a prophecy of the Church is proven from Paul's quotation of it in Hebrews 2. If you remember, we dealt with Hebrews 2 in Part I of this series, showing that Paul cited Psalm 22 as a prophecy of Jesus' and the Church being united in one. But, Paul didn't stop with citing Psalm 22. He also cited this passage.

Jesus and His Church in Isaiah 8

Isa 8:11-18	

11 For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,
 12 Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.
 13 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.
 14 **And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.**

15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

16 **Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.**

17 And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

18 **Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.**

(KJV)

17 And say, I will wait for God, who has turned away his face from the house of Jacob, and **I will trust in him.**

18 **Behold I and the children which God has given me: and they shall be for signs and wonders in the house of Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in mount Sion.**

(LXX)

Psalm 22:22 (21:22)

22 **I will declare thy name to my brethren: in the midst of the church will I sing praise to thee.**

(LXX)

Heb 2:9-13

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

10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, **in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation** perfect through sufferings.

11 For **both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one:** for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

12 Saying, **I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.**

13 And again, **I will put my trust in him.** And again, **Behold I and the children which God hath given me.**

(KJV)

In Paul's quote of Isaiah 8, it is obvious that he used the LXX translation which includes the words "I will trust in him" (Isa. 8:17 LXX). These words are not part of the Hebrew text. Also, the Hebrew text says "the children whom the LORD [YHVH] have given me," while Paul clearly follows the LXX rendering, "the children which God [Theos] has given me" (Isa. 8:18 LXX).

It was a common practice of the rabbis, while teaching their disciples, to simply cite a short sentence or phrase from the Old Testament in order to bring to bear an entire passage on the discussion. The students, being intimately familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures, would immediately know the passage and the entire meaning of that passage in its context. Here we have

Paul, a Messianic Jewish believer, employing precisely the same method in his Epistle to his Hebrew brethren. He was bringing this entire passage from Isaiah 8 into view in support of his main point in Heb. 2:9-13. That point is, both Jesus (the one who sanctifies) and those who are sanctified (believers) are all "of one." This is the Church, the Body of Christ. And in support, he cites two important prophecies from the LXX. Psalm 22 is about Jesus' sufferings followed by His rejoicing "in the Church." And Isaiah 8 is about Jesus and those given to Him, his disciples. This body of Christ, Jesus and the redeemed, "*are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts*" (Isa. 8:18). As we saw from Isaiah 28, some of those "*signs and wonders*" included the gift of tongues as a sign of Israel's impending judgment.

Another point worth noting here is that this prophecy in Isaiah 8 appears to be out of context. That is, the surrounding context seems to be a prophecy of Israel's impending defeat to the king of Assyria. Yet, without breaking the flow, we find this prophecy of Christ and the birth of the Church tucked away within the context of something entirely different. If we interpret this entire chapter using the grammatical historical method, this cannot be a prophecy of Christ because it would violate the context. But, this is just another example of the clever devices used by God to hide the "mystery" in the prophetic Scriptures. In Psalm 22, we saw that He altered the grammar in such a way that David appeared to be speaking of himself about something that had occurred in the past. In Isaiah 8, the device is to place a prophecy of Christ and the Church in the middle of an unrelated prophecy of Israel's destruction by the Assyrians. We have another example of the same device in Isaiah 7:14, where the "virgin with child" appears to be a prophesy about Israel in Isaiah's day. Yet, we know from Matthew and Luke that it was a prophecy of Jesus' birth. Abrupt and hidden changes in context, and changes in person, are two of the devices used to hide the "mystery" in the prophetic Scriptures. Isaiah seems to favor the subtle hidden contextual change, while the Psalms seem to favor the change in person. We will have more from the Psalms as we deal with Peter's sermons in Acts later in this series.

As in parts I & II, we see precisely the same thing. The New Testament writers freely quoted Old Testament prophecy and applied it directly to the Church. Therefore, these Old Testament prophecies are clear examples of the Church in Old Testament prophecy. That is, unless dispensationalists want to argue that the Apostles used faulty hermeneutics under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

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Progressive Dispensationalism

The Kingdom Hope in Hebrews

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The "Hope" in Hebrews

The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish believers. Most commentators understand the central purpose of the book to be encouragement to persevere in the Faith. Apparently, some Jewish believers had been persuaded to abandon Christ and return to rabbinical Judaism. But, merely exhorting Jewish believers to persevere does nothing to motivate them to do so. The motivation for perseverance, which Paul repeatedly laid out before the reader, was the ancient HOPE of Israel and the patriarchs.

Heb 6

17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,

18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.**

19 **This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast,** and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

That "*anchor of the soul*," the thing that gave the early Jewish Christians "hope," is completely missed by virtually all modern commentators! It was the hope of the Messianic Kingdom, including the hope of the promises in the Abrahamic, New, and Davidic Covenants, to which the writer repeatedly referred. This theme is so prevalent in Hebrews, one wonders how so many can miss it.

The Failure of Modern Theological Systems

The sad fact is that theological bias has blinded the modern Christian to the real hope so prominent in Hebrews. This is true of the two major theological camps, Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology, which account for the majority of modern Christians. While Dispensationalists admit the truth of a future Messianic Kingdom, their theology severs Jewish Christians of this dispensation from the hope of Israel and the Patriarchs. Dispensationalists look at Hebrews through a colored lens that blocks out any connection between the Jewish believer and his Jewish heritage. In their thinking, Jewish believers have been severed from their connection to "Israel" are now part of the "Church." The Jewish Christian, in dispensational theology, has the same "heavenly hope" as the Gentile believer is alleged to have. In seeking to maintain their dichotomy between God's plan for Israel and His plan for the Church, they have effectively turned the Jewish Christian into a Gentile, and severed him from the hope of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David.

Those who embrace Covenant Theology (Amillennialists, including Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant), have completely dismissed the "Jewish hope" of a Messianic Kingdom on earth as a false hope. They think the Jews wrongly took the Old Testament prophecies literally. Like

Dispensationalists, they think the hope of the Jewish Christian is the same celestial hope they allege for Gentile Christians.

Neither Dispensationalists and Amillennialists can afford to admit that the Jewish Christian's hope is the literal fulfillment of Israel's covenants, and the promised Messianic Kingdom, without fatally undermining their entire systems. This article will show that the ONLY hope held out for the Jewish believer in Hebrews is the earthly Messianic Kingdom, the ultimate and literal fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants. That being the case, both traditional Dispensationalism and Amillennialism become untenable. If there is one New Testament book that is saturated with the basic premise of Progressive Dispensationalism, this is it.

Authorship

The Pauline authorship of Hebrews is disputed by some. But the general consensus of the early Church was that its author was Paul, and the Greek transcription was Luke's. The theology is definitely Pauline. But the Greek style and grammar is superior to Paul's, on a par with Luke and Acts. Our position is that Hebrews is the work of Paul, perhaps dictated by him and written by Luke his companion. For the purposes of this article, we will assume Pauline authorship. But, the issue of authorship will not have any real bearing on the conclusions drawn in this article.

The Rabbinical Style of Teaching in Hebrews

One of the reasons Hebrews is so misunderstood is the failure to recognize the rabbinical style of teaching in Hebrews. Paul routinely cited short excerpts of Scripture from the Old Testament, without expounding them, in order to bring an entire Old Testament passage to bear on his argument. The Jewish hearers, who were well versed in these Scriptures, immediately knew the context and content of the entire passage, and viewed the teaching of the writer in light of those Old Testament passages. Properly interpreting the book of Hebrews absolutely demands that one have a knowledge of the Old Testament passages from which the many quotes were drawn. We must understand why he used particular citations of Scripture in his arguments, and what these citations would necessarily mean to the Jewish reader who was intimately familiar with the quoted excerpts and their contexts. This style is also seen in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and to a lesser degree in some of his other Epistles. But it dominates the book of Hebrews, since the intended audience was Jewish, and used to this style of teaching.

The Old Testament Text

New Testament writers frequently, but not always, used the Greek Old Testament called the Septuagint (LXX) for their quotes of Scripture. This Greek translation differs significantly in several places from the Hebrew text. The use of the Septuagint is most pronounced in Hebrews where virtually every quote comes from the LXX. Paul even based some of his points on specific words or sentences in the LXX that do not appear in the Hebrew text we have today. For this reason, we will be using the LXX when illustrating the contexts from which these citations are derived.

[\(English Translation of the Septuagint\)](#)

The Hope of the Davidic Covenant

Chapter 1

The first chapter deals with the superiority of Christ to the angels. This superiority is demonstrated by the prophecies of His coming Kingdom, and Christ's destiny to rule the nations as King.

Heb. 1

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."**

These three quotations (in bold) may not appear on the surface to emphasize Christ's Kingdom. But, to Paul's Jewish readers, all three have the very same reference, the Davidic Covenant, the Messianic King and His Kingdom. The first, *"You are my Son, today I have begotten You,"* is a prophecy from Psalm 2. Here is the context which Paul brings to bear on his point. *"But I have been made King by him on Sion his holy mountain, declaring the ordinance of the Lord: the Lord said to me, **Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.** Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel"* (Psalm 2:6-9 LXX). This statement of David's, which on the surface appears to refer to David himself, is in reality also a prophecy of Christ, the everlasting King of the seed of David.

Paul then immediately quoted a second prophecy related to the Davidic Covenant, and the Messianic King. *"And it shall come to pass when thy days shall be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me a house, and I will set up his throne for ever. **I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son:** and my mercy will I not withdraw from him, as I withdrew it from them that were before thee. And I will establish him in my house and in his kingdom for ever; and his throne shall be set up for ever"* (1 Chron. 17:11-14 LXX). This statement appears to be a prophecy of Solomon. Yet, like the previous prophecy, it is also prophetic of Christ, the everlasting King of the seed of David.

The third quote, *"Let all the angels of God worship Him,"* is not found in our Hebrew Bible. It is, however, contained in the Septuagint Greek translation (LXX) Paul used as the basis for all his Old Testament quotations in Hebrews. This quote comes from the last verse in the "Song of Moses" recorded in Deut. 32. It refers to Christ's triumph over the enemies of Israel, when He sets up His Kingdom. *"Rejoice, ye heavens, with him, and **let all the angels of God worship him;** rejoice ye Gentiles, with his people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him; for he will avenge the blood of his sons, and he will render vengeance, and recompense justice to his enemies, and will reward them that hate him; and the Lord shall purge the land of his people."* (Deut 32:43 LXX).

Paul continued by once again contrasting the role of angels with that of the Christ, the King of Israel.

Heb. 1

7 And of the angels He says: **"Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire."**

8 But to the Son He says: **"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom."**

9 **You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions."**

Psalm 104:4 (LXX) was quoted by Paul, referring to the role of the angels. He then contrasted this with a quote of Psalm 45:6-7, which refers to Christ. Once again, an examination of the context of

this quote reveals another prophecy of the reigning King of Israel. *"Thou art more beautiful than the sons of men: grace has been shed forth on thy lips: therefore God has blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Mighty One, in thy comeliness, and in thy beauty; and bend thy bow, and prosper, and reign, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall guide thee wonderfully. Thy weapons are sharpened, Mighty One, (the nations shall fall under thee) they are in the heart of the king's enemies. **Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness beyond thy fellows.**"* (Psalm 45:2-7 LXX). Notice Paul clearly stated that this prophecy was spoken to "the Son." (*But **to the Son He says**; "Your throne, O God, is forever..."*). Paul interpreted Psalm 45 to be a prophecy of Christ's rule, His "Throne."

He then adds another prophetic Psalm.

Heb. 1

10 And: **"You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.**

11 They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment;

12 Like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail."

This citation is from Psalm 102. *"In the beginning thou, O Lord, didst lay the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. The children of thy servants shall dwell securely, and their seed shall prosper for ever"* (Psalm 102:25-28 LXX). This passage refers to the transformation of the creation, the heaven and earth shall be "changed." Yet, Israel will dwell securely in Christ's Kingdom.

Finally, Paul quoted Psalm 110:1, a prophecy of Christ's present place, at the Father's side waiting for His Kingdom to be established.

Heb. 1

13 But to which of the angels has He ever said: **"Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?**

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

Again, the context is clearly the coming Kingdom. *"The Lord said to my Lord, **Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.** The Lord shall send out a rod of power for thee out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. With thee is dominion in the day of thy power, in the splendours of thy saints: I have begotten thee from the womb before the morning"* (Psalm 110:1-3 LXX).

The emphasis of chapter 1 has clearly been the superiority of the Davidic King, Jesus the Messiah, over the angels. The quotations Paul brought to bear on his topic all refer to His coming Kingdom.

Chapter 2

Chapter 1 began by pointing out that *"in these last days,"* God has spoken to Israel **by His Son** (as

opposed to his former communication through Moses and the prophets). Chapter 2 begins with essentially the same point, *"so great a salvation, which **at the first began to be spoken by the Lord**, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him."* (v. 3). He warns them not to drift away from the things Jesus taught, and the Apostles who heard Him. Then true to the theme in chapter 1, Paul again contrasted Christ's rule as King in "the world to come" with the role of the angels.

Heb 2

5 For He has not put **the world to come, of which we speak**, in subjection to angels.

Here, Paul clearly stated that the subject of his discourse thus far is *"the world to come."* The Greek word translated "world" is not "aion" (age) but "oikoumene" (land). Literally, *"...the land, the coming one, about which we speak."* There is no question Paul was referring to the coming Messianic Kingdom, in which the whole world will be subdued under the rule of Jesus Christ and His saints.

At this point in discourse Paul adds another component. In verse 6, He brought the saints into the equation, and their role in the coming Kingdom.

Heb. 2

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?"**

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.

This is a quote from Psalm 8:4-6 (LXX). In context, it refers to God's ultimate plan for man, to rule over His creation. This was God's ideal. But, Paul then says, *"But now we do not yet see all things put under him."* Meaning, man is not yet fulfilling this role for which he was destined. The fulfillment of this will occur when the saints rule the world with Christ. But first, the saints needed to be *"brought to glory"* and to *"salvation"* through the suffering of their *"Captain,"* as Paul explains in the next two verses.

Heb. 2

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.

Christ, who is the King, and His saints who will reign with Him, are all "of one." They are His "brethren," and will share in His glory and Kingdom.

Heb. 2

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."**

Here Paul quoted Psalm 22:22. Notice the context, which is once again prophetic of the Messianic Kingdom. **"I will declare thy name to my brethren: in the midst of the church will I sing praise to thee.** *Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye seed of Jacob, glorify him: let all the seed of Israel fear him. For he has not despised nor been angry at the supplication of the poor; nor turned away his face from me; but when I cried to him, he heard me. My praise is of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; and they shall praise the Lord that seek him: their heart shall live for ever. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor of the nations."* (Psalm 22:22-28). Psalm 22 is well known as a prophecy of the sufferings of Christ. Verses 1-21 describe the crucifixion. Yet, beginning with verse 22, the scene changes to the victory of Christ as King of Israel! It is at this very point in the Psalm, where it turns from Christ's sufferings to His Kingly reign, that Paul began his quote. This is quite fitting, since Paul's point was that Jesus had to *"taste death"* for His people first, before they could fulfill their destiny and reign with Him. That He will sing *"in the midst of the assembly"* (ekklesia) with His people refers to the rejoicing with His people in His Kingdom.

Finally, Paul brings to bear two more passages.

Heb. 2

13 And again: **"I will put My trust in Him."** And again: **"Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."**

These two quotes come from Isa. 8:17-18. The first quote, *"I will put my trust in Him,"* does not appear in the Hebrew Bible, but only the LXX. The context is a prophecy of Christ's first coming, and gathering out of Israel a faithful remnant of disciples. Apparently, Paul was implying that his Jewish readers are among these *"children whom God has given"* to Christ. They have put their trust in Him. And Paul wished for them to persevere so that they may in the end be a part of the *"assembly,"* the *"brethren"* among whom Christ will sing, when *"the Kingdom is the Lord's."* (Psalm 22:22-28).

The Hope of the Abrahamic Covenant

Chapters 3 & 4

We will deal with chapters 3-4 together, since throughout these two chapters, Paul expounded upon a single Old Testament text, Psalm 95:8-11. Let's consider this Psalm first, and then see how Paul explained its significance for his Jewish readers.

Psalm 95:8-11 (94:8-11)

8 Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, according to the day of irritation in the wilderness:

9 where your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works.

10 Forty years was I grieved with this generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.

11 *So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.*
(LXX)

This Psalm was an exhortation to Israel, not to follow the example of their forefathers "today" while God was speaking to His people Israel. The negative example David used was the "rebellion" in the wilderness. The consequence of that rebellion was that Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years, until a whole generation died off. Only their children went into the promised land. Paul turned to Psalm 95, using this passage as both a warning and a future promise for his Jewish brethren.

Heb. 3

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: **"Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness,**

9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years.

10 Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.'

11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' "

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;

13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called **"Today,"** lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,

15 while it is said: **"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."**

16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?

17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?

18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?

19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Paul interpreted the first word, **"today,"** as referring to a time still present, the day when opportunity to hear God's voice was still open for the Jewish people. "Today" simply meant before judgment falls. In these verses, Paul's focus was on not hardening one's heart when hearing God's call. And, like David, he used the example of the Israelites at Kadesh Barnea for a warning.

However, in chapter 4, Paul went on to draw a most interesting conclusion from this passage regarding the future hope of Israel.

Heb. 4

1 Therefore, **since a promise remains of entering His rest,** let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.

Paul drew a fascinating inference from Psalm 95. Since this was a warning from God, *"Today, if you hear His voice harden not your hearts,"* and since Israel failed at Kadesh Barnea to enter into His rest, Paul inferred that there is a future promise of entering "His rest" implied in this prophetic

warning for Israel in this Psalm. That is, in Psalm 95, the Holy Spirit was speaking of another opportunity for Israel to enter His rest, since they failed to do so at Kadesh Barnea. Notice Paul's reasoning in drawing this inference in the following verses.

Heb. 4

2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "**So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,**" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "**And God rested on the seventh day from all His works**";

Paul was not speaking here of Israel simply achieving a generic "rest" from her enemies in the promised land under Joshua. Paul's emphasis was on entering **God's "rest,"** something quite different from merely having rest from one's enemies. He got this idea directly from Psalm 95, where David wrote, "*they shall not enter **MY rest.***" Notice in verse 3 Paul stated that "*we who have believed do enter that rest.*" That "rest" is the rest Israel hoped to achieve in the promised land, the ultimate realization of the inheritance promise to Abraham. But they failed to do so because of unbelief. "We," (Paul and Jewish believers) are the ones who will realize the hope Israel had of entering His rest, the inheritance promised to Abraham and his seed.

Paul then cited Genesis 2:2, where Moses spoke of **God's rest** - the seventh day. He then tied this in with "**My rest**" in Psalm 95. Notice:

Heb. 4

5 and again in this place: "**They shall not enter My rest.**"

6 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience,

The "it" that some must enter is the "promised land," the inheritance that God promised to Abraham and his seed. (see Gen. 15:13-21). Israel in the Old Testament did not enter into God's rest promised to Abraham and His seed in Gen. 15:13-21, because of their unbelief. Paul concluded, in verse 6, that the **SAME promise** of the land inheritance is still yet to be realized by himself and the rest of believing Israel.

Heb. 4

7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "**Today,**" after such a long time, as it has been said: "**Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.**"

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.

9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

When Paul wrote, *"Today' after such a long time,"* he meant that the prophetic warning written by David in Psalm 95 for "today," was written "such a long time" after the rebellion in the wilderness. Yet, this prophetic warning, *"if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts,"* implied another opportunity for Israel to enter into God's rest. In other words, centuries after Israel failed to enter God's rest, God was going to give them a second opportunity to do so. This time, He exhorted them not to make the same mistake their forefathers made at Kadesh Barnea. Paul then made this amazing statement: *"For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God."* Paul has actually inferred "another day" from this Psalm. He has stated essentially that the "rest" Israel received through Joshua was not God's rest. It was not the ultimate fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham. His conclusion? Simply that God's Sabbath rest for His people is yet future. And Jewish believers must persevere, after hearing God's voice, they must not harden their hearts like their forefathers did. Otherwise, they too will fail to enter God's Sabbath rest. In verse 9, the Greek word is "Sabbaton." God rested on the 7th day. And Israel's hope is to enter His Sabbath rest. While Israel in the Old Testament looked for this "rest," they did not achieve it under Joshua. It remains still as the hope of Israel. That "Sabbath rest" is the same Kingdom of Christ Paul repeatedly spoke of in the first two chapters.

We must not fail to point out the apparent support in this passage for an idea that was quite prevalent in the early Church. That is, Christ would return to establish His Kingdom at the end of six thousand years. The Millennium was viewed as the "Sabbath Rest" by several of the Early Church Fathers, based upon the same kind of thinking Paul displayed here, tying in the future hope of Christ's Kingdom with God's Sabbath rest at the creation. While this passage surely does not prove that theory correct, it is certainly consistent with it. And one could easily infer that this theory was indeed Apostolic from this passage.

In chapter 2, Paul established (from Psalm 22) the necessity of Christ's redeeming Israel before they can reign with Him. In the remainder of chapter 4 and all of chapter 5 he developed this idea further, showing Jesus' current role as High Priest for His people.

Chapter 6

The first part of chapter 6 deals again with perseverance, and the consequences for those who turn back in unbelief (like those at Kadesh Barnea). Paul then exhorted his Jewish brethren to follow the example of those who have persevered in faith, and who will in the end inherit the Abrahamic promises. (Later, Paul gave a long list of these "people of faith" whom he tells his readers to imitate. They are those who will ultimately realize the promises, as we will see in chapter 11).

Heb 6

11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,

12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience [endurance or perseverance] inherit the promises.

13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

14 saying, **"Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."**

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.

17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,

18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might

have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

This passage requires that we have an understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant. We learn from Genesis 12:1-3 of God's initial promise to Abraham. It consisted of two major things. First, that He would make from Abraham's seed a great nation. Secondly, that He would give to Abraham and his offspring the land of Canaan, from Egypt's Nile river to Iraq's Euphrates river, as an everlasting possession (Gen. 15:18-21). Israel has never possessed all this land. And certainly, their possession of parts of it was not permanent.

In verses 11-12, Paul exhorted his Jewish readers to persevere along with the men of faith, in placing their hope in the future fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. That is, the future inheritance of the Land, the "Sabbath Rest," mentioned in chapter 4. Paul then reminded his readers that God not only made this covenant with Abraham, but afterwards, He swore an oath to Abraham that He would bring this to pass for Abraham and his descendants. In verse 14, Paul quoted from Genesis 22. This is the passage where Abraham's faith in God's promise was put to the test. After partially fulfilling His promise to Abraham, by giving him a son in his old age, God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to Him. You know the story. Abraham followed God's instructions to the point where God stopped him at the last moment. Then, after offering the ram instead of his son, God spoke to Abraham out of heaven again.

Gen. 22:16-18

18 I have sworn by myself, says the Lord, *because thou hast done this thing, and on my account hast not spared thy beloved son,*

17 surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thy seed *as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is by the shore of the sea, and thy seed shall inherit the cities of their enemies.*

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, *because thou hast hearkened to my voice.*

(LXX)

God had formerly given Abraham a promise, that He would give him a son in his old age, that this son would become a great nation, and that He would give to Abraham and his offspring the land for an everlasting inheritance. But, after testing Abraham's faith, God swore an oath to Abraham, reaffirming the original promise. In Heb. 6:15, Paul points out that it was after Abraham "endured" (that is, he persevered in his faith by offering Isaac), that God swore the oath to him. Paul states plainly that it was at this point that Abraham "*obtained the promise.*" In other words, had Abraham failed to persevere in faith, and had drawn back from offering Isaac as a sacrifice, he may not have obtained the promise. Of course, God foreknew that Abraham would persevere, and so made the original promise with confidence.

In verse 16, Paul pointed out why God confirmed the original Abrahamic promise, "*determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath.*" That is, the reason God swore the oath to Abraham after he persevered in faith, was for the benefit of the Jewish people — the "heirs of promise." And what did God intend to demonstrate? It was "*the immutability of His counsel.*" That is, God WILL fulfill the promise He made to Abraham in its entirety. God has staked His credibility on this one thing, the complete fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. If God does not do so, down to the smallest detail, then He is a liar, and cannot be trusted. And that includes His giving Abraham and his descendants the land He promised in Gen. 15:18-21, from the Nile to the Euphrates, as an everlasting inheritance.

Paul then brings the fulfillment of the promise home for his readers. *"By two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we** might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge **to lay hold of the hope set before us.**"* The *"two immutable things"* are the original promise to Abraham, and the confirming oath He swore to Abraham after he persevered in faith. Those two things were *"the hope set before us"* (Paul and his Jewish readers). In this passage Paul has placed the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, including the everlasting land inheritance, as the hope of both himself and his Jewish readers. It was this hope that provided a *"strong consolation"* for the Jewish believer who had *"fled for refuge"* from the persecution. It is this hope that Paul wrote in vs. 19 was his *"anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast."* Paul's hope was not to be whisked away to heaven, but to have an everlasting inheritance in the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Uniting the Abrahamic and Davidic Hope

Chapter 7

In chapter 7, Paul turned his attention to a fascinating man whom Abraham encountered, Melchisedec, "King of Salem" and "Priest of God." This encounter is recorded in Genesis 14. In this encounter, Melchisedec blessed Abraham, the one who had the covenants and promises, and Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec. Paul viewed this blessing as more confirmation of the Abrahamic promises. He then suggested that Melchisedec was in fact a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. In this way, Paul showed to his Jewish readers that the promise is so secure, it was even confirmed by Jesus Christ Himself!

Paul then turned to Psalm 110, which prophesied of an eternal Priest, not of the order of Aaron under the Law of Moses, but *"according to the order of Melchisedec."* Yet, this *"Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec"* is more than just a "Priest," he is the **Priest - King**, as the context shows.

Psalm 110 (109 LXX)

1 The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

2 The Lord shall send out a rod of power for thee out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

3 With thee is dominion in the day of thy power, in the splendours of thy saints: I have begotten thee from the womb before the morning.

*4 The Lord sware, and will not repent, **Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.***

5 The Lord at thy right hand has dashed in pieces kings in the day of his wrath.

6 He shall judge among the nations, he shall fill up the number of corpses, he shall crush the heads of many on the earth.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head.

(LXX)

In Hebrews 7, Paul has once again not only held up Jesus Christ as the Savior, the Priest of His people, but also as the King who will rule the nations. It is through this Priest - King that Israel can have hope of receiving the everlasting inheritance in His coming Kingdom. Paul has, in a brilliant move using Psalm 110, tied together the Abrahamic Covenant with the Davidic Covenant described in the first two chapters. Psalm 110 is clearly a part of the Davidic Covenant, referring to the King of David's seed who would rule Israel forever. Yet, this Davidic promise included the statement that this King is also *"Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec,"* then one who met Abraham, blessed him, and thereby confirmed the Covenant God made to Abraham. Therefore, the fulfillment of God's Covenant to Abraham is to come through the eternal King of David's seed, who is in fact Jesus Christ (cf. Isa. 9:6-7 & Luke 1:28-33).

Paul was not the first to make the connection between the Davidic promise of an eternal King, and the Abrahamic Covenant. Luke records a prophecy of Mary, when the babe leaped in her womb. "

Luke 1:46-55

46 And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord,
 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
 48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.
 49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.
 50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.
 51 He has shown strength with His arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
 52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly.
 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.
 54 **He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy,**
 55 **As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever."**

Luke went on to record a prophecy of Zecharias about his son, John the Baptist, immediately after his birth.

Luke 1:67-79

67 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:
 68 "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people,
 69 And has raised up a **horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David,**
 70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began,
 71 **That we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us,**
 72 **To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant,**
 73 **The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:**
 74 To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear,
 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.
 76 "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,
 77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins,
 78 Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;
 79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Notice in both of these prophecies, the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant is tied to the coming of the Davidic King. Also, notice that Zecharias made specific reference to the "oath" God swore to Abraham after he persevered in faith. That oath, as we saw from Genesis 22, concerned the everlasting land inheritance. And Zecharias clearly alluded to that as well in verses 74-75. That the Abrahamic land inheritance would be realized through the Davidic King is a foundational truth contained both in the Old Testament prophecies, and in the Gospels. Paul has simply repeated it for his Jewish brethren, pointing them toward this hope and encouraging them to persevere in the Faith in order to assure their participation in the realization of this hope.

The Hope of the New Covenant

Chapter 8

Beginning with chapter 8, Paul turned his attention to the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. True to Pauline theology as articulated in Galatians, he shows the temporary place served by the Law of Moses (Old Covenant), and its being superseded by the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. The problem that evidently led to the writing of this Epistle was the turning back of some

Jewish believers to Judaism, and the Law of Moses. So, Paul next sought to illustrate three things: a) the temporary nature of the Law of Moses, and that it was destined to be superseded by the New Covenant, b) the New Covenant has come being instituted by Christ, making the Old Covenant obsolete, and c) the New Covenant is far superior to the Old Covenant.

Heb. 8

1 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,
2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

Paul still had in mind his text from Psalm 110. The "High Priest" is Jesus Christ, *"a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec"* (v. 4). He is currently seated at the right hand of the Father, as the same Psalm said, *"The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool"* (v. 1). Paul here began to focus in on Jesus Christ's present ministry in heaven, during this period of waiting until His enemies are made His footstool. In verses 3-5, he showed that the Tabernacle, and the rituals according to the Law, served as merely earthly illustrations of the true priesthood, and the true Temple in heaven, of which the earthly tabernacle was merely a copy. In verse 2 above, he contrasts Christ's Priestly ministry in the "true tabernacle which the Lord erected" as opposed to the earthly tabernacle that Moses erected. The superiority of the "true tabernacle" is obvious over the one erected in the wilderness.

Paul continued, showing the *"more excellent ministry"* that Jesus Christ has, as the Priest according to the order of Melchisedec over the Aaronic priesthood under the Law. And this new priesthood comes through the "New Covenant" prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Heb. 8

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

8 Because finding fault with them, He says: **"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--**

9 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

11 "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

12 "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

13 In that He says, **"A new covenant,"** He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Here again, Paul used the LXX. There is a textual variation between the Hebrew and LXX in verse 10. "Laws" is plural in the LXX but singular in the Hebrew text. For this reason, many suppose that "Law" (Heb - Torah) refers to His putting the Law of Moses in their hearts, making the New Covenant merely an internalizing of the Old Covenant. But, here Paul once again cites the LXX's plural "laws," referring to the individual laws contained in this New Covenant, which is *"not according to"* the Law given at Mt. Sinai.

In verse 6, Paul leaves no doubt that this New Covenant had already been inaugurated by Christ. *"He **has** (perfect tense) obtained a more excellent ministry."* And, *"He **is** (present tense) also the Mediator of a better covenant."* In verse 8, God found fault with Israel, because they did not keep the Mosaic Covenant. So, He prophesied through Jeremiah the New Covenant.

There is much debate today, particularly amongst Dispensationalists, as to whether the New Covenant has actually come. The New Covenant is connected to the land inheritance in some Old Testament prophecies. Because of this, Dispensationalists see the need to isolate the New Covenant from the "Church Age." Also, it was prophesied for *"the house of Israel and the house of Judah,"* something incompatible with Dispensationalism's segregation of the "Church" from Israel. Yet, Paul left no doubt that the New Covenant has come. This is also confirmed in several other passages (cf. Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25, 2 Cor. 3:6, Heb. 9:15).

Yet, a careful examination of Jeremiah's prophecy quoted by Paul, shows that it has not been fulfilled in its entirety. Yes, He has put His laws in the hearts of those who believed on Him (cf. Rom. 2:28-29, 2 Cor. 3:2-6). But, Jeremiah also said, *"they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them."* This part of the prophecy concerns the day when *"all Israel shall be saved"* (Rom. 11:26-29). So, even with the coming of the New Covenant, there is a future hope for which Paul's readers looked, when *"all Israel shall be saved."* When God *"will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."*

Chapter 9

Paul next contrasted the priestly rituals under the Law of Moses with the heavenly Priestly ministry of Christ under the New Covenant.

Heb. 9

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.

The New Covenant Priesthood is as far superior to the Old Covenant priesthood as the heavenly Temple is to the earthly tabernacle. Keep in mind that this "Priesthood" of Christ under the New Covenant, is that very "Priesthood according to the order of Melchisedec" which Paul took from Psalm 110. Remember in that Psalm, the "Priest" ministers on behalf of Israel during the time when *"The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."* (Psalm 110:1 LXX). This priesthood anticipates the remainder of the prophetic Psalm, His kingly reign. So, Paul then expressed the same idea in the following verses.

Heb. 9

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;

25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy

Place every year with blood of another--

26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

This is a repetition of Paul's theme in chapter 2. Before God's people could reign with Him, before man could fulfill his destiny to have the whole creation in subjection unto him, he had to be redeemed. Now, for those who are redeemed, and "*apart from sin*," who "*look for Him*," He will appear for the completion of their salvation, (which is the resurrection and reigning with Him in that eternal inheritance). Once again, the hope held out for Paul's Jewish readers is the hope of Abraham and the Patriarchs.

Chapter 10

In verses 1-25, Paul continued illustrating the temporary nature of the Old Covenant, and the superiority of the New Covenant. In verses 26-31 he gave a stern warning against falling away from the Faith of the New Covenant, and its permanent consequences. He argued that if the consequences of apostasy under the Law were severe (physical death), the consequences of apostasy under the New Covenant are much more severe (being eternal damnation). Finally, he encouraged his Jewish readers once again to persevere in the Faith so that they may inherit the promise to the Patriarchs.

Heb. 10

35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

37 "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry.

38 Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him."

39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

The Faith Necessary to Enter the Inheritance

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 is well known as the "Hall of Faith." In this chapter Paul set out to hold up the great men of God from ancient times as the models of the kind of faith that perseveres. As usual, he turns to the Septuagint.

Heb. 11

6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of **those who diligently seek Him.**

The last clause of this verse is a citation of Psalm 9:10 LXX. Again, we need to bring to bear the

whole context from which this quote was drawn.

Psalm 9

1 I will give thanks to thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will recount all thy wonderful works.

2 I will be glad and exult in thee: I will sing to thy name, O thou Most High.

3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall be feeble and perish at thy presence.

4 For thou hast maintained my cause and my right; thou satest on the throne, that judgest righteousness.

5 Thou hast rebuked the nations, and the ungodly one has perished; thou hast blotted out their name for ever, even for ever and ever.

6 The swords of the enemy have failed utterly; and thou hast destroyed cities: their memorial has been destroyed with a noise,

7 but the Lord endures for ever: he has prepared his throne for judgment.

8 And he will judge the world in righteousness, he will judge the nations in uprightness.

9 The Lord also is become a refuge for the poor, a seasonable help, in affliction.

*10 And let them that know thy name hope in thee: **for thou, O Lord, hast not failed them that diligently seek thee.***

11 Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Sion: declare his dealings among the nations.

(LXX)

As usual, Paul's quotation comes from a prophecy of Christ's victory over the nations in His coming Kingdom. The "reward" for those who diligently seek the Lord is His coming Kingdom, the realization of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants.

Paul went through a list of great men of faith. But, of particular interest to our study are his comments about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the heirs of the original promise God made to Abraham. Before we proceed, it should be pointed out that the same promise God swore to Abraham and confirmed by an oath (including the land inheritance), He also swore to Isaac, and to Isaac's son, Jacob, whom God renamed, Israel. (cf. Gen. 17:19,21, 26:1-5, 28:12-15, 50:24). All three of these men lived in the land of Canaan, but none of them realized the everlasting inheritance of that land while they were alive. Their inheritance of the promised land awaits the resurrection.

Heb. 11

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Paul's point here is that the three men, to whom God swore to give the land, the patriarchs of twelve tribes of Israel, did not themselves receive the fulfillment of the promise while still alive. Yes, they lived in the "*land of promise*," but as foreigners and strangers. It did not belong to them at the time. And it certainly was not their everlasting inheritance, as God had sworn to them. These men were awaiting something much more than what they had. They looked for a city built by God.

Many commentators wrench this statement out of the context, and from the historical promise God actually made to these men. They interpret it as some celestial hope. Nothing could be further from the truth! The "city" for which the Patriarchs looked was the city of Jerusalem, aka, Sion. It is "the city of the Great King!" Paul was not alluding to some city in heaven. Abraham never heard of such a "city." How then could the Patriarch look for such a thing? Rather, Paul was alluding to the hope of the Patriarchs, when God would fulfill His promise. It is described by David in Psalm 48.

Psalm 48 (47 LXX)

1 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in **the city of our God**, in his holy mountain.

2 **The city of the great King** is well planted on the mountains of Sion, with the joy of the whole earth, on the sides of the north.

3 God is known in her palaces, when he undertakes to help her.

4 For, behold the kings of the earth were assembled, they came together.

5 They saw, and so they wondered: they were troubled, they were moved.

6 Trembling took hold on them: there were the pangs as of a woman in travail.

7 Thou wilt break the ships of Tharsis with a vehement wind.

8 As we have heard, so have we also seen, in **the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God has founded it for ever.**

(LXX)

This is the city for which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob looked. In verse 8 Paul said that they went to live in the place they would afterward receive for an inheritance. They lived in Canaan, dwelling in tents. That was the place of their inheritance. They did not look for a city somewhere else, a city in heaven! Such an idea would have been completely foreign to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! They looked forward to a TIME when that very place in which they lived as foreigners would belong to them, and in which the Lord Himself would establish *"the city of the Great King."*

This raises the question, however, of how Abraham could have known of, and looked for, this Jerusalem spoken of by David and Isaiah, the "City of God," the "City of the Great King." For the answer to that question, we need only refer back to chapter 7, where Paul described Abraham's meeting with Melchisedec, "Priest of the Most High God." This mysterious character was considered by Paul to be far superior to Abraham. So much so, that he was "made like unto the Son of God," and his "priesthood" remains continually. Paul actually stated in so many words that the appearance of Melchisedec to Abraham was in fact the "Son of God," who is both "King of Righteousness" and the "King of Salem," (Salem being the ancient name for Jerusalem). Melchisedec blessed Abraham, and brought "bread and wine" to Abraham when he blessed him. It is no coincidence that Jesus, "the priest forever after the order of Melchisedec," in His first priestly act in the flesh, took bread and wine at the last supper, saying, "this is My body" and "this is my blood." That the "King of Salem" met with Abraham, and blessed him, implies that Abraham was aware of this "Salem" and also aware of who this person really was. Why? Because as Paul states, Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec. He goes so far as to say that the whole Aaronic priesthood, who were figuratively in the "loins" of father Abraham, paid tithes to this man through Abraham's act. The point was clearly that the whole nation of Israel was in effect bowing down to this man whose name means, "King of Righteousness" and who was the "King of Salem." Could Abraham have known all this, and not known about the "City of the Great King" (formerly "Salem" and later "Jerusalem")? Hardly! Abraham "looked for a city, whose builder and maker is God" because he looked for the day when the "King of Righteousness" would reign as "the King of Salem" ("Salem" literally means "peace," and "Jerusalem" literally means "city of peace"). Abraham awaited the city of Peace, because he awaited the return of Melchisedec, the Priest – King.

Paul continued as follows:

Heb. 11

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Unfortunately, the Amillennial bias of the translators has colored the translation of verse 13. And Dispensationalists do not object either, because to translate it correctly would upset both systems. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not "strangers and pilgrims" on planet earth. They were strangers

and pilgrims on the LAND, the very land that God promised them as an everlasting inheritance. The Greek word is "γης" which literally means the soil, the land. By translating this "earth," the sense is given that the Patriarchs were seeking to get off this planet and attain heaven. Nonsense! Such an idea is foreign to the Old Testament promises, and foreign to the context of Hebrews. How could they look for an inheritance in heaven, when the text plainly says they lived in tents as strangers and pilgrims in the very land of their future inheritance? Did they live in tents as pilgrims in heaven? Hardly! They lived in the land of Canaan. And they looked forward to the time when God would fulfill His promise to Abraham, and they would receive all the land as an everlasting inheritance.

Heb. 11

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

The word translated "homeland" in verse 14 literally means a place to call home. They were not seeking some other place. They were seeking to call the place in which they dwelled as foreigners, their "homeland," according to the promise of God. He went on in verse 15 to say that if they had been unhappy living as strangers and foreigners, they could have gone back to the land Abraham left, Ur of the Chaldees (Iraq). But, instead they stayed there, living in tents, because they were awaiting the fulfillment of the promise. They desired a "better country" one that is "heavenly." The adjective "heavenly" here is not expressing a location, but the source of both the promise and its ultimate fulfillment. It is "heavenly" because the promise was from heaven, and the source of its fulfillment will also be from heaven, as opposed to something natural and earthly.

The "better country" in verse 16 is sometimes misunderstood as being "better" than the land in which they were dwelling (Canaan). But, a closer look at the text shows that "better" contrasts their future hope with the land Abraham LEFT, Ur of the Chaldees. Ur was a prosperous place. Yet, Abraham chose to leave that land behind, and go and live out the rest of his days in the deserts of Canaan, because he was seeking the "better homeland" that God promised to him. Paul wrote, *"God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them,"* (that is, Sion, the city of the Great King, which will be the capitol of the promised land, and of the whole world).

Heb. 11

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

This statement by Paul cements the idea that the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, with its everlasting inheritance in the land of Canaan, was the hope of Paul and the Jewish Christians. Why did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob not receive their inheritance while they were still alive dwelling in Canaan in tents? Paul answered that question. God planned to include "us" in the fulfillment of His covenant. That is, Paul and his Jewish readers were a part of the promise.

The Grand Finale!

Chapter 12

The first part of chapter 12 deals once again with exhortations toward perseverance. The "cloud of

witnesses" mentioned in the "Hall of Faith" in chapter 11 were portrayed by Paul as watching from the grandstands as the current runners in the Olympic race persevered to finish their course. He again warned them of the consequences of quitting the race, using Esau as his example. Esau was the firstborn of Isaac. His was the birthright. He was the one to whom the Abrahamic Covenant would have been fulfilled. But, Esau despised his birthright, and sold it to his brother for a bowl of soup. Paul let that be a warning to his Jewish audience. If they do not prize their birthright through the New Covenant, their fate may be the same as Esau. Sure, he was sorry afterwards. But he could not get it back even with many tears. What an awesome warning! (cf. Heb. 6:4-8 & Heb. 10:23-31).

Finally, Paul contrasted the awesome display, when God came down out of heaven upon Mt. Sinai to give Israel the Law, with the yet future day when Christ will come down out of heaven to overthrow the kingdoms of the world, and set up His everlasting Kingdom on the earth.

Heb. 12

18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest,

19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore.

20 (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow."

21 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.")

22 But **you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,**

23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

In Exodus 19, God came down upon Mt. Sinai. His coming was accompanied by thick darkness, by fire and smoke, by His own awesome voice, and the blaring sound of the trumpet. The sight and sound was so awesome, all Israel trembled in fear of the Lord. Paul and his readers were not there that day to witness this awesome event, when God gave Israel His Law. They will be present, however, when this happens again. Christ is coming down from heaven to the Mt. of Olives (Zech. 14:4-5). The sun and moon will be darkened (Matt. 24:29-31). He will come with a "shout" (1 Thess. 4:16), and with the sound of the "last trumpet" (1 Cor. 15:52 & Zech. 9:14). Paul says, "*but, you are come to Mount Zion and the city of the living God.*" This is again a quote from Psalm 48.

Psalm 48 (47 LXX)

1 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in **the city of our God, in his holy mountain.**

2 The city of the great King is well planted on **the mountains of Sion**, with the joy of the whole earth, on the sides of the north.

3 God is known in her palaces, when he undertakes to help her.

4 For, behold the kings of the earth were assembled, they came together.

5 They saw, and so they wondered: they were troubled, they were moved.

6 Trembling took hold on them: there were the pangs as of a woman in travail.

7 Thou wilt break the ships of Tharsis with a vehement wind.

8 As we have heard, so have we also seen, in **the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God has founded it for ever.**

(LXX)

Paul called Jerusalem "heavenly Jerusalem," not because it is in heaven, but to distinguish it from

the present city of Jerusalem, built by man. It is that city, whose builder and maker is God, for which Paul and his Jewish brethren looked. That is, the city of Jerusalem as described in Isaiah 65-66.

Isaiah 65

17 ¶ For there shall be a new heaven and a new earth: and they shall not at all remember the former, neither shall they at all come into their mind.

18 But they shall find in her joy and exultation; **for, behold, I make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people a joy.**

19 **And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and will be glad in my people:** and there shall no more be heard in her the voice of weeping, or the voice of crying.

20 Neither shall there be there any more a child that dies untimely, or an old man who shall not complete his time: for the youth shall be a hundred years old, and the sinner who dies at a hundred years shall also be accursed:

21 and they shall build houses, and themselves shall dwell in them; and they shall plant vineyards, and themselves shall eat the fruit thereof.

22 They shall by no means build, and others inhabit; and they shall by no means plant, and others eat: **for as the days of the tree of life shall be the days of my people,** they shall long enjoy the fruits of their labours.

23 My chosen shall not toil in vain, neither shall they beget children to be cursed; for they are a seed blessed of God, and their offspring with them.

24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will hearken to them; while they are yet speaking, I will say, What is it?

25 Then wolves and lambs shall feed together, and the lion shall eat chaff like the ox, and the serpent earth as bread. They shall not injure nor destroy in **my holy mountain**, saith the Lord. (LXX)

This is the thing for which Paul and his readers hoped, and must persevere in the Faith. But, notice what Paul said next. Not only were they to come to this restored Jerusalem, the city of God, but "to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect." There is no question that Paul was referencing Isaiah 65-66 (LXX). The phrase, "general assembly" is a direct quote from Isaiah 66:10. Below is the entire passage Paul had in view here.

Isaiah 66

5 ¶ Hear the words of the Lord, **ye that tremble at his word;** speak ye, our brethren, to them that hate you and abominate you, that the name of the Lord may be glorified, and may appear their joy; but they shall be ashamed.

6 A voice of a cry from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord rendering recompence to his adversaries.

7 Before she that travailed brought forth, before the travail-pain came on, she escaped it and brought forth a male.

8 Who has heard such a thing? and who has seen after this manner? Has the earth travailed in one day? or has even a nation been born at once, that Sion has travailed, and brought forth her children?

9 But I have raised this expectation, yet thou hast not remembered me, saith the Lord: behold, have not I made the bearing and barren woman? saith thy God.

10 Rejoice, O Jerusalem, and all ye that love her **hold in her a general assembly:** rejoice greatly with her, all that now mourn over her:

11 that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breast of her consolation; that ye may milk out, and delight yourselves with the influx of her glory.

12 For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I turn toward them as a river of peace, and as a torrent bringing upon them in a flood the glory of the Gentiles: their children shall be borne upon the shoulders, and comforted on the knees.

13 As if his mother should comfort one, so will I also comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

14 And ye shall see, and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall thrive like grass: and the hand of the Lord shall be known to them that fear him, and he shall threaten the disobedient.

15 ¶ For, behold, the Lord will come as fire, and his chariots as a storm, to render his vengeance with wrath, and his rebuke with a flame of fire.

16 For with the fire of the Lord all the earth shall be judged, and all flesh with his sword: many shall be slain by the Lord.

17 They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves in the gardens, and eat swine's flesh in the porches, and the abominations, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord.

18 And I know their works and their imagination. I am going to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.

19 And I will leave a sign upon them, and **I will send forth them that have escaped of them to the nations, to Tharsis, and Phud, and Lud, and Mosoch, and to Thobel, and to Greece, and to the isles afar off, to those who have not heard my name, nor seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.**

20 And they shall bring your brethren out of all nations for a gift to the Lord with horses, and chariots, in litters drawn by mules with awnings, to the holy city Jerusalem, said the Lord, as though the children of Israel should bring their sacrifices to me with psalms into the house of the Lord.

21 And I will take of them priests and Levites, saith the Lord.

22 For as the new heaven and the new earth, which I make, remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name continue.

23 And it shall come to pass from month to month, and from sabbath to sabbath, that all flesh shall come to worship before me in Jerusalem, saith the Lord.

24 And they shall go forth, and see the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched; and they shall be a spectacle to all flesh.

(LXX)

In verse 10, the "general assembly" (πανηγυρει) is exactly what Paul referred to in Hebrews 12:23. It is the grand assembly of the saints of Israel in Jerusalem upon the return of Christ. It excludes the wicked. Notice in this passage God will separate the wicked from the just. The wicked will not be able to stand in the congregation of the righteous (Psalm 1:5). The "general assembly of the congregation of the firstborn who are registered in heaven," is the believing remnant of Israel. "Firstborn" (πρωτοτοκων) here is plural, (lit. "the assembly of the firstborn ones"). It does not refer to Christ, but to Israel (cf. Ex. 4:22).

So, what about the "innumerable company of angels?" They also are mentioned in this passage. The Greek word translated "angels" is "αγγελων," which simply means "messengers." In verse 19 of Isa. 66, God will send out a large company of "messengers" to proclaim His message (αναγγελω – the verb form of "αγγελων") to those who have never heard of his fame, to all the Gentile nations. And they will bring to the city of God the rest of the Jews scattered throughout the world.

Let's let Paul continue with his final warning, and appeal to prophecy.

Heb. 12

25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,

26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, **"Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."**

27 Now this, **"Yet once more,"** indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.
 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Lastly, Paul appealed to the prophet Haggai. The book of Haggai was written after the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, as recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. Nebuchadnezzar had sacked Jerusalem in 586BC, destroying Solomon's Temple. Some of the elder Jews, those who were alive seventy years earlier and seen Solomon's Temple, were very disappointed with the much more humble structure being built by Zerubabel and the workman under his command on the former site of Solomon's Temple. The foundation for the rebuilt Temple was much smaller. And the materials at their disposal to complete the Temple were much more mundane than the huge amounts of gold, silver, and other precious materials Solomon used. This led to great discouragement among the Jewish people, particularly the older men, and all those working on the massive project.

This is the historical setting for the prophecy in chapter two, which Paul quotes in Hebrews 12. In order to encourage the workmen, and Zerubbabel their leader and chief builder, God spoke to Israel through Haggai the prophet about the future plans God had for His Temple in Jerusalem. That is, one day that Temple in Jerusalem would far excel even Solomon's Temple. This would occur when God shakes the heaven and earth, and brings judgment upon all the heathen nations. This is the passage that Paul chose to cite in Hebrews 12, in reference to the future hope of his Jewish Christian readers.

Haggai 2:1-9 & 20-22

1 ¶ In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the Lord spoke by Aggaeus the prophet, saying,

2 Speak now to Zorobabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of Juda, and to Jesus the son of Josedec, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, saying,

3 Who is there of you that saw this house in her former glory? and how do ye now look upon it, as it were nothing before your eyes?

4 Yet now be strong, O Zorobabel, saith the Lord; and strengthen thyself, O Jesus the high priest, the son of Josedec; and let all the people of the land strengthen themselves, saith the Lord, and work, for I am with you, saith the Lord Almighty;

5 and my Spirit remains in the midst of you; be of good courage.

*6 For thus saith the Lord Almighty; **Yet once I will shake the heaven, and the earth**, and the sea, and the dry land;*

7 and I will shake all nations, and the choice portions of all the nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord Almighty.

8 Mine is the silver, and mine the gold, saith the Lord Almighty.

9 For the glory of this house shall be great, the latter more than the former, saith the Lord Almighty: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord Almighty, even peace of soul for a possession to every one that builds, to raise up this temple. ...

20 And the word of the Lord came the second time to Aggaeus the prophet, on the four and twentieth day of the month, saying,

*21 Speak to Zorobabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of Juda, saying, **I shake the heaven, and the earth**, and the sea, and the dry land;*

22 and I will overthrow the thrones of kings, and I will destroy the power of the kings of the nations; and I will overthrow chariots and riders; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword striving against his brother.

(LXX)

The central focus of this passage is the final Temple in Jerusalem, which will far surpass even Solomon's Temple in its greatness. It is the Kingdom Temple. It will be constructed when Christ returns to overthrow "the power of the kings of the nations (εθνος - Gentiles)." This great

"shaking" is the great tribulation and the Day of the Lord, when Christ returns to overthrow the Kingdoms of this world, and establish His glorious Kingdom. Only what cannot be shaken will remain, according to Paul. He then made this revealing statement: *"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire."* The "kingdom" for which Paul and his Jewish readers awaited was the one prophesied by Haggai, when *"I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord Almighty. Mine is the silver, and mine the gold, saith the Lord Almighty. For the glory of this house shall be great, the latter more than the former, saith the Lord Almighty: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord Almighty."*

Conclusion

What more can be said? The proof is overwhelming that the hope Paul held out for himself and the Jewish believers was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, and Davidic Covenant, as well as many other Old Testament prophesies of Christ's Kingdom. There is no cosmic destiny for the Jewish believer, as both Dispensationalists and Amillennialists suppose. The Abrahamic promises of an eternal inheritance in the promised land are to be realized through Christ, both by His atonement (redeeming His people so they can reign with Him), and by His taking the Throne of David, overthrowing the kingdoms of this world, and establishing His everlasting Kingdom, establishing the "City of God" on Mt. Sion, and making the Temple in Jerusalem the "house of prayer for all nations." The Amillennialist and the Dispensationalist must manipulate the text of Hebrews into all kinds of contortions in order to maintain their cosmic destiny.

So what about the Gentiles? Paul did not deal with this question in the book of Hebrews. But, he did in other Epistles written to Gentiles, such as Ephesians and Galatians.



Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

The 70 Weeks of Daniel

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Traditional dispensationalism rests heavily on a specific interpretation of the seventy weeks prophecy of Daniel nine. We agree with traditional dispensationalists regarding the interpretation of this passage, including:

1. the gap between the 69th and 70th weeks
2. the fulfillment of the 70th week at the end of the present age
3. the identification of the "prince that shall come" with the Antichrist
4. the future rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, and its defilement in the middle of the 70th week

However, we would disagree that the gap between the 69th and 70th weeks constitutes the 'Church age.'

If there is one concept and verse on which traditional dispensationalism hinges, it would have to be the following:

Dan 9:24

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. (KJV)

Dispensationalists emphasize that the focus of this prophecy is Israel - "thy people" (Daniel's people, the Jews). They believe the entire 70 weeks are said to concern Israel and Jerusalem. Dispensationalists infer from this that the gap between the 69th and 70th weeks does not concern Israel, and the goals foreseen by this prophecy. They believe this prophecy justifies the idea that God's dealings with Israel ended with the 69th week (immediately prior to the crucifixion), and will commence again at the beginning of the 70th week. In their thinking, the Church fills this gap. Since God is presently dealing with the Church and not Israel, a change of dispensation is implied at the beginning of the 70th week. If this is true, it implies a pre-trib rapture.

While we agree that the focus of the prophecy is the Jewish people and Jerusalem, we do not agree that it in any way indicates God would stop dealing with Israel during the gap between the 69th and 70th weeks, or a change of program has occurred. The evidence that God continues to deal with Israel throughout the present age (within the gap) is actually found in this very passage. There are two prophesied events in verse 26 that occurred after the 69th week, within the gap.

1. The crucifixion of Christ 5 days after the end of the 69th week
2. The destruction of Jerusalem 37 years after the end of the 69th week

Dispensationalists can hardly deny that the destruction of Jerusalem concerns the fulfillment of prophecy related to Israel. Remember, Daniel was told that the prophecy was about "his people" and the city of Jerusalem. Certainly, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD70 concerns Jerusalem and Daniel's people! Not only was it prophesied in this passage, but Jesus specifically said that its fulfillment was God's judgment on Israel for not accepting Jesus as Messiah (Luke 19:41-

44). Most dispensationalists would also agree that the return of the Jews to Israel, and the nation's rebirth in 1948, is the fulfillment of prophecy. Likewise, Paul speaks of God's dealing with Israel in this age, provoking the nation to jealousy through the Gospel going to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11). How then can it be said that God is not dealing with Israel during this gap? Besides, God did not begin dealing with Israel in 445BC, when the first week began with the command of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem.

The prophecy in Daniel 9:25 is not intended to indicate that God's dealing with Israel is limited to the 70 weeks. The key word here is 'determined.'

*Dan 9:24 24 Seventy weeks are **determined** upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.* (KJV)

The word 'determined' is the Hebrew word 'chathak' (Strong's #2852). According to Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew lexicon, it means: *"to divide, to determine; to be determined, to be decreed, to be settled, to be marked out."* The idea is a definite predetermined period of time, marked out to accomplish some purpose. The purpose is clearly stated in the prophecy. It concerns the accomplishments of Christ at both His first and second comings.

If these 'weeks' of years are fixed periods of time, that would indicate they cannot be changed. Once the trigger for the first 69 weeks occurs, the prophesied period of time MUST count down, and cannot be changed, stopped, or altered in any way. In short, God has decreed blocks of time that cannot be altered, and the prophesied events are locked to those periods of time. This implies that any time outside of the prophesied 'weeks' are not necessarily determined or fixed by God. That is, there is some flexibility (or at least ambiguity) both before the first week began, and within the gap between the 69th and 70th weeks. The importance of this fact becomes obvious when we examine the New Testament, particularly the Olivet Discourse.

What sparked the Olivet Discourse was Jesus' comments on the Temple Mount about the destruction of the Temple, prophesied in this very passage.

Matt 24:1-2

1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

*2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, **There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.***

(KJV)

Dan 9:26

*26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and **the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.***

(KJV)

Luke 21 records Jesus' Temple Discourse, where He dealt with the events of AD70 in detail (Luke 21:12-24). After ascending the Mount of Olives that evening, the Disciples asked Jesus about the signs of His coming, briefly mentioned in His Temple discourse. In Jesus' reply, He referred the disciples to the book of Daniel at least 3 times, and to the 70 weeks prophecy once in particular.

Matt 24:15 15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

(KJV)

Dan 9:27

*27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and **in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.***

(KJV)

When Jesus said, "*whoso readeth let him understand,*" He was referring to those who would read Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy. This prophecy can only be properly understood based on Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse. Believers in the tribulation, who observe the 'abomination of desolation,' can then determine when the second coming will occur by viewing Daniel's prophecy in light of Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse. This is because the duration of the 70th week is 'determined' or fixed. Once it begins, the prophesied events will occur exactly as predicted by Daniel, down to the exact numbers of days. One can predict the day of Christ's second coming once the exact day of the beginning of the 70th week has been determined.

However, the time between the 69th and 70th weeks is not fixed or determined by God. Why? Jesus explained that in the previous verse.

Matt 24:14

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

(KJV)

In Matt. 28:18-20, Jesus sent His disciples to preach the Gospel to all the nations, and to teach the new converts to "*observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" In the above verse, Jesus said that the 'end' will not come until after this task is completed. Unfinished world evangelization is therefore hindering the coming of Christ. God has not fixed the time of the 'end' because the delay in Christ's coming is determined by US, and not by God. This is why there is no prophecy in Scripture of the length of this dispensation. It is also the reason the New Testament was written in such a way that every generation of Christians COULD be the generation that sees Christ's return to earth. This is because each generation of Christians has in its power the potential to complete the Great Commission. Yes, even the first century Church had that potential. One man, Paul, evangelized nations from Israel to Spain in less than 40 years! And the early Church had the benefit of 'tongues' and other supernatural manifestations of the Spirit to aid in this task. The Great Commission COULD potentially be completed within the first century. Every generation of Christians could potentially be the last IF they threw everything into world evangelism, and the Church surrendered herself to the task.

Just before the ascension, the disciples asked Jesus if He was then going to restore the Kingdom to Israel, that is, assume the Throne of David. Jesus' answer was to remind them of something that must occur first.

Acts 1:6-8

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

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.

(KJV)

Of course, God's foreknowledge demands that He know the exact time. He has placed this knowledge in His own jurisdiction, and has NOT revealed this knowledge, not even to Jesus while He

was here on earth (Mark 13:32). This is why the New Testament speaks of Jesus' coming as 'quickly,' and why the early Church expected Jesus' coming within their lifetime. 'Preterists' fail to see this simple truth, and imagining that Jesus must have come in the first century because of similar statements. What both preterists and dispensationalists fail to see is that every generation has the potential to be the last. Based on the rapid spread of the Gospel in the first few decades of the Church, the potential for the completion of the Great Commission was really not very far off, even for the first century Church. The New Testament was written with this fact in mind. Hence, the eager expectancy of the early Christians.

Several decades after Jesus ascended to heaven, Peter addressed the seeming long delay in Jesus' return in his second Epistle.

2 Pet 3:1-9

1 *This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:*

2 *That ye may be mindful of **the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:***

Peter intended to remind them of the Old Testament prophecies about the 'Day of the Lord' (referenced in verse 10) and also the commandment of Jesus' Apostles. Notice the 'commandment' is singular. Peter was referring to the Great Commission. This is THE 'commandment' of Jesus to the Apostles.

3 *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,*
4 *And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

5 *For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:*

6 *Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:*

7 *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

Notice that Peter's use of the term 'last days' seems to imply a long delay before Christ would come.

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

In Peter's thinking, only a few moments had passed since Jesus commissioned His Apostles to preach the Gospel to all the nations. Even now, two-thousand years later, only two days have passed using Peter's reckoning.

9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; **but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.***
(KJV)

According to Peter, the cause of the delay in Christ's return is God's longsuffering. He is not necessarily longsuffering to the lost. That is not what Peter said. God is longsuffering to US-WARD because He wants none to perish and all to come to repentance. We are the ones who were assigned the task of world evangelism. It is up to US to complete the task. It will go as slowly or as quickly as the Church motivates herself to finish it! After 2000 years, it is obvious that God's "longsuffering to usward" is quite enduring.

The gap in the 70 weeks prophecy is filled by the task of world evangelism. The majority of the nation of Israel was blinded so we could accomplish this task. A remnant of Israel was trained and sent to the nations, to make converts, and train them to continue and finish the task. The 70th

week and the second coming of Christ has been postponed so that we have time to do what Jesus has assigned His people to complete. We have in our power the ability to hasten the coming of Christ. This period of time in which we live has not been 'determined' or fixed by God (although it is known to the Father). We are the ones who will eventually 'determine' the duration of the gap in Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy. Once we have finished our job, the 70th week will commence, and nothing will be able to stop the coming of Christ 7 years later. Until then, His coming is on hold.

That we as Christians have the ability to hasten the coming of Christ is clear later in this chapter. After describing the Day of the Lord, Peter said that we as Christians are "*looking for and **hastening** the coming of the day of God*" (v. 12).

Some might object that the 70 weeks prophecy was made regarding Daniel's people the Jews, and the city of Jerusalem. Yes, that is true. But, it is not that the duration of the weeks themselves concern Israel. It is that these predetermined blocks of time must elapse BEFORE the major events concerning Israel would be fulfilled. Remember, 6 things are said to be fulfilled.

Dan 9:24 24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to

- *finish the transgression, and*
- *to make an end of sins, and*
- *to make reconciliation for iniquity, and*
- *to bring in everlasting righteousness, and*
- *to seal up the vision and prophecy, and*
- *to anoint the most Holy.*

The first three occurred in conjunction with Jesus' crucifixion, which was AFTER the 69th week according to verse 26. So, it cannot be said that the prophesied events would occur WITHIN the 70 weeks themselves. Likewise, the remaining three things will occur in Christ's Millennial Kingdom, AFTER the 70th week (not during the 70th week). Therefore, the prophesied events all occur after the blocks of time represented by the weeks, and not within the weeks themselves. The weeks are simply blocks of determined time that precede the fulfillment of these events that concern Jerusalem and Daniel's people. All six of these things concern Jerusalem and the Jewish people. Jesus was crucified by the Jews right outside Jerusalem. And Jesus will return to Jerusalem to set up His Kingdom. Before each of these major events, a fixed period of time must elapse, 69 weeks before Jesus' first coming, and one week before His second coming.

Traditional dispensationalists are mistaken in assuming that God's dealings with Israel are limited to the 70 weeks. They are also mistaken in assuming that God does not deal with the Church at the same time He is dealing with Israel. Furthermore, they take a giant leap of logic by inferring that the Church must be removed before God resumes His dealings with Israel as a national entity. We have already proven that Old Testament prophecy regarding Israel has been fulfilled within the gap between the 69th and 70th weeks. Therefore, it is obvious that God can deal with a nation and with the Church at the same time, since this is what He has been doing all along.

The 70 weeks prophecy actually fits progressive dispensationalism better, particularly in connection with a post-trib rapture.



Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

Is Jesus Seated on the Throne of David?

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One key unresolved question within progressive dispensationalism is the interpretation of the Davidic Covenant. Some progressive dispensationalists believe the Davidic Covenant is partially fulfilled by Christ's being seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father. Other progressives hold that Christ's being seated on David's throne is exclusively reserved for the Millennium, (as do traditional dispensationalists). The urgency of resolving this issue should not be underestimated. The issue itself is not central to the overall PD theological system. There is room for disagreement on this point within the PD camp without doing damage to the whole system. However, the partial fulfillment concept held by Blaising and Bock has become the "whipping boy" for traditional dispensationalists who seek to paint progressive dispensationalism as unorthodox, and leaning toward a-millennialism. Progressive dispensationalism is solidly pre-millennial. But the perceived similarity of a **partially fulfilled** Davidic Covenant to the a-mill view (which sees the Davidic Covenant as **completely fulfilled** with Christ's present reign from heaven) lends itself to emotional charges that are really rooted in fear. Yes, those attacking progressive dispensationalism are afraid that support for the pre-trib rapture is being seriously eroded by progressive dispensationalism. This fear may be well founded! But, the reactionary smear campaign, painting progressives as leaning toward a-millennialism, is absolutely false. Progressive dispensationalism is totally incompatible with a-millennialism. Progressives are firmly devoted to a historical-grammatical (literal) method of interpretation that makes the a-mill view completely unacceptable.

The purpose of this article is to show that Jesus is **not yet** seated on the Davidic throne. This is reserved for the Millennium.

Isa 9:6-7

*6 For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 **Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever.** The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*
(NKJ)

Luke 1:31-33

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

*32 **He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:***

*33 **And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.***
(KJV)

The covenant God made with King David, that from David's seed a righteous King would sit on the Throne of Israel and reign over Israel forever, was specifically applied to Jesus by Gabriel. The question is, When? In Peter's first sermon in Acts 2, he interpreted the Davidic Covenant in such a way that leads some to conclude it is fulfilled now, by Christ's being seated in heaven at the Father's right hand.

However, that is not exactly what Peter said. When we examine this passage in its historical setting, something entirely different appears. Peter's goal in this sermon was NOT to show that that Old Testament prophecies of Messiah's reigning on David's throne were presently fulfilled. Such an idea would flow counter to the Millennial hopes of the Jews to whom he was preaching, and would invoke an immediate negative reaction. They did not even believe at this point that Jesus was any more than an executed criminal. To now imply that He was already reigning in some mystical way in heaven, while the Jews fully expected an earthly reign, would certainly be greeted with scorn.

Rather, Peter intended to establish Jesus' identity as "the Christ" (Messiah - King of Israel) prophesied in the Old Testament who **WILL** physically reign over Israel as "King of the Jews." He was preaching to a crowd of Jews from the Diaspora who had come to Jerusalem to worship on the feast days. Most of them were not residents of Jerusalem or Israel. They had traveled to Jerusalem from foreign lands where they lived to attend Passover seven weeks earlier, and had either stayed until Pentecost, or had returned. They had heard about all the commotion surrounding the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Some of them may even have joined in with the crowds who cried "away with Him, give us Barabas." Yet, they were not privy to His three years of teachings or witnesses of His miracles, although they no doubt heard the rumors of miraculous healings. They had also apparently heard the rumors of His resurrection, which the Temple leadership were trying to squelch.

Peter began his sermon by appealing to Joel 2, the prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Israel. He claimed that the miracle of speaking in foreign tongues they had just witnessed was the fulfillment of this prophecy. This no doubt got their attention immediately, because it showed that long awaited prophecy was being fulfilled - God was visiting His ancient people. Next, Peter connected the fulfillment of this prophecy with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thereby, showing that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah, whom the Jews expected would accompany the fulfillment of Joel.

Acts 2:22-24

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

(KJV)

Peter then launched into a series of Davidic kingly prophecies from the Psalms to prove that Jesus was the subject of their fulfillment, not David himself.

Acts 2:25-36

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither

his flesh did see corruption.

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

(KJV)

Notice Peter did NOT say that Jesus presently occupied the throne of David. "*knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.*" He showed that David was not speaking of himself, but someone from "the fruit of his loins." Then he applied this principle to another Psalm, "*He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*" In other words, the prophecy of *his soul not being left in hell, or seeing corruption* was not referring to David, but to the one prophesied who would sit on David's throne. Peter then said Jesus was presently seated at the right hand of God after being raised from the dead. He quoted another Psalm to prove that such was prophesied of Messiah PRIOR to His reigning on David's throne. "*For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool.*" Notice that being seated on the right hand of the Father is for the purpose of **WAITING** until His enemies are made his footstool. In short, Peter was saying that Jesus is presently fulfilling prophecy while awaiting His position of King of Israel on David's throne. That this is what Peter meant, is clear from his second sermon.

Acts 3:19-21

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

*21 **Whom the heaven must receive UNTIL the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.***

(KJV)

Clearly, Peter was placing Christ's present place beside the Father as a period of **WAITING** for the time when the prophecies of the earthly Kingdom will be fulfilled. Other passages support this "waiting period" concept.

Heb 10:12-13

12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,

13 waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.

(NASB)

Old and New Testament passages clearly connect the assumption of the Throne of David with the full restoration of Israel to their land.

Jer 23:5-8

5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

*6 **In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely:** and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

7 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

8 But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own

land.
(KJV)

Matt 19:28

28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, ***in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory***, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
(KJV)

Matt 25:31

31 ***When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:***
(KJV)

The word "Christ" (Heb. - Messiah) means "anointed one," and is used elsewhere to describe the ones "anointed" as Kings of Israel. Yet, being the "anointed one" does NOT necessarily guarantee assuming the position and duties of KING immediately. David was "anointed" king of Israel by Samuel. Yet, there was a long time of Saul's pursuing David, and David's having to WAIT until his throne was established, by the removal of Saul! I believe the situation is the same with Jesus. He was "anointed" Messiah and King at His first coming, yet He must WAIT until His enemies are made His footstool before assuming His role as "King of Israel." This waiting is accomplished at the Father's right hand. There is one thing that keeps Jesus from fully exercising His place as King of Israel, and that is Israel's repentance and national salvation.

On Palm Sunday, many of the Jews were willing to accept Jesus as their King. But, the nation as a whole rejected Him as King of Israel. The last days of Jesus life speak a great deal to the question of His being the King of Israel promised to sit on David's throne.

Matt 21:9

9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.
(KJV)

Matt 21:15

15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,
(KJV)

Matt 22:41-46

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,
42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David.
43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,
44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?
45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?
46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.
(KJV)

Jesus then gave his scathing denouncement of the leadership of Israel. He followed this with this lament.

Matt 23:36-39

36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.
37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens

under her wings, and ye would not!

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

(KJV)

Jesus implied that His taking His seat as King of Israel as the "Son of David" was being postponed UNTIL Israel repents nationally. Paul says this will occur when the "fullness of the gentiles" come in [Rom. 11]. This in no way diminishes His being the King! It is just that Israel will NOT benefit from His being their King UNTIL they repent. Once national repentance takes place, Jesus will take His seat on the "glorious throne" [Matt. 19:28, Matt. 25:31].

Jesus is King, and His kingdom is present in the remnant of believers. But, the Davidic covenant specifically speaks of a political throne of Messiah. Jesus is the rightful king, just as David was the rightful King after Samuel anointed him. However, he had to await Saul's removal. Likewise, Jesus is now WAITING in heaven for His enemies to be made His footstool. Let's look at John's account of Jesus' trial before Pilate.

John 18:36-37

*36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but **NOW** My kingdom is not from here."*

37 Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

(NKJV)

The word 'now' implies that Jesus' kingdom at present is not "of this world," but will be in the future. This is clearly what the disciples expected when they asked Jesus about when He might "restore the Kingdom to Israel."

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."

(NKJV)

The implication here is that the restoration of Israel's throne will be AFTER the gospel is taken to the nations.

Jesus is now seated with His Father in HIS throne. He is NOT seated on HIS throne. Upon His coming He will sit on HIS OWN throne, the place of King of Israel under the Davidic Covenant.

Rev 3:21

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

(KJV)

There is clearly a distinction made here between the present 'throne' Jesus occupies and the future 'throne.' One is said to be His Father's throne, and the other is said to be Jesus' throne.

It is clear then that Jesus' present place at the Father's side is a place of WAITING. And according to Revelation 3:21, Jesus does NOT consider being seated at the Father's side as occupying "HIS

THRONE." Likewise, several passages say that He will sit on HIS own throne at His second coming, [Matt. 19:28 & Matt. 25:31].

The term "throne of David" is a synonym for "King of Israel." Other kings of Israel were said to be seated on "David's throne," [I Kings 2:12,24, Jer. 22:2,4, Jer. 36:30].

Based on this, it seems that being "seated on David's throne" strongly implies ruling over Israel in a political sense. In fact, this is exactly what Gabriel promised to Mary - *"he will rule over the house of Israel forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end."*

Until Jesus returns, and actually takes his place as "King of Israel," He cannot be considered seated on David's throne in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. Granted, it is well established in Scripture that Jesus is that King. And even that He presently rules in the hearts of the faithful remnant. But, His kingdom now is limited to the hearts of the redeemed. As yet it is not a political Kingdom, ruling the earth with Israel as head of the nations.

Rev 12:5

*5 And she brought forth a man child, **who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron:** and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.
(KJV)*

There is clearly a distinction made here between Jesus' place in heaven now, and His future place as ruling the nations with a rod of iron. His ruling in this manner begins when He returns as "King of kings and Lord of lords."

Rev 19:11-16

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

*15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: **and he shall rule them with a rod of iron:** and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

*16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.
(KJV)*



Progressive Dispensationalism

In Depth

Exegesis of Romans 16:25-27

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Romans 16:25-27 (NKJV)

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel¹ and the preaching² of Jesus Christ³, according to the revelation of the mystery⁴ kept secret⁶ since the world began⁵
 26 but now has been made manifest⁷, and by⁸ the prophetic Scriptures⁹ has been made known¹¹ to¹² all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God¹⁰, for obedience to the faith —
 27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever¹³. Amen¹⁴.
 (Footnote numbering is ours)

Romans 16:25-27 (Our literal translation from the Greek)

25 Now unto Him who is able to establish you according to my Gospel¹, and Jesus Christ's² preaching³, according to the revelation of the mystery⁴ from time eternal⁵ concealed⁶.
 26 But now, having been made apparent⁷ through⁸ the prophetic Scriptures⁹, according to the commandment of the everlasting God¹⁰, was made known¹¹ for¹² all nations for the obedience of faith —
 27 to God, alone wise, be the glory through Jesus Christ for the ages¹³, Amen¹⁴.

1. "according to my Gospel" Many early Christians understood Paul's "according to my Gospel" to mean the Gospel of Luke, written by Paul's traveling companion and used in the Pauline churches. Ireneaus tell us; *"Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him."* (Against Heresies, Bk. III, i). *"But surely if Luke, who always preached in company with Paul, and is called by him 'the beloved,' and with him performed the work of an evangelist, and was entrusted to hand down to us a Gospel, learned nothing different from him [Paul], as has been pointed out from his words,"* (ch. xiii). Tertullian writes; *"For even Luke's form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul. And it may well seem that the works which disciples publish belong to their masters."* (Against Marcion, Bk. IV, ch. v). Caius writes; *"The third book of the Gospel, that according to Luke, the well-known physician Luke wrote in his own name, in order, after the ascension of Christ and when Paul had associated him with himself as one studious of right."* (Frag. III, i). Eusebius adds: *"But Luke, who was of Antiochian parentage and a physician by profession, and who was especially intimate with Paul and well acquainted with the rest of the apostles, has left us, in two inspired books, proofs of that spiritual healing art which he learned from them. One of these books is the Gospel, which he testifies that he wrote as those who were from the beginning eye witnesses and ministers of the word delivered unto him, all of whom, as he says, he followed accurately from the first. The other book is the Acts of the Apostles which he composed not from the accounts of others, but from what he had seen himself. And they say that Paul meant to refer to Luke's Gospel wherever, as if speaking of some gospel of his own, he used the words, 'according to*

my Gospel." (Eusebius, History Bk. III, iv) See also, Jerome and Gennadius, VII, Col. 4:14, 2 Tim. 4:11.

It is also quite apparent from internal evidence that Paul's oral Gospel and Luke's written Gospel were interdependent. For a good example of this connection compare Paul's recounting the Last Supper with Luke's account (cf. Luke 22:19 & 1 Cor. 11:23). Jesus' command, "*this do in remembrance of me,*" quoted by Paul, was recorded in Luke's Gospel alone. And Paul stated the source of this history, "*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you...*" (v. 23) and then immediately gave the historical account including the Lord's command, "*this do in remembrance of me.*" It would seem then that Luke's Gospel was essentially what Paul preached, and according to Luke was gathered from both those who heard the Lord in person and also His "ministers" (Luke 1:1-2). Our view of Rom. 16:25 is consistent with the idea that Paul's "*my Gospel*" refers to that same "Gospel" of which Luke's is a written record. We see nothing in Paul's writings that would contradict this very early tradition, and no good reason to reject it. It could also refer to Paul's oral tradition (Gospel) which heavily influenced Luke's written Gospel. At any rate, it is critical that we acknowledge the clear interdependence between Paul's teaching and Luke's Gospel and Acts. This will become apparent later in this article as we address *the revelation of the mystery*.

2. "the preaching of Jesus Christ" The proper rendering should be *Jesus Christ's preaching* as opposed to *the preaching about Jesus Christ*. That is, **the content or substance of Jesus' preaching**. *Jesus Christ*, in the clause το κηρυγμα Ιησου Χριστου (the preaching of Jesus Christ), is *subjective* genitive, not *objective* genitive. In every other occurrence of κηρυγμα (preaching) with a genitive noun in the NT, the genitive noun is *subjective* genitive (cf. Matt. 12:41, Luke 11:32, 1 Cor. 2:4, 1 Cor. 15:14). That two of these examples are also from Paul, and one from Paul's traveling companion, is significant and weighs heavily in favor of the *subjective* genitive in this verse. There are no examples of κηρυγμα to be found with an *objective* genitive referent in the NT or LXX (cf. Matt. 12:41 & Jonah 3:2 LXX). If the concept was the preaching about Jesus Christ, the emphasis would be on the action implied in "preaching" rather than the substance of what was preached. However, Paul used an articular accusative noun here for "preaching," which emphasizes substance not action. Had Paul wanted to emphasize the action of preaching (preaching about Jesus Christ), he would have used an aorist participle. Therefore, it is certain that Paul meant *Jesus Christ's own preaching* (message) as opposed to *the preaching about Jesus Christ*. This Greek rendering is also attested by Chrysostom (Homily XXVII), with none to the contrary in the patristic evidence. Most English versions read "*the preaching of Jesus Christ,*" being vague enough to allow either interpretation. John Gill's Commentary supports our rendering. The Greek speaking early Church understood this passage the same (John Chrysostom, Homily XXVII).

3. "my Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ" The entire clause, το ευαγγελιον μου και το κηρυγμα Ιησου Χριστου (lit. "*the gospel of mine and the preaching of Jesus Christ*"), forms a Sharp TSKTS construction (Sharp's rule VI, ie, article - substantive - kai - article - substantive). The two substantives, *gospel* and *preaching*, are therefore being distinguished because both substantives have the definite article. Had Paul used the Sharp TSKS construction (Sharp's rule I, ie, article-substantive-kai-substantive), the idea would be just the opposite, uniting the two substantives in some kind of union. The implication would be that the *gospel* of Paul and *preaching* of Jesus Christ referred to the same thing, or at least were being viewed together as a unit. That is, "*the preaching of Jesus Christ*" would be a restating or further explaining the meaning of "*my gospel,*" with Paul himself being the one performing the action implied in the word *preaching*. However, Paul's use of the TSKTS construction strongly implies he meant to distinguish *my gospel* from *the preaching of Jesus Christ*. The former being Paul's own (or the Gospel of Luke), and the latter that which Jesus Christ Himself preached. This is very weighty support for our observation in note 2, that Jesus Christ is *subjective* genitive. Paul's *gospel* and Jesus Christ's *preaching* are to be distinguished as distinct things in this context. This is not to say they are different gospels or that their content is different. It merely means that *Paul's gospel* is not the same thing as Jesus' *preaching*. The preaching was done by Jesus Christ Himself, not Paul's preaching about Jesus Christ, as has been wrongly claimed

by some.

4. "the revelation of the mystery" This should not be understood as something completely unheard of previously being made known for the first time. The word *mystery* implies something cryptic, known but not understood, in virtually every other occurrence in Scripture (cf. Mark 4:11-12, 2 Thess. 2:7, Rev. 1:20, Rev. 10:7, Rev. 17:7). Likewise, the word *revelation* implies an uncovering of something formerly concealed from common view or knowledge, but not entirely unknown previously. For example, Christ's second coming is frequently called the *revelation* of Jesus Christ. It is not that He was never before heard of or seen, and will then be seen for the first time. Rather, the idea is that He will be fully known or become common knowledge. All "mystery" about Him will be seen and understood fully. The concept of the "mystery" of the Gospel being known but not understood in the Old Testament was plainly articulated by Peter. *"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into."* (1 Pet 1:10-12 NKJV)

5. "since the world began" The words *χρονους αιωνιους* literally mean *time eternal*. The KJV and NKJV are less than precise.

6. "kept secret" Lit. *concealed* or *silent*.

7. "has been made manifest" The Greek word *φανερωθεντος* (*having been made apparent*) is an aorist passive participle. The aorist references the whole act, implying that Paul was referring to an event (the revelation of the mystery), rather than a process, particularly one that was ongoing, which the aorist tense usually forbids. It is also in the passive voice. Thus, *"having been made apparent"* is the best rendering. The implication from the context is that the mystery was made apparent through the two channels mentioned in the previous verse, ie, Paul's gospel and Jesus Christ's preaching.

8. "by" The Greek word is "dia" meaning *the channel of an act* - *"through."*

9. "by the prophetic Scriptures" The KJV rendering, *"by the Scriptures of the prophets,"* is incorrect. The word *προφητικων* is an adjective not a genitive noun. *"Prophetic Scriptures"* is the correct rendering, as in virtually all modern translations. This should not be interpreted as referring to the New Testament Epistles being written by Paul, as some have mistakenly claimed. Nowhere in the New Testament has Paul or any other writer referred to any NT book as *"Scripture."* All other occurrences of *γραφων* (Scripture), whether singular or plural, with or without the definite article, always refer to Old Testament Scriptures. On the other hand, there is a subtle difference between *"the prophetic Scriptures"* and *"the Scriptures of the prophets."* The former implies Old Testament Scripture that is prophetic in nature, whether from the Law, the Prophets, or the Writings. The latter implies exclusively the Prophets, (Isaiah to Malachi). It is clear Paul meant that the mystery had been revealed through the agency of the various prophetic Scriptures scattered throughout the Old Testament. That is, the prophetic Scriptures which prophesy of Christ and the Gospel.

Jesus preached the revelation of the mystery to His disciples from the prophetic Scriptures immediately after His resurrection. This was recorded by Luke, Paul's companion, as follows: *"Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.... Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and*

the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things'." (Luke 24:25-27 & 44-48 NKJV) See also Acts 1:3.

It is deserving of notice that Luke's Gospel is the only one of the four that records the revelation of the mystery by Jesus to the disciples from the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures. This could be the reason Paul indicated that *my Gospel* (meaning Luke's Gospel and/or Paul's oral preaching) and *Jesus Christ's preaching* (as described exclusively by Luke {ch. 24}) was the source of this *revelation of the mystery*. Through the *revelation of the mystery* from *the prophetic Scriptures* the Romans could be *established* in the Faith. It is therefore beneficial for us to also be established in the Faith through a comprehensive understanding of Christ and the Gospel as portrayed in the Old Testament *prophetic Scriptures*.

Paul stated plainly, in his defense before Agrippa, that his Gospel was entirely contained within the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures. *"Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come-- that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."* (Acts 26:22-23 NKJV)

10. "according to the commandment of the everlasting God" cf. John 12:49 & John 16:25 & Luke 24:26-27,44-46, in that order for the explanation of how the mystery was revealed, by the command of the Father, through Christ to the disciples.

11. "has been made known" As in note 7, the verb γωρισθεντος is in the aorist tense. This indicates an event, not an ongoing process. That is, *the revelation of the mystery*, through the agency of *the prophetic Scriptures*, has been made known.

12. "to" The preposition εις indicates *leading unto*. It points to movement toward the goal, which in this case is the obedience of all nations to the gospel. Paul was not indicating that it had already been made known to all nations, as NKJV implies. That simply was not true at the time of the writing. Nor did he mean it was in the process of being made known to all nations, as the KJV implies. That would require the use of the present tense verb not the aorist. The NKJV correctly recognizes the aorist tense verb as indicating a past completed event. But, by wrongly translating εις as *"to"* instead of *"for"* implies something that was simply not true — the past completion of the Great Commission. The KJV's wrong translation of the verb in the present tense implies that the revelation of the mystery was an ongoing process as the Gospel spread to the nations. The only interpretation that is consistent with the Greek syntax is that the mystery had been made known, through the agency of the prophetic Scriptures, in order (toward the goal) that all nations might believe. The best and simplest rendering of εις here is *"for."* The NIV also captures the correct meaning in dynamic equivalence, *"so that all nations might believe."* The NASB makes the same mistake as the NKJV.

13. "forever" Lit. *"for the ages."*

14. Verses 25-27 are all one grammatically complete sentence. *"Now unto Him ... to God alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for the ages, Amen."* The simple subject and object are "Glory (subject) be to God (object)." The verb "be" is understood and the simple predicate is the indirect object "to Him" or "to God." Everything else in these three verses consists of modifiers. The subject, "Glory" comes at the end of the sentence in verse 27 making it very emphatic. The object "God" in verse 27 and "Him" in verse 25 are in apposition. Apposition denotes a grammatical construction in which two nouns (or substantive constructions) have the same referent and stand in the same syntactical relation to the rest of the sentence. So the main idea of the entire sentence is

a doxology to God.

Other observations:

Paul's closing statement in the book of Romans is parallel to his opening statement of the same book. A comparison of these two passages sheds great light on the meaning of Romans 16:25-27.

Rom 1:1-5 (NKJV)

1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to **the gospel of God**
 2 which He promised before through His prophets **in the Holy Scriptures**,
 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,
 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.
 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship **for obedience to the faith among all nations** for His name,

Romans 1:1-5 (NKJV)	Romans 16:25-27
the gospel of God	my gospel and Jesus Christ's preaching
which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures	made apparent through the prophetic Scriptures
for obedience to the faith for all nations	was made known for all nations for the obedience of faith

The "Gospel of God" in chapter one is clearly parallel to both "my Gospel" and "the preaching of Jesus Christ" in chapter 16. Both passages connect the Gospel to the Old Testament Scriptures. The term "prophetic Scriptures" in chapter 16 does not refer to New Testament Epistles currently being written. The parallel statement in chapter one unmistakably indicates that the Gospel was contained in the Old Testament Scriptures. Both passages indicate this "Gospel" is the one made known in order to be proclaimed to all nations. It is therefore obvious that Paul's Gospel cannot be separated from Old Testament prophecy, or from the Gospel preached by Jesus Himself. This fact deals a fatal blow to traditional dispensationalism's understanding of the "mystery."



Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

The Dangers of Excessive Dispensationalism

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A serious difficulty in traditional dispensational thinking is what to do with the four Gospels. Dispensationalists unanimously agree that Paul's Epistles apply directly to the Church. Most would also include the General Epistles and Revelation. There is by no means a consensus among dispensationalists regarding how much of Acts or the Gospels applies directly to the Church. At one end of the dispensational spectrum are those who see the Church beginning with Jesus' calling the first disciples. At the other end are those who see the present dispensation beginning towards the end of the book of Acts. These see the ministry of Jesus and the Twelve Apostles as something entirely distinct from the present dispensation. Some, on the fringe of ultradispensationalism, do not even accept the Great Commission or water baptism. They associate these with the Twelve and Jesus' ministry, and accept only Paul's epistles as containing "Church doctrine." (They usually do not even accept all of Paul's teaching, because Paul taught on baptism and the proper use of spiritual gifts, which many consider obsolete.)

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE IS SOUND

Dispensationalism is a structure that makes sense and order out of seemingly conflicting ideas in Scripture. Without some form of dispensationalism, the Scriptures would be self contradictory. Take the food laws for example. God told Noah, *"Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things."* [Gen. 9:3]. Yet, the kosher Laws God gave to Israel forbid their eating 'unclean' animals. But, to Christians, Paul wrote, *"For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."* [1 Tim. 4:4,5].

As is quite apparent from this example, without a system to explain such apparent discrepancies, the Bible becomes impossible to decipher.

Essentially, the primary premise of dispensationalism is that God has not always dealt with mankind under the same rules, or program. There has been a progression of programs since creation. Contrary to charges made by opponents of this system, the basic dispensational principle is not a human system superimposed on the Word of God. It is explicitly taught in the Scripture. There are a number of Scriptures which demonstrate a change in God's program. Here are a couple of examples.

John 4

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

*21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, **the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.***

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

Hebrews 8

*13 In that he saith, A new covenant, **he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.***

Both of these Scriptures demonstrate dynamic use of the basic principle on which dispensationalism rests. God has dealt with mankind differently during various periods of history. His economy for dealing with man in one period eventually gives way to a new economy. This has occurred on several notable occasions in Scripture. The flood, the giving of the Law, the New Covenant, and the Millennial Kingdom are all clear examples of dispensational changes. In each of these cases God's dealings with man has (or will) changed dramatically.

The differences of opinion among dispensationalists stem from the application of the basic dispensational principle to the Scriptures. On what grounds can we say a new dispensation has begun? Some, when encountering seemingly contradictory ideas in Scripture, such as Paul's emphasis on grace and James' emphasis on works, immediately infer separate dispensations for Paul's and James' ministries. Others try to harmonize this type of difficulty within a single dispensation. The approach one takes, whether **distinguishing** or **harmonizing** passages, has far reaching implications toward the degree of dispensational distinctions one finally adopts. In other words, the tendency to harmonize Scripture leads to fewer dispensations, while the tendency to draw distinctions leads to more dispensations.

THE IMPACT ON PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING

The degree of dispensationalism has a huge effect on practical Christian living. All Scripture was written to specific audiences. We need to correctly decide how much Scripture is directly applicable to us. After all, the basic question that must be answered from Scripture is, "How does it apply to me?" The degree of dispensationalism plays a direct role in making these judgments. The more distinctions we make between alleged dispensational groups, the less Scripture we have that directly applies to us. Conversely, the fewer dispensations we see, the more of the Scripture directly applies to us. If we accept no dispensational distinctions at all, we are bound by the Old Covenant, including the law of the Sabbath, animal sacrifices, the kosher laws, and the death penalty for such offenses as dishonoring one's parents. At the other extreme are hyperdispensationalists who recognize only Romans through Philemon as having direct application to the Church today. For them, the Old Testament, the Gospels, most of Acts, and Hebrews through Revelation, were intended for other past or future dispensations and are not binding on us today.

But, if only Paul's epistles apply directly to us, we are not bound at all by the teachings of Christ! How can we claim to be 'Christians?' Shouldn't we be called 'Paulians?' Isn't a 'Christian' a follower of Christ? Therefore, a real problem emerges regarding what to do with the teachings of Jesus.

The best example of this problem is the 'Sermon on the Mount.' In Matthew five through seven Jesus gave a series of commandments to His disciples. Many, in the mainstream of dispensationalism, teach these commandments belong to another dispensation, implying they are not binding on us. The old Scofield Bible demonstrates this kind of thinking in its notes attached to this sermon. *"...the sermon on the mount gives neither the privilege, nor the duty of the Church."*[page 1,000]. If this sermon does not apply to the Church, one needn't be too concerned about it. On the other hand, if Jesus intended these commandments to be followed by all Christians, and if dispensationalists are relegating it to another dispensation, they are guilty of undermining the gospel and leading Christians astray! Jesus said to His disciples, *"if you love me, keep my commandments."*

THE IMPACT ON ESCHATOLOGY

A second important consideration is the impact of dispensationalism on eschatology. If the ministry and teaching of Christ, as found in the Gospels, directly applies to the Church, then the Olivet Discourse [Matt. 24, Mark 13] must also apply to the Church. The problem is, in this discourse Jesus answered the disciples' question about His second coming by outlining a series of events His followers would endure. This included the Great Tribulation. He clearly placed the gathering together

of His elect after the tribulation, [Matt. 24:29-31]. It is apparent that a strong continuity between the ministry of Jesus and the Church age weighs heavily in favor of the posttribulation rapture position. Conversely, the clearer the distinction between the ministry of Jesus and the Church age, the stronger the logical foundation for the pretribulation rapture position. The same holds true for Revelation. The sharper the distinction between "Church saints" and "Tribulation saints," the easier it is to suppose a pretribulation rapture between Revelation three and four. Conversely, the more unified the saints, the more difficult it is to envision a rapture where the Scripture does not explicitly place one. The bottom line is simply this. The heavier the basic principle of dispensationalism is applied to Scripture, the more likely the pretribulation rapture position appears. And, the lighter this principle is applied, the more likely the posttribulation rapture position appears.

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

The degree to which we apply dispensational distinctions must be based on clear biblical evidence. As Bible believing Christians, we must have sound biblical authority for what we believe and teach. Too often we let the end justify the means. Our thinking becomes biased toward a doctrinal position we find attractive. We might lean towards a certain position because it is held by people we respect, or because the opposing position is unpopular, and embracing it might bring the wrath of our peers. For example, if we want to believe in a particular rapture position, we might be tempted to accept whatever theology will get us there, even if we have to fudge a little here and there. The same holds true for other theological issues like Calvinism vs. Arminianism. As Christians, we can often detect this kind of biased thinking among scientists who approach the origin of the universe from a predetermined rejection of God. As human beings, we are also quite capable of kidding ourselves. While we can often spot biased thinking in others, it is very difficult to detect our own biased thinking. Truth can only be found by being entirely objective. We must hold truth as all important regardless of the repercussions. This requires a genuine willingness to abandon long cherished views, and embrace unpopular positions, given adequate proof.

There is only one way to be objective regarding dispensational distinctions. **We must have clear statements from Scripture indicating a dispensational change before we assume one.** We cannot invent dispensations on the basis of apparent doctrinal difficulties. There are apparent doctrinal difficulties even within a single writer's works, often within the same book. For a good example of this compare Romans 8:35-39 with Romans 11:20-22. Are we to suppose a dispensational change between Romans eight and Romans eleven? Obviously, the apparent conflict in these passages arises from our lack of understanding and our own doctrinal bias, not from a dispensational distinction. We are not free to make divisions where the Scriptures do not. If we use doctrinal difficulties as license to devise dispensational distinctions, we could come up with an infinite number of dispensations. This would effectively render the vast majority of Scripture irrelevant to us! This is just as destructive as denying all of the Bible is the Word of God. Making dispensational distinctions without having clear statements of Scripture indicating a change, is the equivalent to making the Word of God subjective to our theology, rather than subjecting ourselves to its authority. If dispensationalists would be consistently objective by holding to this criterion, we could save the Body of Christ much confusion. Because we have frequently allowed the end to justify the means, confusion reigns among dispensationalists.

THE PROBLEM IN THE GOSPELS

The most difficult problem for dispensationalists is what to do with the Gospels. If we take the position that they contain "Church doctrine" how do we explain doctrinal difficulties that arise between the teaching of Jesus and Paul? A good example is the rich young ruler who asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" To which Jesus answered, "Keep the commandments." Some dispensationalists would point to this apparent conflict with Ephesians 2:8,9 by concluding Jesus' ministry was a separate dispensation. Others might try to find a way to reconcile Jesus' statement by saying Jesus was simply trying to point out to this young man that he had not kept the spirit of the Law. This may be true but it does not resolve the problem. Jesus answered a direct question about salvation by referring him to the Old Covenant. Doesn't this imply that the Old Covenant was still in force to some degree?

APPLYING THE BIBLICAL CRITERIA

We stated earlier that clear statements must be our source of authority. What does the Bible say about a dispensational change from the Old Covenant to the New?

Luke 16

16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

Here Jesus made a statement indicating that something new had begun. When John the Baptist began his ministry the Old Covenant began to be supplanted by the preaching of the Kingdom of God. The fact that John was to **prepare** the way for Christ shows a **transition** was in progress rather than a clear distinction. John did not belong to another dispensation as is commonly taught.

John 1

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

John was sent to proclaim Jesus, and salvation through Him alone! John the Baptist's own words show that his Gospel message was essentially the same as the Gospel message today, that of salvation through faith in Christ alone.

John 3

35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

However, even though the Gospel began to be preached with the appearance of John the Baptist, the Old Covenant did not expire for the Jewish people on the day John began preaching.

Hebrews 8

*13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old **is ready to vanish away**.*

Hebrews, written only a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, clearly indicates that while the Old Covenant was obsolete, it had not yet entirely expired. How is it that the Old Covenant was still in effect to some degree many years after the New Covenant was established? This is only possible if there was an overlapping of the Old Covenant and the New. Jesus' answer to the woman of Samaria also shows that the Old Covenant was still in force on the Jewish people, yet He offered her salvation apart from the Old Covenant.

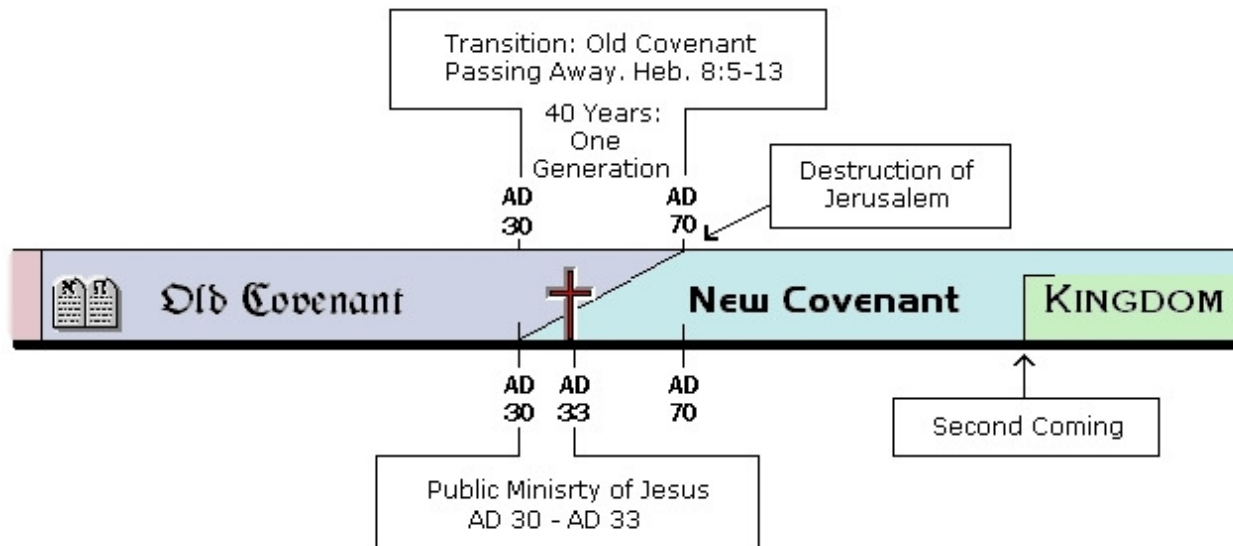
John 4

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

Many dispensationalists have recognized this transitional period. Yet any transitional time where dispensations overlap creates a serious problem for interpreters. Most of the New Testament was written within this transitional period. How are we to know what is for us and what was intended for the transitional period only? What do we do with Jesus' answer to the rich young ruler? If we reject it as not for us, what is for us, and on whose authority? This is the dispensational paradox.



It would be a terrible thing indeed if God left us to muddle through the Gospels never being entirely sure what applies to us and what does not. But, Jesus gave us the key to determining, on His authority, what is for us and what is not for us in the Gospels. This key is extremely important for dispensationalists. It is the key that unlocks the "mystery" Paul wrote about. This key has far reaching implications into all areas of theology. It is the most important piece of information available to anyone seeking to properly understand the teachings of our Savior, our Lord, and the founder of our Faith.

THE KEY

Matthew 28

19 Go ye therefore, and teach **all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 **Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:** and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The Great Commission is still in force today. This is clear from the words, "even unto the end of the world (age)." Notice that a part of the Great Commission is to teach new converts to observe **everything Jesus taught His disciples**. He did not say, teach new converts to observe what He told the Scribes, Pharisees, the crowds, or even the rich young ruler. He told them to teach everything He specifically taught them, His disciples. Since the fulfillment of the Great Commission includes the entire Church age, Jesus commanded the disciples to teach **Gentile Christians** to observe everything He taught them, as recorded in the Gospel narratives. This must mean that all of Jesus' teaching directed specifically to the disciples is "Church doctrine." Since the disciples are dead, and we have succeeded them in assuming the task of world evangelism, we must also obey Christ's last command. **We must consider all of the material from the Gospel accounts, directed specifically to the disciples, as applicable to us today.**

With this criterion, it is a simple task to read the Gospel accounts and decide what is Church doctrine and what is transitional. Since all four Gospels were written as a narrative on the life and ministry of Christ, all we have to do is follow the writer's narration to see whom Jesus was addressing. The Sermon on the Mount is the first glaring example of this kind of teaching. Jesus called His newly chosen disciples aside and began to teach them, [Matt. 5:1,2]. Other notable examples are the Humility Discourse, [Matt. 18], the Olivet Discourse, [Matt. 24], and the Upper Room Discourse, [John 13-17]. Some other famous discourses **do not** fit this criterion, including the Bread of Life Discourse, [John 6], and the Good Shepherd Discourse, [John 10].

CATEGORIES OF JESUS' TEACHING

Even in a casual reading of the Gospels, it is apparent that Jesus did not treat everyone alike. He spoke to the crowds, individuals, and the Scribes and Pharisees, often referring them to the Law of Moses. He also took His disciples aside and taught them privately. In these cases, He taught New Covenant doctrine.

Mark 4

1 And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: ...

10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. ...

33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.

34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

Jesus, working within the context of the Jewish nation and the Old Covenant that was still in force on the Jewish people, began revealing the New Covenant. He did not directly teach New Covenant doctrine to the crowds, or the Jewish leaders. He spoke in parables. Yet when He was alone with the disciples, He taught them New Covenant doctrine. It was not His purpose to convert all of Judaism, but to call out of Judaism a remnant. He then taught His "little flock" Church doctrine, preparing them to be missionaries to the whole world. Jesus did this for three years. The night before the crucifixion, as Jesus passed the cup to these twelve men, He said; *"This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."* [Luke 22:20]. Jesus confirmed the New Covenant the next day spilling His blood so that sinners could be redeemed. After the resurrection, Jesus instructed His disciples to preach the gospel to all nations until the end of the age, making His powerful statement which establishes the criterion and authority for applying Jesus' teaching to ourselves, *"teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."* If we take Jesus literally here, He was telling them, and is telling us, to teach all Christians to pattern their lives after His instruction to the disciples. The most comprehensive teaching being the Sermon on the Mount. If we do this, we are preparing them a good foundation for the difficult days ahead.

WHAT JESUS EXPECTS OF YOU

Notice how Jesus closed His Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7

24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

One of the main reasons so many Christian's lives are falling apart today is because they lack the foundation that Jesus' teaching provides. When Jesus' teaching is relegated to another dispensation, Christianity suffers immensely. As we get closer to the return of Christ, things will get much worse. That's why Jesus warned us in the above verses to pattern our lives after the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount contains 10 Commandments of Jesus to His followers, which form the basis of all other New Testament teaching on Christian living. Here's what Jesus said about His commandments, delivered to His disciples.

John 14

15 If ye love me, keep my commandments....

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him....

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

John reinforced Jesus' remarks with the following words:

I John 2

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

I John 3

22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

I John 5

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

II John 1

6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

Revelation 22

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Keeping His commandments does not refer to the Law of Moses as is commonly taught. All of these Scriptures have primary reference to the commandments Jesus gave directly to His disciples, to be passed along to us. Following Jesus' commandments is one of the most important thrusts of the New Testament.

For pastors and Bible teachers, this should be the main thrust of your discipling believers. First, by setting an example by living according to the Sermon on the Mount. And secondly, by teaching Jesus' commandments to His sheep. Today most Evangelical churches are primarily engaged in teaching deep theological concepts, or focused on evangelism. Both of these are good and essential. But the training the sheep need most of all is, **Following Jesus 101**. The foundation for this curriculum is the **Sermon on the Mount**.

Following the dispensational pack may bring man's approval. But, for those who want to be great in God's sight, and have the highest positions in the Kingdom to come, the top priority must be living

and teaching this Sermon, and the rest of Jesus' teaching. Here's what Jesus said about teaching this sermon, and Jesus' commandments.

Matthew 5

*19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: **but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.***

Believers also need to be taught how to interpret the Scriptures themselves. The proper use of the dispensational principle is essential. The average church member has no clue how to determine if a passage directly applies to him. This is especially apparent in the Gospels. This condition exists partly because Bible teachers vary dramatically on their extent of dispensationalism. Church members are told this passage does or doesn't apply to them based on that teacher's personal view. Most do not understand why. They are almost never given the biblical criterion for making their own determinations. Consequently, many abandon personal study and rely solely on Church leaders for spiritual discernment and nourishment. This is a sad situation because it returns Evangelical Christianity back to a pre-Reformation condition, making the laity entirely dependent on the clergy, a human authority. The average believer can never mature in his understanding of the Word unless he has the biblical criterion, and can make his own judgments. The primary job of pastors, elders, and teachers, is equipping the saints.

Ephesians 4

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-- Christ--

No doubt many dispensationalists will reject this key to proper biblical exegesis. Why? Not because Scripture can be cited to prove it is incorrect. Rather, they can see the implications regarding the Olivet Discourse. Much of the structure of present day dispensationalism gives the much needed license to "disqualify" the Olivet Discourse from "Church doctrine." If the instruction given to the disciples in this discourse was intended for all Christians, "*even unto the end of the age,*" then the pretribulation rapture position needs serious reevaluation.

The unvarnished truth is this. Refusal to teach Christians to observe all of Jesus' instruction to the disciples is refusal to obey the Great Commission. Many dispensationalists, while trying to steer clear of the Olivet Discourse for eschatological reasons, in doing so, have deprived Christians of the very teaching that will make them strong and able to endure severe testing. That teaching is contained in the "commandments of Jesus," the Sermon on the Mount. That oversight can still be corrected, but the time is very, very, short.



Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

Pauline Authorship of Hebrews

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The authorship of Hebrews is important to several contemporary issues of theology, particularly regarding the "eternal security" debate, as well as the "Law/Grace" debate instigated by the modern Hebrew Roots movement. The early Church considered this Epistle to be Paul's. But, modern Evangelical scholarship often denies this, usually because of theological reservations.

PRIMARY ARGUMENTS AGAINST PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

The arguments against Pauline authorship concern two main points. First, the following verse is said to rule out Paul.

Heb 2:3

*3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and **was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,***
(NKJ)

The objection to Pauline authorship is that the writer seems to speak as though his knowledge is second-hand. Paul would not have spoken in this way, since He was also sent by Jesus, when He appeared to him on the Damascus road. And Paul was given special revelation by the Spirit.

However, Paul did not sit under the teaching of Jesus Christ in person, as the other 11 Apostles had. According to Acts 15 and Gal. 2:1-9, Paul's mission was to the Gentiles, and Peter retained the title of "Apostle of the circumcision" (Jews). It was the other Apostles in Jerusalem who were seen as the spiritual authority for the Jewish believers, since they had been taught personally by Jesus. Paul carried no authority over the Jewish believers. When he went up to Jerusalem, Paul always submitted himself to the leadership of the Apostles and elders regarding the Jerusalem church (Acts 21:18-26). Even when Paul confronted the Judaizers who threatened his ministry among the Gentiles, Paul appealed to the Apostles and elders in the Jerusalem church to rein in the Messianic "Judaizers" who were creating the problem (Acts 15). Paul always respected the other Apostles, and let them handle the Jewish believers as they saw fit. He did not interfere or assert himself while on their turf. However, when Peter came to Antioch and did not act according to the truth of the Gospel, Paul confronted him publicly, because Peter was on Paul's turf (Gal. 2:11-15). It is not that difficult to see that Paul was merely acting in character here, and acknowledging the fact that the Jewish believers, to whom he was writing, owed their allegiance to the 11 Apostles. These men were the conduit for the proclamation of the Gospel to them, not Paul. When it came to the Jews hearing the Gospel, and thousands of them being saved, Paul really had no part in that aspect of the development of the early Church, nor in their being disciplined in the Faith. It would simply not have been proper for Paul to include himself in those who confirmed the message of Christ to the Jewish believers. Paul wrote, "*how shall we (the Jewish believers) escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and **was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.***"

The second objection is based on the writing style of the book of Hebrews, which differs from Paul's other Epistles. While it is true that Paul's other Epistles display a more crude form of Greek, and Hebrews is very polished and eloquent Greek, Paul rarely wrote his own Epistles. In fact, the only one he actually wrote himself was Galatians.

Paul had an eyesight problem, which was most likely his "thorn in the flesh" that he referred to in 2 Corinthians. Paul almost always had a companion with him. Paul usually dictated his Epistles, which were transcribed by a companion. You can see this in many of the closing remarks of his Epistles. For example:

Rom 16:22

22 I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.

(KJV)

However, for some reason, Paul wrote the entire book of Galatians himself, perhaps so that the Galatians would understand that he was very serious, and that the Epistle was not a forgery.

Gal 6:11

11 See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!

(NKJ)

The original manuscript of Galatians was written in very large print, because of Paul's extremely poor eyesight.

Gal 4:13-16

13 You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.

14 And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

15 What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

(NKJ)

That different people wrote the different Epistles of Paul for him, explains the differences in writing style. Luke was Paul's companion on his journeys according to Acts. And the Greek style of Hebrews is indistinguishable from Luke's other works, his Gospel and Acts.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

Paul indicated that there were some forged epistles in circulation, which were attributed to Paul, yet were not written by him. Most likely, they were written by some of the Judaizers who were constantly at loggerheads with Paul.

II Thess 2:2

*2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report **or letter supposed to have come from us**, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.*

(NIV)

Because of Paul's infirmity, and because it was not difficult for someone to claim a forgery was genuine because he used a variety of scribes, Paul's Epistles were "password protected." Paul let it be known that in EVERY epistle that was genuinely from him, he would write in his own handwriting (using the large letters) something along these lines, "grace to you." Paul's Gospel was all about grace. And he signed each letter with a note to the readers, about the grace of God to them. In the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote the last two verses in his own unique handwriting:

II Thess 3:17-18

17 The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.

*18 **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.***

(NKJ)

Every Epistle of Paul's contains this closing blessing, written in his own handwriting. Here are all fourteen:

Rom 16:20

20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

(KJV)

1 Cor 16:23

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

(KJV)

2 Cor 13:14

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

(KJV)

Gal 6:18

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

(KJV)

Eph 6:24

24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

(KJV)

Phil 4:23

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

(KJV)

Col 4:18

18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

(KJV)

1 Thess 5:28

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

(KJV)

II Thess 3:18

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

(KJV)

1 Tim 6:21

21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

(KJV)

2 Tim 4:22

22 The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

(KJV)

Titus 3:15

*15 All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.
(KJV)*

Philemon 1:25

*25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.
(KJV)*

Heb 13:25

*25 Grace be with you all. Amen.
(KJV)*

With this well known signature of Paul's, I can assure you, no other orthodox writer in the early Church would have infringed on Paul's signature statement. If you look at the other epistles by James, Peter, John, and Jude, none of them have this statement.

During Paul's lifetime, he oversaw the care of the churches from Italy to Asia Minor. However, after Paul's death, and prior to his being imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos, John was handed over the care of the churches of Asia Minor, that were the result of Paul's missionary activity. It is no surprise then, that long after Paul's death, when John delivered the seven letters and the book of Revelation to these seven churches, that he ended with a salute to Paul.

Rev 22:20-21

*20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.
(KJV)*

John really took up Paul's mission after his death in Rome, and became the "Apostle to the Gentiles."

There are other indications of Pauline authorship in Hebrews as well. The theology is most definitely "Pauline," as Hebrews is the companion book to Galatians, only written to the Messianic believers rather than to Gentiles. It is beyond the scope of this article to do an extensive comparison. However, one example regarding the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old Covenant should suffice.

Gal 4:19-5:4

*19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,
20 how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!
21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says?
22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.
23 His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.
24 These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent **two covenants**. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.
25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.
26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.
27 For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who*

has a husband."

28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

29 At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.

30 But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."

31 Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

(NIV)

Heb 8:6-13

*6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as **the covenant** of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.*

*7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that **first covenant**, no place would have been sought for another.*

*8 But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.*

9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

11 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

*13 **By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete;** and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.*

(NIV)

Many of the churches Paul started contained some Jewish believers too. Some people have the idea that Paul started exclusively Gentile churches. But, if you follow Luke's account in Acts, some of them actually had a core group of charter members who were Jews of the Diaspora. For example, the church in Ephesus was started as a split from the synagogue (Acts 18:19-21 & Acts 19:1-20). The original members of the Ephesian church were Jews and Jewish proselytes (Gentiles who had formerly converted to Judaism). Likewise, the church in Antioch was mixed also. Those mixed churches had already been followers of Paul's Gospel teaching. Hebrews was written primarily to the Jews who had lived in Judea, many of whom were on the run because of the persecution from the unbelieving Jewish leadership.

Heb 10:32-35

32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:

33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;

34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods,

knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.
35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.
 (NKJ)

This is a reference to Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, and imprisonment in Caesarea (a few miles west of Jerusalem) prior to his appealing to Caesar, and being sent to Rome (where he was when he wrote this Epistle). Paul had Messianic friends in Caesarea, whom he visited on his way to Jerusalem.

Acts 21:8-15

8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.
9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.
10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.
11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.
12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.
13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.
14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.
15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.
 (KJV)

After arriving in Jerusalem, Paul was arrested at the instigation of the unbelieving Jews, put in prison, and eventually shipped back to Caesarea to be held in prison (Acts 23:23ff). Paul spent two years in the Roman jail at Caesarea, while the Jewish believers ministered to his needs.

Acts 24:23-27

*23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, **and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.***
24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.
25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.
26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.
*27 But **after two years** Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.*
 (KJV)

This is what Paul referenced when writing to the Jewish brethren in Hebrews. The unbelieving Jews in Judea were at that time persecuting the Messianic believers. Yet, they ministered to Paul from their own means, while he was in the Roman prison. Thus he writes to them, "*for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.*"

Also, note that Paul mentioned his companion, Timothy.

Heb 13:23-25

23 Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.
24 Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

25 Grace be with you all. Amen.
(NKJ)

Paul was writing from "Italy" (Paul was in prison in Rome for 2 years at this time, having been sent there from Caesarea because of his appealing to Caesar {Acts 28}).

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE OF PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

Church tradition, from the earliest days, has classified Hebrews as Paul's. In fact, in the first few centuries, manuscripts of New Testament books were not bound all together. Often, each book was a separate scroll. But, sometimes they were bound together in sections. This was the case with the four Gospels and Acts, being bound together. And it was also the case with Paul's fourteen Epistles including Hebrews. Also some of the Early Church Fathers made reference to Paul's fourteen epistles.

Here is an example, written in the second century by Clement of Alexandria, commenting on the "style" of writing. Luke was Paul's companion on his missionary journeys. Clement argues that Luke's style of Greek writing (from Acts) is evident in Hebrews, which he attributes to Paul.

"As Luke also may be recognized by the style, both to have composed the Acts of the Apostles, and to have translated Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews." [Clement, Fragments from the Latin of Cassiodorus, I]

Eusebius, the fourth century Christian historian, had quite a bit to say about the authorship of Hebrews which he gleaned from earlier writers.

"But it is highly probable that the works of the ancients, which he says they had, were the Gospels and the writings of the apostles, and probably some expositions of the ancient prophets, such as are contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in many others of Paul's Epistles." [Eusebius, Book II, ch. XVII].

"Paul's fourteen epistles are well known and undisputed. It is not indeed right to overlook the fact that some have rejected the Epistle to the Hebrews, saying that it is disputed by the church of Rome, on the ground that it was not written by Paul. But what has been said concerning this epistle by those who lived before our time I shall quote in the proper place." [Eusebius, Book III, ch. III]

Referring to Clement of Rome, Paul's acquaintance (Phil. 4:3) who wrote one of his own epistles (I Clement), Eusebius wrote the following: *"In this epistle he gives many thoughts drawn from the Epistle to the Hebrews, and also quotes verbally some of its expressions, thus showing most plainly that it is not a recent production. Wherefore it has seemed reasonable to reckon it with the other writings of the apostle. For as Paul had written to the Hebrews in his native tongue, some say that the evangelist Luke, others that this Clement himself, translated the epistle."* [Eusebius, Book III, ch. XXXVIII]

Clement was in Rome at the time of Paul's imprisonment. He also wrote his Epistle to the Corinthians (I Clement) after Paul's death, and quoted from Hebrews. Eusebius' conclusion is that Hebrews was known to Clement in the mid-first century, so it can be traced back to Rome about Paul's time. He concludes that it is not a more recent epistle, as the detractors claimed.

Speaking of Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius wrote; *"He says that the Epistle to the Hebrews is the work of Paul, and that it was written to the Hebrews in the Hebrew language; but that Luke translated it carefully and published it for the Greeks, and hence the same style of expression is found in this epistle and in the Acts. But he says that the words, Paul the Apostle, were probably not prefixed, because, in sending it to the Hebrews, who were prejudiced and suspicious of him, he*

wisely did not wish to repel them at the very beginning by giving his name. Farther on he says: "But now, as the blessed presbyter said, since the Lord being the apostle of the Almighty, was sent to the Hebrews, Paul, as sent to the Gentiles, on account of his modesty did not subscribe himself an apostle of the Hebrews, through respect for the Lord, and because being a herald and apostle of the Gentiles he wrote to the Hebrews out of his superabundance." [Eusebius, book VI, ch. XIV]

"In addition he makes the following statements in regard to the Epistle to the Hebrews in his Homilies upon it: "That the verbal style of the epistle entitled 'To the Hebrews,' is not rude like the language of the apostle, who acknowledged himself 'rude in speech,' that is, in expression; but that its diction is purer Greek, any one who has the power to discern differences of phraseology will acknowledge. Moreover, that the thoughts of the epistle are admirable, and not inferior to the acknowledged apostolic writings, any one who carefully examines the apostolic text will admit." Farther on he adds: "If I gave my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are those of the apostle, but the diction and phraseology are those of some one who remembered the apostolic teachings, and wrote down at his leisure what had been said by his teacher. Therefore if any church holds that this epistle is by Paul, let it be commended for this. For not without reason have the ancients handed it down as Paul's. But who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows. The statement of some who have gone before us is that Clement, bishop of the Romans, wrote the epistle, and of others that Luke, the author of the Gospel and the Acts, wrote it." But let this suffice on these matters." [Eusebius, Book VI, ch. XXVI]

In summary, it is clear that the orthodox Christians of the early Church recognized the Epistle to the Hebrews as Paul's genuine work. The most common tradition was that Luke, Paul's companion, transcribed the book for him into Greek. Some thought Clement of Rome did the transcription. Some claimed that Paul wrote the original in the Hebrew tongue, and that Luke translated it into Greek. As Eusebius says, only God knows who the scribe was. Regardless, the consensus of the earliest testimonies is definitely that the Epistle is genuinely Paul's.



Progressive Dispensationalism In Depth

The Future of Dispensationalism

An Answer to Dr. John Master (Philadelphia Bible University)

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Dr. John Master, of Philadelphia Bible University and a *traditional dispensationalist*, has given a very honest and refreshing assessment of the current debate between traditional and progressive dispensationalists. Master's treatment of the subject can be read at the following link, <http://www.etsjets.org/meetings/2002/future-of.PDF>. I say "refreshing" because when you scan the internet for information on progressive dispensationalism, you find a plethora of articles denouncing PD by traditional dispensationalists. One quickly gets the impression reading some of them that dispensationalists are quite afraid of this development within their system, and are seeking to squash it at all costs.

There are few clear and balanced expositions of progressive dispensationalism on the internet. PFRS seems to be the lone exception. A fair treatment of PD by the other side is virtually non-existent. In most of the articles written by traditional dispensationalists denouncing PD, the attempt seems to be to scare the reader away from PD by linking it to amillennialism. At the very least, these articles portray PD as teetering on the ledge of that scary "slippery slope" that leads to a-mill. The chief culprits in this scheme are Zola Levitt and his theological staff, and other members of the Pre-Trib Research Center, such as Thomas Ice and Mal Couch.

In this environment, Master's honest assessment of the current situation is refreshing. In this article, I would like to engage Dr. Master's major points. In particular, I would like to take up his challenge to progressive dispensationalists to address certain issues that he feels are problematic for our system.

Master has indeed put his finger on the biggest problem within his own camp, traditional dispensationalism. And that is the problem of the New Covenant prophesied to Israel (Jer. 31), yet fulfilled (at least partially) in the present dispensation. Before I attempt to answer his challenge, I believe we should first consider his attempt at answering the problem of the New Covenant in traditional dispensationalism. This problem will be the undoing of traditional dispensationalism, with its dualistic programs for Israel and the Church.

The Key Problem for Traditional Dispensationalism Remains

In his attempt to ease the problem for his side, Master claims Hebrews 8 does not actually state that the New Covenant has already superseded the Old (Mosaic) Covenant. He presents the novel idea that the New Covenant prophecy of Jeremiah itself (Jer. 31:31-34), when it was made through Jeremiah, made the Mosaic Covenant "obsolete" at that time, in a theoretical or prophetic sense. In other words, the writer of Hebrews was not claiming that **in his day** the coming of the New Covenant had made the Mosaic Covenant "old." Rather, Jeremiah's prophesying of the coming of the New Covenant is what made the Mosaic Covenant "old" in the sense that Jeremiah prophesied of its eventual demise. Master writes, *"But does Hebrews teach the New covenant has replaced the Mosaic covenant and Christ now functions in heaven as the Melchizedekian high priest? I do not think Hebrews teaches this. If Hebrews did teach the present functioning of the New covenant, the book would be contradicting itself. First and most obviously, Hebrews 8:13 simply does not say the Mosaic covenant has been replaced by the New covenant. What it explicitly says is that, when the Lord spoke through Jeremiah about the New covenant, at the moment of the announcement of the*

New covenant's replacing it, the Mosaic covenant became "obsolete" (pepalai,wken)."

I must admit that this is a pretty imaginative attempt at resolving the dilemma presented by the New Covenant in Hebrews 8. But it does nothing to elevate the same problem in several other passages, such as Jesus' reference to His *"blood of the New Covenant"* at the Last Supper, or Paul's claim to being a *"minister of the New Covenant"* to the Gentiles (2 Cor. 3:6).

One thing is for sure. Dr. Master has definitely overstated his case. While the grammar of Hebrews 8:13 might permit his view, it does not require it as Master claims. Master writes, *"What it explicitly says is that, when the Lord spoke through Jeremiah about the New covenant, at the moment of the announcement of the New covenant's replacing it, the Mosaic covenant became 'obsolete'."* Does the text explicitly say this? No it does not. The NKJV reads, *"In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete."* Literally from the Greek this verse says, *"in saying 'new,' He has made obsolete the old..."* or *"by saying 'new,' he has made obsolete the old..."*. This construction — the preposition *"en"* followed by the articular infinitive — can have one of two meanings in this verse, according to Greek scholar, Daniel B. Wallace. It can refer to contemporaneous time (as Master takes it), or to *means*, that is, **the way in which the action is accomplished**.¹ While Master's interpretation is a possibility, it is by no means a certainty. It is just as grammatically correct to see this clause as referring to means. The former covenant was made "old" BY his calling this covenant "new." This interpretation is strongly supported by the context, as we shall show. Hence, the proper translation is not *"when he said, 'new'..."* as Master seems to think (referring to contemporaneous time with Jeremiah). Rather, *"by saying 'new,' he has made obsolete the old."* In other words, the writer of Hebrews was explaining that the use of the word "new" in the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31 is what guarantees the Mosaic Covenant's obsolescence. When the writer of Hebrews continues by saying, *"He **has made** the first obsolete,"* he used the perfect tense. That means a completed action in the past with continuing results to the present. The Mosaic Covenant was already obsolete when Hebrews was written, but not in Jeremiah's day. It was made obsolete by the coming of the New Covenant through Christ. If Master's interpretation of the clause is correct, then the Old Covenant actually became obsolete in Jeremiah's day. Why then do all the prophets following Jeremiah constantly exhort Israel and Judah to follow the Mosaic covenant (eg. Mal. 4:4)?

The proof that Master's interpretation is in error comes from the context. Master has failed to notice the context which clearly names Christ as the current administrator of the New Covenant at the time of the writing of Hebrews. The quote of Jeremiah 31 contained in Hebrews 8 was presented to support the writer's point, that Christ had **already** inaugurated this *"better covenant,"* and was currently its "minister." *"But now **He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.** For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah'— ..."* (Heb 8:6-8 NKJV). Notice the verb *"has,"* underlined above, which is a perfect indicative verb. Again, the perfect tense indicates a completed act with continuing results. So, Christ had already obtained a *"more excellent ministry"* than Moses' when Hebrews was written. Notice the verb *"is"* underlined above. This verb is present indicative, and indicates the present continuous status of Christ as the mediator of this *"better covenant."* Finally, notice the verb *"was"* underlined above. This is also perfect indicative, completed in the past with continuing results. In short, the *"better covenant"* had already been established, and the results were continuing when the author of Hebrews penned this text. There is no question that the *"better covenant"* in verse 6 is the *"New Covenant,"* because the writer immediately quoted Jeremiah 31 in support of his argument that Jesus was currently the mediator of this *"better covenant,"* which had already been established on better promises. Master simply cannot postpone the New Covenant until the Millennium without violating the context.

Master points out that the Mosaic Covenant seems to have been present in the writer's day, since he spoke of the sacrifices, priestly offices, using the present tense. That is true only because the Temple was still standing, and the Jewish priesthood was still offering sacrifices in Jerusalem when this book was written prior to AD70. But, the fact that unbelieving Jews did not understand the

Mosaic Covenant was obsolete, and consequently continued to offer animal sacrifices, does not in any sense establish the idea that the New Covenant had not yet come. The writer of Hebrews seems to anticipate the prophecy of Jesus regarding the imminent destruction of the Temple and priesthood with the words, *"about to vanish away."* What is abundantly clear from this passage is that the New Covenant had already been established, that Jesus was its current administrator, and that all remnants of the Mosaic Covenant were about to disappear with the impending destruction of the Temple that Jesus so clearly prophesied (Luke 21:5-6).

In addition, Dr. Master seems to have overlooked the fact that the prophecy of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31 is quoted again in chapter 10. *"And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,' then He adds, 'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.'* Now **where there IS remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way** which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh," (Heb 10:11-20 NKJ).

The words in blue above are direct quotes of Jeremiah 31, regarding the New Covenant. The writer of Hebrews clearly taught that the sacrifices of the Old Covenant were made obsolete by the once-for-all offering of the body of Christ. It was through this offering, not the animal sacrifices, that we are *"perfected forever"* (permanently) as opposed to the animal sacrifices that could never take away sin. The writer then said that the Holy Spirit witnesses this to us, and proceeded to again quote the same prophecy of Jeremiah regarding the New Covenant that he quoted previously in chapter 8. He interpreted the clause from Jeremiah, *"their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more,"* as referring specifically to the redemption that we now have on account of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. This is clearly the realization of this part of Jeremiah's prophecy in their day by those who experienced forgiveness through Christ. Finally, the *"new"* and *"living way"* of salvation is obviously a reference to the *"new"* covenant. There is no alternative than to conclude that the writer of Hebrews fully believed the New Covenant was being realized in his own day.

We applaud Master for a valiant attempt at resolving the dilemma of the New Covenant within traditional dispensationalism. But, his attempt fares no better than the former attempt by some, claiming there are two New Covenants, one for Israel and one for the Church. It is simply untenable to deny the establishment of the New Covenant of Jer. 31 at the first coming of Christ. Unless traditional dispensationalism can resolve the New Covenant dilemma, it is doomed.

Answering Master's Challenge to Progressive Dispensationalists

The problem that Master postulates for progressive dispensationalists is in reconciling the prophecies of the Millennium, which he says indicate the presence of the Mosaic (Old) Covenant reinstated. Master thinks that such prophecies of a restored Temple and sacrificial system indicate the presence of the reinstated Mosaic Covenant in the Millennium. He thinks that this is an obstacle to progressive dispensationalism, because we claim that the realization of the OT promises come only through Christ and the New Covenant.

We are happy to address the issue for Master regarding animal sacrifices in the Millennium. However, the problem with this reasoning should be immediately apparent. If, as Master claims, the New Covenant is not in place now, and is reserved for the Millennium exclusively, and especially to the nation of Israel as distinct from the Church, how can the Mosaic Covenant be made obsolete at all? Jeremiah clearly said that the New Covenant would supersede the covenant given on Mt. Sinai. And Hebrews 8 says that the term *"new"* implies that the Mosaic Covenant's becoming obsolete. Even in Master's traditional dispensationalism, the New Covenant is predominant in the Millennium. How then can the Old Covenant continue in the Millennium even in Master's dispensationalism? If

Master puts the inauguration of the New Covenant at the beginning of the Millennium, he must also put the superseding or passing away of the Old Covenant there also. He then has the same problem that he has claimed for PDs -- how to explain the animal sacrifices in the OT prophecies of the Millennium!

The problem that Master raises is a not really problem at all. The premise of his argument is flawed. **The Mosaic Covenant will never be reinstated.** It is, and will always be, obsolete. The error that Master makes is in assuming that the presence of animal sacrifices indicates a return to the Old Covenant. Not so. In fact, if you compare the feasts and sacrifices in the Millennium prophecies, you will find that they are different than those prescribed in the Law of Moses! The Law prescribed very specific details regarding the Tabernacle. They are different regarding the Millennial Temple. The Law prescribed very explicit instructions for the priests. They are different in Ezekiel's prophecies of the Millennial Temple and priesthood. The Law prescribed very specific feasts. They are different in the Millennial prophecies. While it is true that there will be feasts similar to those prescribed by the Law, and even called by some of the same names, some of the feasts will never be celebrated again.

Under the Law of Moses, the Tabernacle (or Temple) was off limits to Gentiles. But, in the Millennium ...

Isa 56:7

*7 Even them [Gentiles] will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.
(KJV)*

Question: When in the history of the world has the Temple been a "house of prayer for ALL PEOPLE?" Answer: NEVER! One might argue that the word "people" in Isaiah 56:7 does not necessarily have to mean everyone, but could refer to all of Israel. However, we find Jesus interpreting this passage a bit differently, when he cast out the merchants from the Temple. Jesus said, *"My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves."* (Mark 11:17)

Here the word "nations" is the Greek word "ethnos" (from which we get "ethnic") which is the word normally translated "Gentiles" in the New Testament. According to Jesus, Isaiah's prophecy predicted a future time when the physical Temple would be a place of prayer for ALL NATIONS [Gentiles]. This is a prophecy of the Millennium, as Zechariah 14 describes, where all nations will come to keep the festivals. This was strictly forbidden under the Old Covenant.

As to the alleged problems created with passages such as Heb. 10, where Christ's atonement is *"once for all,"* and there is no need of further sacrifice for sins, one must recognize that not all sacrifices were "atonement" sacrifices. Technically, the atonement sacrifice was done only once a year, on the *"Day of Atonement,"* the most holy day of the year under the Old Covenant. On the 10th of Tishri, the high priest took the blood and entered into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled the Ark of the Covenant. It is the "Day of Atonement" that Hebrews has in view when referring to Christ's atonement being *"once for all."* It is not feasts like Passover, or Pentecost, or Tabernacles. The description of the event is clearly stated in Hebrews, and fits only the *"Day of Atonement."*

Heb 9:22-28

22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

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

*25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, **as the high priest entereth into the holy place***

every year with blood of others:

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

(KJV)

It is clear, by the reference to the priest entering the Temple once a year with blood, that this passage is speaking of the "Day of Atonement."

The Feast of Tabernacles [Zech 14] and the Passover [Ezekiel 45] will be celebrated in the Millennium. But NOT the *Day of Atonement*. Notice all the Festivals that will be celebrated in the Millennium in the following passage. And notice the absence of *Pentecost*, *Feast of Trumpets*, and the *Day of Atonement*.

Ezek 45:21-25

21 **In the first month**, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have **the passover, a feast of seven days**; unleavened bread shall be eaten.

22 And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock for a sin offering.

23 And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the LORD, seven bullocks and seven rams without blemish daily the seven days; and a kid of the goats daily for a sin offering.

24 And he shall prepare a meat offering of an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and an hin of oil for an ephah.

25 **In the seventh month**, in the fifteenth day of the month, shall he do the like **in the feast of the seven days**, according to the sin offering, according to the burnt offering, and according to the meat offering, and according to the oil.

(KJV)

The "Passover" was a one day feast that began the seven day "Feast of Unleavened Bread" (Lev. 23). So, in the above passage, since the "Passover" continues for 7 days, it is clear that the entire Passover/Unleavened Bread/Firstfruits festivals are being kept. However, what is not mentioned is Pentecost, which was 50 days after the Sunday (Firstfruits) following Passover. Also, of the feasts of the 7th month, Trumpets (Tishri 1), the Day of Atonement (Tishri 10), and the Feast of Tabernacles (Tishri 15-21), only the feast of Tabernacles is mentioned. Christ fulfilled the "Day of Atonement," and His once for all atonement makes this feast obsolete. Jeremiah makes it clear that the "Day of Atonement" will NOT be celebrated in the Millennium.

Jer 3:14-17

14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

16 And it shall come to pass, **when ye be multiplied and increased in the land**, in those days, saith the LORD, **they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.**

17 At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and **all the nations shall be gathered unto it**, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

(KJV)

The "ark of the covenant" was THE icon of the Mosaic system. It was the most holy item in all of Judaism, and contained the original 10 commandments (Law). It was only "visited" once a year by the High Priest, when he sprinkled the blood on it, making ATONEMENT for the people. The rest of

the time, it simply sat there in the Holy of Holies behind the veil never seeing the light of day. When Jeremiah wrote *"neither shall that be done any more,"* he was saying that the High Priest entering the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement [Tishri 10] will not be done any more. Then he tells us why! Because, in place of the *"ark of the Covenant,"* **the Lord's Throne will be there!** In other words, in OT times, the *"ark of the Covenant"* was TEMPORARY and a SUBSTITUTE for the physical presence of the Lord on His Throne in His Holy Temple! God has been on His Throne in the Heavenly Temple, as described in Revelation. And the Temple on earth was just a copy or representation of the Temple of God in Heaven (Heb. 8:5). The *"ark of the Covenant"* was the representation of the Throne of God. The priest going into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the ark was a symbol of Christ's entering the Temple in Heaven with His own blood!

Heb 9:12

*12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.
(KJV)*

Isn't it great how all this fits together so nicely! In the Millennium, the priests will not be restricted from entering the Temple except once a year, as they were under the Law of Moses! The Throne of the Lord will be in the Holy place, and the veil will be OPENED! People, including Gentiles, will have full access to the Lord on His Throne! They will come to Jerusalem to worship, and bring their offerings to the Lord.

The sacrifices offered will NOT be atonement for sin. Christ took care of that once and for all. However, there will be many sacrifices as offerings of praise, and memorials. Actually, this is what the Passover was, a memorial of God's deliverance from Egypt, as well as a prophecy of the crucifixion. And the Feast of Tabernacles was a memorial of the trek through the wilderness, as well as a prophecy of the Millennium! These Festivals will be grand feasts, in memorial of what God has done for us, just as we now keep the "Lord's supper" as both a memorial of the crucifixion, AND a prophecy of the Millennial Kingdom, when we will sit down and dine with Jesus Himself.

Luke 22:15-20

*15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:
16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, **until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.**
17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:
18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, **until the kingdom of God shall come.**
19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.
20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.
(KJV)*

You can see both the memorial aspect of the Lord's supper here as well as the prophetic aspect. All of the Jewish Festivals were the same way. And, once we are on the other side of the second coming of Jesus Christ, what was "prophetic" will then be "memorial!"

It seems to me that all of the sacrifices mentioned in relation to Ezekiel's Temple would have to be commemorative, looking back to what has already been accomplished, in the same way we celebrate the crucifixion with bread and wine.

Some might object that any sacrifices of any kind would be blasphemous. But, what were the sacrifices to begin with? Did the the OT "atonement" sacrifices actually atone for sins in the first place? The writer of Hebrews says no! They were simply a reminder of Israel's need of a Savior!

Heb 10:1-4

*1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, **can***

never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

*3 **But in those sacrifices there IS a remembrance again made of sins every year.***

*4 **For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.***
(KJV)

His point is NOT that the sacrifices can *no longer* atone for sin, once Christ died. His point is clearly that they **never could** atone for sin in the first place! If they could, then there would have been no requirement for it to be done every year. So, even in OT times, the sacrifices were never intended to actually make atonement, but to be a reminder to Israel of their sins on a yearly basis. The sacrifices all pointed forward to Christ. The problem for Israel was that they attached too much meaning to the sacrifices, and failed to realizing their PROPHETIC significance. So, they expected that there was some merit in the blood of "*bulls and goats*" that cleansed their sins. Consequently, they rejected the only real atonement for sin.

If the animal sacrifices were never actually "atonement" for sins, and were prophetic in nature, then what is really the problem with a sacrifice that is offered as a memorial of the fulfillment of this prophetic type? Nothing!

Is it a sin to observe the Passover now, to kill a lamb, and eat it with your family remembering God's deliverance from Egypt? Of course not! But, when one recognizes the prophetic aspect of the passover, and how it points to Christ, and one celebrates the Passover in faith, and in worship of Christ, it's meaning is full.

Those who argue that such things are blasphemous on the grounds that Christ died once for all should apply the same principle to the Lord's Supper! Does not celebrating using wine and bread do the same thing? Yes it does! It is symbolism pointing to Christ! Did not Jesus Himself say He would observe Passover with His disciples in the Kingdom?

Luke 22:15-16

15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

(KJV)

There is no problem here for progressive dispensationalists, because the Law of Moses will never be reinstated. Rather, in the Millennium, some feasts will be observed by the Gentiles as reminders of what Christ has done for us, just as we now use the bread and wine for the same purpose.

The Future of Dispensationalism

This article was written as a response to Master's thinking on where the current debate is headed. One thing is for sure. Traditional dispensationalism is losing adherents at a rapid rate. Many conservative seminaries are no longer strictly holding this position. Progressive dispensationalism is very quickly replacing traditional dispensationalism. Sure, there are some hold-outs, who think that traditional dispensationalism is orthodoxy itself, and will defend it with their dying breath. But, the younger generation is not so locked into tradition. They can see the glaring problems in this system, and are gravitating toward the system that has resolved these issues without giving up on premillennialism.

Even many amillennialists, who formerly were dispensationalists, are switching back to premillennialism because of progressive dispensationalism's resolving the problems within dispensationalism. This author has heard from several. It was these problems that drove many former dispensationalists over to the Covenant Theology / amillennial camp in the first place. But, that camp has its own problems, particularly with the way it handles most prophecy using allegory.

As we stated in the article on the dangers of excessive dispensationalism, the reason for propping up this dying system is the precious pre-tribulation rapture. Just look at who is making the most noise about progressive dispensationalism. It is the members of the **Pre-Trib Research Center**. Traditional dispensationalism was constructed to prop up pre-tribulationism. And without the dualistic thinking (the alleged dichotomy between God's program for Israel and the Church) of traditional dispensationalism, pre-tribulationism is surely going to fall by the wayside. There is no passage of Scripture that directly teaches a pre-tribulation rapture. It is based solely on inferences founded in this dualistic premise. As traditional dispensationalism crumbles, so too will pre-tribulationism. The question is, what will take its place?

There are two systems that are growing rapidly among Evangelical Christianity. The first is Progressive Dispensationalism, which takes Scripture at face value. This system is a return to the theology of the earliest Christians, as found in the writings of primitive Christianity. The other system is preterism, which is the path to apostasy. Preterism is swallowing up many churches today, and leading them into apostasy. Why? Because the pastors and members of these churches are ill prepared to answer the problems of traditional dispensationalism and amillennialism. Augustine's amillennialism, and the Covenant Theology that goes along with it, has set the stage for preterism to overtake the weak. Why? Because of the allegorical methodology of amillennialism is employed even more consistently by preterists. Sadly, it is to the point of denying even the resurrection of the body which is our Christian hope. The hope of the Church is replaced with mystical nonsense.

So, what does the future hold for Evangelical Christianity? It holds two things: A return by some to the primitive Faith, and the slide by the rest into apostasy. The "conservatives" will be progressive dispensationalists (premill), *"looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing"*. The liberals will be preterists -- (you already have all the prophecies fulfilled in some mystical fashion now. Christ is not coming back to earth). Traditional dispensationalism is going by the wayside. And so is futurist amillennialism.

Notes:

1. Wallace, Daniel B., Greek Grammar, Beyond the Basics, pp. 595-6



Eschatology of the Post-Apostolic Church

By Tim Warner - Copyright © December 2000

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In our series of articles titled, [The Rapture is After the Tribulation](#), we outlined the biblical basis for post-tribulationism. **Our basic thesis was that Jesus' teaching to His Apostles-in-training, with its post-trib rapture, formed the foundation for the eschatology of the early Church.** In contrast to this, the pre-trib theory claims that Paul taught a new eschatology featuring a pre-trib rapture which was quite different from Jesus' (Jewish) teaching.

The eschatology of the Early Church (after the deaths of the Apostles) was the direct result of the labor of the Apostles. One big advantage the Early Christians had over us is 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, where Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers about the "Restrainer," who was holding back the revelation of Antichrist. Paul wrote, *"remember ye not, that when I was with you I told you these things. And now ye know what withholdeth..."* [v. 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. For example, below we have quoted Irenaeus and Hippolytus rather extensively. Both of these men dealt with eschatology extensively, and both had a chain of linkage to the Apostle John who wrote Revelation. John personally discipled 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 discipled 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 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 even 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 **teachers** than to test their **students**! If our theory is correct, that a uniform rapture view can be traced from Jesus through the Epistles and Revelation, then we would expect to find the same continuity in the writings of the post-apostolic Church. On the other hand, if pre-tribbers are correct in their theory, that Paul was given a new prophetic scenario for the Church, we would expect the post-apostolic Church (especially Gentiles to whom Paul was sent) to embrace this alleged pre-trib scheme, and to distinguish their

eschatology from what Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse. **If the post-apostolic Christians display the kind of post-trib expectancy consistent with Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse, then pre-tribbers 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. Most of the writers understood the Millennium as the literal reign of Christ and the saints on earth for 1,000 years after the second coming. But, those who favored allegorical interpretation (spiritualizing the Millennium) thought the 70th week (but not the tribulation) was already fulfilled. These were exclusively North African writers, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Julius Africanus (all of which were connected with the heretical Alexandrian school). Tertullian, also of North Africa (Carthage), thought the 70th week was past. Yet, like the orthodox writers, he still believed in a future tribulation and Antichrist, and a literal Millennium.

However, despite the 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 post-tribulationists, seeing only one future coming of Christ after the tribulation.

We do NOT claim independent authority for any Christian literature outside the Bible. Some of the writers we refer to carry greater weight than others, depending on their level of orthodoxy, and their linkage 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 post-trib thesis, and ignored those that oppose us. The writings of the early Christians consistently support post-tribulationism, and give absolutely no hint of pre-tribulationism.

IMMINENCE or EXPECTANCY?

One of the key elements of pre-trib thinking is the idea that Jesus could come at any moment, and no intervening prophetic events need occur prior to Jesus' coming. Some pre-trib authors have claimed the early Christians believed in the imminency of Jesus' coming. **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 "imminency."

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." [Irenaeus: Against Heresies, Book V, XXX]

[Click for more quotes showing non-imminency \(Non-Java Window\).](#)

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." [Dialog with Trypho, CX]

[Click here for more quotes regarding post-trib \(Non-Java Window\).](#)

FUTURIST or HISTORICIST?

The early Christians **did not** believe they were in the tribulation, as is claimed by some. They 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 had been 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 held a literal "futurist" view of Revelation, just as pre-tribbers do today, minus the pre-trib 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." [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 27,28]

[Click here for more quotes on the future 70th week \(Non-Java Window\).](#)

Some pre-trib authors have implied that the reason the early Christians did not teach pre-tribulationism is because they were not as theologically sophisticated as modern scholars. They had not developed their doctrinal positions enough to realize a pre-trib 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 pre-tribulationism was "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 generations? The whole concept of evolving theology is absolutely antibiblical. 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 a 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 post-trib argument against pre-tribulationism 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 post-trib, 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 pre-tribulationism 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 pre-millennial, futurist, and post-tribulational.



History of Pre-Trib Development

By Tim Warner - Copyright © December 2000

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NOTE: If your browser does not support Java, use the "no Java" ([NJ](#)) links.

The story of the development of pre-tribulationism is a tangled one. From its inception in the early 1800s, there has been a deliberate attempt to cover up its origins. This has been perpetrated along two lines of 'revisionism.' One was to hide the real origin of pre-tribulationism in 19th century Scotland, and attribute it to [John Nelson Darby \(NJ\)](#), and the **Plymouth Brethren**. The other has been a recent attempt to selectively quote and misrepresent ancient Christian documents to make it appear early Christians were pre-trib. The purpose of this article is to document a timeline of the major events in the development of this relatively new prophetic viewpoint.

THE EARLY CHURCH

In our article, [Eschatology of the Early Church](#), we demonstrated the fact that the early Church was unquestionably "post-tribulational," seeing a single future coming of Christ to rescue the Church from Antichrist, judge the wicked, and set up His earthly Kingdom. They were also "futurists," seeing the events of Revelation as being fulfilled within a short period of seven years at the end of this age.

THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

From the rise of Roman Catholicism (4th century), the predominant view was a-millennial. The Church not only allegorized the Old Testament prophecies of the Millennial Kingdom, but also began to allegorize the tribulation. Yet, they remained post-trib, seeing only a single future coming of Christ.

THE REFORMATION CHURCH

During and after the Protestant Reformation (16th century), Protestant Christians held to what is called "**Historicism**," a view of prophecy that considers the events of Revelation as occurring all throughout the Church's history. This was accomplished by employing the "year-day" theory — that the 1260, 1290, & 1335 days mentioned in Daniel and Revelation should be interpreted as years. It was common for Protestants to identify the Roman Catholic Church with Mystery Babylon, and the papacy with the Antichrist. Since historicists considered the tribulation as encompassing most of the Church age, and viewed themselves as being in the tribulation, they were necessarily post-tribulationists. This view lent itself to a flurry of date-setting in the first half of the 19th century, where the 1260, 1290, & 1335 days (years) were calculated from the Roman Church's rise to supreme power under the Roman Emperors, until the second coming.

RETURN TO PRE-MILLENNIALISM

Morgan Edwards

Morgan Edwards was a Baptist minister in Pennsylvania in the mid-late 1700s. As a teenager and seminary student, Morgan wrote a hypothetical essay as part of his seminary training. Morgan was assigned the task, by his tutor, to write an essay on the Millennium using literal interpretation. In Morgan's hypothetical scenario, he separated the rapture from the second coming by at least 3.5 years. His work seems to be a mixture of "futurism" and "historicism." And, Morgan contradicted himself and made many obvious errors. Yet, his work appears to be the very first time the rapture was seen as a separate coming of Christ. Many years later (1788), Morgan published his essay in a

book. While Morgan Edwards is sometimes cited as a pre-tribulationist, his work indicates that he did not wish to be seen as a "literalist;" he was content with the typical "historicist" view of the times; and that his work was hypothetical. Furthermore, there is no apparent connection between Morgan Edwards' essay and modern pre-tribulationism. And Morgan's other works do not display pre-trib thinking. We must look elsewhere for the origins of modern pre-tribulationism. For those interested in an in-depth analysis of Morgan Edwards' essay, see our article [Morgan Edwards & the Pre-Trib Rapture](#).

Father Manuel de Lacunza

Fr. Manuel de Lacunza was a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest, born in Chili in 1731, and sent to Spain at the young age of 15 to become a Jesuit priest. When the Jesuits were expelled from Spain in 1767, Fr. de Lacunza moved to Italy. In 1790, he wrote a book on prophecy, called ***The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty***, which was published in Spain in 1812. Fr. de Lacunza wrote under the pen name, *Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra (a converted Jew)*, allegedly to avoid detection since his book ended up on Rome's banned books list.

Fr. de Lacunza's book promoted a return to the literal interpretation of prophecy, and the primitive "futurist" view of Revelation. He rejected the "year-day" theory of the historicists. Consequently, he saw a personal Antichrist and future tribulation of 1260 days, followed by the coming of the Lord. He did not espouse a pre-trib rapture, as has been claimed.

EDWARD IRVING

In the 1820s, [Edward Irving \(NJ\)](#), pastored a Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) congregation in London. Irving became aware of Father de Lacunza's book, and was so impressed with it, he took it upon himself to translate it into English, adding a "preliminary discourse" of his own. Irving's English translation was published in 1827. Some of Irving's early prophetic views can be discerned from his "preliminary discourse," including, surprisingly, all the key elements of **dispensationalism** that later showed up in Darby's writings. Irving, in his "preliminary discourse," indicated that he had been teaching these things to his congregation beginning Christmas 1825, years before Darby is alleged to have arrived at his dispensational ideas [1]. [Click here to read excerpts from Irving's preliminary discourse \(NJ\)](#).

Irving had been preaching that God would restore Apostles and prophets to the Church, and a great Pentecostal outpouring would come just before the soon return of Jesus Christ. Right on schedule, rumors of healings, tongues, visions, and other manifestations began circulating in Port Glasgow, Scotland, from the home of James and George MacDonald, and their sister Margaret. People came from England, Ireland, and parts of Scotland to observe the supernatural manifestations in the "prayer meetings" held by the MacDonalds.

The "revival" soon spread to Irving's church, with "tongues" and other "manifestations" breaking out, especially among the women. Due to the strange goings on in Irving's church, and his heretical views on the person of Christ, Irving was eventually defrocked by the Church of Scotland, and moved his congregation to a rented hall, forming the **Catholic Apostolic Church**. (Irving taught that Jesus had a fallen sinful nature and only kept from sinning by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is similar to the teachings of some modern Charismatics, who see Jesus as the "proto-type Christian"). Not only were prophetic revelations and other alleged miracles occurring in Irving's congregation, but such "revelations" seemed to focus on end-time prophecy concerning the coming of the Lord.

February - June, 1830

Out of the spectacle of alleged latter-day Holy Spirit outpouring in Scotland and England, and the eschatological influence of de Lacunza's futurist/dispensationalism, emerged the very first documented evidence of a pre-tribulation rapture. This was first articulated in the form of a letter written by **Margaret MacDonald**, sister of James and George MacDonald of Port Glasgow. In March or April of 1830, after being ill and bed-ridden for about 18 months, Margaret claimed to have seen

a series of visions of the coming of the Lord. She wrote down these visions and sent a copy to Edward Irving. A month later (June), [Irving claimed in a private letter \(NJ\)](#), that Margaret's visions had a huge impact on him. *"the substance of Mary Campbell's and Margaret MacDonald's visions or revelations, given in their papers, carry to me a spiritual conviction and a spiritual reproof which I cannot express."*

The outstanding feature of Margaret's visions was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on a elite group within the Church, combined with a secret rapture **before the revealing of the Antichrist**. She saw only these "Spirit filled" Christians "taken" to be with the Lord, while the rest of the Church without this experience would be left to be purged in the tribulation. [Click here to read Margaret's letter describing her vision \(NJ\)](#).

September, 1830

The official quarterly publication of the Irvingites, ***"The Morning Watch,"*** had promoted a post-trib coming exclusively through mid-1830. But, the September 1830 issue featured part two of an article by "Fidus" describing the theory that the seven letters in Revelation actually describe seven consecutive "Church ages." In this article, "Fidus" clearly articulated the new idea of a partial pre-trib rapture. "Fidus" saw the Philadelphian church being raptured prior to the tribulation, and the Laodicean church representing the less fortunate Christians. [Click here to read the "Fidus" article \(NJ\)](#). This article in ***The Morning Watch*** is the first (known) publication of a pre-tribulation rapture in Great Britain, several years before Darby mentioned a pre-trib rapture.

June, 1831

In the June issue of ***The Morning Watch***, Edward Irving made crystal clear his pre-trib teaching. The biblical basis of the Spirit-filled Church being raptured before the tribulation was the catching up of the "man-child" in Revelation 12. Irving argued that the body of Christ has been *"united to Him by regeneration of the Holy Ghost, 'born of God, sons of God,' (Rev. ii. 27; xii. 5). And therefore we with him are called Christ (1 Cor. xii. 12)."* Irving went on to say that, *"with this key [that the mention of 'Christ' includes Spirit-filled believers] the Old Testament prophecies which speak of Christ must be interpreted, ... and especially those prophecies which speak of the pregnant woman: to all which an explicit key is given to us in the xiith chapter of Revelation; where, though the child is spoken of as one (ver. 5), it is also described as many (ver. 11), who overcame the acuser; and when that number is accomplished, there are still a remnant of her seed, whom the dragon doth persecute and seek to destroy (ver. 17). This two-fold company -- the one gathered before, and the other after the travailing woman is cast out into the wilderness, ... -- do together constitute the New Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb, which cometh down from heaven."* (The Morning Watch, June, 1831, pp. 301-302).

19th CENTURY INDEPENDENT WITNESSES CONFIRM MacDONALD/IRVINGITE ORIGIN The Morning Watch (1832)

An anonymous writer, in the December 1832 (p. 249) issue of *The Morning Watch*, likely referred to Margaret MacDonald's letters (and probably her friend Mary Campbell & Emily Cardale of London) with the following words; *"The Spirit of God has caused several young women, in different parts of Great Britain, to condense into a few broken sentences more and deeper theology than ever Vaughan, Chalmers, or Irving uttered in their longest sermons; and therefore more than all the rest of the Evangelical pulpits ever put forth in the whole course of their existence."*

Robert Baxter (1833)

British Lawyer, Robert Baxter, was an early member of the Irvingites. Baxter had previously been post-trib, but eventually adopted the pre-trib rapture views of Irving. He was involved with the supernatural manifestations, even giving his own prophecies. He later became disillusioned with the whole movement, and abandoned Irvingism (and pre-tribulationism). Upon his departure, he wrote an expose of Irvingism, called ["Narrative of Facts, Characterizing the Supernatural Manifestations in Members of Mr. Irving's Congregation" \(1833\) \(NJ\)](#). In this book, Baxter spoke of Irving's early pre-trib teachings. *"An opinion had been advanced in some of Mr. Irving's writings, that before the*

second coming of Christ, and before the setting in upon the world of the day of vengeance, emphatically so called in the Scriptures, the saints would be caught up to heaven like Enoch and Elijah; and would be thus saved from the destruction of this world, as Noah was saved in the ark, and Lot was saved from Sodom." Baxter wrote that the coming of the Lord was the main topic of the prophetic utterances in Irving's congregation. Looking back, he thought they had all been deceived by lying spirits pretending to be the Holy Ghost.

Robert Norton (1861)

Robert Norton was the author of *"The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets; In the Catholic Apostolic Church"* (1861). Norton took a favorable view of the Irvingite movement, writing in the preface that his book was offered *"as proofs or illustrations of its heavenly origin and character."* [Norton credited Margaret MacDonald \(NJ\)](#) as the first to proclaim the "new doctrine" of a pre-trib rapture, which was picked up by Edward Irving.

Samuel P. Tregelles (1855/1864)

Samuel P. Tregelles was the most eminent Plymouth Brethren scholar of the 19th century. After Darby borrowed and modified the pre-trib concept from the Irvingites, Tregelles openly opposed Darby's emphatic pre-trib stance. In an 1855 article in *The Christian Annotator*, Tregelles wrote that the true Christian hope is the final *"advent"* and *"not some secret advent, or secret rapture to the Lord, as Judaizers supposed might be the case..."* [2]. Nine years later, Tregelles published *"The Hope of Christ's Second Coming."* Here he identified the "Judaizers" who first taught the pre-trib view. *"The theory of a secret coming...first brought forward...an utterance in Mr. Irving's Church...about the year 1832"* [3]. A later Plymouth Brethren writer, William Kelly, also identified the Irvingites as "Judaizers." He defined "Judaizing" as Christians adopting "Jewish elements." Kelly added, *"nowhere is this so patent as in Irvingism"* [4].

JOHN NELSON DARBY & THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN

The Irish preacher, [John Nelson Darby \(NJ\)](#), one of the founders of the Plymouth Brethren, wrote [his first prophecy paper \(NJ\)](#) in 1829 [5]. In this paper, Darby argued that unfulfilled Old Testament prophecy concerning the restoration of Israel should be applied to the Church. He also placed the Church on earth until the Revelation 19 coming at Armageddon. While he may have hinted at some dispensational ideas, such ideas were already fully developed in Irving's 1826 "preliminary discourse." Furthermore, on pages 6-10 & 19-21, Darby referred to Irving, de Lacunza, *The Morning Watch*, and even quoted some of Irving's works, including his "preliminary discourse!" So, while dispensationalism may have been evolving in Darby's own mind, clearly, these ideas were not original with him! He was reading them in Irving's and de Lacunza's works!

In 1830, Darby was still defending "historicism" against "futurism" three months after the clear pre-trib "Fidus" article appeared in *The Morning Watch*. In the December 1830 issue of *The Christian Herald*, Darby published an article entitled, ["On 'Days' Signifying 'Years' in Prophetic Language" \(NJ\)](#) [6]. Darby defended the standard "historicist" view, that the 1260 day tribulation meant 1260 years. Consequently, he saw the tribulation as largely past, and could not possibly have been expecting a pre-trib rapture, which requires a "futurist" viewpoint.

In 1830, J. N. Darby also visited the MacDonald's in Port Glasgow, and observed the "manifestations" in their prayer meetings, as Darby later recalled. Darby described the sequence of events — who prayed, who spoke in tongues, etc. [7]. But, while he noted Margaret's speaking, he failed to mention the subject of her prophesying. However, John Cardale, who was also present, wrote that Margaret *"commenced also speaking ... gave testimony to the judgments coming on the earth; but also directed the church to the coming of the Lord as her hope of deliverance,"* and was heard speaking in a loud voice *"denouncing the coming judgments."* [8]. Therefore, we can conclude that Darby was fully aware that the "pre-tribulation rapture" was a subject of the prophecies among the Irvingite Charismatics. It was nine more years before Darby clearly espoused a pre-trib rapture in his published works.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have tried to be fair in this short article, attempting to avoid over-reaching the facts or drawing unwarranted conclusions. We should put to rest the rumor that the pre-trib rapture originated in an utterance of "tongues" in Irving's church. While, it appears that such utterances of prophetic revelation were common in Irving's church, the secret pre-trib rapture was first seen by Margaret MacDonald in her "visions," months before she spoke in tongues. It was published in the September 1830 issue of *The Morning Watch*, and only afterwards became the subject of the "prophetic utterances" in Irving's church. It is clear that Darby was fully aware of the goings on among the MacDonalds and Irvingites, as well as de Lacunza's and Irving's "dispensationalism." Darby cannot rightly be credited with either dispensationalism or pre-tribulationism.

This is not to imply that Darby's pre-trib development owes its existence exclusively to MacDonald, de Lacunza, or Irving. The evidence supports a connection between these, and that Darby was influenced (perhaps strongly) by the Irvingites. There may very well have been others who influenced Darby, too.

The Irvingite pre-trib (gathering of the elite) rapture was not as much the result of the outworkings of Irving's dispensational leanings, but rather grew out of alleged gifts of prophecy among Scottish / English Charismania. Darby seems to have given the whole theory a facelift, and fine-tuned a theological system whereby a full pre-trib rapture could be sold to the public, who would naturally be skeptical of the excesses of the Irvingites. So, while Darby did not originate the pre-trib rapture idea, he gave it some respectability. As it turns out, Darby became its greatest salesman.

My thanks to Dave MacPherson, whose years of research turned up the original works quoted in this article, and who provided me with extensive photocopies of the source material.

For more information on the Irvingite movement, see ["Irvingite Gifts" by Benjamin B. Warfield, 1918](#)

NOTES:

1. See: Dave MacPherson, *The Rapture Plot*, p. 94
2. Tregelles, Samuel P., *Premillennial Advent* (The Christian Annotator, June 16, 1855), p. 190.
3. Tregelles, Samuel P., *The Hope of Christ's Second Coming* (Ambassadors for Christ, n.d. 1864), pp. 34,35.
4. Kelly, William, *The Catholic Apostolic Body, or Irvingites* (The Bible Treasury, Dec. 1890), p. 191.
5. Darby, J. N., *Reflections* (1829), Prophetic No. 1, pp. 1-31.
6. Darby, J. N., *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Prophetic No. 1*, p. 40.
7. Darby, J. N., *The Irrationalism of Infidelity* (London: 1853), pp. 283-285.
8. Cardale, John B., *On the Extraordinary Manifestations in Port Glasgow* (The Morning Watch, Dec. 1830) p. 870, 871, 873.



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Morgan Edwards and the Pre-Trib Rapture

By Tim Warner - Copyright © January 2001

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It is a well know fact that John N. Darby is responsible for the spread of the modern theory of pre-tribulationism. However, this does not mean Darby originated this idea, only that he popularized it.

In our article entitled, "[*The History of Pre-Trib Development*](#)," we have given hard evidence that:

- a) Edward Irving taught all of the essentials of dispensationalism in 1825
- b) the Irvingites taught a secret rapture in 1830
- c) Darby was exposed to both Irving's "dispensationalism" and the secret rapture ideas (from Margaret MacDonald's visions and articles appearing in Irving's quarterly, *The Morning Watch*), long before he embraced either dispensationalism or pre-tribulationism.

Pre-tribbers in the past have been content to trace the origins of pre-tribulationism to Darby. However, with the research of Dave MacPherson exposing the pre-trib connection to the Irvingites, with their heresies, false prophecies, and failed date setting, modern pre-tribbers have been frantically trying to come up with "pre-Irving" evidence of pre-tribulationism to deflect the stigma of "Irvingism." The search for earlier pre-trib evidence has not been totally unsuccessful. A 1788 book by Baptist Minister, Morgan Edwards, displays a very crude form of pre-tribulationism.

The appearance of pre-tribulationism relatively late in Church history substantially weakens the probability that it was actually taught by the Apostles. Whether Morgan Edwards (1788) or Edward Irving (1830) was the first to publish this theory is inconsequential, both being removed from Apostolic times by more than seventeen centuries. The fact is, there is no trace of pre-tribulationism in the early Church, or prior to the Reformation. This fact is devastating to pre-trib.

However, the problem of a late date for pre-tribulationism is bad enough without the connection to the Irvingites, with their weird goings-on. Such bizarre origins casts serious doubt on its viability as something engineered by the Holy Ghost! So, pre-tribbers have felt compelled to distance themselves and their secret rapture as far from Irving as possible! By successfully showing that Morgan Edwards wrote of a pre-trib rapture before Irving, they at least are saved the embarrassment of Irvingite Charismania, Margaret MacDonald's visions, and association with heresy. ... Or are they?

Even the discovery of Morgan Edwards' book does not eliminate the ghost of Edward Irving for pre-tribbers. There is a clear traceable history back-tracking the development of modern pre-tribulationism through dispensational seminaries (like Dallas Seminary), the Scofield Bible, early pre-trib prophecy conferences, the Plymouth Brethren, J. N. Darby, and finally the Irvingites, and even Margaret MacDonald's visions. However, despite the earlier date (32 years earlier), there is no apparent connection between Morgan Edwards' (1788) "Millennium" book and modern pre-tribulationism. So, if Morgan Edwards' theory did not take hold in some group, or if his book did not fall into the hands of Irving or Darby, then he might as well have developed his theory on Mars! Because, it had no impact at all on modern pre-trib development.

[Thomas Ice](#), in his article on [Morgan Edwards](#), claimed that pre-tribulationism is derived from the literal interpretation of the Bible, and points to Edwards and Darby as evidence of this, claiming they **independently** arrived at their conclusions from a study of the Scriptures. But, as we have already

shown, Darby's ideas were borrowed from the Irvingites. He had plenty of outside help in forming his ideas, besides a literal interpretation of the Scripture. Contemporaries of Darby, like Samuel Tregelles, held to literalism and pre-millennialism, but strongly opposed the pre-trib rapture theory. Furthermore, while Darby did interpret Old Testament prophecy related to Israel literally, he relied **exclusively** on symbolism and inference (NOT LITERALISM) to justify the pre-trib rapture [1], seeing it allegorically in the "man-child" who was caught up to heaven in Rev. 12! [2]. Even modern pre-tribbers, who publicly pride themselves on their "literalism," are also forced to resort to symbolism, finding support in John's being caught up to heaven in Rev. 4, or the 24 elders as representing the raptured Church in heaven. So much for "literalism!" Ice's implication that literalism automatically leads to pre-tribulationism is simply nonsense! Certainly it leads to pre-millennialism. But, there is nothing in the Bible that, when taken literally, indicates a pre-trib rapture! It is excessive **dispensationalism** that leads to "pre-tribulationism," not consistent literalism.

Pre-tribbers may be disappointed to discover that while Morgan Edwards' conclusions regarding the Millennium were based on literal interpretation, he gave no (literal) biblical reason for separating the rapture from the second coming. His only justification for this separation was his belief that it provided a necessary interval for the judgment of believers.

Morgan Edwards' Book

In 1788, Morgan Edwards published two essays that he had written while a student, titled, *"Two Academical Exercises on Subjects Bearing the Following Titles; Millennium, Last-Novelties."* The "Millennium" section dealt with the tribulation, second coming, and Millennium. The "Last-Novelties" section dealt with the end of the Millennium, New Heaven and New Earth, etc.

Before we proceed, we need to understand that Morgan's academic essays are not well developed eschatological treatise. As a young (20-24 years old) seminary student, he was assigned the task of writing an essay on the Millennium by his professor. While it is apparent that young Morgan had a pretty good handle on Scripture, he made several glaring errors and contradictions, as we shall see. Three things should be noted before examining Edward's essay.

1. Morgan Edwards apparently did not rely on other works. In fact, while he occasionally referred to others, he wrote in opposition to the historicist / a-millennialism of the times. Not once did he refer to another writer to support his rapture theory (although he did appeal to the Church Fathers in support of his literal Millennium). That he considered his theory "new" and novel, is clear from the verse he chose to put on the title page:

*"May we know what **this new doctrine**, whereof thou speakest, is? for thou bringest **certain strange things** to our ears: We would know, therefore, what these things mean. ACTS xvii. 19. 20"*

2. The opening statement in his essay indicates his total lack of confidence in his new theory. And, it shows that Morgan was simply writing his essay following the instruction of his professor, to use the LITERAL method in all cases except where that would lead to absurd conclusions. This was contrary to the accepted Protestant way of treating prophecy at the time. Morgan also stated that his following the literal hermeneutic was strictly for this exercise alone, and that he did not wish to be seen as a literalist. In other words, this whole essay was **hypothetical!**

*"And is it come to my lot to treat of the Millennium, or Christ's thousand years reign on earth? Thousand pities, sir, that you had not allotted the task to one of these older and abler students! But, since it is your pleasure, I will do my possible: and **in the attempt will work by a rule you have often recommended, viz. "to take the scriptures in a literal sense, except when that leads to contradiction or absurdity."** I need say no more to inform you, sir, that **I wish to be understood as a minister of the letter only while I treat of the said Millennium.** Very able*

*men have already handled the subject in a mystical, or allegorical, or spiritual way: and **could I rest satisfied with their sentiments**, and deliver them perhaps with applause; **as that would show my reading**, - and at the same time, free a novice from the affectation of singularity and taking too much upon him, **like another son of Levi**."*

His statement, "I wish to be understood as a minister of the letter **only** while I treat of the said Millennium," indicates his apparent discomfort with the literal method he was required to use by his professor! Historicists of his day saw literal interpretation as a "Jewish" thing. Paul wrote that "*the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life*." It was common for a-millennialists to use this verse to justify "spiritual" interpretation. Hence, Morgan equated literal interpretation with "*the sons of Levi*." Later in the discourse, after apparently months of studying his topic, young Morgan seemed to be much more comfortable with "literalism."

3. Morgan's professor's reaction to his work is very telling. Following is the closing statement of his "Millennium" essay, followed by his professor's assessment.

Morgan: "*I wonder, Sir, if your patience be not exhausted with the length, and perhaps, **nonsense** of my sermon?*"

Professor: "*You finished your discourse with a supposition that the length and **nonsense** of it had tried my patience. If you used lightness you are to blame. But as I hope you are always in earnest when you study the things of God, I have to assure you that **the novelty and ingenuity of your attempt have entertained me not a little**. And when you are more master of time than at present, I advise you to study your subject closely, and **you will see cause to alter some parts of your plan, and correct errors of others**. - You also dropped a hint or two touching the New Heaven and the New Earth, which sounded a little strange. Let us hear what you have to say on those subjects, when it comes your turn to appear in that desk again.*"

Morgan shortly thereafter was assigned the task of developing the "last-novelties" (New Heaven & New Earth & New Jerusalem), which he did using the same "literal" method. This is the second part of the book. When Morgan published his book containing both works, the publisher added a note immediately after the professor's remarks quoted above, (on the last page of the first "Millennium" section).

*"Let me tell thee, gentle reader, that the tutor's advice was taken by the composer of the Millennium; and that it has undergone several alterations and corrections since the protograph was exhibited in the said desk. Let me tell thee further, that the other advice, or rather command of the tutor was attended to; and a discourse delivered in the same desk, on the New Heaven and New Earth. A copy of which follows under the title, Last Novelties. **And if thou like it half as well as I do, thou wilt not begrudge the eleven-penny bit it cost thee.**"*

It seems Morgan's work was published partly for its novelty and entertainment value rather than its weight as a theological discourse! And, one is not disappointed with the second section, where Morgan speculated that the lake of fire is in the moon, and that all the other planets in our solar system are inhabited!

"Nor will the moon be useless though it will have no sea to govern; because, (as many suppose) the lake of fire and brimstone is in the moon:" [p. 51]

"What sense is there in taking the sons of one globe into another, when all globes have their own inhabitants?" [p. 52]

"I cannot help felicitating the present age on account of the knowledge they have of those heavens, by means of modern astronomy: ... and partly because it enables us to form a comparison between our world and the other worlds in our sight; and consequently between ourselves and our neighbors,

who inhabit those worlds." [p. 53]

Below are what we consider the most important quotations from Edwards' essay on the Millennium. Several things are worth noting: Among them, on pages 16 & 21 Morgan equated the "elect" in Matt. 24 with the Jewish nation. He seems rather confused on the length of the tribulation. On pages 19-23 he laid out a scenario where the two witnesses prophesy for 42 months, followed by their being killed, followed by Antichrist's reigning for 42 more months, making a total of seven years. On page 21 he put the rapture 42 months BEFORE the witnesses are killed, making it a full seven years between the rapture and Millennium. However, on pages 7 & 53 he claimed that the rapture is 3.5 years before the Millennium. Another observation worth noting is his use of literal "days" rather than the common "year-day" theory of the historicists. On page 20, he saw the Antichrist's being revealed in the future, although he saw the "mystery of iniquity" historically, as largely the papacy, with the "Antichrist" being the last pope. But in a footnote on the same page, he seems to contradict himself, calling the Antichrist (the Man of Sin) a "succession of persons," implying a "historicist" perspective. He wrote that the two witnesses will be literal men, Elijah and John the Apostle, seemingly foreseeing a "futurist" scheme. But, on page 14, he viewed the Ottoman/Turkish empire, that was presently occupying the Holy Land, as the second Beast of Revelation 13. This may imply a "historicist" perspective. He definitely did not hold to "imminence" (according to the pre-trib definition) because he saw the 2 witnesses appearance and prophesying "out of sackcloth" prior to their 42 month stint "in sackcloth" (which he placed before the "abomination of desolation"). In his scheme, one would see the witnesses prophesying prior to the rapture. He also held to the "six day theory," where the Millennium would begin 6000 years from creation. According to Morgan's calculations given on pages 19,33,34, the Millennium would begin in 1996 (far from being imminent in his day). Unlike modern pre-tribbers, he saw the seals, trumpets, and vials, as recapping and synchronous, each series concluding with Christ's reign on earth.

Comparison	Morgan's Hypothesis	Pre-Trib Pre-Mill	Historicist A-Mill	Post-Trib Pre-Mill
Imminence	NO	YES	YES	NO
Literal "1260" Days	YES	YES	NO	YES
Revelation Sequential	NO	YES	YES/NO	NO
Separate Rapture	YES	YES	NO	NO
Future Anti-christ	YES/NO	YES	NO	YES
Matt. 24 "Elect" = Israel	YES	YES	NO	NO

While some might conclude that Morgan Edwards was the first to proclaim a pre-trib rapture (depending on how one defines the terminology), his view was a far cry from modern pre-trib. The hypothetical nature of his discourse indicates that Morgan himself was neither a pre-tribulationist, nor a futurist, but only hypothesized this scenario to humor his professor! And even in his attempt to display a literal hermeneutic, he sometimes allowed the contemporary "historicist" view to blend with his hypothetical scenario. A "historicist" cannot be pre-trib, since he views some of the tribulation as past. So, I think it is a bit of a stretch for Thomas Ice to claim Morgan Edwards as "another pre-Darby pretribulationist."

[Click here](#) for the entire text of Morgan Edwards' "Millennium" essay - transcribed by Tim Warner.

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NOTES:

1. In Darby's 1830 article, he wrote: *"First, in prophecy, when the Jewish church or nation (exclusive of the Gentile parenthesis in their history) is concerned, i.e., when the address is directly to the Jews, there we may look for a plain and direct testimony, because earthly things were the Jews' proper portion." "And on the contrary, where the address is to the Gentiles...there we may look for symbol, because earthly things were not their portion... When therefore facts are addressed to the Jewish church as a subsisting body ... I look for a plain, common-sense, literal statement.... On the other hand, as the church was a system of grace and heavenly hopes...it is...symbolized by analogous agencies."* [p. 35]. (J. N. Darby, *On Days Signifying Years in Prophetic Language*, Prophetic No. 1, The Collected writings of JND, p. 35. First appeared in *The Christian Herald* {Dec. 1830}, Dublin, Ireland)

2. J. N. Darby, *The Rapture of the Saints* (1850-65), Prop. No. 4, p. 163, *"the timeless rapture of the man-child, for the Church is one with Christ..."*; J. N. Darby, *Lectures on the Second Coming* (1865), Prop. No. 4, p. 246, *"I have no doubt that the man-child ... includes the Church as well as Christ."* J. N. Darby, Synopsis, Rev. 12 *"But Satan, as the open infidel enemy of God and God's power in Christ, sought to devour the child as soon as born, who was to have the rule of the earth from God. But the child, Christ, **and the assembly with Christ**, is caught away to God and His throne.... Christ and the assembly are all one. But the woman-the Jews, after this fly into the wilderness, where God has prepared a place for them, for the half-week. The assembly, or heavenly saints, (as Christ, note,) go up to heaven to be out of the way. The Jews, or earthly ones, are protected by providential care upon earth.... The child that is to have power, in and from heaven, is previously taken up there.... The historical course of events is now pursued, the child being supposed to be already caught up. There is war in heaven; and the devil and his angels are cast out, and have no more place there. This brings out yet more clearly the distinction of the heavenly saints and the Jewish remnant."*



Dallas Doctors' Departure Distortions

Walvoord's & Pentecost's Myth

Rumors of the Early Church's "Imminent" Departure have been Greatly Exaggerated

By Tim Warner - Copyright © January 2001

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One of the tactics used by some pre-trib authors, to offset the embarrassing dearth of pre-trib belief for the first 1700 years of Christianity, is to simply revise history! One would hope Christians (especially those in high places) would refrain from such tactics. But, alas, it is common among modern pre-tribulationists. Even the big names at Dallas Theological Seminary are no exception. We are not going to judge their motives. We are simply going to expose what has been going on. Whether these men intentionally meant to deceive, whether they were deceived themselves, or whether they were simply repeating what they had read from others, we cannot say. But the result is the same. They have grossly misrepresented historical documents in an attempt to give the impression that pre-tribulationism or its essential elements were taught in the Early Church.

Dr. John Walvoord, former president of Dallas Theological Seminary and author of several pre-trib books, has repeatedly claimed that while the early Christians were post-trib, they were not "futurists." They believed they were already in the tribulation and therefore were looking for an imminent rapture. The implication of this claim is that the early Christians were taught by the Apostles to expect the rapture at any moment. But, they were confused about the tribulation events. Thus, it is easy to discredit and dismiss their strong post-trib stance. Walvoord implied that the Apostles actually taught "pre-trib," since they passed on the idea of "imminence." And, the early Christians were simply too stupid to keep the tribulation events in the future, as they had allegedly been taught by the Apostles.

Dr. Dwight Pentecost, also of Dallas Seminary, made similar statements in his classic pre-trib textbook, *Things to Come*. Below are two quotes from Walvoord and one from Pentecost that indicate this line of reasoning.

"Unquestionably, the majority view as far as the rapture is concerned is the posttribulationist view, namely, that Christ will come for His church in connection with His second coming to the earth. This is the view advocated by the amillenarians and postmillenarians and by some premillenarians. They contend that to divide the rapture from the second coming to the earth by a period of at least seven years is to bifurcate what the Scriptures intend to be a single event.

Posttribulationists who have written on this subject usually attack the pretribulationist view, rather than support their own position. Arguments gleaned from their writings in favor of the posttribulationist position may be itemized as follows:

1. The argument from history. Posttribulationists appeal to the fact that the early church fathers were posttribulationist and conclude that, therefore, the pretribulation position is new and novel. Pretribulationists reply by noting that **modern posttribulationism with its doctrine of tribulation first and then the rapture is not what the early church**

fathers believed at all, for the early church held the any-moment view of the Lord's return, thinking erroneously that they were already in the great tribulation.

The modern form of posttribulationism which places the tribulation still future and to be followed by the rapture is in some respects more recent than pretribulationism as it is taught today." [Walvoord, *Future Work of Christ-Part I: The Coming of Christ for His Church — BibSac Vol 123 #489*] (Emphasis mine)

"[I]n the early church fathers there was no clear agreement that a specific seven year period as is indicated in Daniel 9:27 had to occur before the Lord could return. Generally speaking, the early church fathers, as well as the Protestant Reformers, tended to identify contemporary events with the events of the Great Tribulation and because of this **could look for the imminent return of Christ.**" [Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, p. 51.] (Emphasis mine)

"The Early Church lived in the light of the belief in the imminent return of Christ. Their expectation was that Christ might return at any time. Pretribulationism is the only position consistent with this doctrine of imminence. If an argument from silence be followed, the weight of evidence favors the pre-tribulation view." [Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 166]

Dr. Walvoord's claim, that "*in the early church fathers there was no clear agreement that a specific seven year period as is indicated in Daniel 9:27 had to occur before the Lord could return*" is very misleading. If he means that they were not unanimous in their agreement, well, who is today? There was a dispute in the early Church over whether the Millennial hope was literal. Those inclined toward allegorical interpretation also thought the 70th week was past. These were Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Julius Africanus. All were affiliated with the North African Alexandrian school, known for its allegorical interpretation, unorthodox views, and combining Christianity with Greek and Eastern philosophy. The other exception was Tertullian of Carthage (North Africa). While Tertullian viewed Daniel 9:27 as past, he was still a "futurist," looking for a literal "tribulation," and the persecution of the Church by Antichrist just prior to the Lord's coming. Unfortunately, Tertullian was involved in the Montanist heresy.

In the orthodox (pre-millennial) writers, there is clear agreement. Irenaeus and Hippolytus taught that the 70th week would be **the last seven years of this age** in which the two witnesses would prophesy for the first 42 months, the "abomination of desolation" being in the middle, and the Beast would persecute the Church for the last 42 months, then Christ would return (a clear "seven year" tribulation with a post-trib rapture). Other early writers, including Barnabas, Justin, Hermas, Cyprian, Lactantius, and Victorinus, did not refer to Daniel 9:27, and so no specific mention is made of the tribulation being "seven years." But it is clear that they were expecting a future tribulation at the end of the age, and a literal Antichrist who would persecute the Church. These writers saw the Antichrist's reign as 3.5 years. And the ministry of the two witnesses as also 3.5 years. This implies a seven year tribulation.

Walvoord's claim that they thought they were in the tribulation, is equally false. The early Church Fathers consistently placed the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist, and the 2 witnesses in the future. Not one believed the tribulation was in progress. Some thought that the beginning of the tribulation was imminent, expecting the Antichrist to be revealed in their lifetimes. But Walvoord completely misrepresents the Church Fathers when he says they did not understand the 70th week, or thought it was in progress.

Both Walvoord and Pentecost are wrong when they claim the Early Christians expected an "any moment" coming of Christ. The Early Church Fathers looked for intervening events to take place before Christ would return. In the following quotations we will prove decisively that the *Dallas Doctors' Departure Distortions* have no basis in fact, and totally misrepresented the writings of the Church Fathers.

We will demonstrate that the orthodox Early Church Fathers:

1. Understood the 70th week as future, and would be literally seven years
2. Understood that the tribulation events of Revelation would occur within the 70th week, just prior to Christ's coming
3. Certain intervening events must come before Antichrist would appear. Therefore they did NOT hold to the idea that Jesus' coming was 'imminent.' Rather, they expected the entire sequence of events - tribulation, Antichrist, second coming - to occur soon.

And let's not forget that this is exactly what post-trib / pre-mills teach today, and is the position of **The Last Trumpet** website. So, Walvoord's claim above, that modern post-tribbers do not hold to the same basic scenario as the Early Church Fathers, is another misrepresentation of the facts.

Irenaeus, while reproving certain Christians for too much speculation, by trying to figure out the name of Antichrist based on the Greek letters for the number 666, wrote that believers **should wait for the Roman empire to break up into ten regions ruled by ten kings, then Antichrist would be made known, and Christians could recognize him by the number 666.**

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." [Irenaeus: Against Heresies, Book V, XXX]

Irenaeus instructed believers to wait for the fulfillment of distinct prophetic events that would precede the coming of Christ. The division of the Roman Empire into ten regions, in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy, and the appearance of Antichrist, must occur before Christians could expect to see the return of Christ. This is not a belief in "imminence" by any stretch of the imagination. Nor is it a belief that they were presently in the tribulation. Here is another quote from Irenaeus.

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**, among whom the empire which now rules [the earth] **shall be** partitioned. ... 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." [Against Heresies, Book V, XXVI]

[Click here for more quotes showing non-imminency \(Non-Java Window\).](#)

Notice, Irenaeus used the future tense throughout when speaking of the tribulation events. All of these things were in the future from his perspective.

The orthodox Early Christians also had a clear understanding of the 70th week, that it consisted of the last seven years before Christ's second coming, and that it was entirely future. And, they placed the ministry of the two witnesses, as well as the Antichrist, within the 70th week.

Hippolytus:

"**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." [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 27,28]

"For when Daniel said, "I shall make my covenant for one week," **he indicated seven years; and the one half of the week is for the preaching of the prophets, and for the other half of the week — that is to say, for three years and a half — Antichrist will reign upon the earth**. And after this his kingdom and his glory shall be taken away." [Appendix to the Works of Hippolytus, XXV]

[Click here for more quotes showing a future 70th week \(Non-Java Window\).](#)

Had Dr. Walvoord simply mischaracterized the early Christians, one might suppose that he was just misinformed. But, there are also examples of his quoting excerpts from these documents, and omitting certain statements in the immediate context which show that the early Christians could not possibly have held to imminence! Robert Gundry, in his 1973 book, *The Church and the Tribulation* [p. 175], illustrated this with the following quote from the first century "Didache" [The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles].

The Didache Chapter XVI

"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 the Lord cometh." [Here Walvoord, Stanton, and Pentecost^[1], break off the quotation in an endeavor to make the passage establish a belief in imminence by the early Church] "... for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if ye be not made perfect in the last time.... then shall appear the world-deceiver as Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders.... Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and perish; but they that endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself."

1. Walvoord, *BibSac*, 111:200; Stanton, 221; Pentecost, 169.

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Grant Jeffrey's 'Apocalypse' Debacle

The 'Mac-Daddy' of Pre-Trib 'Revisionism'

By Tim Warner - Copyright © January 2001

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In his 1992 book "Apocalypse," Grant Jeffrey made the astounding claim that some Early Church writers clearly taught an imminent pre-trib rapture. He then selectively quoted several Early Church authors in an attempt to bolster his claim. For many years, post-trib authors have quoted these very same authors to illustrate that the Early Church was post-trib! Other pre-trib authors and scholars have even acknowledged that the Early Church was entirely post-trib. Grant Jeffrey is the first to my knowledge to make the outrageous claim that the Early Church Fathers taught an imminent pre-trib rapture.

Jeffrey's 'revisionism' technique was to selectively quote short excerpts that allow him to apply a pre-trib "spin," while omitting sentences in the immediate context that show belief in a post-trib rapture/resurrection. I have tried to give the man the benefit of the doubt. But, I am at a loss to explain how he could not have known he was misrepresenting these ancient witnesses. In chapter four, Jeffrey stated the following.

The Early Church's Belief in an Imminent Rapture

Some of the early Church writers wrote about the persecution of the tribulation as if the saints will be present. However, a number of early Christian commentaries suggested that the Church will be delivered supernaturally before the Great Tribulation. Some posttribulation writers declare that the hope of a pretribulation Rapture and deliverance from the Great Tribulation was never taught until the Plymouth Brethren began to emphasize this around 1820. As this chapter will show, there is a great deal of evidence to illustrate that some writers in the first few centuries of the Church believed in Christ rapturing the saints to deliver them from this coming Tribulation. The doctrine of the imminent Rapture was clearly taught in the New Testament and by some writers in the first centuries of the early Church. There was a difference of opinion within the early Church about the timing of the Rapture just as we find today. However, the hope of the imminent Rapture clearly existed in the writings of the early Church.

[Apocalypse, pp. 86,87]

The above statements by Jeffrey are dead wrong. None of the early Christian writers indicated a belief in an imminent pre-trib rapture. There is no evidence whatever of a debate in the Early Church regarding the timing of the rapture! Post-tribulationism was the only rapture view espoused by any of the writers of the Ante-Nicene period [from the Apostles until the council of Nicea in 325AD]. The only debate that developed was regarding the Millennium, and whether the blessings associated with it were to be literally understood. They believed in a future, literal 70th week, a literal Antichrist, and a single coming of Jesus after the tribulation to raise the dead saints, rapture the living saints, and destroy the Antichrist. Jeffrey boldly manipulated these authors in an attempt to portray them as "pre-tribbers!" His treatment of this issue is the most blatant pre-trib "revisionism" I have ever seen.

The Didache [1st or Early 2nd Century]

On page 87, Grant Jeffrey commented on the "Didache," an anonymous Christian document. We saw in the article on Walvoord's revisionism, that Walvoord also quoted an excerpt from this same chapter to support his "imminence" claim. Walvoord simply stopped quoting just before the part that shows Christians in the tribulation. But, Jeffrey was far more cunning, by actually quoting most of the chapter, but omitting key sentences which show the author of the Didache was not teaching a pre-trib rapture at all. The way Grant Jeffrey presents his quote, it appears to imply a pre-trib rapture. But, if you include the parts he omitted, it is quite clear that the author of the Didache was not pre-trib, but was warning Christians about their testing in the tribulation. Below is the quote from page 87 of Jeffrey's 'Apocalypse.' Following that, I have included the same quote, but with the words Jeffrey omitted re-inserted in blue type.

A Church manual from approximately A.D. 110, called the "Didache," confirms the belief of these Christians in the imminent return of Christ for believers. This was written less than fifteen years after John wrote the Revelation.

In the Didache 16, we find the following instructions. "1 Be ye watchful for your life! Let not your lamps be extinguished, nor your loins ungirded, but be ye ready! For ye know not the hour in which your Lord cometh. 2. Assemble yourselves frequently, seeking what is fitting for your souls. For the whole time of your faith will not be profitable to you, if you are not made perfect in the last time...then the world deceiver shall appear as a son of god and shall work signs and wonders... 6. And then shall the signs of the truth appear, first the sign of a rift in heaven; then the sign of the sound of a trumpet, and the thirdly, a resurrection of the dead. 7. But not of all, but as it was said, 'The Lord will come and all His saints with Him. 8. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.'..."

After warning Christians to prepare for "the hour in which your Lord cometh," the Didache said, "Then, the world-deceiver shall appear." This order of events suggests the Rapture will precede the appearance of the world-deceiver, the Antichrist.
[Apocalypse, p. 87]

In Jeffrey's truncated version of the Didache, and his analysis of it, the illusion of a secret rapture is developed from the exhortation to "watch" for the coming of the Lord (if one supposes, as Jeffrey does, that "watching" automatically implies an "any-moment" advent). Jeffrey points out that the "watching" is prior to the appearance of Antichrist, and so infers a pre-trib rapture, even though the passage never mentions a pre-trib coming. Now, here is the same quote, with the omitted words re-inserted in blue type.

*"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."

I find the first omission very interesting. Notice, the word **"for"** beginning the omitted part. When the author of the Didache wrote, "... 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** ..." he was explaining the preceding phrase, "the last time," during which Christians would be "made perfect." Obviously, he was saying that Christians will encounter what he calls "the last time." Then he gave an explanation of what he meant by "the last time." The omitted portion is a paraphrase of Matthew 24:9-15, where Jesus warned of the coming tribulation. The author of the Didache was saying that Christian's faith will be tested during "the last time," which he derived from Matthew 24's tribulation.

The second omission is just as bad because the last sentence shows that those whom the author was exhorting to "watch" will indeed encounter this period of persecution under Antichrist. "They that endure in their faith" during the persecution of Antichrist are the same ones he exhorted to be "watching" for the coming of the Lord, and who would be "made perfect in the last time" (which consists of the events of the tribulation that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24)! Also, notice in the last sentence that the author of the Didache placed the trumpet sound, and the resurrection of believers, **after** the time of Antichrist. Yet, Jeffrey thinks nothing of claiming the author of the Didache as a "pre-tribber!"

His use of the words "for ye know not the hour in which our Lord cometh" to imply an imminent pre-trib rapture is an old pre-trib trick. The author's paraphrase of Matthew 24:9-15 shows that he was following the Olivet Discourse. And this quote from which Jeffrey derives his pre-trib rapture comes from the same passage. Jesus said, "but of that day and hour knoweth no man" [Matt. 24:36]. The question is, WHAT "day or hour" was Jesus (and the Didache) referring to? The answer is found in verses 29-31, "immediately after the tribulation ... they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Jesus clearly had His POST-TRIB coming in view when He said that no one knows the "day or hour." So, when the author of the Didache quoted these words, there is no reason to assume that he meant something other than what Jesus said! Jeffrey interpreted these words of Jesus as modern pre-tribbers do, rather than in their context. By injecting the modern pre-trib concept of "any moment" imminence into this statement (which cannot possibly teach pre-trib imminence), and omitting the parts that expose his scheme, Jeffrey was able to give an illusion of a pre-trib rapture for his unsuspecting readers!

The Epistle of Barnabas [2nd Century]

In the same chapter, Jeffrey also claimed the Epistle of Barnabas teaches an imminent, pre-trib rapture. True to form, he omitted the sentences that show the writer expected Christians to go through the tribulation, giving the appearance of an "imminent" rapture. As before, the words Jeffrey omitted I have re-inserted in blue type.

This epistle clearly conveys the writers hope of the imminent return of Christ to take the saints to heaven.

"The final stumbling-block approaches, concerning which it is written, as Enoch says, '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 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.**"***

[Apocalypse, p. 92]

Notice that Grant Jeffrey omitted the part that clearly speaks of the tribulation, the ten kings, and the Antichrist. The sentence following, which Jeffrey included, is actually referring to the tribulation just described, which Jeffrey omitted. *"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..."* In context we see that Barnabas was warning Christians about withstanding the onslaught of the Antichrist, which later he calls *"the Black One."* The whole force and intended meaning of Barnabas' warning is lost because of Grant Jeffrey's omissions. His editing job leaves the impression that *"this wicked time"* meant the days they were living in. When in reality, it referred to the tribulation Barnabas had just described (but omitted by Jeffrey)! By omitting this description of the tribulation trial of the Church, Jeffrey again gives the illusion that Barnabas was indicating an imminent pre-trib rapture which they could expect at any moment. Yet, in context we see that Barnabas was doing nothing of the kind. Rather, he was exhorting the believers to be watchful, because the whole tribulation scenario could unfold soon. And like Jesus' exhortation in Matthew 24, Christians should be WATCHING for His POST-TRIB coming with their lamps trimmed! [Matt. 24:29-33 & 25:1-13].

The Shepherd of Hermas [2nd Century]

On page 90 of his book, "Apocalypse," Grant Jeffrey claimed the Shepherd of Hermas teaches a pre-trib rapture. He quoted the following passage from the Shepherd of Hermas to prove his point, and then gave his assessment.

"Thou hast escaped a great tribulation because thou hast believed and at the sight of such a huge beast hast not doubted. Go therefore and declare to the Elect of the Lord His mighty deeds and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation which is to come. If ye therefore prepare yourselves and with your whole heart turn to the Lord in repentance, then shall ye be able to escape it, if your heart is pure and blameless."

After explaining to him that *"the golden colour stands for you who have escaped from the world,"* the virgin concluded her message with, *"Now ye know the symbol of the great tribulation to come. But if ye are willing, it shall be nothing."* Despite the unusual details of this so-called vision, it clearly conveys the understanding of this early Christian writer that the faithful Church is promised a supernatural escape from the great tribulation." [Apocalypse, pg. 90]

Jeffrey's out of context quotation may fool the average unsuspecting reader. But, for those who

bother to look up and read the entire vision of Hermas, something entirely different awaits. It is quite apparent that Hermas did not mean total exemption or removal from the tribulation when he used the word "escape." Instead he meant survival, making it through the tribulation without succumbing to Satan's deception and attack, and without denying the Lord.

Consider Jeffrey's quote of Hermas in it's context. The following are excerpts from the end of the Third Vision, and the Fourth Vision. Jeffrey's quotations are in black type, and the parts he omitted I have again inserted in blue type.

[Third Vision] "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."

*[Fourth Vision] "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. ... 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. ... This then is the type of the great tribulation that is to come. If ye wish it, it will be nothing."*
[The Shepherd of Hermas, Vision III, IV]

I think it is obvious that Hermas did not teach a pre-trib rapture. Notice the beatitude, "Happy ye who endure the great tribulation that is coming on." In his vision he had to face the beast head on. Yet because of his faith, God did not allow the beast to harm him. Clearly then, to "escape" the great tribulation means emerging from it safely, not being removed prior to it.

Grant Jeffrey's use of this out-of-context quotation from the Shepherd of Hermas, to infer a pre-trib rapture, recklessly misrepresents this passage. The Shepherd of Hermas does not support a pre-trib rapture in the slightest.

Hippolytus

Grant Jeffrey briefly alluded to the writings of Hippolytus as well. Here is what he wrote in its entirety.

Hippolytus, who lived from A.D. 170 to 236, was the most brilliant of the early Church writers. Writing in his *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, (section 66) about the Rapture he quoted extensively and approvingly from Paul's writing in 1 Thessalonians 4:12: "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." He reminds his readers of the hope of Christ's imminent return. He wrote that we should be "'looking for that blessed hope and appearing of our God and Savior' when having raised the saints among us, He will rejoice with them glorifying the Father."
[Apocalypse, pg. 88]

The portion Jeffrey quoted above, in his attempt to make a pre-tribber out of Hippolytus, was the closing statement of a work which gave a great deal of information regarding the early Church's view of the rapture. It is unfortunate that Jeffrey only mentioned the closing statement. He incorrectly claimed that Hippolytus taught an "imminent" rapture. This is nowhere taught or implied in the writings of Hippolytus. Apparently, to Jeffrey, Hippolytus' quote of 1 Thessalonians four is an automatic indication that Hippolytus was pre-trib! But, this Church Father, which Jeffrey says "*was the most brilliant of the early Church writers*" was as strong a post-tribber as you can find today, and made probably the clearest defense of pre-millennial/post-tribulationism you can find in all the Early Church writings! Incidentally, while Jeffrey makes his claims about this writer's being pre-trib, his quotation does not support his claim one iota. There is nothing in Hippolytus' statement or quotation of 1 Thessalonians four that indicates he believed the rapture was pre-trib! Consider a few other quotes from Hippolytus.

*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.***
[Fragments from Commentaries, II, 7]

*[I]t 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.* [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 5]

*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. [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 50]

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 Savior Jesus Christ from heaven, for whom we have looked in hope.** [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 60, 61, 64]

One of the things that really bothered me about Jeffrey's "Apocalypse" book, was his comment at the end of the section where he quoted the Church Fathers. Here is what he wrote;

Note that none of the writers quoted here suggests that the Church will experience the Great Tribulation and Mark of the Beast system of Antichrist." [pg.91].

Anybody with one good eye can see that this statement is blatantly false. The quotes above from Hippolytus, as well as many others, prove this beyond dispute. Yet, Jeffrey's books continue to sell in large numbers, and unsuspecting Christians lap up the lies of the pre-trib propaganda machine as though they were "gospel."

Cyprian [3rd Century]

Grant Jeffrey also attempts to use Cyprian's writings to bolster his claim that the Church Fathers believed in an imminent rapture. His comments, and a brief quote from Cyprian, are as follows.

Cyprian lived from A.D. 200 to 258, and wrote extensively on Christian doctrine. In his Epistle 55, chapter 7, he wrote about the belief in Christ's ability to deliver the Church from the Antichrist's tribulation. *"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."* Cyprian's declaration that Christ "is One who can deliver us from his [Antichrist's] hands" suggests the possibility of the Church being raptured before the Tribulation period. It is significant that he did not write about enduring the persecution of the Antichrist. Rather, Cyprian promised that Christ "is One who can deliver us from his hands." [Apocalypse, pg. 88]

Jeffrey's brief quote, and his analysis of Cyprian's writings, show a blatant disregard for the context

in which this passage is found. Not only does the entire passage refute Jeffrey's claims, but it proves beyond doubt that his statement; *"he did not write about enduring the persecution of the Antichrist. Rather, Cyprian promised that Christ is One who can deliver us from his hands"* is another gross misrepresentation. The *"delivering out of Antichrist's hands"* clearly **does not** mean a pre-trib rapture, but safely emerging from the time of tribulation, without denying the Lord. Consider the quote Jeffrey used, this time in it's context. As before, the parts Jeffrey quoted are in black, and the rest I have reinserted in blue. I have included Cyprian's remarks a few paragraphs before the passage in question because it clearly establishes the fact that he was speaking of the great tribulation. Please forgive the long quotation, but I think it is necessary to get the whole picture.

*"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."**...*

*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." Let us take these arms, let us fortify ourselves with these spiritual and heavenly safeguards, that **in the most evil day we may be able to withstand,** and to resist the threats of the devil: let us put on the breastplate of righteousness, that our breast may be fortified and safe against the darts of the enemy: let our feet be shod with evangelical teaching, and armed, so that when the serpent shall begin to be trodden and crushed by us, he may not be able to bite and trip us up: let us bravely bear the shield of faith, by the protection of which, whatever the enemy darts at us may be extinguished: let us take also for protection of our head the helmet of salvation, that our ears may be guarded from hearing the deadly edicts; that our eyes may be fortified, that they may not see the odious images; that our brow may be fortified, so as to keep safe the sign of God; that our mouth may be fortified, that the conquering tongue may confess Christ its Lord: let us also arm the right hand with sword of the Spirit, that it may bravely reject the deadly sacrifices; that, mindful of the Eucharist, the hand which has received the Lord's body may embrace the Lord Himself, hereafter to receive from the Lord the reward of heavenly crowns. **Oh, what and how great will that day be at its coming, beloved brethren, when the Lord shall begin to count up His people, and to recognize the deservings of each one by the inspection of His divine knowledge, to send the guilty to Gehenna, and to set on fire our persecutors with the perpetual burning of a penal fire, but to pay to us the reward of our faith and devotion!"** [The Epistles of Cyprian, LV, 1,7-10]

For the life of me, I can't understand how brother Jeffrey can get an "imminent" pre-trib rapture out of this passage. Even the short quote he provided does not suggest an imminent rapture, as Jeffrey claims. His riding roughshod over these ancient witnesses demonstrates a calloused disregard for context. The context is all about Christians being spiritually prepared to endure the tribulation.

Victorinus [3rd Century]

Grant Jeffrey also claims that Victorinus' Commentary on Revelation supports a pre-trib rapture. Jeffrey's comments, from "Apocalypse" pg. 89, are as follows;

Victorinus, bishop of Petau, lived from A.D. 240 till his martyrdom during the last great persecution in A.D. 304. In His Commentary on the Apocalypse he interpreted chapter 6 of the Revelation to promise the deliverance of the Church from the tribulation period. "'And the heaven withdrew as a scroll that is rolled up.' For the heaven to be rolled away, that is, that the Church shall be taken away. 'And the mountains and islands removed from their places; that is, that the good will be removed, seeking to avoid the persecution.'" In his comments on chapter 15, Victorinus wrote, "'And I saw another great and wonderful sign, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is completed the indignation

of God.' For the wrath of God always strikes the obstinate people with seven plagues, that is, perfectly, as it is said in Leviticus; and these shall be in the last time, when the Church shall have gone out of the midst." These comments reveal that this second century pastor also understood that the saints would be "removed" to escape the wrath of God "when the Church shall have gone out of the midst" of the coming tribulation. [Apocalypse, pg. 90,91]

Like most post-tribbers today, Victorinus did not interpret the seals, trumpets, and vials, chronologically (as pre-tribbers do). He believed they overlapped, the last of each series converging on the coming of Christ. He believed the sixth seal would occur at the end of the tribulation.

" "[A]lthough the same thing recurs in the phials [vials], still it is not said as if it occurred twice, but because what is decreed by the Lord to happen shall be once for all; for this cause it is said twice. What, therefore, He said too little in the trumpets, is here found in the phials [vials]. **We must not regard the order of what is said, because frequently the Holy Spirit, when He has traversed even to the end of the last times, returns again to the same times, and fills up what He had before failed to say. Nor must we look for order in the Apocalypse; but we must follow the meaning of those things which are prophesied.**" [Chapter 7]

The cosmic signs associated with this seal, the darkening of the sun and moon, are the same signs Jesus said would occur "*immediately after the tribulation*" [cf. Matt. 24:29 & Rev. 6:12-14]. So, when Victorinus wrote; "*the Church shall be taken away,*" at the sixth seal, he is confirming what Jesus said in Matthew 24:29-31. When the sun and moon are darkened, Jesus will gather together "His elect." But, this is clearly in a post-trib context.

Below is the context of Jeffrey's quote. The part Jeffrey quoted is in black, and the parts he omitted are again in blue.

" 12. "And I saw, when he had opened the sixth seal, there was a great earthquake." In the sixth seal, then, was a great earthquake: **this is that very last persecution.** "And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair." The sun becomes as sackcloth; that is, the brightness of doctrine will be obscured by unbelievers. "And the entire moon became as blood." **By the moon of blood is set forth the Church of the saints as pouring out her blood for Christ.** 13. "And the stars fell to the earth." **The falling of the stars are the faithful who are troubled for Christ's sake.** "Even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs." **The fig-tree, when shaken, loses its untimely figs — when men are separated from the Church by persecution.** 14. "And the heaven withdrew as a scroll that is rolled up." For the heaven to be rolled away, that is, that the Church shall be taken away. "And every mountain and the islands were moved from their places." Mountains and islands removed from their places intimate that in the last persecution all men departed from their places; that is, that the good will be removed, seeking to avoid the persecution.

[Commentary on the Apocalypse, Chapter 6]

Victorinus was using a bit of allegorical interpretation in the above passage [something that began to be widespread in the fourth century - leading to a-millennialism]. But, it is clear that he did not

expect the Church to be raptured before the tribulation. He spoke of the persecution of the Church, pouring out her blood **during the tribulation**. I wonder why Grant Jeffrey omitted this part?

The final portion Jeffrey quoted from this author, deals with the bowls of wrath, which occur at the extreme end of the tribulation, just prior to Armageddon.

" 1. "And I saw another great and wonderful sign, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is completed the indignation of God." For the wrath of God always strikes the obstinate people with seven plagues, that is, perfectly, as it is said in Leviticus; and these shall be in the last time, when the Church shall have gone out of the midst."[Commentary on the Apocalypse, Chapter 15]

Unfortunately, the ancient manuscripts of Victorinus' commentary are missing the pages that follow this comment. So, it is impossible to place this quotation in a context. But, since Victorinus is clearly speaking about the bowls of wrath, which post-tribbers believe occur at the extreme end of the tribulation, perhaps covering only the last few days or hours, his comments could not in any way imply a pre-trib rapture. At best, they could support a "pre-wrath" rapture. But even that is a bit of a stretch, because Victorinus did not interpret the seals, trumpets, and vials sequentially, as both pre-tribbers and pre-wrathers do. He viewed them as overlapping, and converging at the second coming. So, even with the above statement that seems to imply that the Church would be removed during the vials, in no way can we get a pre-trib rapture from Victorinus! I think a few other quotes from this same commentary are in order, to show Victorinus' belief that the Church will go through the tribulation.

*" "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**. [Chapter 7]*

*The woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and wearing a crown of twelve stars upon her head, and travailing in her pains, **is the ancient Church of fathers, and prophets, and saints, and apostles**" [Chapter 12]*

*Moreover, he himself shall contrive that his servants and children should receive as a mark on their foreheads, or on their right hands, the number of his name, lest any one should buy or sell them.... [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." [Chapter 13]*

*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**. [Chapter 20]*

The last quote, from chapter 20, shows that Victorinus did not interpret the Millennium literally. He apparently believed the 1,000 years spoken of in Rev. 20 meant the age in which we live. [This view is held by a-millennialists today, which was being developed about the time of Victorinus].

Nevertheless, Victorinus clearly indicated in this passage that he believed the Church would be persecuted by the Antichrist. Victorinus' words do not indicate a belief in a pre-trib rapture, as Jeffrey suggests.

On page 91, Jeffrey listed another quotation he said comes from "Lactantius' Commentary on the Apocalypse." He then proceeded to quote the very same passage he had previously attributed to "Victorinus' Commentary on the Apocalypse" on page 89! I don't know how this mistake was made, but, Lactantius did not write a commentary on Revelation. Was Jeffrey trying to make it appear that he had even more ancient "pre-trib" writers? One might suspect that this was just an editing error. But, Jeffrey made another identical major blunder, by listing the "Didache" on page 87, and his quote from it, and then on page 91, listing "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," and the very same quote again, but from a different translation! These are exactly the same document. [The word "Didache" is the Greek word for "Teaching" and is the abbreviated name for "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles"]. Jeffrey quoted both of these passages twice, both times using different names or titles, as though this added more to his pile of "pre-trib" evidence! Are these simply editing errors? Or, is there something more going on here?

What can we say in conclusion regarding all of this alleged evidence that the early Christians expected an imminent pre-trib rapture? I think it is fairly obvious, to the unbiased reader, that Grant Jeffrey has forced his own ideas into the writings of the Church Fathers. He was determined to find evidence that a pre-trib rapture was taught prior to the 19th century. Consider Jeffrey's statement in the Ice-Demy book, *When the Trumpet Sounds*.

"Over the last decade I came to the conclusion that the pretribulation rapture is taught so clearly in the New Testament that it is virtually impossible that no one ever taught this doctrine in the 18 centuries before 1830.
[When the Trumpet Sounds, pg. 108].

I don't know about you, but it looks to me like Grant Jeffrey has manufactured his own evidence. At best, we could say his work in this area is heavily biased and extremely shoddy. At worst it is downright fraudulent. I do not wish to judge his motives. We'll leave that to the Lord. But we can certainly judge his work. His use of the Early Church Fathers to support an imminent pre-trib rapture is so obviously a total fabrication, one wonders why pre-trib scholars who have no doubt read his work have remained silent. I dare say that silence is collaboration.

I encourage the reader, who is confused by all the claims and counter claims, to obtain a copy of the Ante-Nicene Fathers and read these authors for yourself. You can look up the quotes being used, and read them in their larger context. This is the only way to really get a feel for their perspective. You can download the entire collection free from [this site](#). Or, you can look up passages on-line at [this site](#).

**"You shall know the TRUTH, and the TRUTH shall make you free!" [John 8:32]
"For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." [Mark 4:22-23]**

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Pseudo-Pseudo-Ephraem

Grant Jeffrey II, the Sequel!

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Grant Jeffrey's "Mission Impossible"

Recently, Grant Jeffrey produced a translation of a sermon reportedly written by Ephraem of Syria in the fourth century. It is now heralded by other prominent pre-tribbers (including **Thomas Ice** of *The Pre-Trib Research Center*) as an "ancient pre-trib statement." This document contains a statement that Jeffrey claims is a clear reference to a pre-trib rapture. Jeffrey is demanding that post-tribulationists, in future printings of their books, recant their often stated theme, that post-tribulationism is ancient and pre-tribulationism is modern. He writes; *"A number of these [post-trib] authors will have to drastically revise the next edition of their books based on the discovery of new pretribulation rapture texts from the writings of the early church."* His conclusion is as follows.

"I believe Ephraem the Syrian's A.D. 373 manuscript, *On the Last Times, the Antichrist and the End of the World*, fully meets the challenge of Dr. William Bell and Rev. John Bray's \$500.00 challenge. This new evidence clearly refutes the dogmatic declarations of many that there is no evidence that anyone ever taught the pretribulation rapture before A.D. 1830. The biblical truth of the glorious rapture of the church prior to the Tribulation was definitely taught in the early church. As I have shared in my earlier books, the truth of the pretribulation rapture is supported by the clear insistence on the imminent return of our Lord found throughout the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers. In addition, as I pointed out in my *Apocalypse* book, the apocalyptic fourth vision of *The Shepherd of Hermas* from A.D. 110 declared that the elect will escape the Great Tribulation. This finding of the pretribulation rapture in Ephraem's writings illustrates that the biblical truth of God's blessed hope and deliverance of the saints was upheld by a remnant of the faithful from the beginning of the church until today."

[*When the Trumpet Sounds*, pg. 125]

Apparently Grant Jeffrey is quite confident he has found the smoking gun. But he also claimed that the *Didache*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Hippolytus*, *Cyprian*, and *Victorinus*, all taught an 'imminent' (pre-trib) rapture. As we demonstrated in our article [Grant Jeffrey's Apocalypse Debacle](#), all of these claims are bogus! Jeffrey has been engaged in blatant 'revisionism' of the Church Fathers. We demonstrated from these very writings that the early Church did not believe in an imminent, pre-trib rapture, and that Jeffrey manipulated the texts, by omitting key sentences that clearly show they were post-trib, in an attempt to make them appear to support 'imminence.' So far, Jeffrey has grossly overstated his evidence. It is clear, from Grant Jeffrey's own words, that he was determined to find evidence of pre-tribulationism in the early Church no matter what.

"Over the last decade I came to the conclusion that the pretribulation rapture is taught so clearly in the New Testament that it is virtually impossible that no one ever taught this doctrine in the 18 centuries before 1830."

[*When the Trumpet Sounds*, pg. 108]

Usually, someone that determined to find his "evidence" will eventually find it.

Ephraem of Syria? or Pseudo-Ephraem?

The quotation Jeffrey referred to is found in "Pseudo-Ephraem." The prefix "pseudo—" means "false" or "falsely ascribed to—." Scholars doubt this document is genuinely from the hand of Ephraem of Syria, or that it was written in the fourth century. It was most likely written much later by an anonymous author, who falsely ascribed it to Ephraem the Syrian. So, when Jeffrey wrote *"I believe Ephraem the Syrian's A.D. 373 manuscript, On the Last Times, the Antichrist and the End of the World..."*, he has already mis-represented his evidence, and demonstrated the same kind of "spin" that is evident in his other claims. This sermon was neither written by *Ephraem the Syrian* nor was it written in A.D. 373! And Jeffrey knows this! Ephraem's genuine writings, contained in the Post-Nicene Fathers collection, display no hint of pre-tribulationism. Here is the allegedly pre-trib statement that Jeffrey provides from Pseudo-Ephraem.

"For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins."

This quote, even if not genuinely from Ephraem of Syria, seems impressive on the surface. But based on Jeffrey's track record, we should approach this with some healthy skepticism, and carefully consider the entire sermon, as well as Ephraem's known writings.

The Real Ephraem of Syria

The well respected scholar, Dr. Robert H. Gundry, chairman of the Department of Religious studies at Westmont College and author of seminary textbooks and books on eschatology, has recently authored a book entitled, *First the Antichrist*. On pages 161-188, he gives several quotes from the real Ephraem of Syria which show that Ephraem believed the resurrection and translation of believers would occur after the tribulation. So, this alleged pre-trib statement, if it is indeed such, would directly contradict statements known to be genuinely from Ephraem of Syria who lived in the fourth century. (For further information regarding this aspect, see Dr. Gundry's book, [First the Antichrist](#)). Therefore, we should conclude that either the Pseudo-Ephraem sermon is not genuinely Ephraem's, or Pseudo-Ephraem did not mean to imply a pre-trib rapture, or both!

Pseudo-Ephraem's Sermon

Now, let's consider the sermon to see if it consistently supports Jeffrey's claim. (The entire sermon appears at the bottom of this article for those who wish to examine it themselves).

In the first section, the author alluded to the condition of his times, seeing the corruption of the world as indicative of the end of the age.

"Dearly beloved brothers, believe the Holy Spirit who speaks in us. We have already told you that **the end of the world is near, the consummation remains**. Has not faith withered away among mankind? How many foolish things are seen among youths, how many crimes among prelates, how many lies among priests, how many perjuries among deacons! There are evil deeds among the ministers, adulteries in the aged, wantonness in the youths—in mature women false faces, in virgins dangerous traces! In the midst of all this there are **the wars with the Persians, and we see struggles with diverse nations threatening and "kingdom rising against kingdom."** When the Roman empire begins to be consumed by the sword, **the coming of the Evil One is at hand**. It is necessary that the world come to an end at the completion of the Roman empire."

Notice the quotation from Matthew 24:7. **Also, notice what the author sees as being at hand, "the coming of the Evil One."** He anticipated that the Roman Empire was about to fall, and

supposed that upon its fall, the kingdom of Antichrist would arise. He continues;

"...In those days many will rise up against Rome; the Jewish people will be her adversaries. **There will be stirrings of nations and evil reports, pestilences, famines, and earth quakes in various places. All nations will receive captives; there will be wars and rumors of wars.** From the rising to the setting of the sun the sword will devour much. The times will be so dangerous that in fear and trembling they will not permit thought of better things, because many will be the oppressions and desolations of regions that are to come."

Note again the allusion to Matthew 24. It is becoming clear that this author was using Matthew 24 as his backdrop for the sermon. Again, we have no hint as yet of a pre-trib rapture. He continues;

"We ought to understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, what is imminent or overhanging. **Already there have been hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord, they have already been fulfilled (consummated), and there is not other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one in the completion of the Roman kingdom.** Why therefore are we occupied with worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world?"

Thus far, it appears that the author was not expecting a pre-trib rapture. He saw some of the signs Jesus gave in Matthew 24, hunger, plagues, violence among the nations, as already current and fulfilled. What he saw as "imminent" or "overhanging" was ONLY the arrival of the Antichrist, which Jesus spoke of in verse 15. Pseudo-Ephraem spoke as though Christians should expect the Antichrist's appearance at any time. *"[T]here is not other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one..."* This seems to rule out a pre-trib rapture. Had he taught a pre-trib rapture, one would expect that this would be "imminent" for the believers rather than the appearance of Antichrist. He then encouraged believers to reject their earthly cares and prepare themselves so that *"he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world."* Some might suppose that this means a rapture to heaven. However, later we will see that Pseudo-Ephraem believed Christians would be sustained in remote locations on earth (the "woman" of Rev. 12 sustained "in the wilderness") while the rest of the world reeled under the tribulation. So, with this thought in mind, our forsaking worldly cares, and making preparation to be "drawn" away from the confusion to remote places where Christ will sustain us, is a logical inference from the above statement. Pseudo-Ephraem continues;

"Believe you me, dearest brother, because the coming of the Lord is nigh, believe you me, because the end of the world is at hand, believe me, because it is the very last time. Or do you not believe unless you **see with your eyes?** See to it that this sentence be not fulfilled among you of the prophet who declares: "Woe to those who desire to see the day of the Lord!" **For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins.**"

This is the statement that Jeffrey claims clearly teaches a pre-trib rapture. But, note that no rapture, no resurrection, and no coming of the Lord is mentioned. What is said is the elect are *"taken to the Lord"* prior to the tribulation for the purpose of avoiding the "confusion." Now, such terminology could fit with a pre-trib scenario. But, it does NOT require one. If Pseudo-Ephraem believed Christians would be preserved in remote earthly places, like Elijah was fed by the Lord, like the Israelites were protected in Goshen during the plagues, and fed in the wilderness with manna, and like the prophecy of Revelation 12, where the "woman" is fed by God "in the wilderness," then

there is no reason to imagine a pre-trib rapture was meant! He continues;

"And so, brothers most dear to me, it is the eleventh hour, and the end of the world comes to the harvest, and angels, armed and prepared, hold sickles in their hands, awaiting the empire of the Lord. And we think that the earth exists with blind infidelity, arriving at its downfall early. Commotions are brought forth, wars of diverse peoples and battles and incursions of the barbarians threaten, and our regions shall be desolated, and we neither become very much afraid of the report nor of the appearance, in order that we may at least do penance; because they hurl fear at us, and we do not wish to be changed, although we at least stand in need of penance for our actions!"

True to his text, Pseudo-Ephraem alluded to the angels gathering the elect *"immediately after the tribulation"* [Matt. 24:29-31], and also seems to place this at the *"empire of the Lord"* (or Millennial Kingdom of God). He seems to be tying in the parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13, where the reapers (the angels) harvest the wheat immediately before the Kingdom of God, and after the tribulation, according to Matt. 24:29-31.

In section IV, while describing the horrors of the tribulation, our author made the following interesting statement; *"In those days people shall not be buried, **neither Christian, nor heretic, neither Jew, nor pagan, because of fear and dread there is not one who buries them; because all people, while they are fleeing, ignore them.**"* He obviously believed Christians would still be present in the tribulation, perhaps not all prepared themselves, as he exhorted earlier, and so would not be taken to the Lord for protection in remote places.

Furthermore, his comment about dead people not being buried during the tribulation is clearly a reference to Isaiah 26. And this passage also refers to the elect being preserved from the tribulation ON EARTH!

Isaiah 26:20,21	Pseudo-Ephraem
20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. 21 For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. (KJV)	"In those days people shall not be buried, neither Christian, nor heretic, neither Jew, nor pagan, because of fear and dread there is not one who buries them; because all people, while they are fleeing, ignore them."

Since Pseudo-Ephraem referred to this passage, it is very likely that he also had in mind the preservation of the elect on earth during the tribulation, as is indicated in the immediate context.

In the following quote, we see clearly that Psuedo-Ephraem believed Christians would be preserved in remote places even while the rest of the world starved and went without water.

"Then gold and silver and precious clothing or precious stones shall lie along the streets, and also even every type of pearls along the thoroughfares and streets of the cities, but there is not one who may extend the hand and take or desire them, but they consider all things as good as nothing because of the extreme lack and famine of bread, because the earth is not protected by the rains of heaven, and there will be neither dew nor moisture of the air

upon the earth. **But those who wander through the deserts, fleeing from the face of the serpent, bend their knees to God, just as lambs to the adders of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord, and while wandering in states of desertion, they eat herbs.**"

Clearly, these who flee from the "*face of the serpent*," who "*bend their knees to God*," who leave the cities, who are sustained by God as nursing lambs, and have herbs to eat, **are Christians**. These are the ones who were "*taken to the Lord*" so as not to witness the destruction of the world. And it is clear from this passage, that being "*taken to the Lord*" is NOT a rapture to heaven. It is fleeing the cities to places where the Lord will provide for their needs, as a nursing lamb depends on its mother!

Pseudo-Ephraem's eschatology is not all that different from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, who saw Christians on earth during the tribulation. They viewed the "woman" who fled into the wilderness in Revelation 12, as the Church. Pseudo-Ephraem simply made the logical deduction that the preservation in the wilderness applied to believers who prepared themselves. Notice in the following quotes, earlier writers viewed the "woman" as the Church.

Hippolytus

"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." [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 60, 61, 64]

Victorinus

"**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,... "But the woman fled into the wilderness, and there were given to her two great eagle's wings." The aid of the great eagle's wings — to wit, the gift of prophets — was given to that Catholic Church, whence in the last times a hundred and forty-four thousands of men should believe on the preaching of Elias; but, moreover, he here says that the rest of the people should be found alive on the coming of the Lord. And the Lord says in the Gospel: "Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains;" that is, as many as should be gathered together in Judea, let them go to that place which they have ready, and let them be supported there for three years and six months from the presence of the devil. "Two great wings" are the two prophets — Elias, and the prophet who shall be with him." [Commentary on the Apocalypse, 12:1,6,14]

There is every reason to believe that Pseudo-Ephraem held a similar view of Revelation 12's "woman" referring to the Church. But, Pseudo-Ephraem seems to have picked up on and emphasized the **provision and protection** for the Woman "*in the wilderness*," while earlier writers seemed to focus on the "remnant of her seed" [vs. 17] who become the targets of the Antichrist's wrath.

Revelation 12:6,14	Pseudo-Ephraem
6 And the woman fled into the wilderness , where she hath a place	"For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they

prepared of God, that **they should feed her there** a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might **fly into the wilderness**, into her place, **where she is nourished** for a time, and times, and half a time, **from the face of the serpent**.

see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins."

"But those who wander **through the deserts, fleeing from the face of the serpent**, bend their knees to God, **just as lambs to the adders of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord**, and while wandering in states of desertion, **they eat herbs**."

The phrase *"fleeing from the face of the serpent"* is a dead give-away that our author was referring to Revelation 12. And Rev. 12 certainly is not referring to a pre-trib rapture in anybody's eschatology! Pseudo-Ephraem was most likely referring to this very passage when he wrote that the elect are *"taken to the Lord"* prior to the tribulation (which he saw as 3.5 years), and *"as lambs to the adders of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord."* Our author continues:

"Then, when this inevitability has overwhelmed all people, **just and unjust, the just, so that they may be found good by their Lord**; and indeed the unjust, so that they may be damned forever with their author the Devil, and, as God beholds the human race in danger and being tossed about by the breath of the horrible dragon, he sends to them consolatory proclamation by his attendants, the prophets Enoch and Elijah, who, while not yet tasting death, are the servants for the heralding of the second coming of Christ..."

Here it is quite clear that Pseudo-Ephraem saw Christians still on earth in the tribulation, and that this is partly a test of the just as well as the unjust. Our author concludes his sermon as follows;

"And when the three and a half years have been completed, the time of the Antichrist, through which he will have seduced the world, after the resurrection of the two prophets, in the hour which the world does not know, and on the day which the enemy of son of perdition does not know, will come the sign of the Son of Man, and coming forward the Lord shall appear with great power and much majesty, with the sign of the wood of salvation going before him, and also even with all the powers of the heavens with the whole chorus of the saints, with those who bear the sign of the holy cross upon their shoulders, as the angelic trumpet precedes him, which shall sound and declare: Arise, O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his hour of judgment has come! Then Christ shall come and the enemy shall be thrown into confusion, and the Lord shall destroy him by the spirit of his mouth. And he shall be bound and shall be plunged into the abyss of everlasting fire alive with his father Satan; and all people, who do his wishes, shall perish with him forever; **but the righteous ones shall inherit everlasting life with the Lord forever and ever.**"

Note that our author was still following Matthew 24. Here he alluded to verses 29-31, where the Lord appears in great glory. Notice he placed the trumpet blast here and the resurrection of those who sleep in Jesus! Since Matthew 24 does not mention the resurrection, we cannot avoid the conclusion that our author was tying in 1 Thess. 4:13-17 (which mentions the resurrection of the *"sleeping ones"* at the trumpet blast) with the second advent *"immediately after the tribulation"* mentioned in Matt. 24:29-31. He also placed obtaining *"eternal life"* with this advent of the Lord. This would hardly be appropriate had he held to pre-tribulationism.

It seems to me that the vigorous searching for some hint of pre-tribulationism has caused Grant Jeffrey to project modern concepts into ancient quotations that the author never intended. One out-of-context quote does not establish a belief in a pre-trib rapture, especially when the context supports a post-trib resurrection of the saints, Christians present on earth in the tribulation, and believers relying on the Lord for nourishment in remote places, as nursing lambs! The mistake made

by Jeffrey (and Ice) is the assumption that "taken to the Lord" means a pre-trib rapture, while ignoring nearly everything else in this sermon that clearly indicates Pseudo-Ephraem was not pre-trib!

Pseudo-Alexander

The Pseudo-Ephraem sermon was found by Jeffrey in Paul Alexander's *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*. Both Grant Jeffrey and Thomas Ice have claimed that Paul Alexander believed Pseudo-Ephraem taught a pre-trib rapture. Here is one example.

Examining an Ancient Pre-Trib Rapture Statement

by Thomas Ice

"Finally, the Byzantine scholar Paul Alexander clearly believed that Pseudo-Ephraem was teaching what we call today a pre-trib rapture. According to Alexander, most Byzantine apocalypses were concerned with how Christians would survive the time of severe persecution by Antichrist. The normal approach given by other apocalyptic texts was a shortening of the time to three and a half years, enabling the survival of some Christians.¹⁹ Unlike those texts, this sermon has Christians being removed from the time of tribulation. Alexander observed:

'It is probably no accident that Pseudo-Ephraem does not mention the shortening of the time intervals for the Antichrist's persecution, for if prior to it the Elect are 'taken to the Lord,' i.e., participate at least in some measure in beatitude, there is no need for further mitigating action on their behalf. The Gathering of the Elect according to Pseudo-Ephraem is an alternative to the shortening of the time intervals.'²⁰"

It seems that Jeffrey and Ice not only have misrepresented Pseudo-Ephraem's sermon, but they also misrepresented the Byzantine scholar, Paul Alexander! Yes, Alexander did make a note of the fact that Pseudo-Ephraem seems to emphasize being "*taken to the Lord' i.e., participate at least in some measure in beatitude*". But, Ice and Jeffrey are forcing a pre-trib rapture into this statement and assuming that 'taken to the Lord' means a pre-trib rapture. That is simply not so! Alexander saw Pseudo-Ephraem as a post-tribulationist! He was NOT making a distinction between other post-trib writers and a pre-trib Pseudo-Ephraem, as Jeffrey and Ice would have you believe! Rather, Paul Alexander distinguished between two different forms of **preservation** of believers through the tribulation until the second coming after the tribulation in Christian apocalyptic literature. Other Byzantine writers saw the elect suffering in the tribulation, but their extinction would be prevented by the shortening of the days as per Matt. 24:22. Alexander's point was that Pseudo-Ephraem spoke of "*some measure of beatitude*" for the saints, (that is, being 'taken to the Lord' and sustained in remote places **on earth**), in accordance with Revelation 12's "woman" who fled from the face of the serpent, and was sustained by God "in the wilderness." This concept was apparently new in Byzantine eschatology.

A few pages after the quote provided above by Thomas Ice, Paul Alexander laid out his understanding of the sequence of events in Pseudo-Ephraem's sermon, and he did NOT include a pre-trib rapture! Here is Alexander's commentary on the sequence of events in Pseudo-Ephraem's eschatology.

"In Pseudo-Ephraem the sequence is as follows. After the attack of the *gentes nequissimae* or *bellicae* (1) there follows the surrender of the Christian Empire (2), the apparition of the Antichrist (3), an illusion to the blessings of Moses and Jacob on the tribe of Dan (4), then the division of the Antichrist's career into a period of adolescence before

his seizure of imperial power and a second period, of maturity, when he will hold imperial power (5). Then comes his challenging God by sitting in the Jewish Temple at Jerusalem (6), the "great tribulation" of three and a half years (drought, famine, etc.:7) and during it the mission of Enoch and Elijah (8), and, finally, the Second Coming and punishment of the Antichrist (9). This schedule may be presented schematically as follows:

1. Attack of *gentes bellicae* or *nequissimae* 212.13-213.17
 2. Surrender of the Empire 214.1
 3. *apparebit ille nequissimus et abominabilis draco* 214.4
 4. Blessings of Moses and Jacob on Dan 214.6
 5. *adulescens ... antequam sumat imperium; factus legitimus sumet imperium* 216.2,11
 6. Sitting in the Jewish Temple 217.1
 7. *tribulatio magna* lasting three and a half years 217.14
 8. Mission of Enoch and Elijah 219.10
 9. Second Coming of Christ and punishment of the Antichrist 220.2"
- [Alexander, Paul J., *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Univ. of California Press, 1985), pp. 218,219]

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Below is the text of Pseudo-Ephraem's sermon for your examination.

On the Last Times, the Anti-Christ, and the End of the World

A Sermon by Pseudo-Ephraem

Section I

Dearly beloved brothers, believe the Holy Spirit who speaks in us. We have already told you that the end of the world is near, the consummation remains. Has not faith withered away among mankind? How many foolish things are seen among youths, how many crimes among prelates, how many lies among priests, how many perjuries among deacons! There are evil deeds among the ministers, adulteries in the aged, wantonness in the youths--in mature women false faces, in virgins dangerous traces! In the midst of all this there are the wars with the Persians, and we see struggles with diverse nations threatening and "kingdom rising against kingdom." When the Roman empire begins to be consumed by the sword, **the coming of the Evil One is at hand**. It is necessary that the world come to an end at the completion of the Roman empire.

In those days two brothers will come to the Roman empire who will rule with one mind; but because one will surpass the other, there will be a schism between them. And so the Adversary will be loosed and will stir up hatred between the Persian and Roman empires. In those days many will rise up against Rome; the Jewish people will be her adversaries. There will be stirrings of nations and evil reports, pestilences, famines, and earth quakes in various places. All nations will receive captives; there will be wars and rumors of wars. From the rising to the setting of the sun the sword will devour much. The times will be so dangerous that in fear and trembling they will not permit thought of better things, because many will be the oppressions and desolations of regions that are to come.

Section II

We ought to understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, **what is imminent or overhanging**. Already there have been hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord, they have already been fulfilled (consummated), and there is not other

which remains, except the advent of the wicked one in the completion of the Roman kingdom. Why therefore are we occupied with worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world? Believe you me, dearest brother, because the coming (advent) of the Lord is nigh, believe you me, because the end of the world is at hand, believe me, because it is the very last time. Or do you not believe unless you see with your eyes? See to it that this sentence be not fulfilled among you of the prophet who declares: "Woe to those who desire to see the day of the Lord!" For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins. And so, brothers most dear to me, it is the eleventh hour, and the end of the world comes to the harvest, and angels, armed and prepared, hold sickles in their hands, awaiting the empire of the Lord. And we think that the earth exists with blind infidelity, arriving at its downfall early. Commotions are brought forth, wars of diverse peoples and battles and incursions of the barbarians threaten, and our regions shall be desolated, and we neither become very much afraid of the report nor of the appearance, in order that we may at least do penance; because they hurl fear at us, and we do not wish to be changed, although we at least stand in need of penance for our actions!

Section III

When therefore the end of the world comes, there arise diverse wars, commotions on all sides, horrible earthquakes, perturbations of nations, tempests throughout the lands, plagues, famine, drought throughout the thoroughfares, great danger throughout the sea and dry land, constant persecutions, slaughters and massacres everywhere, fear in the homes, panic in the cities, quaking in the thoroughfares, suspicions in the male, anxiety in the streets. In the desert people become senseless, spirits melt in the cities. A friend will not be grieved over a friend, neither a brother for a brother, nor parents for their children, nor a faithful servant for his master, but one inevitability shall overwhelm them all; neither is anyone able to be recovered in that time, who has not been made completely aware of the coming danger, but all people, who have been constricted by fear, are consumed because of the overhanging evils.

Section IV

Whenever therefore the earth is agitated by the nations, people will hide themselves from the wars in the mountains and rocks, by caves and caverns of the earth, by graves and memorials of the dead, and there, as they waste away gradually by fear, they draw breath, because there is not any place at all to flee, but there will be concession and intolerable pressure. And those who are in the east will flee to the west, and moreover, those who are in the west shall flee to the east, and there is not a safer place anywhere, because the world shall be overwhelmed by worthless nations, whose aspect appears to be of wild animals more than that of men. Because those very much horrible nations, most profane and most defiled, who do not spare lives, and shall destroy the living from the dead, shall consume the dead, they eat dead flesh, they drink the blood of beasts, they pollute the world, contaminate all things, and the one who is able to resist them is not there. In those days people shall not be buried, neither Christian, nor heretic, neither Jew, nor pagan, because of fear and dread there is not one who buries them; because all people, while they are fleeing, ignore them.

Section V

Whenever the days of the times of those nations have been fulfilled, after they have destroyed the earth, it shall rest; and now the kingdom of the Romans is removed from everyday life, and the empire of the Christians is handed down by God and Peter; and then the consummation comes, when the kingdom of the Romans begins to be fulfilled, and all dominions and powers have been fulfilled. Then that worthless and abominable dragon shall appear, he, whom Moses named in Deuteronomy, saying: "Dan is a young lion, reclining and leaping from Basan. Because he reclines in order that he may seize and destroy and slay. Indeed (he is) a young whelp of a lion not as the lion of the tribe of Judah, but roaring because of his wrath, that he may devour. "And he leaps out from Basan." "Basan" certainly is interpreted "confusion." He shall rise up from the confusion of his

iniquity. The one who gathers together to himself a partridge the children of confusion, also shall call them, whom he has not brought forth, just as Jeremiah the prophet says. Also in the last day they shall relinquish him just as confused.

Section VI

When therefore the end of the world comes, that abominable, lying and murderous one is born from the tribe of Dan. He is conceived from the seed of a man and from an unclean or most vile virgin, mixed with an evil or worthless spirit. But that abominable corrupter, more of spirits than of bodies, while a youth, the crafty dragon appears under the appearance of righteousness, before he takes the kingdom. Because he will be craftily gentle to all people, not receiving gifts, not placed before another person, loving to all people, quiet to everyone, not desiring gifts, appearing friendly among close friends, so that men may bless him, saying; he is a just man, not knowing that a wolf lies concealed under the appearance of a lamb, and that a greedy man is inside under the skin of a sheep.

Section VII

But when the time of the abomination of his desolation begins to approach, having been made legal, he takes the empire, and, just as it is said in the Psalm:-They have been made for the undertaking for the sons of Loth, the Moabites and the Ammanites shall meet him first as their king. Therefore, when he receives the kingdom, he orders the temple of God to be rebuilt for himself, which is in Jerusalem; who, after coming into it, he shall sit as God and order that he be adored by all nations, since he is carnal and filthy and mixed with worthless spirit and flesh. Then that eloquence shall be fulfilled of Daniel the prophet:-And he shall not know the God of their fathers, and he shall not know the desires of women. Because the very wicked serpent shall direct every worship to himself. Because he shall put forth an edict so that people may be circumcised according to the rite of the old law. Then the Jews shall congratulate him, because he gave them again the practice of the first covenant; then all people from everywhere shall flock together to him at the city of Jerusalem, and the holy city shall be trampled on by the nations for forty-two months, just as the holy apostle says in the Apocalypse, which become three and a half years, 1,260 days.

Section VIII

In these three years and a half the heaven shall suspend its dew; because there will be no rain upon the earth, and the clouds shall cease to pass through the air, and the stars shall be seen with difficulty in the sky because of the excessive dryness, which happens in the time of the very fierce dragon. Because all great rivers and very powerful fountains that overflow with themselves shall be dried up, torrents shall dry up their water-courses because of the intolerable age, and there will be a great tribulation, as there has not been, since people began to be upon the earth, and there will be famine and an insufferable thirst. And children shall waste away in the bosom of their mothers, and wives upon the knees of their husbands, by not having victuals to eat. Because there will be in those days lack of bread and water, and no one is able to sell or to buy of the grain of the fall harvest, unless he is one who has the serpentine sign on the forehead or on the hand. Then gold and silver and precious clothing or precious stones shall lie along the streets, and also even every type of pearls along the thoroughfares and streets of the cities, but there is not one who may extend the hand and take or desire them, but they consider all things as good as nothing because of the extreme lack and famine of bread, because the earth is not protected by the rains of heaven, and there will be neither dew nor moisture of the air upon the earth. But those who wander through the deserts, fleeing from the face of the serpent, bend their knees to God, just as lambs to the adders of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord, and while wandering in states of desertion, they eat herbs.

Section IX

Then, when this inevitability has overwhelmed all people, just and unjust, the just, so that they may be found good by their Lord; and indeed the unjust, so that they may be damned forever with their author the Devil, and, as God beholds the human race in danger and being tossed about by the breath of the horrible dragon, he sends to them consolatory proclamation by his attendants, the prophets Enoch and Elijah, who, while not yet tasting death, are the servants for the heralding of the second coming of Christ, and in order to accuse the enemy. And when those just ones have

appeared, they confuse indeed the antagonistic serpent with his cleverness and they call back the faithful witnesses to God, in order to (free them) from his seduction ...

Section X

And when the three and a half years have been completed, the time of the Antichrist, through which he will have seduced the world, after the resurrection of the two prophets, in the hour which the world does not know, and on the day which the enemy of son of perdition does not know, will come the sign of the Son of Man, and coming forward the Lord shall appear with great power and much majesty, with the sign of the wood of salvation going before him, and also even with all the powers of the heavens with the whole chorus of the saints, with those who bear the sign of the holy cross upon their shoulders, as the angelic trumpet precedes him, which shall sound and declare: Arise, O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his hour of judgment has come! Then Christ shall come and the enemy shall be thrown into confusion, and the Lord shall destroy him by the spirit of his mouth. And he shall be bound and shall be plunged into the abyss of everlasting fire alive with his father Satan; and all people, who do his wishes, shall perish with him forever; but the righteous ones shall inherit everlasting life with the Lord forever and ever.

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Baptist Pre-Trib Revisionism

Dr. Ken Johnson's Revisionism of Baptist Writers

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At the 34th annual missions conference at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Lubbock Texas, March 13-15, 1995, the theme of the conference was "The Premillennial Second Coming Of Jesus Christ." Dr. Ken Johnson spoke on **"The Imminent Pre-Trib Coming of Christ."** The entire printed text of the sermon can be found on the [Tabernacle Baptist Church website](#). It was published in tract form (#G-605), and may be ordered from Tabernacle Baptist Church, Lubbock, Texas.

Benjamin Keach (1640-1704) a Pre-Tribulationist?

After denouncing the work of post-trib writers, who have traced the origin of the pre-trib rapture back to Margaret MacDonald and the Irvingites around 1830, Johnson attempted to show that Baptists were pre-trib before Edward Irving and Margaret MacDonald.

Johnson stated, *"History Will Show Baptists Are A Group These Writers Did Not Consult: **Benjamin Keach plainly shows he preached and believed in a Pre-Trib Rapture** though he believed in a historical application of Revelation and the second coming at the 7th trumpet:"* Johnson then provided the following quotes from Keach to support his claim that Keach was pre-trib.

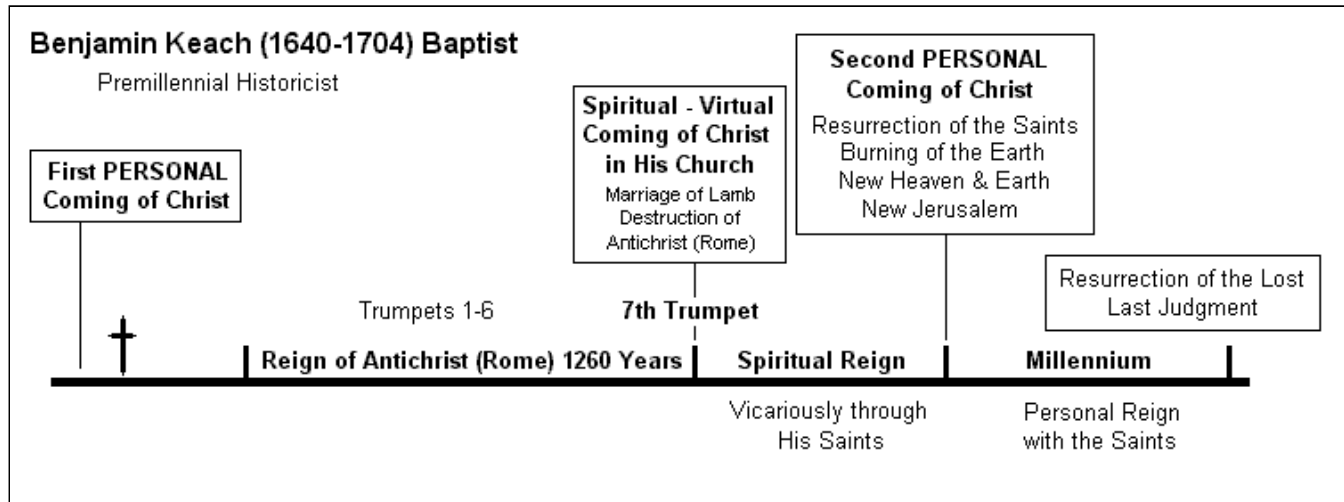
"(1) 'His second personal coming I judge will be at the beginning of the thousand years reign, when 'God will tabernacle with men,...' Rev. 21:3."

*"(2) 'There is a precursory coming of our Lord, (as one notes) or a most glorious **spiritual coming**, to set up a more visible and universal kingdom in this world, which will precede his **personal appearance**; which I take to be the beginning of the latterday glory, and which will be at the sounding of the 'Seventh trumpet,' for then Jesus Christ will begin His spiritual and more visible and glorious kingdom; or 'when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ,' Rev. 11:15,18. One design of this coming of our Lord, is to destroy the son of perdition, and utterly to overthrow Mystery Babylon....Now it is partly this coming of Christ (I conclude) our Lord in the first place intends, though I will not exclude his personal appearance; for I see no reason to doubt, but that the precursory coming of the Lord Jesus is to prepare things for his personal appearance; when, (as a bridegroom) he will appear to celebrate the marriage with his beloved spouse. Yet his coming upon mystery Babylon, or by his bright appearance to destroy the son of perdition, may be distinguished from the coming last mentioned, though both may be comprehended, or included by the Bridegroom's coming." [Benjamin Keach, Exposition Of The Parables, p.643]."* Then Johnson adds, *"THIS IS NEARLY 150 YEARS BEFORE THE 1830 DATE OF MARGARET MACDONALD."* [bold and underline mine - TW, all caps - Johnson]

Ironically, while Johnson admits that Keach was a historicist, he also claims that he was a pre-tribulationist. This is an oxymoron. A historicist cannot be a pre-tribulationist, because historicists believe the tribulation began in the early Church period, and extends over many centuries of Church history, seeing most of Revelation already fulfilled. In order to also hold to a pre-trib rapture, a historicist would have to claim that the rapture occurred centuries ago!

Unfortunately, the quote Johnson provided, to support his claim that Benjamin Keach was a pre-tribulationist, proves no such thing. While Keach thought there was a "coming" of Christ between his first advent and His second coming to earth, he calls it a "spiritual" coming which will precede his "personal" appearance. By using the term "spiritual coming" in contrast to His "personal appearance," it is obvious that this prior "coming" is NOT a "personal" coming. Keach was speaking of an alleged work of Christ on earth through His Church as a "spiritual coming," which would mark *"the beginning of the latterday glory"* for the Church. Keach thought that this "spiritual coming" would be *"to set up a more visible and universal kingdom in this world, ... for then Jesus Christ will begin His spiritual and more visible and glorious kingdom."* Keach thought that the "spiritual kingdom" was preparatory for the Millennium. It is clear from Keach's statement that the "spiritual coming" to establish a "spiritual kingdom" was a work wholly on earth, and had nothing to do with a bodily coming of Christ, physically taking the Church to heaven, or a resurrection of the dead in Christ. How Johnson gets a pre-

trib rapture from Keach is anyone's guess.



Hansard Knollys (1598-1691) a Pre-Tribulationist?

Dr. Ken Johnson continues with another Baptist he claims was pre-trib. "Ivimey quotes Hansard Knollys, the date is 1689-1692, who states to the General Assemblies at Curriers-Hall Cripplegate which is pastored by Knollys: "As Mr. Knollys has been stigmatized as of **Fifth-Monarchy principles**, and as the sentiments of many godly ministers upon that subject are but little known, the following extract from one of his works will explain them: 'That the next glorious appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, will be **his virtual and spiritual coming** [NOTE: Knollys is referring to the rapture as NEXT--KJ] **in his saints** and sanction (as the Bride groom of his church) to marry her sons (Isa. 62:4,5) and by them to reign over the nations with power and great glory a thousand years here on earth, Dan. 7:27. There are but three special kinds and times of Christ's coming. 1. His coming in the form of a servant in the days of his flesh, Phil. 2:9. 2. His coming as judge at the last day, when he shall judge the quick and the dead, (II Tim. 4:1) called his appearance the second time, Heb. 9:29. Both these are **his personal appearances**, or his **coming in his own person**. [NOTE: Knollys separates these--KJ.] **But between these two appearances, or comings of Christ in his own person, there is witnessed by the holy prophets and apostles, and recorded in the holy Scriptures of truth, another kind of Christ's coming at another time. And that is His coming as the Bridegroom, and as the only Potentate, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, (I Tim. 6:14,15. Rev. 19:16) which is his virtual, spiritual, powerful, and glorious coming in his saints** and sanction, and by them to marry his Jerusalem, Isa. 62:4,5. So shall thy sons marry thee, and with them to reign over the nations and kingdoms of the world a thousand years on earth, Rev. 10:15-17." [bold and underline mine - TW]. Johnson would like to paint Knollys as a pre-tribulationist. But it is quite clear from this quote, as well as what immediately follows (not quoted by Johnson), that Knollys was a post-millennialist. Knollys goes on to say, "It is the Duty of all Virgin professors, especially sanctified Believers, who are wise Virgins, to go out and meet the Bridegroom, **when he comes by his spiritual power and glory in his Saints and Sanctions**, to set up his Kingdom and to reign on Earth. ... [T]he God of Heaven will set (up) this Kingdom of Christ and his Saints in (the) days of those Kings of **the fourth Monarchy** that oppose him and his Saints, Dan. 2:24. And give it unto Christ as he is the Son of David, Luke 1:32,33. ... [W]hen Christ comes to set up his Kingdom and **to reign on Earth Virtually and Spiritually in his Saints** and Sanction, with power and great glory, it's the duty of all Virgin-professors, especially sanctified Believers, who are wise Virgins to go out to meet the Bridegroom, verse 6."

Johnson also seems to have completely overlooked Ivimey's statement that the quotation of Knollys was given to explain the views of the "Fifth-Monarchy." The Fifth Monarchy Men were a radical political-religious group who attempted to replace the British Parliament and establish the rule of Christ on earth through political reform and even force if necessary. Their full story can be found [here](http://www.geocities.com/lasttrumpet_2000/timeline/johnson.html). Fifth Monarchists were by no means pre-tribulationists, futurists, or even pre-millennialists! While they expected the "return of Christ" to rule the earth for 1000 years, it was a "spiritual, virtual coming" — an empowerment of the Church to radically reform the British Empire to establish Christ's virtual rule on earth through the Church. In other words, it was the British Protestant version of the Roman Catholic Church-state, supposedly with Christ's Kingdom overthrowing the Roman "Antichrist" and a Protestant Great Britain ruling the world — the Throne of David being in London. Fifth Monarchists were seen as traitors, and several leaders were executed. Fifth Monarchists by no means held to a personal coming of Christ prior to the Millennium, nor Christ's taking of the Church to heaven. And they certainly did not foresee any kind of personal coming prior to the "tribulation" or events of Revelation 4-19.

Knollys' "coming" prior to the "second coming" was not a physical coming of Christ. The "next" coming of Christ was not the rapture, as Johnson claims. Knollys said this was "*his virtual and spiritual coming **IN** his saints.*" Yet Johnson interrupts Knollys' sentence with his bracketed statement claiming that this is the "rapture" according to Knollys! Furthermore, Knollys clearly contrasted "*His **personal** appearances, or his coming **in his own person***" (first and second comings) with His "next" coming which was to be "***another kind** of Christ's coming.*" He defined this "coming" as Christ's "*virtual, spiritual, powerful, and glorious coming **IN** his saints.*" Obviously, Knollys was not referring to a pre-trib rapture. Both Keach's and Knollys' view, of a "spiritual coming" of Christ "in his saints," was the empowerment of the (Protestant) Church to establish the Kingdom on earth immediately after the fall of Rome's Church-state. This eschatology is much closer to the modern "Reconstructionist," "Joel's Army," and "Manifest Sons of God" post-millennial eschatology being promoted by some of the more radical Charismatic groups. It shares a similar view of the Kingdom with Roman Catholicism — the Church being the Kingdom without Christ's physical presence on earth.

Below is a lengthy excerpt from Hansard Knollys' [Exposition of the Parable of the Ten Virgins \(1674\)](#), more fully explaining his Baptist post-millennial eschatology.

"Introduction: The Lord Jesus Christ being asked by his Disciples what shall be the sign of his coming, chapter 24:3, answered and said, verse 12, Iniquity shall abound and the love of many shall wax cold, and verse 21, Then shall be great Tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. So the Apostle testified also, 2 Tim. 3:1. But saith our Savior verse 29, Immediately after the Tribulation of those days, verse 30, Then shall appear (not the person but) the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven --- And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with power and great Glory --- Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened to ten Virgins, chapter 25:1." ...

*"This is His Spiritual, Virtual, and Powerful Coming. I do believe and am persuaded that **the coming of Christ (spoken of in this Parable, verses 6 and 10) is not the coming of Christ in his own person upon the Earth** (though I do believe Christ will come the second time in his own person upon the Earth, Heb. 9:28, Zech. 3:4,5) but **this is his virtual, spiritual, powerful and glorious coming in his Saints** and Sanction as the Bridegroom of his Church, the new Jerusalem, who shall also come down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her husband. **This is our David's Mystical Kingdom on Earth among his Saints, when HE shall be King of all the Earth, and all the Kingdoms of this world shall be Christ's. And when the Lord's redeemed Ones, whom HE has made Kings and Priests to God, shall have the Kingdom and Dominion under the whole Heaven given to them, and they shall reign on Earth.** And the reasons grounded on Scripture are as follows. 1. Negatively. 2. Affirmatively.*

*Negatively. That **the coming of Christ spoken of in the 6th and 10th verses of this Parable is not the coming of Christ in his own person upon the Earth.** First, because at the personal coming of Christ on Earth, (called his appearing the Second time, Heb. 9:28) all his Saints shall come with him. ... Secondly, Because at the personal coming of Christ on Earth, will be the Universal Physical Resurrection of all that are dead. ... Thirdly, Because when Christ comes virtually and spiritually as the Bridegroom, then will begin the times of the Restitution of all things.*

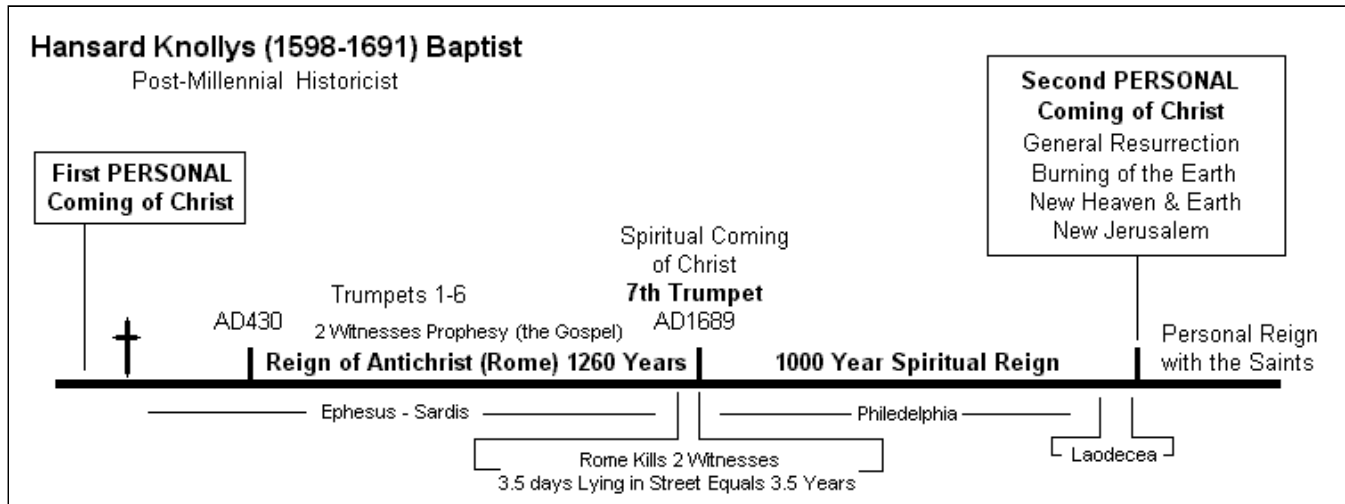
Objection: Does not this Opinion exempt and exclude Christ from Rule and Sovereignty in his Monarchical Kingdom on Earth, contrary to Rev. 20:4, They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years?

Answer: No. Consider first, Christ may be said to be with a person or people, and they with him virtually by his Spirit and power or his powerful spiritual presence. Isa. 57:15; 2 Cor. 6:16; Rev. 2:1; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12,13. As it is said, Jer. 8:9, Is not the LORD in Zion? Is not her King in Her? though not personally, but spiritually.

*Secondly, as **Christ is said to be in his Mystical Kingdom the Church of God here on Earth**, where his Laws, his Statutes and his Ordinances are dispensed in his Name, and by the power of his holy Spirit; even so will he be in his Monarchical Kingdom, the throne of his Father David here on Earth, Luke 1:32,33. And the Lord God shall give unto him the Throne of his Father David. And he shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever, and of his Kingdom there shall be no end; **not personally at the beginning of it, but virtually by his Laws**, etc." [bold and underlining mine - TW]*

Knollys was a post-millennialist, placing the resurrection of believers (and all the dead) at a general resurrection after the Millennium. He held to the Reformed view of the tribulation (historicism), seeing the Roman Church-State as the reign of the Beast. Christ's Millennial Kingdom was the virtual reign of Christ on earth vicariously through the Protestant Church. Rome was represented by the rule of the Beast. The rule of the Protestant Church-state follows the overthrow of the Roman Beast at Christ's "virtual - spiritual" coming.

Christ's physical "second coming" would occur at the end of the Millennium.



[Click here](#) for Hansard Knollys "Exposition of the Parable of the Ten Virgins."

John Gill (1697-1771) a Pre-Tribulationist?

Next, Johnson attempted to connect Knollys' alleged "pre-tribulationism" to the famous Baptist scholar, John Gill. Johnson stated, "In Vol. II, p.358, Ivimey refers to Knollys and his pre-millennialism saying, '...It appears that his opinion on this subject was not different from that of Dr. Gill, and **OTHERS**' [emp. mine--KJ]. John Gill's (1697-1771) position is stated in his commentary in Vol. VI, p. 560 re. 1 Thess. 4:15: 'The apostle having something new and extraordinary to deliver, concerning the coming of Christ, the first resurrection, or the resurrection of the saints, the change of the living saints, and the rapture both of the raised and living in the clouds to meet Christ in the air, expresses himself in this manner...'" Johnson then concludes by saying, "This commentary was written over 50 years before the supposed revelation of Margaret Macdonald."

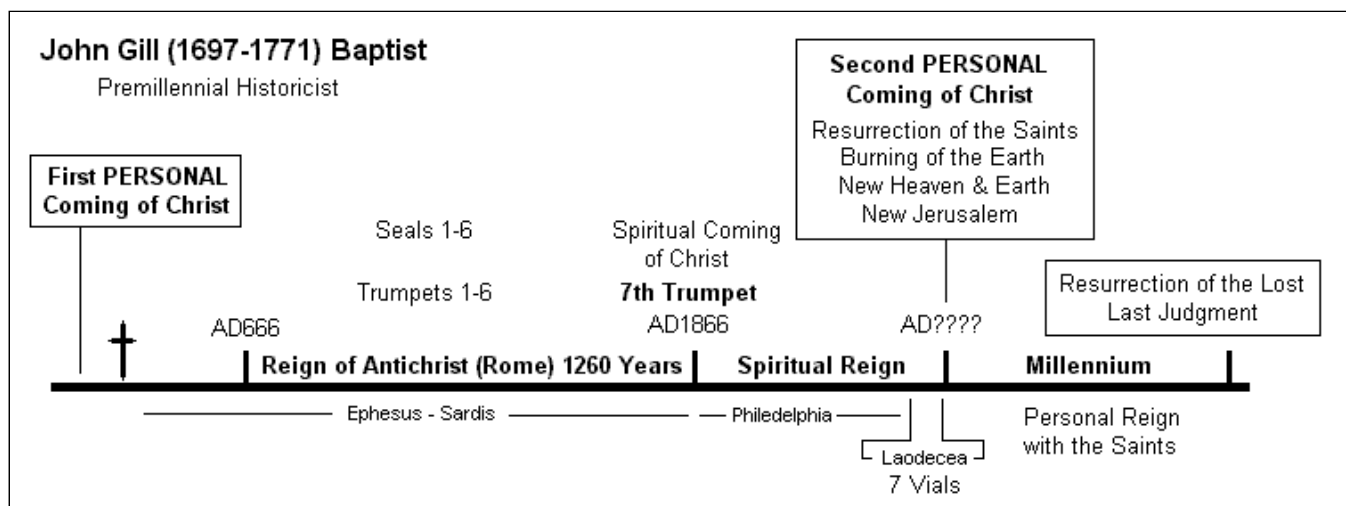
However, nothing Johnson cites indicates Gill understood 1 Thess. 4:15 in a pre-trib context. Johnson has attempted to link John Gill to pre-tribulationism by first claiming that Knollys was pre-trib (which he was not), and then citing a brief comment by Ivimey that both shared a similar eschatology. John Gill was NOT a pre-tribulationist, as Johnson would have us believe. A brief look at Gill's comments on several end-times passages proves that Gill was a historicist, not a futurist, and was post-trib. Johnson should go back to the previous verse and look at Gill's note on 1 Thess. 4:14. Gill put the rapture and resurrection at the beginning of the Millennium. Gill writes, "And the dead in Christ shall rise first; the same with those that are asleep in Jesus, (1 Thessalonians 4:14) not only the martyrs that died for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel; nor merely those who die in the lively exercise of faith in Christ; but all that die interested in him, and in union with him: and these shall "rise", in consequence of their being his; being given to him, made his care and charge, and engaged for by him, and in virtue of their union to him; and shall rise to an entire conformity to his glorious body, and in order to enjoy eternal life and glory with him: and **these will rise "first", before the wicked, which is the first resurrection, (Revelation 20:5,6) even a thousand years before them;** the righteous will rise in the morning of the resurrection, and so will have the dominion in the morning, (Psalms 49:14) **even at the beginning of the thousand years, as soon as Christ will come;** but the wicked will not rise till the evening of that day, or till the close of the thousand years: and this agrees with the notions of the Jews, who thought that some will rise before others;" (John Gill, Commentary 1 Thess. 4:14). Gill goes on to explain the "shout" associated with the rapture in verse 16, connecting it with the coming of Christ's army in Revelation 19. Gill writes: "**with a shout;** the word here used is observed by many to signify such a noise or shout as is made either by mariners, when they pull and row together; and shout to direct and encourage one another; or to an army with the general at the head of it, when about to undertake some considerable action, to enter on a battle, and make the onset; **Christ will now appear as the King of kings, and Lord of lords, as the Judge of the whole earth, attended with the host, or armies of heaven, and the shout of a king will be among them: perhaps the same is intended, as by the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunderings upon the coming of Christ, the destruction of antichrist, and the marriage of the Lamb, in (Revelation 19:1,6,7,14,15).**" [bold and underlining mine - TW]

As we continue reading [John Gill's commentary](#), it becomes obvious that Gill thought Jesus and believers would rule from heaven during the Millennium. Regarding the phrase, "to meet the Lord in the air" in verse 17, Gill writes: "whither he will descend, and will then clear the regions of the air of Satan, and his posse of devils,

which now rove about there, watching all opportunities, and taking all advantages to do mischief on earth; these shall then fall like lightning from heaven, **and be bound and shut up in the bottomless pit, till the thousand years are ended:** here Christ will stop, and will be visible to all, and as easily discerned by all, good and bad, as the body of the sun at noonday; as yet he will not descend on earth, because it is not fit to receive him; but when that and its works are burnt up, and it is purged and purified by fire, and become a new earth, he will descend upon it, and dwell with his saints in it: and this suggests another reason why he will stay in the air, and his saints shall meet him there, and whom he will take up with him into the third heaven, till the general conflagration and burning of the world is over, and to preserve them from it; and then shall all the elect of God descend from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband, and he with them, and the tabernacle of God shall be with men; see (Revelation 21:1-3)." [bold mine - TW]

His comment on 2 Thess. 2:3 clearly indicates that Gill was a historicist regarding the tribulation, seeing the "Man of Sin" as the whole Roman Catholic hierarchy currently in power.

That Gill did not see the Church raptured out prior to any part of the tribulation is clear from his comment on Rev. 3:10. "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth; this hour seems to refer not to any of the vials which will be poured out on the antichristian states, but to some affliction and distress which will befall the reformed churches, and will light upon the outward court worshippers among them. It seems to be the last struggle of the beast of Rome, and to denote some violent and sharp persecution, such as what Daniel mentions, that never was before nor since; but it will be but short, but one hour, the twenty fourth part of a prophetic day or year, perhaps about a fortnight; yet it will be very extensive; it will reach all the world, the whole Roman empire, and **all that dwell upon the earth, that are called by the name of Christians, and will try them, whether they are so or not; Christ will now have his fan in his hand, and purge his floor of all his formal professors and hypocrites; and it will be known who are his true churches, and pure members; and these he will keep close to himself, and preserve safe amidst all the distress and confusion the world will be in.**" It is quite clear that John Gill saw the Church on earth right up until the very end of the tribulation.



[Click here](#) for John Gill's "Of the Second Coming of Christ, and his Personal Appearance."

The bottom line is this: None of the Baptists cited by Dr. Ken Johnson were pre-tribulationists. Once again, pre-tribulationists have resorted to revisionism and misrepresentation of historical writers in order to distance pre-tribulationism from Edward Irving and the nineteenth century mystics of Great Britain. As usual, a closer examination of these writers proves that they were not pre-trib. It seems the harder they try to bypass Edward Irving and the Scotch - British proto-Charismatics, the larger their ghosts seem to loom.



Double Talk

How Many Second Comings?

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Pre-tribbers insist that the second coming of Jesus Christ is in two stages. They frequently display lists of alleged "differences," which, in their thinking, imply the rapture is separate from the second coming. The following list is typical of their thinking.

1. At the rapture, Jesus comes alone. But, at the revelation, He comes with all his saints.
2. At the rapture, Jesus comes for his saints. But, at the revelation, He comes with His saints.
3. At the rapture, He comes "in the air." But, at the revelation, He lands on the Mount of Olives.
4. At the rapture, the saints go to heaven. But, at the revelation, saints return to earth.
5. The rapture is signless, and could occur at any moment. But, the revelation is preceeded by signs.
6. At the rapture, only the saints see Him. But, at the revelation, every eye shall see Him.
7. At the rapture, the tribulation begins. But, at the revelation, the Millennial Kingdom begins.

The above list seems to lead to the conclusion that the "rapture" is distinct, and separated from the second coming by a period of time. The logic seems reasonable, that is, until you try to prove each point from the Bible! The fact is, each of the above "contrasts" are simply manufactured from a preconceived premise of a pre-tribulation rapture. None of these alleged distinctions can stand on their own.

Pre-tribulationists pick out a certain detail from a known post-trib passage, like Matthew 24, then compare it to a rapture passage from the Epistles, which may not mention this particular detail, and conclude that they are two separate comings. But just because a certain element is not mentioned in a given rapture passage, does not mean it does not exist. If we used the same logic on the four Gospels, we would have to conclude that there were four separate Jesus Christs, and forty eight disciples, minus, of course, the four Judas Iscariots! Each of the Gospel accounts is different; each adds certain details, while leaving out others, but never in conflict. Only when we combine all four accounts, do we get a complete picture. The same is true of the rapture passages.

When we test the pre-trib logic, by comparing the two best known rapture passages, we find differences. For example, 1 Thessalonians 4 mentions the Lord descending from heaven, the shout, the voice of the archangel, the "catching up" of the saints, and clouds. None of these things are found in 1 Corinthians 15. On the other hand, 1 Corinthians 15 mentions the dead saints receiving resurrected bodies, while this is not found in 1 Thessalonians 4. Using pre-trib logic, we would conclude that there will be two raptures, at one we will be "caught up;" at the other we will receive new bodies! Their logic cannot be sustained consistantly. In fact, 1 Thessalonians 4 has far more in common with Matthew 24 than it does with 1 Corinthians 15!

Let's briefly look at each alleged distinction between the "rapture" and the "revelation," mentioned in the previous list.

1. "At the rapture, Jesus comes alone. But, at the revelation, He comes with all his saints." *Does the Bible teach that Jesus will come alone at the rapture? He will come with all the saints who have died [1 Thes. 3:13 & 4:14]. He will be accompanied by Michael the Archangel [1 Thes. 4:16].*
2. At the rapture, Jesus comes for his saints. But, at the revelation, He comes with His saints. *Must we separate His coming FOR His saints, from His coming WITH His saints? According to Mark 13:24-*

27 Jesus will come FOR His elect on earth, while coming WITH His elect from heaven, after the tribulation. Similarly, 1 Thessalonians 4 speaks of Jesus coming WITH those who "sleep in Jesus," while coming FOR those who are alive and remain.

3. At the rapture, He comes "in the air." But, at the revelation, He lands on the Mount of Olives. *Doesn't Jesus have to come through "the air" in order to come "to the earth?"* [cf. Acts 1:10-12 & Zech. 14:4a,5b]

4. At the rapture, the saints go to heaven. But, at the revelation, saints return to earth. *There is no Scripture that says Christians will go to heaven after the rapture.*

5. The rapture is signless, and could occur at any moment. But, the revelation is preceeded by signs. *The Bible does not teach that the rapture could occur at any moment. In fact, the very verses used by pre-tribbers to try to prove "imminence," come from Matthew 24, which is clearly speaking of Jesus' coming after the tribulation, [cf. Matt. 24:36 & vs. 29-31]. Also, Jesus' coming "as a thief" refers to the battle of Armageddon [Rev. 16:15,16].*

6. At the rapture, only the saints see Him. But, at the revelation, every eye shall see Him. *There is no Scripture that says only the saints will see Jesus at the rapture.*

7. At the rapture, the tribulation begins. But, at the revelation, the Millennial Kingdom begins. *There is no Scripture that places the tribulation after the rapture.*

The entire pre-trib approach is illogical. Instead of trying to isolate passages based upon the absence of a particular detail, we should merge them based upon their common details. If all of the elements of two descriptions of the second coming can be integrated, without conflict, we can conclude that they are the same event. When we use this approach, we find many similarities between Jesus' descriptions of His coming after the tribulation, with Paul's descriptions of the rapture found in the epistles. When these accounts are merged, we have a complete picture of the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Rapture / Revelation Comparison	Jesus	Paul
Resurrection	John 6:39,44	1 Thess. 4:13-16
Trumpet	Matt. 24:31	1 Thess. 4:13
Angels	Matt. 24:31 Matt. 25:31	1 Thess. 4:16 2 Thess. 1:7
Gathering [elect]	Matt. 24:31	2 Thess. 2:1
Clouds	Matt. 24:30	1 Thess. 4:17
Thief in the night	Matt. 24:42-44	1 Thess. 5:2
Surprise the world	Luke 21:35	1 Thess. 5:2,3

Sleeping / watching	Mark 13:35-37	1 Thess. 5:6
Warning against drunkenness	Matt. 24:49 Luke 21:34	1 Thess. 5:7,8
Exempt from wrath	Luke 21:18,36	1 Thess. 5:9
Church to continue until end of tribulation	Matt. 24:29-31 Mark 13:14-17	2 Thess. 1:7-10 2 Thess. 2:1-3
Falling away [apostasy]	Matt. 24:9-13	2 Thess. 2:3
Antichrist comes first	Matt. 24:15	2 Thess. 2:1-3
Temple defiled	Matt. 24:15	3 Thess. 2:4
Warning against deception	Matt. 24:4,11,23-27	2 Thess. 2:2,3
Signs come first	Mark 13:29 Luke 21:28	1 Thess. 5:4 2 Thess. 2:1-3
Looking for the Kingdom of God	Matt. 6:10 Luke 21:31	1 Cor. 15:50 2 Thess. 1:5

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Imminence Could Jesus Come "at Any Moment?"

By Tim Warner - Revised 05/2002

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John Walvoord, and many other pre-trib writers, claim that the concept of "imminence" is the cornerstone of the pre-trib rapture doctrine. To them, pre-trib stands or falls on "imminence."

Webster's defines "imminent" as, *"ready to take place; especially: hanging threateningly over one's head."* Central to the pre-trib "imminence" understanding is that **nothing is hindering the rapture, and no prophesied event intervenes before the rapture.** If any prophesied event must necessarily take place before the rapture, then it could not be said that the rapture was "imminent" **until after that prophesied event was fulfilled.**

Pre-tribbers attempt to use statements by Jesus, Paul, James, and Peter, to support the idea that the rapture is "imminent" by the above definition.

"Imminence" According to Jesus

The foundational Scriptures used to support an "any moment" rapture come from the Olivet Discourse, particularly the parables that follow the sequence of events outlined by Jesus.

Matthew 24

36 *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*

42 *Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*

43 *But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.*

44 *Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

Taken out of context, these verses might appear to teach an "any moment" rapture. The problem is, the context proves Jesus was speaking about His coming *"immediately after the tribulation"* [vs. 29-31]. These verses must be interpreted within the general chronology of Matthew 24. The disciples had asked Jesus about the **signs** of His coming, [vs. 3]. Jesus gave a lengthy discourse, outlining the entire age and various signs until His coming in glory after the tribulation. He placed the gathering together of His elect after the tribulation, [vs. 31]. Then he gave the parable of the fig tree as an illustration, showing them **HOW** they were to watch for the signs.

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.***

Jesus was quite clear that "watching" meant looking for the fulfillment of all of the previously mentioned signs, and that all of the prophesied signs He had just listed must occur **BEFORE** His coming would be "imminent."

Jesus followed this with, *"But of **that day and hour** knoweth no man,"* and, *"Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."* Jesus could not possibly be speaking of a "signless coming," because He had just given them many signs for which to watch!

Verse 33 above most definitely refers to an "imminent" coming, which Jesus described as "*near, even at the doors.*" A better description of "imminence" could not be given! But, look at the qualifying statement! He said, "**when ye shall see all these things**, know that it is near, even at the doors." The coming of Christ for His elect is "imminent" **ONLY AFTER** the signs Jesus gave come to pass. Are "all these things" listed earlier in verses 4-29 prophesied events? Most certainly! Have they ALL come to pass? No! Of course not. Therefore, the coming of Jesus is NOT "imminent" yet! It will be "imminent" at some point in the future, **after** these things are fulfilled. But, not until then.

This begs the question, what things was Jesus speaking of when He said, "**when ye shall see all these things?**" The answer is found in the previous verses, in fact, the entire discourse. They are, the wars, earthquakes, famines, the abomination of desolation, and the cosmic signs. Once **ALL** these things occur, **THEN** we can know that Jesus' coming is "imminent" (near, even at the doors). Since Jesus limited "imminence," and confined it to the period **AFTER** the specific signs are fulfilled, we have no right to claim that Jesus taught an UNCONDITIONAL kind of "imminence" for His coming (as pre-tribbers attempt to do). To infer a "signless" coming from a passage that is filled with signs, and instructions to watch for those signs, is to do violence to the text!

Some pre-tribbers claim that the phrase "**all these things**" in verse 33 does not refer to the previously mentioned signs, but to the budding of the fig tree in verse 32. They interpret the "fig tree" parable as referring to Israel becoming a nation in 1948. However, this is no better for their view, because it then places the return of Israel to the land as a precondition for this "imminence." In other words, in that scenario Jesus' coming could not be "imminent" until after 1948. That would mean all of the other statements in the New Testament used by pre-tribbers to support "imminence" could NOT really mean that Jesus' coming was imminent when they were written! After all, the Jews could not return to the land until AFTER they were driven from it. That did not occur until AD70, years AFTER Paul wrote all of his Epistles, the same Epistles that are alleged to support this idea of unconditional "imminence." If those passages did not mean that Jesus' coming was "imminent" in the first century BEFORE Jerusalem was destroyed, they do not teach "imminence" now! Furthermore, the parable of the fig tree has nothing whatever to do with Israel becoming a nation. It is clear from the parallel passages in both Mark 13 and particularly Luke 21:29-31, that the "fig tree" parable is simply an illustration. Luke wrote, "*And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*" In the same manner they could know that summer was near by watching for the budding of the fig trees (and all the trees), so too could they know when Jesus' coming was "*near, even at the doors*" by watching for the fulfillment of "**all these things.**"

Another thing that is usually ignored in this discourse is verse 14. Jesus clearly stated that the Gospel must be published among ALL NATIONS before He would return. This is the same Gospel He sent these same men out to preach, ie, the Great Commission. The Gospel was not published among all nations even by the death of John, the last Apostle. Neither has this been completely fulfilled even today! How then could Jesus' coming have been seen as "imminent" by the Apostles who wrote the New Testament? It is not possible. They looked for the fulfillment of the various signs and worked diligently toward preaching the Gospel to all nations. They hoped it would come in their lifetimes. But they did not teach that Jesus' coming for the Church was "imminent" in the first century.

In verse 43 Jesus used a parable that was borrowed by Paul, Peter, and mentioned again by Jesus in Revelation. Jesus used the analogy of a "thief in the night" to illustrate what will happen to those who do not watch for the signs.

Matt 24:43-44

43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.
(KJV)

Pre-tribbers use this verse more than any other to infer "imminence." But, is that what Jesus taught? Isn't the context still His coming *"immediately after the tribulation?"* Isn't Jesus still speaking to the very same disciples that He had just told to watch for a host of signs that occur during the tribulation? We saw already that Jesus taught a **CONDITIONAL** kind of "imminence" that depended on **FIRST** watching for a series of signs that must be fulfilled prior to His coming being "imminent." This follows the previous statement in verse 33, that we could know that Jesus' coming was "near, even at the doors" after we see "all these things." It is very apparent Jesus had not changed His subject from His post-trib coming (in verses 29-31) to some alleged pre-trib coming not even hinted at in the text! Notice that the very same people (referred to as "ye," "you," and "yourselves" in verses 3-31, who were given signs to watch for before and during the tribulation) are also the people to whom the "thief in the night" parable is addressed. The same people were told of the signs, and that after they observe the fulfillment of these signs they could know Jesus' coming for them would be *"near, even at the doors."* So, the kind of "watching" that Jesus was speaking of included the concept of previous signs, and refers specifically to the post-trib coming in vss 29-31. Had the owner of the house watched, the thief wouldn't have surprised him. In the same way, Jesus taught His disciples to be watching for the signs of His coming, so as not to be surprised when He comes.

It is obvious that the point of Jesus' warning is that believers not be caught by surprise by His coming for them. With the pretrib kind of "imminence," it is simply impossible NOT to be surprised by Jesus' coming! If no prophesied event must necessarily precede Jesus' coming, and if it is over "in the twinkling of an eye" before we could realize what happened, just what is there to watch for that will prevent us from being surprised by the "thief in the night?" Yes, watching, according to Jesus, implies being always in a state of readiness for His coming. But it also implies having a keen knowledge and awareness of the fulfillment of the signs that Jesus prophesied. That is the whole point of the parable of the fig tree in vss. 32,33.

"Imminence" According to Paul

Paul used the same analogy to show how we should watch, actually pointing the Thessalonians back to Jesus' "thief in the night" parable.

1 Thess 5:2-5,6

*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...***

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

(KJV)

Paul interpreted Jesus' parable for us. Jesus will come in judgement "as a thief" upon the lost. They will be destroyed suddenly at His coming. They will be utterly surprised (as the man not watching for the thief in Jesus' parable). But His coming will NOT be "as a thief" for believers, because we know the signs of His return, and will be watching. Paul's statement in verse 4, *"ye brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief,"* indicates that watching Christians will NOT be surprised by Jesus' coming. It will NOT be "as a thief" for those who are watching. Not being "in darkness" because we are watching implies we will have some knowledge when Jesus' coming is *"near, even at the doors."* This passage shows that Paul interpreted Jesus' words just as we have, and NOT as pre-tribbers do.

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)

These verses plainly say that Jesus' coming FOR us is NOT imminent YET. At least two prophesied events must occur first, the apostasy and the revelation of the Man of Sin. Both of these things are drawn from the Olivet Discourse, in the same order (cf. Matt. 24:9-15). It is easily apparent that Paul is referring his readers to Jesus' words in the Olivet Discourse.

Some pre-tribbers appeal to modern translations which render the last part of verse 2, "*as that the Day of the Lord has come,*" rather than the KJV's, "*as that the day of Christ is at hand.*" Two points must be addressed here. First, if the reading "Day of Christ" is the correct reading, then there is no question that the rapture follows the apostasy and the Antichrist, because the phrase "Day of Christ" most definitely refers to the rapture in Phil. 1:10 & 2:16. If "Day of the Lord" is the correct reading, then we should refer you to our article [The Day of the Lord does not Include the Tribulation](#) which proves conclusively that the Day of the Lord is the day of Christ's coming AFTER the tribulation. It is NOT the entire tribulation, as pre-tribbers claim. Therefore, the mere fact that Christians are watching for the "Day of the Lord" as the day of "*our gathering together unto Him,*" shows that Paul is speaking of the post-trib advent.

Secondly, the words "is at hand" (meaning "imminent") in the KJV, are translated "has come" in some modern translations. But this is a bad translation. According to Greek scholar, A.T. Robertson, (who used modern versions with this rendering), the phrase "is at hand" in the KJV is the correct rendering despite modern versions' mistranslation. Here is Robertson's comment.

"as that the day of the Lord is now present (*wv oti enesthken h hmera tou kuriou*). 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. In #1Co 3:22; Ro 8:38 we have a contrast between *ta enestwta*, the things present, and *ta mellonta*, the things future (to come). The use of *wv oti* may be disparaging here, though that is not true in #2Co 5:19. In the Koiné it comes in the vernacular to mean simply "that" (Moulton, Proleg., p. 212), but that hardly seems the case in the N.T. (Robertson, Grammar, p. 1033). Here it means "to wit that," though "as that" or "as if" does not miss it much. Certainly it flatly denies that by conversation or by letter he had stated that **the second coming was immediately at hand.** "It is this misleading assertion that accounts both for the increased discouragement of the faint-hearted to encourage whom Paul writes #1:3-2:17, and for the increased meddlesomeness of the idle brethren to warn whom Paul writes #3:1-18" (Frame). It is enough to give one pause to note Paul's indignation over this use of his name by one of the over-zealous advocates of the view **that Christ was coming at once.** It is true that Paul was still alive, but, if such a "pious fraud" was so common and easily condoned as some today argue, it is difficult to explain Paul's evident anger. Moreover, **Paul's words should make us hesitate to affirm that Paul definitely proclaimed the early return of Jesus. He hoped for it undoubtedly, but he did not specifically proclaim it as so many today assert and accuse him of misleading the early Christians with a false presentation.**" (Robertson, A.T., Word Pictures, 2 Thess. 2:3)

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 actually settles the whole "imminence" question. Paul corrected the Thessalonians' mistaken excitement that Jesus' coming could be at any moment. He reminding them that Jesus' coming for them was **not yet "imminent."** He chastised them for supposing that it was "at hand." He referred them back to Jesus' statements in the Olivet Discourse, that two major signs must precede His coming, the great apostasy (Matt. 24:9-13) and the coming of the Man of Sin (Matt. 24:15). Paul's teaching here is in perfect harmony with Jesus' teaching in Matt. 24:32,33. Only **after** we see "*all these things,*" can we know that His coming is "*near, even at the doors.*"

Some claim that Paul used certain Greek words that require an "any moment" anticipation of the rapture. For example;

Phil 3:20

*20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we **look for** the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:
(KJV)*

The Greek word translated "look for" is "apekdechomai." Some pre-tribbers insist that it means "imminent" in the sense of occurring at "any moment." However, that is not the biblical meaning. Paul's terminology does NOT require imminence (in the sense of "any moment.") He merely taught believers to eagerly await Christ's return with expectancy and anticipation. "Apekdechomai" is a compound of "apo" (#575 - away from) and "ekdechomai" (#1551 - to await). It means to await something (at a distance) with anticipation. But it does NOT mean it could occur at any moment, or was threatening to occur at any moment, without any prior signs. In fact, most Bible translations render this "wait for" rather than the KJV's "look for." In the other occurrences of this word in the KJV, it is almost always rendered "wait" as well. In Rom. 8:19 it is used regarding the creation awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God. The restoration of the creation is post-trib. And we all agree that certain prophesied events must occur before this restoration of the creation. Also, the same word is used in 1 Pet. 3:20, regarding God's waiting in the days of Noah while Noah was building the ark.

1 Pet 3:20

*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.
(NKJ)*

Surely, the flood was not "imminent" all the while Noah was building the ark! Yes, it most surely was going to happen. And Noah and family most surely anticipated, waited for, and looked for, the day when the flood would come. They did not know **when** it would come. But, they were fully aware that certain things had to happen first. They had to finish the ark, and stock it with supplies and animals! And they knew beyond a shadow of doubt that the flood would not come until after these things were done. This is precisely the kind of anticipation and expectancy that Paul taught concerning the rapture, using the very same Greek word. And it is exactly what he taught explicitly in 2 Thess. 2:1-3.

Some pre-tribbers also point to Phil. 4:5, "the Lord is at hand," as proof that Paul taught an "any moment" kind of expectancy. The Greek word in question is "eggus." It does not necessarily mean "imminent" in the sense of "any moment." It simply means "near" either in **distance** or **time**. Paul could have meant that the Lord is close by. This is how the NASB and NIV render this verse. Even if Paul was referring to nearness of time, "eggus" still does not require an "any moment" kind of "imminence." It is the same word used in the following verses.

Matt 26:18

*18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is **at hand**; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.
(KJV)*

Here, Jesus was referring to His crucifixion as being 'at hand.' Could it occur 'at any moment?' No, Jesus first had to eat the Passover with His disciples, be betrayed by Judas, etc. Was Jesus aware that these things must happen before he was crucified? Sure. 'At hand' does not imply 'any moment.' Here is another example:

John 11:55

*55 And the Jews' passover was **nigh at hand**: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem*

before the passover, to purify themselves.
(KJV)

In this case, John said the Passover was "at hand," and went on to mention the trip to Jerusalem, (which took at least several days). Was the Passover threatening to occur "at any moment?" No! They all knew that Passover was on the 15th of Nisan! This verse is simply John's way of saying that the time of the Passover was fast approaching, and getting rather close. It is his way of saying that the attention and anticipation had now turned toward the approaching Passover. But, the important point here is the Greek word "eggus" does not imply uncertainty about the time. Quite the contrary, in both cases above it refers to an event about which the exact time was known! And in neither case does it indicate that no other known event could occur first! Quite the contrary. In both cases those in question knew that other things must occur first.

Since these same Greek words are used by Paul of Christians' anticipation of the rapture, and since Paul clearly and unmistakably wrote that two specific things must occur before "*our gathering unto Him*" in 2 Thess. 2:1-3, Paul simply did not teach the kind of "imminence" that pre-tribbers teach.

"Imminence" According to Peter

Peter also referred his readers to Jesus' parable of the "thief in the night." Yet, the context indicates he was referring to Christ's post-trib coming.

2 Pet 3:3-10

3 *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,*
4 *And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things*
continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

5 *For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the*
earth standing out of the water and in the water:

6 *Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:*

7 *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto*
fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

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

9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to*
us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

10 *But **the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night**; in the which the heavens shall*
pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the
works that are therein shall be burned up.

(KJV)

Peter wrote almost exactly the same statement that Paul wrote in 1 Thess. 5:2, "*the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*" Paul was clearly speaking of the day for which Christians were watching, ie, the rapture. Both Peter and Paul were referring their readers back to Jesus' parable of the "thief in the night" in the Olivet Discourse. Jesus was speaking of His coming to gather His elect "immediately after the tribulation" (Matt. 24:29-31&43). By their citing Jesus' parable, they both implied that the rapture was post-trib, and that the signs Jesus spoke about are inherently linked to our watching for the "thief in the night."

One of the most important points from 2 Peter 3, is that the very same coming of Christ that was threatening the scoffers with sudden destruction is what Christians are awaiting. It is extremely difficult to imagine that Peter's reference to the Day of the Lord coming as a "thief in the night" as a pre-trib rapture.

"Imminence" According to James

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)

Here James used a parable of a farmer, patiently awaiting the time of harvest. Is this a picture of an "any moment" coming with no prior signs? Does a farmer expect the harvest "at any moment" during the entire year after planting? The parable explains how we are to watch. A farmer knows that there is an appointed time for the harvest, after the crop has matured. James refers to his awaiting the rainy season before harvest. In Israel, there were two main rainy seasons, and the two harvests followed these rainy seasons. Farmers never harvested their fields until after the rains. Hence, the rains in this parable are signs that must come prior to Christ's coming. So, in James' exhortation, while the coming of the Lord is drawing nigh (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."

"Watching" for Jesus' coming inherently includes watching for the signs Jesus gave in Matthew 24. The same could be said of all of the commands to watch. If Jesus could tell His disciples to "watch" for His coming "immediately after the tribulation," and yet that coming be preceded by a host of signs, pre-tribbers cannot rightly claim that other commands to "watch" imply an "any moment" coming.

"Imminence" According to John

Revelation 16

*15 Behold, **I come as a thief**, Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

This is the final time in Scripture that Jesus' parable of the "thief in the night" is cited. These verses prove that Jesus' coming "as a thief" is in reference to His post-tribulation coming. The context of this beatitude is immediately before Jesus comes in glory to destroy the Antichrist. It is the final warning to believers who are watching the unfolding of the signs during the tribulation. It is located in the chronology of Revelation between the 6th and 7th vials. The 7th vial is the fall of Babylon, and the coming of Christ at Armageddon.

The pre-trib concept of "imminence" completely misses the point of Jesus' statements in Matt. 24. It imagines the subject of the "thief in the night" parable is a pre-trib coming, when no such coming is hinted at in the text, and the context undeniably has Jesus' post-trib coming in view. The pre-trib idea of "imminence" ignores Paul's statement in 1 Thess. 5, that Christians will NOT be surprised by Jesus' coming, and that it will NOT be "as a thief in the night" for those of us who are watching. This simply cannot fit a pre-trib scheme. The pre-trib idea of "imminence" twists Paul's words in 2 Thess. 2:1-3, where he flat out said that Jesus' coming for us is NOT imminent yet. And, the pre-trib idea of "imminence" turns a blind eye to Revelation 16, where the "thief in the night" parable is most certainly used as the final warning for believers in the tribulation, that Jesus' coming is becoming "imminent."

If, as John Walvoord and other pre-trib writers claim, unconditional "imminence" is the cornerstone of pre-tribulationism, then pre-trib is clearly left WITHOUT its chief cornerstone! The Bible simply does not teach that Jesus could come at any moment. His coming is only "imminent" AFTER the series of signs Jesus gave come to pass.

Another point often overlooked by pre-tribbers is Jesus' prophecy of Peter's death. John was the only one to record this prophecy in the closing chapter of his Gospel. John wrote His Gospel AFTER the destruction of Jerusalem and after Peter had been martyred in Rome. John was probably the

only living Apostle at the time. It is apparent that John wrote this to squelch the rumor among the Churches that Jesus would return before John died.

John 21:17-24

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

*19 **This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.** And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*

20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

*22 Jesus saith unto him, **If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?** follow thou me.*

*23 **Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?***

24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

(KJV)

Since John made it clear that there was a rumor among the brethren that he would live to see Jesus' coming, and since this same rumor was based on Jesus' prophecy of Peter's death, it is obvious that the early Christians knew that Jesus' coming was not "imminent" until after Peter died. Therefore, when all of Paul's, Peter's, and James' epistles were written, Jesus' coming could NOT have been "imminent" at the time! Consequently, none of the statements in these epistles meant that Jesus' coming was "imminent" to those to whom they were addressed! How then can pre-tribbers argue from these same statements that Jesus' coming is "imminent?" Have they changed their meaning after they were written and received by the early Church? Pre-trib "imminence" is simply an untenable position!

Pre-tribbers frequently claim the statements in the New Testament, about Christians "looking for" Jesus' coming, indicate His coming must be imminent. In their thinking, we could not "look for" Jesus' coming if we knew certain things must occur first. However, this is simply not so. An expectant mother is "looking for" the birth of her child. Yet she is keenly aware that there is labor to endure before she can hold her little one in her arms. Why is it so hard for pre-tribbers to comprehend that we (post-tribbers) could be "looking for the blessed hope?" What pre-tribbers fail to realize is the words used in the New Testament regarding our expectancy of Christ's coming imply an eagerness and longing. It is with eager anticipation that we await the coming of the Lord, because we long to see Him. We do NOT eagerly await the tribulation, the Antichrist, the mark of the Beast, or the plagues, because those things are not the focus of our hope! Our focus is on Christ and His glorious appearing! We look beyond those things to the one in whom we place all our hopes! That we must go through a short period of tribulation first is as inconsequential to our "looking for" Him as the labor is to the expectant mother. It is a matter of perspective. Ask any post-tribber if He is "looking for" the return of Jesus, and he will tell you that he most certainly is! It is pre-tribbers who try to spin the language so as to deny us this "blessed hope." Well, we will not be denied! We are going to go right on eagerly expecting Jesus to come, anticipating His coming with joyful hope, all the while knowing that there are some "birth pains" to be endured before the birth. Our focus is on Jesus! Hence, we are "looking" for our Savior. This kind of "looking" with eager anticipation is clearly intimated by Peter regarding the new heaven and new earth! Yet no pre-tribber would suppose that this is "imminent."

2 Pet 3:12-14

*12 **Looking for** and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire*

shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

*13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, **look for** new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

*14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye **look for** such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*

(KJV)

If first century Christians could be "looking for" the "*new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,*" why cannot post-tribbers be "*looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,*" (Titus 2:13)?

Also see our article [Knowing the Day & Hour](#) for a discussion of how and when we can and will know the time of Jesus' coming.

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Wrath or Rapture?

Can Christians be Present During Judgment?

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1 Thessalonians 5

9 For God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Many pre-tribbers make every attempt to paint a picture of the tribulation so horrible, no Christian could possibly endure it. The entire period is labeled, the "time of wrath." Then, they introduce 1 Thessalonians 5:9, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath..." Therefore, a pre-tribulation rapture must be implied. After all, "Jesus would never allow His bride to be dragged through the mud before the wedding!"

This sounds good to modern Christians who have never missed a meal, or slept on the ground. It seems only reasonable, for believers who have service agreements on all their appliances, to be raptured before that awful time. But for the Thessalonian Christians who received this letter, life was not so easy. They were being persecuted severely for their faith; many had been killed, [1 Thes. 2:14, 2 Thes. 1:4-6]. Paul was not telling them they would not have to suffer. They were already suffering. He was saying they would get relief, when Jesus comes to destroy their persecutors.

The Context of 1 Thessalonians 5.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 must be interpreted within its context. Paul wrote in verse 2, the "Day of the Lord" is coming as a "thief in the night." I have given conclusive proof that the "Day of the Lord" begins when Jesus comes after the tribulation. [See the article entitled, "The Day of the Lord."] The fact that the sun and moon will be darkened, "after the tribulation," but before the "Day of the Lord," demonstrates that the "Day of the Lord" is not the tribulation, as pre-tribbers claim, but follows it. According to verse three, "sudden destruction" will overtake the ungodly at that time. The seven year tribulation cannot be characterized as "sudden destruction," nor can it rightfully be labeled the "Day of the Lord." During the tribulation the tension builds to the climax, when Jesus is revealed from heaven, to destroy the ungodly, [Rev. 19:11-21].

Luke 17

29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

The wicked will be destroyed the same day, suddenly, when Jesus is revealed. It is within the context of the "Day of the Lord" that Paul wrote, "*For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation, by our Lord Jesus Christ.*" It is God's wrath, at the battle of Armageddon, that we are exempt from. We are not promised exemption from persecution, or even martyrdom. In fact we are promised persecution, [Luke 21:12-19, John 16:1-4,33, 2 Tim. 3:12]. But we can be certain, as Paul reassured the Thessalonians, that God will destroy those who persecute us, and deliver His people from persecution. When He comes in judgment, we will be spared, because, "God hath not appointed us to wrath..."

The Wrath of the Tribulation

No doubt, the great tribulation will be dreadful. Jesus said there has never been anything like it before, nor will there be anything like it again. But Revelation paints a picture of a large group of

overcomers emerging from the hour of trial, [Rev. 7:14, Rev. 12:11, Rev. 20:4]. Some of God's wrath will be unleashed during the tribulation on the followers of Antichrist. But this wrath is selective, not universal. [See: Rev. 9:4, Rev. 16:2, Rev. 16:10].

God's Wrath in the "Church Age"

In Daniel 9:26, Matthew 24:2, Mark 13:2, Luke 19:41-44, and Luke 21:20-24, the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was foretold. According to two of the above passages, Luke 19:41-44 and Luke 21:20-24, this was God's wrath on Israel. If it is true that 1 Thes. 5:9 teaches Christians cannot be on earth when God's wrath is unleashed, why didn't the rapture come before A.D. 70! Forty years into the "Church age" we find "wrath" without a "pre-wrath" rapture! Since God's wrath can be found prior to the tribulation within the alleged "Church age," and Christians were not raptured, there is no logical grounds for demanding a pre-trib rapture in order to keep Christians separate from "wrath" in the tribulation.

Saints in the Tribulation

The book of Revelation refers to believers in the tribulation many times. All rapture views place saints of God on earth during God's wrath. Whether we call them Israel, the Church, or tribulation saints, is irrelevant. If a single saint is on earth at that time, all of the pre-trib logic is nullified. Are the "144,000," the "great multitude" of Rev. 7, the saints who "overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb," and the beheaded overcomers of Rev. 20:4, "appointed unto wrath?" One must have an elitist attitude in order to sustain such a conclusion.

The Old Testament Connection

God has routinely judged the wicked while supernaturally protecting His children at the same time. The precedent set in Egypt is important because it establishes God's normal method of judging the wicked. God protected His own people while pulverizing the Egyptians with a series of plagues identical to many of the plagues in Revelation. Other examples could be cited, such as Noah and the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. God never raptured His people before to avoid His wrath, He simply protected them, or gave them the means to protect themselves, such as Noah's ark, and the early warning given to Lot.

I understand 1 Thes. 5:9, "God hath not appointed us to wrath," to mean exactly what it says. We will not experience God's wrath. But it requires a leap of logic to say this verse implies removal from the earth.

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The Restrainer

Who or What Restrains the "Mystery of Iniquity?"

By Tim Warner - Revised Feb. 2002

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II Thess 2:1-9

1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,
 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.
 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,
 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.
 5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?
 6 And **now you know what is restraining**, that he may be revealed in his own time.
 7 **For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.**
 8 **And then the lawless one will be revealed**, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.
 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,
 (NKJV)

The Pre-Trib View

Paul indicates in this passage that someone is withholding the "mystery of iniquity." Once this person moves "out of the way," the Antichrist will be revealed. Pre-tribulationists claim the Holy Spirit is the restrainer. His influence, exercised through the "Church," keeps the revelation of Antichrist and his demonic kingdom in check. They believe the Holy Spirit, along with the Church will be removed before the Antichrist can be revealed.

Pre-tribbers assume several things not stated by Paul. The passage does not say who the restrainer is. Pre-tribbers assume it is the Holy Spirit. It does not say where the restrainer goes when he is "taken out of the way." Pre-tribbers assume He goes to heaven. It is assumed that the "Church" will also go to heaven because she is indwelt by the Spirit.

The pre-trib reasoning depends upon a positive identification of the restrainer as the Holy Spirit. What is the basis for concluding that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit? According to Scofield, the process of elimination requires this view. He says the Holy Spirit is the only one who could do the job. Since the restraining influence has been at work from the time of the Apostles to the present, the restrainer must be eternal and supernatural. It is said that the Holy Spirit is the only one who could fit this criteria.

If the Holy Spirit leaves earth at the beginning of the tribulation, how could the multitudes be saved in the tribulation? No one can be saved apart from the drawing and convicting influence of the Spirit of God. Also, how could 144,000 Jews evangelize the world in seven years, without the power and presence of the Spirit, when the "Church" has been unsuccessful in nearly two thousand years with the Holy Spirit? The Word of God clearly teaches in Mark 13:9-11, that Christians in the tribulation will be empowered by the Holy Spirit! And that the Spirit will be **indwelling** them.

If we clear away all the assumptions and speculation, these verses say only that someone is withholding the revelation of the Antichrist. When the restrainer moves "out of the way" (of the "mystery of iniquity"), the Antichrist will be revealed. The restrainer is not identified in this passage, nor is there any indication that the restrainer will go to heaven at this time. Scofield is not correct in claiming that only the Holy Spirit can fit the criteria established in this passage.

Other Views

The earliest known interpretation of Paul's "restrainer" seems to have been the Roman Empire. This was the view of Tertullian, a late second century Latin writer. Some have also claimed that Irenaeus (mid 2nd cent.) and Hippolytus (late 2nd cent.) also taught this. But, a close examination of their writings indicates that while they thought Rome must fall first, they derived this idea from Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image, not from Paul's discussion of the restrainer. They understood the legs of iron as being the Roman Empire. Since the ten toes represented the 10 kings that give their authority to the Beast, they concluded that the Roman Empire would dissolve into ten kingdoms, after which the Antichrist would arise. This is not the same as Rome being what restrains the appearance of Antichrist. After Constantine made Christianity a state sponsored religion in the fourth century, writers commonly held that Rome was the restrainer.

Others have understood this to refer to human government in general. Since *"the powers that be are ordained of God,"* human laws are seen as keeping this wicked force in check.

Why not the Holy Spirit, Rome, or Human Government?

Before we answer this question, let's look at all of the requirements of the passage in question. Then we will compare the candidates mentioned above to see if they fit the criteria established in this passage.

Criterion #1. The restrainer is spoken of in the neuter gender in verse 6, "**what** is restraining." In verse 7, the restrainer is referred to using the singular masculine personal pronoun, "**He** who now restrains." The first criterion is that the restrainer is properly spoken of both in the neuter gender and the masculine (singular) gender. The restrainer is both an "it" and a "he."

Criterion #2. According to verse 7 the "mystery of iniquity" was already working in the first century. Since Paul spoke of the restraining in the present tense, and projected this into the future until the Antichrist is revealed, we can deduce that the restrainer has been active for at least 2000 years. Therefore, the restrainer must be a being that has lived for at least this period of time.

Criterion #3. The restrainer is hindering what Paul calls the "mystery of iniquity" and not the "Man of Sin" himself. Obviously, the "Man of Sin" (Antichrist) was not alive in the first century. The gist of Paul's statement indicates that the "mystery of iniquity" is some kind of demonic force, a "spiritual" power that seeks to bring about the revelation of the Man of Sin. John adds some light for us in the following passage.

I John 4:1-3

*1 Beloved, do not believe every **spirit**, but test **the spirits**, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

*2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every **spirit** that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,*

*3 and every **spirit** that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And **this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.***

(NKJV)

Notice the similarity to Paul's statement. John says they knew that the "spirit of Antichrist" was coming. He informs them that this "spirit" was already working at the time. Our third criterion is the restrainer seems to be able to deal directly with spiritual powers on a spiritual plane, rather than in

the physical realm. Therefore it is most likely that the restrainer is a spiritual being since he is restraining a spiritual being.

Criterion #4. The restrainer must be more powerful than the one he is restraining, or have greater authority. Otherwise, how could he be successful in restraining for at least 2000 years?

Criterion #5. The Greek word for "restrain" or "withhold" in this passage means to physically grab and hold down. The restrainer deals directly in hand to hand combat with the demonic forces.

Of the previously mentioned candidates for "restrainer," Rome fails the endurance test, since Rome fell many centuries ago. The Man of Sin is still not on the scene. Neither did Rome have the ability to deal directly with demonic powers, and could not deal in close combat with such forces. It also fails the masculine singular pronoun criterion. And whether Rome was more powerful than demonic powers is highly doubtful.

Human government may have continued for the required time, but, like Rome, fails to fit the masculine singular personal pronoun (he). Like Rome, it also fails in the ability to deal on a spiritual plane, and with demonic powers directly. Furthermore, human government will continue in the tribulation, and laws will continue to be enforced. If human government were the restrainer, Paul's words would imply that human government would come to an end before the Man of Sin is revealed. We know that is not true according to Revelation and Daniel. Also, like Rome, human government seems to fail to have sufficient power to keep demonic forces in check, even if it could operate in that realm somehow.

The Holy Spirit fits most of the criteria, certainly being able to deal with demonic forces on a spiritual plane, and having the necessary power. The Holy Spirit is eternal, so He has no difficulty with the long time element. However, the Holy Spirit is not typically spoken of in the neuter gender (WHAT is restraining). Nor is the Holy Spirit typically pictured as directly restraining evil in Scripture, or hands-on wrestling directly with the demonic powers. Yes, the Spirit does play a counter-force role to Satan according to John, ("*greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world*"). But, this is in reference to the Spirit's influence on us, giving us the ability to overcome the adversary in our personal lives. While the Holy Spirit's presence may indirectly hinder the activity of demonic powers, Paul seems to be painting a picture of more direct hands-on intervention with the powers of darkness.

The Restrainer is Michael and His Armies of Angels

During the reign of Cyrus, King of Persia, an angel appeared to Daniel to reveal the future to him. He informed Daniel that he had been delayed twenty-one days because of a struggle with the "prince of Persia", [Dan. 10:10-13]. Then he said he must return to the struggle with the "prince of Persia," and afterward he must wrestle with the "prince of Greece."

Dan 10:12-14,20-21

12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

*13 **But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me;** and I remained there with the kings of Persia.*

14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days. ...

*20 Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and **now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.***

*21 But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: **and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.***

(KJV)

Was the angel referring to the human rulers of Persia and Greece? (Persia was the supreme world power at the time of Daniel's vision). But, that seems hardly likely. How could a human ruler or king fight with an angel, or hold back an angel from coming to Daniel? Besides, the same angel in Dan. 11:1 said he stood to **confirm and strengthen** the first Medo-Persian King (Darius) from the very first year of the Persian Empire. This angel was helping the human Persian king, and at the same time was wrestling against the "prince of Persia." I think it is fair to conclude that the "prince of Persia" was a demonic spirit that sought to turn the kingdom of Persia to do its dark bidding. And this angel had been assigned to restrain it.

Also, notice that the angel said he was returning to the fight with the "prince of Persia" after he left Daniel. After that, the "prince of Grecia" would come. If we follow the succession of Kingdoms in Daniel, we see that the Greeks were to come after the Persians, followed by the Romans. Then the Antichrist would arise out of the ten kingdoms that replaced Rome.

It is apparent that the angel was fighting with a series of demonic powers that sought to influence these successive kingdoms for evil. If there was a "prince of Persia" during the time the Persians ruled the known world, followed by a "prince of Greece" when Alexander the Great came to power and conquered the Persians, it is safe to assume that there would be a "prince of Rome" also. And that the angel would be engaged in the struggle with that demonic force as well. But, notice what this angel said to Daniel about Michael. *"But I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that **holdeth** with me in these things, but **Michael your Prince**."* The expression "Michael your Prince" is in reference to Israel's Prince. Earlier in verse 14, the same angel said to Daniel, *"I am come to make thee understand what shall befall **thy people** (Israel) in the latter days..."* So, "Michael your Prince" is most definitely Israel's Prince. The word "holdeth" means to hold down, or to restrain. Earlier, the angel said that Michael had to come and help him while wrestling with the "prince of Persia" (vs. 13). Michael seems to be superior to this angel at least in strength, and probably in rank. From the angel's words in this passage we can conclude that angels, and Michael in particular, are engaged in restraining demonic powers that seek to influence and control human government for evil purposes. Since at least two successive "princes" are named (Persia and Greece) in the major outline of the succession of kingdoms leading to the Antichrist, we can conclude that this restraining activity was ongoing over these successive kingdoms. Michael is definitely identified as the restrainer here.

The same angel continued his conversation with Daniel through chapter 11, revealing many details about the world kingdoms from Daniel's time until the final kingdom of the Antichrist. He concluded by again referring to Michael in connection with the coming tribulation.

Daniel 12:1

1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. (KJV)

It is within the context, of angelic restraining of these successive demonic powers that sought to control the series of world empires leading to the Antichrist, that we find that Michael will "stand up" and the time of trouble will begin. It is Michael and his forces who have been "HOLDING" at bay the demonic spirits which attempt to control the world empires. We already saw that Michael was named as Israel's "prince." And here we see the same thing stated. Michael stands for Daniel's people. That is, Michael is Israel's defender. Michael will "stand up" and the time of trouble will begin. What is meant by Michael's standing up? The Hebrew word could mean "stand still" (that is to cease his restraining activity). But, given the fact that the same word is used in reference to his "standing" for Israel, it seems to imply that Michael will take a defensive posture regarding Israel at the time great tribulation begins. Apparently, Michael will cease his offensive role as restrainer of the demonic "princes" and focus on a purely defensive role as Israel's protector in the tribulation.

In Revelation 12 we have more insight regarding Michael's activity at this time.

Rev 12:7-17

*7 And there was war in heaven: **Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,***

8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

*14 **And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.***

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

(KJV)

No doubt this passage was meant to bring to mind Daniel 12:1. The timing of Daniel's "standing up" is at the beginning of the "time of trouble." Jesus referred to this verse in Matt. 24:21, calling it "great tribulation" following the "abomination of desolation" (vs. 15). And here in Rev. 12 we see that the period of Israel's protection in the wilderness is 1260 days. Both passages then are parallel. Michael's "standing up" occurs at the same time as the "war in heaven," the mid-point of the 70th week.

When we examine Paul's words in 2 Thess. 2, we see that he too referred to precisely the same time, describing the "abomination of desolation" as the Man of Sin taking his seat in the Temple claiming to be God. This is how he will be "revealed" once the restrainer moves "out of the way" of the "mystery of iniquity."

The word "withhold" or "restrain" (letteth - KJV) in 2 Thes. 2:6-8 are translated from the Greek word "katecho," literally; **"to grasp and hold down."** The restrainer is "holding down" the "mystery of iniquity." At the time Michael and His angels throw Satan and his demons down to the earth, and Michael takes a defensive stand for Israel's remnant "in the wilderness," the restraint will be removed from the "mystery of iniquity," allowing the Beast to emerge unrestrained on the scene. The time of trouble begins with his unrestrained "abomination of desolation." Jesus twice quoted from this vision of Daniel in His Olivet Discourse, connecting the Antichrist to the final king in Daniel's vision, [cf. Dan. 11:31 & Matt. 24:15], and identifying the "time of trouble" with the "great tribulation," [cf. Dan. 12:1 & Matt. 24:21]. Since Paul's remarks about the Man of Sin sitting in the Temple parallel Jesus' mention of the "abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel the prophet, it is very likely that Paul had Michael in mind when he spoke of the "restrainer."

Michael and his army of angels fit all of the criteria. Regarding the grammatical concerns, the angelic army is neuter, and Michael their commander is singular masculine. Michael and his angels

have been around for over 2000 years, so they fit the time frame requirement. Michael and his angels are the perfect candidate to deal directly with spiritual entities, since they are spiritual beings. Michael is clearly seen in Scripture as the counter force to Satan, the one who contends directly with the Devil [Jude 1:9]. And Michael and his army of angels are more powerful than Satan and his demons, as illustrated by their winning the "war in heaven," and casting Satan and his demons down to the earth.

CRITERIA	HOLY SPIRIT	ROME	HUMAN GOV	MICHAEL & HIS ARMY
Masculine/Neuter	NO	NO	NO	YES
Active 2000+ Years	YES	NO	YES	YES
Spiritual Being	YES	NO	NO	YES
Stronger	YES	NO	NO	YES
Direct Contact	NO	NO	NO	YES

While we may not be able to prove with absolute certainty that the restrainer is Michael and his angels, they are the best fit by far. We also have other passages, like Daniel 10, that actually say Michael is engaged in this type of activity. No similar passages can be found for the role of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Michael is by far the best choice. And in my opinion, the only possible choice.

If Michael is the restrainer, the whole pre-trib argument from 2 Thessalonians 2 collapses. Not only does the passage say nothing of the restrainer going to heaven, but there is no reason to suppose that the Holy Spirit or the Church is even in view. Finally, IF Paul was referring to the Holy Spirit, and implying that the Church would be taken to heaven before the Antichrist is revealed, he would be directly contradicting what he had just written in verses 1-3. There he said that "our gathering together unto Him" will not occur until **AFTER** the apostasy and the revelation of the Man of Sin.

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In My Father's House

A Discussion of John 14

By Tim Warner - Revised 02/2002

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John 14

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye 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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

(KJV)

John fourteen one through three is sometimes quoted as evidence that Jesus taught a pre-tribulation rapture. Other pre-tribulationists believe the rapture was not revealed by Jesus at all. They believe Paul alone was the conduit for this revelation. Those who claim John fourteen teaches a pre-trib 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 pre-tribulationism and equally troublesome for post-tribulationism, **if it were true**. The post-tribulation view does not allow for the Church to go to heaven after the rapture, but directly into the Millennial Kingdom.

Presuppositions & Bias

One of the difficulties with the way this passage is interpreted is our own personal bias. If we believe in a pre-trib rapture, we naturally would look at this passage with a bias toward pre-trib. We might assume that since Jesus was referring to coming for His disciples, He had a pre-trib rapture in view. If we already believe that Christians are going to heaven after the rapture, we would be inclined to interpret *"My Father's House"* as heaven. But, if we have a bias toward the post-trib view, we would assume Jesus was referring to the second coming. If we are going to understand this passage correctly, we need to look beyond our own presuppositions, and look at John fourteen from the perspective of the disciples, whom Jesus was addressing. We all have presuppositions that we bring to a passage. The disciples themselves had presuppositions based on their Jewish upbringing and training in the Old Testament Scriptures, and based on Jesus' prior teaching. 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?"* It is clear from Jesus' own words in this very discourse that He was teaching His disciples **ONLY** what they could understand and digest at the time. He told them, **"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."** (John 16:12-13). Notice that 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 receive and 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 pre-tribulationists is how to reconcile these verses with the Olivet Discourse. That discourse, occurring only two days earlier, was a lengthy discussion of the last days and the second coming. There is no pre-trib 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 that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

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)

"That day" and "that hour" refer to Jesus' coming after the tribulation mentioned in the previous verses. The "*man taking a far journey*" was Jesus. He was about to return to heaven. That He "*gave authority to His servants and to every man his work*" refers to the Great Commission. Obviously, this concerns Christians, since the Great Commission was given to the 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 disciples, and passed on to us in succeeding generations as well. But, the point I would like to stress is the disciples' expectation from the Olivet Discourse was most certainly that Jesus would come back for them after the tribulation, not before.

Typically, pre-tribulationists disqualify the Olivet Discourse from any discussion of the rapture by claiming it is Jewish, and does not concern the Church. However, any reasoning they employ to disassociate the Olivet Discourse from the Church must also be applied to the Upper Room Discourse. Both were given to Jesus' disciples only two days apart, both in the midst of a Jewish setting. 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 this discourse from the Olivet Discourse, particularly since they were in the midst of observing the Jewish Passover? 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 pre-trib rapture based on John fourteen. Nor could John fourteen be simply further revelation, adding a pre-trib rapture to the scenario Jesus described on the Mount of Olives. The two ideas are mutually exclusive. 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 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 in 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 pre-trib rapture in John fourteen, He was directly negating everything He had just told them two days earlier!!!** If pre-tribulationists 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 whatsoever 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.

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 Millennial 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 all 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 seen 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 the Kingdom of God for His *"little flock."* In the verses immediately preceding the passage in question, Jesus' *"going away"* meant going to the cross. This is obvious from His remark to Peter about his denial.

John 13:31-14:3

31 Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

32 If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

*33 Little children, **yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.***

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

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

*36 Simon Peter said unto him, **Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.***

*37 Peter said unto him, Lord, **why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.***

*38 Jesus answered him, **Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.***

14:1 *Let not your heart be troubled: ye 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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

(KJV)

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 saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

18 *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.*

19 ***This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.*** *And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*

20 *Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?*

21 *Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?*

22 *Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry **till I come**, what is that to thee? follow thou me.*

23 *Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?*

24 *This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.*

(KJV)

Notice that Jesus left open the possibility that John might live until the second coming. But, Peter 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 9:12,23-26

12 *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but **by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us....***

23 *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*

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

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin **by the sacrifice of himself.**

(KJV)

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. "*Jesus saith unto her, **Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.***" (John 20:17). Jesus was not referring to His ascension, as 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' 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 activities 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 said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, **That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.**

21 **A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.**

22 **And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.**

23 And **in that day** ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.**

(KJV)

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 of Jesus? 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 pre-tribbers are correct, then 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 that 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' 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 and us, 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 beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

(KJV)

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 9:12,24

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. ...

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

(KJV)

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" to accommodate His disciples, or making the way for the disciples to occupy these abodes? Where is such an idea taught in Scripture? The fact is, this idea is completely foreign to Scripture, and is based solely on pre-trib 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. I can find 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 Temple is always in view. This includes the Tabernacle [1 Samuel 1:24], Solomon's Temple (2 Chronicles 2:1, 7:16), as specifically to 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 example.

Isa 2:2-4

*2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of **the LORD's house** shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*

*3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to **the house of the God of Jacob**; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

(KJV)

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 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them out of **the Temple**...*

*16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not **my Father's house** an house of merchandise.*

*17 And the disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of **thine house** hath eaten me up.*

(KJV)

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.

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 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 pre-trib 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 ye 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 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

*16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled **in the kingdom of God.***

17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

*18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, **until the kingdom of God shall come....***

28 Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.

*29 And **I appoint unto you a kingdom,** as my Father hath appointed unto me;*

*30 **That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.***

(KJV)

According to Luke's account, Jesus spoke of His Kingdom in the upper room and mentioned nothing of 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 Millennial Temple, ruling with Christ in His Kingdom.

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, wilt thou 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 was His return, apparently thinking He was about to streak through the sky gathering together all the elect. 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.

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 therefore 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 apartments connected to the Temple structure atop the Temple Mount as follows. *"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."*

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. *"And when he was come **into the temple, the chief priests and the elders** of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?"* (Matt. 21:23). 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. But they beat His servants, and killed His Son. The result was they were destroyed by the land owner, and the vineyard 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 say I unto you, **The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.**"* (vs. 43). But to His disciples Jesus said: *"Fear not, 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 Millennial 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" is purified Israel, with Gentiles adopted into Abraham's seed, forming one body of redeemed people.

I realize some may object to this view because there are certainly not enough "apartments" in the Kingdom Temple for the whole Church. But, as Luke's account indicates, Jesus was not speaking to all future Christians here, only His disciples. Certainly He did not mean for the whole Church to 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 temptations."* (Luke 22:28). All saints of God will reign with Him in His Kingdom. But, the disciples earned a special place, ruling from Christ's side in the Temple. Other believers who suffer for Christ 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 Millennium, there will not be dispensational distinctions. There is only one program for both Jew and Gentile. There will be only one body of redeemed people who were saved prior to Christ's second coming. This will include Old and New Testament saints. *"And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God"* (Luke 13:29). And again, *"When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (Matt. 8:10-12).

See our series on [Progressive Dispensationalism](#) for more regarding the dispensational ramifications. See our article [Jewish Wedding Customs & the Rapture](#) for a discussion of how John 14 relates to the Jewish Wedding Customs.

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:

1. the context in which Jesus was speaking to going away to be crucified
2. the disciples' familiarity with Old Testament references to the *"house of the Lord"*
3. Jesus earlier usage of the phrase *"My Father's house"*
4. Jesus instructions in the Olivet Discourse given only 2 days earlier
5. the parallel passage in Luke 22, which shows the context of the discussion was the coming Kingdom
6. the apparent implication of the Jewish wedding custom associated with the "Father's house" See our article [Jewish Wedding Customs & the Rapture](#).

I do not mean to imply that a mansion in the sky is unbiblical. God has prepared a city for us, the New Jerusalem, described in Revelation twenty-one. However, it will not be presented to us until the end of the millennium, (Rev. 21:2). The mistake is the idea that the words "my Father's house" in John fourteen refer to heaven or the New Jerusalem. There is no precedent in Scripture for this interpretation and all evidence of similar language points to the Temple in Jerusalem during the Kingdom age. The pre-trib view of these verses hangs entirely on assumptions which cannot be substantiated from other Scriptures, and flow counter to everything else Jesus taught His disciples.

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 raptured 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, Jesus said would be evicted and locked out of His Kingdom.

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Revelation 3:10

Proof Text or Pre-Text?

By Tim Warner - Revised 5/2002

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Revelation 3

*10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will **keep thee from** the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

A Conditional Promise

Notice the promise to "keep thee from" the hour of temptation is conditional upon keeping Jesus' Word with patient endurance. The Greek word "patience" in this verse is found seven times in Revelation (1:9, 2:2, 2:3, 2:19, 3:10, 13:10, 14:12). The last two are referring to believers in the tribulation patiently enduring the persecution of the Antichrist. Jesus' promise to the local church of Philadelphia was **because** they had kept His Word with patient endurance thus far. Jesus did not make this promise to the other six local churches in Revelation. The promise is limited to one local church among many, and in response to their faithfulness. Of course, we can and should make broader application just as we do with all of the Epistles, written to local churches. However, we must also keep in mind the conditional nature of the promise, for those who have patiently kept Jesus' Word. To assume a guarantee for all believers from this verse is a huge mistake. That goes far beyond what is stated or implied, and enters the realm of presumption. Remember Jesus' statement at the end of His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7)? He likened believers who keep His Word to one who builds his house on the rock. He said that whoever keeps His sayings in that sermon would stand firm when the storm comes. Not all believers keep Jesus' Word with patient endurance. If we are going to make a broader application of this promise than what is literally stated, at best it can be seen as a promise to **SOME** believers who take Jesus' advice in the Sermon on the Mount. It is certainly not a blanket promise for the Church at large.

A Promise of Immunity? Or a Promise of Preservation?

Much of the meaning of this verse hangs on the phrase "keep thee from." It is pretty obvious that the "hour of temptation" refers to the events following in Revelation. But, does "keep thee from" mean removal or preservation? This is the key question.

The Meaning of "From"

Pre-tribbers claim the word "from" in the Greek [ek] means "out of." Therefore, they claim we will be physically kept "out of" the tribulation.

It is true the Greek word "ek" means "out of." However, as we will see later, they misinterpret the word "keep." They also misunderstand this little Greek preposition "ek." "Ek" normally requires a previous presence within the object, in this case, the tribulation. In the multitude of occurrences of "ek" in the Bible, in virtually all of them "ek" implies a previous connection to the object, usually within it. Rather than denoting a stationary position, "ek" implies a movement or emerging from within the object. The meaning of "ek" would more accurately be translated "out from among," or "out of the midst of." This is how it is defined in the Greek lexicons. In Rev. 3:10, the object is the tribulation. In order to come "out from among" the tribulation you must first be **IN** the tribulation. This usage can be demonstrated from the following verse.

Rev. 7:14

*14 ...These are they which came **OUT OF** great tribulation,...*

The words "out of" are also translated from the Greek word "ek." In this case, it is clear these saints were in the tribulation first, and emerged from it.

There are three Greek prepositions which could be translated "from" in English, with different meanings. The Greek words "para" and "apo" mean motion away from, or a fixed position outside the object. Had either of these been used in Rev. 3:10, the implication would be that believers would be kept out of, and remain outside, the tribulation. However, "ek" in contrast, means, **motion from the interior of the object**. That is, emerging from within the tribulation. Based on the meaning of "ek" alone, the implication strongly favors a post-trib view of the saints emerging from within the tribulation.

Pre-tribbers attempt to redefine "ek" to mean totally exempt from the tribulation. They have put forward a couple of examples where "ek" may not demand a previous presence in the object. However, if their interpretations of these few cases are correct, they would most certainly be the exception and not the rule. In case you would like to compare other examples of "ek," here are all the occurrences in Revelation chapter 3. The English words represented by "ek" are in bold.

Rev 3:5

*5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name **OUT OF** the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*
(KJV)

Rev 3:9

*9 Behold, I will make them **OF** the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.*
(KJV)

Rev 3:10

*10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee **FROM** the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*
(KJV)

Rev 3:12

*12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down **OUT OF** heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*
(KJV)

Rev 3:16

*16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee **OUT OF** my mouth.*
(KJV)

Rev 3:18

*18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried **IN** the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*
(KJV)

The Meaning of "Keep"

Our English word "keep" can have a variety of meanings, including to prevent, restrain, obey, hold, preserve, etc. Because of this, it is confusing in Rev. 3:10. Pre-tribbers interpret the phrase "keep thee from" to mean "prevent from entering." That is, "keep thee from" would mean to restrain or

prevent from entering or experiencing the tribulation. But, "preventing" is not the meaning of the word "keep" in this verse. "Keep," is translated from the Greek word "tereo" which literally means "to keep an eye upon" in the sense of putting your full attention on someone or something. It does not mean to prevent or restrain. "tereo" implies a kind of giving one's full attention to something or someone. It often implies preservation, but does not require that meaning. The most common usage of "tereo" in the New Testament is in regards to "keeping" God's commandments or words. That is, observing them.

The Meaning of "Keep...from"

Thayer's Greek Lexicon says that when "keep"[tereo] is used with "from" [ek], it means: "*by guarding, to cause one to escape in safety out of.*" That is, to keep full attention on them so as to assure their final emergence. Therefore, Rev. 3:10 cannot mean removal before the tribulation begins, but safely emerging from within the tribulation. Pre-tribbers misunderstand both the word "ek" and the word "keep."

There is only one other time this Greek phrase appears in the entire Bible. And, as we shall see, Jesus' statement in Rev. 3:10 is a reference to His High Priestly prayer in John 17, which also contains the phrase. The night before Jesus was crucified, He prayed in the garden for His disciples whom He was leaving in the world, and also all believers who would come after them. In this prayer, Jesus used the word "tereo" (keep) several times, but in two different ways. He spoke of His and the Father's "keeping" (attentiveness and preservation) of believers, and also believers being attentive to, and "keeping," Jesus' words.

John 17:6

*6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me **out of** (ek) the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have **KEPT** (tereo) thy word.*
(KJV)

John 17:11

*11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, **KEEP** (tereo) through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.*
(KJV)

John 17:12

*12 While I was with them in the world, I **KEPT** (tereo) them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.*
(KJV)

John 17:15

*15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest **KEEP** (tereo) them **FROM** (ek) the evil.*
(KJV)

Notice the word "ek" in verse 6. Jesus considered His disciples as having come "out of" the world. He did not mean physical removal, nor did He mean they were never a part of this world. Rather, He meant they had emerged from the world system, being called out unto Christ. In verse 6, Jesus also used the word "keep" (tereo) in reference to His followers observing God's Word, as delivered by Jesus. In response to their "keeping" His Word, Jesus prayed in verses 11 & 12 that the Father would "keep" (preserve, or be attentive to) believers. In verse 17, we have the only other occurrence of the phrase found in Rev. 3:10, "tereo...ek." Jesus asked the Father NOT to take them out of the world. That is, not to physically remove them from the sphere of this present evil world. Jesus in effect prayed that the Father leave us here, in the midst of this evil world. But, He also prayed that He would "keep (tereo) them from (ek) the evil.

Notice the exact parallel in Rev. 3:10. In both John 17 and Rev. 3:10, Jesus spoke of our "keeping" His Word. And in both He spoke of our being "kept" (preserved or given God's full attention) in RESPONSE to our keeping His Word. And in both we are preserved out from among evil. In Rev. 3:10, John clearly defines it as "the hour of temptation." It is the same as Paul's "The day, The evil" in Eph. 6:13, and Jesus' "the evil" in John 17:15.

Jesus' Prayer & Promise	John 17	Rev. 3:10
Believers KEPT (tereo) His Word	thou gavest them me; and they have KEPT (tereo) thy word. (vs. 6)	because thou hast KEPT (tereo) the word of my patience
He will KEEP (tereo) believers	And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, KEEP (tereo) through thine own name those whom thou hast given me (vs. 11)	I also will KEEP thee
"KEEP...FROM" (tereo...ek)	I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest KEEP (tereo) them FROM (ek)(vs. 15)	I also will KEEP (tereo) thee FROM (ek)
Preservation from...	"the evil" (vs. 15)	"the hour of temptation"

It is extremely important to understand that the exact phrase in Rev. 3:10 (tereo...ek) is put in contrast to the idea of removal from the world in John 17:15. In effect Jesus said, "Don't take them out of the world, instead keep attentive to them with a view to their safely emerging from among the evil." **Therefore, not only was Jesus referring the Philadelphian believers back to His High Priestly prayer in John 17, but by doing so He was indicating they would NOT be removed from the world, but would be watched over attentively during the "hour of temptation," having "kept" Jesus' Word with patience.** Revelation 3:10 is not a promise of removal before the tribulation. It is a conditional promise for those who have been attentive to keep His Word. Jesus will be just as attentive to them until they emerge from the "hour of temptation."

Some pre-tribbers argue that Rev. 3:10 cannot mean preservation in the tribulation because Revelation 13:7 indicates the Antichrist will "overcome" the (tribulation) saints, making this just an empty promise. However, Rev. 13:7 is speaking of persecution of the saints by the Antichrist. He will physically overcome many believers, who will become martyrs. However, Rev. 12:11 says the saints overcome Satan, by being faithful unto death. While the Antichrist may overcome many of the believers physically, these same believers are said to 'overcome' Him by being faithful unto death. The promise in Rev. 3:10 is not of physical survival. It is a promise of God's presence going with us through the trials. One could make the very same argument from John 17, that Christians today experience 'evil' all the time. Therefore Jesus' prayer goes unanswered! Of course we realize that in John 17 Jesus did not pray that no physical or emotional harm would ever come to His disciples. All of them were martyred but John! We understand this as a prayer that they would not be overcome by the evil, but would emerge victorious. So it is with Rev. 3:10.

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The Phantom Rapture

Does John's Being Caught Up Represent the Rapture?

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Pre-tribulationists make a lot of noise about the "literal" method of interpreting prophecy. They claim it is the foundation of their position. The following quote from **"Things to Come,"** by J. Dwight Pentecost, is typical. *"Pretribulation rapturism rests essentially on one major premise--the literal method of interpretation of the Scriptures."* [Things to Come. pg. 193]. No doubt, the literal method necessarily leads to a pre-millennial understanding of prophecy. However, many pre-millennialists do not believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. It is **not** true that literalism leads to pre-tribulationism within the pre-millennial camp. In fact, post-tribbers can far surpass pre-tribbers in interpreting literally and at face value. This is easily demonstrated. Pre-tribbers spiritualize Jesus' words in Matthew 24, by making the disciples "represent" a Jewish remnant in the tribulation, instead of what they actually were, the disciples of Jesus Christ, the elders of the Church. Post-tribbers, on the other hand, interpret that passage in it's most natural, literal sense.

The lapse into "spiritualizing" that characterizes many pre-tribbers becomes even more blatant in Revelation. Their scheme begins in chapters two and three--the seven letters to the seven churches. Literally, they were real letters sent to real churches in Asia Minor. Each letter contained instructions for the local church in it's unique situation, and encouragement to overcome in the hour of trial. Of course, just like Paul's epistles, they have a secondary application to all churches. But many pre-tribbers are not satisfied with literal interpretation here. They resort to "spiritualizing" tactics, making the seven letters symbolic of seven periods of Church history. They cannot produce a single shred of evidence, from the text of the Bible, to validate this leap in logic. Yet, leap they do. What is the reason for their "prophetic view of the Church age?" It lays the foundation for claiming the "Church age" ends before the tribulation begins, implying a pre-tribulation rapture.

Since there is no description of the rapture before the tribulation in Revelation, many pre-tribbers claim John's being caught up to heaven to see the future, in Revelation 4:1-3, is symbolic of the rapture. This view is promoted by the Scofield Bible and many prominent pre-trib authors and teachers. In this view, John's being caught up to heaven to see the future becomes the Church being caught up before the tribulation. Aside from the blatant violation of the grammatical - historical [normal] method of interpretation, there are other reasons to reject this idea. Does not John move back and forth between heaven and earth several times in Revelation, [10:1, 11:1, 12:1, 13:1, etc.]? Does this mean the "Church" will travel back and forth between heaven and earth throughout the tribulation? Or did John suddenly lose his alias identity when he got to heaven? The same people claim the twenty-four elders "represent" the Church in heaven during the tribulation. But Rev. 5:5 & 7:13 indicates the twenty-four elders are individuals. And, it seems highly unlikely that both John and the twenty-four elders "represent" the Church at the same time. In this case the Church would be raptured to heaven to find herself already there. This kind of interpretation makes the first five chapters of Revelation some kind of enigma that must be deciphered. If we simply apply normal methods of interpretation to Revelation, as we have attempted to do with the rest of Scripture, we must reject the notion that the seven letters are prophecy of "seven Church ages." Their intent is clearly stated in the text [Rev. 1:11].

The idea that John's being caught up to heaven represents the rapture, and making the twenty-four elders represent a larger group of saints, must be rejected. None of these can be justified from the text of Revelation. John was simply recording what he saw and heard. Jesus commanded him to write seven letters as He dictated them. And, John alone was caught up to heaven, seeing

the twenty-four elders already seated there. We are not denying that Revelation contains symbolism and apocalyptic language. But, when John's narration is clear when taken literally, there is no justification for spiritualizing. There is certainly no basis for making John himself part of the prophetic scenario. He was simply a observer, recording what he saw and heard. In Revelation, John does not interact with the prophetic scenario unfolding before him, except to dialog with an angel or elder making sure he understands what he is seeing [Rev. 5:5, 7:13, 17:1, 19:9,10, 21:5].

In all fairness, I must point out that many pre-tribulationists reject the "seven Church ages" theory, and the idea that John's being caught up to heaven is symbolic of a pre-tribulation rapture. They recognize that using this method to interpret Scripture makes the Word of God subjective to the whim of the interpreter, and invites all kinds of heresy. For this high standard, they are to be commended. However, this stand creates more problems for the pre-trib position in Revelation. Without the supposed rapture in Rev. 4:1, there is no clean break between the seven letters to the churches and the tribulation scenes. There is no apparent distinction between the saints of the seven churches and the saints in the tribulation. In fact, the commands for the churches to overcome seem to anticipate the tremendous persecution lying ahead in the tribulation scenes. Indeed, the remaining chapters picture the saints as overcomers in the time of trial, [Rev. 12:11,17]. And, the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the righteous are found only in a post-tribulation context in Revelation. The final book of the Bible, addressed to the churches, with a last days theme, without even a hint of a pre-tribulation rapture, must be quite disappointing for pre-tribulationists.

Some may scoff at the validity of the argument from silence. Yet, that silence is deafening when it is consistent throughout the entire Bible. If pre-tribulationism is truly Bible doctrine, my question is, **where is it introduced in Scripture?**

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The Twenty-Four Elders Do They Represent the Raptured Church in Heaven?

Tim Warner - 11/2000

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It is really rather baffling to watch pre-tribbers claim that **literalism** leads to pre-tribulationism, and at the same time rely exclusively on **symbolism** to find the rapture in Revelation! Without anything resembling a 'rapture' in the early chapters of Revelation, pre-tribbers point to the twenty-four elders as proof that the entire raptured Church is in heaven prior to the tribulation. Here is an excerpt from an article by Thomas Ice of the **Pre-Trib Research Center**.

[The Necessity of an Interval Between the Rapture & Second Coming](#)

By Thomas Ice

"The 24 elders of Revelation 4:1-5:14 are best understood as representative of the church. Dr. Charles Ryrie explains:

"In the New Testament, elders as the highest officials in the church do represent the whole church (cf. Acts 15:6; 20:28), and in the Old Testament, twenty-four elders were appointed by King David to represent the entire Levitical priesthood (I Chron. 24). When those twenty-four elders met together in the temple precincts in Jerusalem, the entire priestly house was represented. Thus it seems more likely that the elders represent redeemed human beings, . . . the church is included and is thus in heaven before the tribulation begins."

If these elders refer to the church, then it would mean at least two things:
1) It would necessitate the rapture and reward of the church before the tribulation and would require a chronological gap for them to perform their heavenly duties during the seven-year tribulation. 2) It would also show that the completed church was already in heaven before events of the tribulation begin."

First, let's look at Ice's quote of Ryrie. He claims that *"elders as the highest officials in the church do represent the whole church (cf. Acts 15:6; 20:28)."* Yet, the verses Ryrie offers as evidence do not support his claim!

Acts 15:6

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. (KJV)

Dr. Ryrie would have us believe that the use of the term "elders" here really means **the whole church**. Yet, when we look at the context, it is clear that the whole church was NOT present in verse 6, and the terms "Apostles" and "elders" are meant to EXCLUDE the rest of the church. In verse 4, Paul and Barnabas were before the whole church when a dispute with the Pharisees arose. Then, in verse 6, the Apostles and elders assembled privately with Paul and Barnabas to consider the objections. Therefore, this passage proves just the opposite of what Ryrie claims.

Acts 20:28

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (KJV)

Here again Ryrie's example proves him wrong. This sermon was delivered **to the elders of the Ephesian church**, not the whole church. Paul distinguished between the elders and the "flock" over whom they are the overseers. Paul, in his address, singled out the elders! Therefore, in neither case does the term "elders" imply the whole local church, never mind the whole universal Church! So Ryrie's statement, that in the New Testament "elders" represent the entire Church, is simply not supported by the evidence he provided.

Ryrie also appealed to the 24 courses of priests in the Old Testament in support of his view. The priests acted **on behalf of the people** and so are "representitives" of the people in this sense, with the people themselves NOT entering the Temple or into the presence of the Lord! But, if we transplant this meaning into the Revelation passages, we arrive at much different conclusions that Ryrie and Ice! In this case, the 24 elders would be present in heaven as **representitives** of the people who are **not present** in heaven. In other words, the 24 elders would "represent" the Church in heaven just as our Congressmen "represent" us in the Congress! That is far different that what Ryrie and Ice are implying, that the language of Revelation, by using the word 'elders,' implies that the whole Church is present in heaven.

The 24 Elders are Angelic Beings

Sometimes Revelation 5:8-10 is offered as evidence that the 24 elders represent the whole Church.

Rev 5:8-10

*8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and **four and twenty elders** fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.*

*9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and **hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;***

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. (KJV)

In the KJV, it appears from the song sung by the 24 elders that they are "*redeemed from every tribe and nation.*" Since there are more than 24 nations, it is said that they represent the whole of the Church in heaven. However, it is a well known fact that the KJV mistranslates this particular passage by using the first person plural, when the third person plural should be used. The vast majority of manuscripts support the third person plural. Notice the NASB's correct translation of this passage, where the four creatures and 24 elders are singing in the third person about **another group, redeemed from every nation.**

Rev 5:8-10

*8 And when He had taken the book, **the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders** fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*

*9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, **and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.***

*10 "And Thou hast made **THEM** to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and **THEY** will reign upon the earth." (NASB)*

Clearly, the 24 Elders view themselves **APART FROM** those redeemed from every nation, who will reign on the earth. Notice the group they are singing about are ALL of the saints, not just a particular remnant of saints. By singing of them in the third person, the 24 elders have necessarily excluded themselves from the whole body of the redeemed. They are therefore NOT a part of the

Church.

For those who wish to challenge the NASB (and nearly every other translation), consider this fact. The 24 elders are not the only ones singing this song! It is a joint choir of the four creatures and the twenty-four elders! Are the four creatures claiming to be "redeemed from every nation?" If the KJV is correct here, then the four living creatures are including themselves in the body of redeemed men!

Also, notice that the four creatures and the twenty-four elders work in unison in worship of God. John observed this earlier in chapter 4.

Rev 4:6-11

6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

*9 And **when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks** to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,*

*10 **The four and twenty elders fall down before him** that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

(KJV)

This functioning in unison, as well as their singing in unison in chapter 5, seems to indicate that the 24 elders are celestial beings like the four creatures. Isaiah indicated their interaction with the throne of God thousands of years ago! So, it seems that four living creatures have been in heaven all along worshipping in this manner. So, why not the 24 elders?

John was caught up to heaven in the first century. Yes, he was going there to see the future revealed. But, this doesn't seem to begin until the ceremony of the opening of the seals. At first John just described what heaven was like. Then the play began for his benefit. At first, no one even paid any attention to his arrival.

In his description of heaven, John was doing more than telling us what he personally observed. How did he know that the 4 creatures and 24 elders praise God day and night without ever stopping, as 4:8 indicates? That is not based on his personal observation. He wasn't there long enough to know that from personal observation. Note the use of the present tense verbs in 4:8-10. In other cases where John was simply describing what he personally observed, he used the past tense. For example:

Rev 4:1-6

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

*2 And immediately I **was** in the spirit: and, behold, a throne **was** set in heaven, and one **sat** on the throne.*

*3 And he that **sat was** to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there **was** a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.*

*4 And round about the throne **were** four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I **saw** four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they **had** on their heads crowns of gold.*

*5 And out of the throne **proceeded** lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there **were** seven*

lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

*6 And before the throne there **was** a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, **were** four beasts full of eyes before and behind.*

(KJV)

Note that the verbs are in the past tense in His narrative, indicating John's telling his personal observations. Yet, when elaborating on the activity of the elders and 4 creatures before the throne, John switched to present tense verbs. Note:

Rev 4:8-11

*8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they **rest not** day and night, **saying**, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*

*9 And when those beasts **give** glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,*

*10 The four and twenty elders **fall down** before him that sat on the throne, and **worship** him that liveth for ever and ever, and **cast** their crowns before the throne, saying,*

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

(KJV)

This switch to the present tense verbs indicates that John wanted to emphasize the perpetual nature of what was going on in heaven. In other words, this is what he observed, BUT, he wanted to let his readers know that it is still going on in heaven even now, years after he saw it! This is what goes on in heaven continuously! "This is what heaven is like," rather than "this is what I observed."

Notice also, that when he got to the prophetic parts (the things that shall be hereafter) he switched back to using past tense verbs in his narrative.

I think this is significant in demonstrating that the perpetual praise by the 24 elders and the 4 creatures was going on in the 1st century, and is still going on today. It is because of this perpetual praise that the seventh seal is so important in and of itself, SILENCE IN HEAVEN. It is the first time there is silence in heaven.

That this praise of Jehovah has been going on in heaven since Old Testament days is seen from Isaiah's description.

Isa 6:1-3

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

*3 And one cried to another and said: "**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!**"*

(NKJ)

Note that the 6-wing Seraphim are praising God, just as in Revelation!

Rev 4:8

*8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "**Holy, holy, holy, lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!**"*

(NKJ)

It seems that John's description of them praising God day and night goes all the way back hundreds

of years to Isaiah's day! And, Rev. 4:9,10 says that **WHENEVER** the 4 Seraphim praise in this way, the 24 elders cast their crown before the Throne, (Rev. 4:9,10). I think we can now conclude that the 24 elders have also been doing this since Isaiah's day!

If this observation is correct, and I am convinced it is, then the 24 elders were in heaven worshipping Jehovah in conjunction with the 4 creatures in Isaiah's day. Therefore, they cannot be resurrected men.

4 Creatures & 24 Elders act as Priests

The activities of BOTH the 24 elders and four creatures implies that they are acting **on behalf of** Christians who are not present. Notice that they are offering the **prayers of the saints** before the throne of God.

Rev 5:8

*8 And when He had taken the book, **the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders** fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and **golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.***

(KJV)

There is a clear distinction here between the "saints" (who's prayers are being offered) and those offering them (the 24 elders & 4 creatures). It seems likely then that the "saints" who's prayers are being offered before the throne of God are not present in heaven to act on their own behalf. (If they are already there, why are 'prayers' being offered?)

It seems quite likely that the twenty-four elders and the four creatures are acting on behalf of Christians, and so are separate from the Church in general. By the words of their song, they have excluded themselves from among the "*redeemed from every nation.*"

In chapter 8, we see another "angel" doing exactly the same thing. This implies that acting in this priestly function on behalf of the saints is a function of certain angelic beings (rather than men).

Rev 8:3-4

*3 Then **another angel**, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.*

4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.

(NKJ)

Elsewhere in Revelation we also see the 24 elders referring to the redeemed in the third person, not including themselves.

Rev 11:15-18

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

*16 **And the four and twenty elders**, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,*

*17 **Saying**, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.*

*18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, **and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great;** and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.*

(KJV)

Notice that the 24 elders are speaking about ALL of the saints of all time. Yet, they do not seem to include themselves.

Sometimes it is claimed that the word "elders" is never applied to angels or celestial beings, and therefore must refer to men. However, the biblical definition of "elder" can either mean great age, or higher rank or authority. When speaking of the "elders" of the churches, it is not taken for granted that an "elder" must be old, or older than the congregation. The word speaks more to the concept of authority.

The meaning of the word "elder" is indeed applied to angels in Scripture. In the New Testament Michael is referred to as the "arch-angel" (Jude 1:9). The prefix "arch" means chief or high rank, just as the word "elder." In the Old Testament, Michael is called "one of the chief princes" (Dan. 10:13). Here again, the word "chief" is a Hebrew word with the same meaning. In fact, this same Hebrew word is translated "eldest" in 2 Chron. 22:1. The word "prince" is also a Hebrew word that refers to high rank. So, the concept of "elder" is definately appropriate for certain high ranking celestial beings. And wearing crowns and sitting on thrones would certainly be appropriate for rulers or high ranking celestial beings.

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The Church in Revelation

The Use of the Word "Church" in Revelation

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With the conspicuous absence of a pre-tribulation rapture in Revelation, pre-tribbers are forced to advance arguments which rely solely on speculative reasoning. A good example is the commonly used argument about the absence of the word "Church" in the tribulation scenes. The reasoning goes like this: The word "Church" is used frequently in chapters one through three, which concern the "Church age," but is not mentioned in chapters four through nineteen, which concern the tribulation. Therefore, the "Church" must not be in the tribulation.

Why isn't the "Church" in heaven?

Chapters four through nineteen don't just describe the tribulation. There are numerous descriptions of the events in heaven during this time, notably, all of chapters 4&5, 6:9-11, 8:1-6, 11:15-17, 14:1-5, all of chapter 15, & 19:1-10. These extensive passages mention the twenty four elders, angels, four beasts, and multitudes of saints. But, not once is the word "Church" used to describe them. Furthermore, chapters 20 through 22 describe the millennium, the New Heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem. Not once is the word "Church" used in connection with these. If we apply the pre-trib logic to these passages, we must conclude that the "Church" will not be in heaven, nor will she participate in the millennium, or the eternal state! She has simply vanished!

The word "Church" is misunderstood.

A serious problem with this line of reasoning is the use of the word "Church." The Bible does not use the word "Church" in the way pre-tribbers use it. To them, it means, "all saints saved between Pentecost and the tribulation." But this is an artificial definition based on a dispensational premise. It is not Paul's, nor the early Christians, definition. The early Christians believed they were the true Israel. The "Church" included Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the saints of Hebrews Eleven. This can be demonstrated easily from three passages.

1. In Matt. 18:17, Jesus referred to his band of disciples as the "Church" when instructing them about Church discipline, long before the day of Pentecost.
2. In Stephen's defence before his accusers, he called Old Testament Israel, the "Church in the wilderness," [Acts 7:38].
3. In Hebrews 2:12, Paul quoted Psalm 22:22 and used the word "Church" to describe the Old Testament Jews in worship.

These verses prove that the New Testament usage of this word is not exclusive to saints between Pentecost and the tribulation. If your understanding of a word used in Scripture is not what the writer intended, you will misunderstand the thought he is presenting. He might as well be speaking a foreign tongue.

Some may contend that Jesus spoke of the "Church" as being in the future in Matthew 16:18, *"Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* It was in the future when He said this before the crucifixion. His building His Church refers to the focal point in time when He would become the blood sacrifice for all mankind. When Jesus was crucified, He went to the compartment of hades called "paradise," where all of the saints of the Old Testament were waiting, [Luke 16:22,23, Luke 23:43]. While there He presented the Gospel to them, which of

course they believed, since they were already the people of faith, [1 Pet. 3:18-20 & 4:6]. He "led captivity captive" by bringing these saints out of paradise into the presence of God, [Eph. 4:8-10]. He also gave spiritual gifts to the living saints. This single act of building Christ's Church, which the "gates of hell" could not prevent, united all saints of the distant past, and saints of the distant future, into one body, the body of Christ, [Eph. 1:9,10 & 3:14,15]. The fact that the blood of Jesus cleanses all sinners, demands this union of all those who have been cleansed by His blood, [Heb. 10:10-14]. This single act united the saints of the Old and New Testaments, [Heb. 9:15, Heb. 11:40, Heb. 11:8-10 & Heb. 12:22,23]. This is Jesus' Church.

The use of the word "Church" in Revelation.

John addressed this book to the seven "churches" in Asia Minor. Every time the word "church" [or "churches"] is used, it always means a local church. It is never used in the universal sense in Revelation. It is used to address each church individually in chapters two and three. The remainder of the book was not intended to be a private message limited to any local church, but is a message to all believers of all generations. Therefore, the word "saints" is used throughout the book to identify saints in heaven, as well as those still on earth during the tribulation.

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Judgment Seat of Christ

Where & When?

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Pre-tribbers claim that an interval of time between the rapture and second coming is required. They believe the judgment seat of Christ, and the marriage supper of the Lamb, will take place in heaven, while the tribulation rages below.

The judgment seat of Christ

When will Christians be judged? Does the Bible tell us? If you scan Revelation, you cannot find such a judgment in heaven during the tribulation. Paul's Epistles also fail to back up the pre-trib assumption. But if not during the tribulation in heaven, then when?

Matthew 16

*27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and **then he shall reward every man according to his works.***

This passage is quite clear. Believers will be judged when Jesus comes in glory. This will not accommodate a pre-trib rapture. The following passage comes from the parable of the talents.

Luke 19

*15 And it came to pass, that **when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then** he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.*

When Jesus receives the Kingdom, He will judge His servants, not seven years earlier in heaven. Paul concurs with the following statement.

2 Timothy 4

*1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, **who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;...***

*8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge, **shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.***

As we might expect, Revelation agrees with the above Scriptures. The judgment of **all** believers is at the seventh trumpet, when Jesus sets up His Millennial Kingdom.

Revelation 11

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

*18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that **thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great, and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.***

At the last trumpet, when Jesus destroys the ungodly and begins to reign in His Kingdom, all saints will be judged and rewarded.

Revelation 22

*12 And behold I come quickly, **and my reward is with me**, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

Why would Jesus bring rewards with Him when He comes, if we are returning to heaven to receive them? The obvious answer is, we will be judged and rewarded on earth at His Kingdom.

There is absolutely no evidence from the Scriptures, that the judgment and rewarding of believers occurs in heaven, or during the tribulation, This is only an assumption of pre-tribbers, based on unbiblical presuppositions.

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The Marriage Supper Where & When?

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Revelation 19 mentions the marriage supper of the Lamb. Pre-tribbers insist this supper will take place in heaven during the tribulation, making a pre-tribulation rapture necessary, if we are to attend. But does the Bible really place this event in heaven? Let's make a few observations. Chapter 18 has just described the destruction of Babylon, at the very end of the tribulation. Chapter 19 opens with a roar of saints in heaven, rejoicing over God's destruction of Babylon, the great whore. Just before heaven opens, and Jesus and his army of saints and angels streak towards earth, we find the following account.

Revelation 19

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

9 And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

Here we have the saints shouting and rejoicing because it's time for the wedding! A decree is made concerning the bride's clothing. John is told to write a blessing, and heaven opens and Jesus descends to earth. There is no mention of this wedding or supper occurring in heaven, only the joy of anticipation by those who are about to be married. Why is there no description of the wedding or supper in heaven? Because the rapture and resurrection IS the marriage of the Lamb which is about to commence. The marriage is the union of the saints with Christ. It can only occur when the bride is complete. That's why the statement is made, "His wife hath made herself ready." The church has been purified and made white through tribulation, now she is ready! [1 Peter 1:7, & 4:12,13]. The marriage supper will not occur in heaven, but on earth at Christ's Kingdom.

Isaiah 24

23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

25:1 O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee...

2 For thou hast made a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city: it shall never be built....

6 And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of morrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.

This passage parallels Revelation 19 in several ways. First, Isaiah is clearly speaking of Christ's Kingdom. He speaks of the sun and moon being darkened to announce the Day of the Lord. Just as in Revelation 19, the people rejoice over the destruction of Babylon, [vs. 1,2]. Just as in Revelation 19 Isaiah speaks of the marriage supper. But he unmistakably places it on mount Zion in Jerusalem, [vs. 6]. Further proof that this is indeed the marriage supper of the Lamb, comes from Jesus' own words at the Last Supper.

Luke 22

16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves;

18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come...

29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;

30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus was referring to Isaiah's prophecy. These verses alone prove that the marriage supper will not be in heaven before the Kingdom of God is established on earth.

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Jewish Wedding Customs and the Rapture

By Tim Warner - Copyright © 1998; Revised - 03/2003

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Christian writers throughout history have recognized an underlying theme in the Scriptures, that Jewish wedding customs form a pattern for the redemption of mankind. This is rather hard to miss, particularly when both Paul and John refer specifically to the "Bride" of Christ. But only recently have the Jewish wedding customs been used within the rapture debate, particularly to support the pre-trib scenario.

While we agree that the Scriptures must be interpreted "historically," in light of culture and historical context, we must proceed with caution, being very careful to substantiate an alleged custom with real biblical and historical data. It is not enough to merely assert something as a "custom" and then use it to interpret Scripture. We must prove every detail, and also demonstrate that such an allusion was intended in a particular passage.

Pre-Trib Shenanigans

A serious problem arises when alleged details of a custom being promoted cannot be documented, or when it is not clear that the writer or speaker had such a custom in view in Scripture. The modern pre-trib usage of the Jewish wedding customs illustrates the problematic nature of "customs." Contrary to what is portrayed by many pre-trib authors and speakers, all of the details of such customs are not at all clear in history. Nor is there such a degree of consistency in the historical record as to make the scenario being promoted by pre-trib writers reliable. For those who have investigated the claims being promoted by the prophecy peddlers, one quickly finds it extremely difficult to verify some of the specific details, particularly those details that seem to support the pre-trib version of eschatology. While we do not wish to make any specific charges of dishonesty, it appears that some pre-trib authors may have made a few "adjustments" to the actual customs to make them fit their scheme. And as usual, pre-trib writers borrow statements from each other without careful research and verification. [1]

When reading pre-trib literature which uses Jewish wedding customs to support the pre-trib scheme, one quickly gets the impression that all the alleged details of the wedding scenario presented by these writers are easily verified from the historical record. And, historical sources lay out the scenario presented by pre-tribbers as fact. But that is simply not true. In "[The Parables of Jesus](#)," Joachim Jeremias (authority on ancient Jewish customs) explains the problem.

"The mistaken idea has arisen because we possess no connected description of a wedding feast from the time of Jesus, but only modern collections of material which attempt to construct a connected mosaic out of the scattered allusions to be found in the rabbinic literature. There is evidence that these collections of material are incomplete. This is not surprising in view of the situation with regard to the sources; the material is unlimited and widely scattered, and the picture is extraordinarily varied; then as now, wedding customs differed in different districts; moreover, after the destruction of the Temple, under the repeated impact of national disasters, they underwent far reaching restrictions; but above all, the occasional reports which we possess are widely distributed in space and time: in space they come from Palestine and Babylonia, while in time they are spread over many

centuries." [2]

It appears that some elements of the alleged "custom" being promoted by pre-trib writers are fabricated in order to support their view of the rapture being pre-tribulational (particularly as it relates to "imminence"). Having spent a few years trying to track down the source of some of the details promoted by pre-trib writers, it has become increasingly obvious that the alleged "customs" are reverse-engineered in order to fit with the pre-trib scheme, rather than being derived from real historical sources. Greg Killian's article, [A Jewish Wedding](#) illustrates this. Killian writes, *"Meanwhile, the young man returned to his father's home, and the chadar goes under construction. - The young Jewish bridegroom would make the following speech as he was leaving: Yochanan (John) 14:2-3 'In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.'"* The fact is, there is absolutely nothing in the historical record to suggest such a speech. Killian is simply inventing his own evidence to fit with the text. As each pre-trib writer borrows material from other writers, more and more embellishments seem to be added.

Pre-trib writers also attempt to use certain details that support their scenario, but ignore those that are problematic for the pre-trib scenario. Dr. Robert Gundry illustrates the problem.

"Furthermore, if a purported pretrib coming to fetch the church to heaven is supposed to reflect the ancient Semitic custom of a groom's fetching the bride to his home, what is Jesus' taking the church with Him back to earth right after the marriage supper, and for a thousand years, supposed to reflect? An ancient Semitic custom of the groom's taking his bride back to her home to live with her there for a long time? The pretrib reasoning gets itself into a pickle by injecting a marriage custom that isn't even mentioned in the biblical text at hand, and then giving that custom argumentative weight of an allegorical sort but not carrying out the allegory consistently. In fact, our ignorance of ancient Semitic marriage customs exceeds our knowledge. And what knowledge we do have shows considerable variation in these customs." [3]

When pre-trib writers present a scenario which they claim was the "custom" in Jesus' day, and then use this alleged custom as the foundation for their pre-trib rapture doctrine, they must be held accountable to prove that the scenario they have laid out is indeed biblical and historical. If they cannot prove all of the details on which they place the weight of their arguments for the pre-trib position, we should conclude that they have constructed one giant circular argument using fabricated evidence.

A Kidnapping? Or a Planned Procession?

In the attempt to support pre-tribulationism from the Jewish Wedding customs, pre-trib writers have promoted the myth that the coming of the groom for the bride was "imminent" throughout the engagement period. That is, she had no idea when the groom would come to snatch her away. She must always be in a state of readiness for his arrival.

Zola Levitt writes: "And she waited at home every night. She certainly didn't want to be caught away from home when the bridegroom came. The tradition was that he would

come at night, even at midnight, and try to take her by surprise. Matt 24:42-44
 'Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. You must be ready, for the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.' ...
 Yes, suddenly one night the groom would come. The bride's father and brothers would ensure it was the man with the marriage contract, then look the other way while the two of them and all their friends eloped! They were all whisked away into the night to begin the reception. ... Would they have no warning at all? Well, just this much. When the groom's party was close, they would shout; and when the bride heard that shout, she knew she was as good as married." [4]

The bride, for her part ... did a lot of waiting [C]ustom required her to be ready ... have an oil lamp ready in case he came in darkness ... she was to be ready to travel at a moment's notice. ... [T]he bride would assemble her bridesmaids and whoever would go with her to the wedding ... they were all to have oil lamps ready. They would wait at her house every night on the chance that the groom would come ... and sweep them all away to a sudden wedding ceremony. ... When the Father deemed all to be ready, the bridegroom would assemble his friends ... and set out in the night [T]he Jewish brides were stolen ... as the party would get close to her house, they were required to give her a warning. Someone in the party would shout! When the shout was heard, the bride and her party were to go out to meet the bridegroom." [5]

Chuck Missler writes: "Although the bride was expecting the groom to come for her, she did not know the time of his coming. As a result, the groom's arrival was preceded by a shout, which announced her imminent departure to be gathered with him. ... The Bridegroom has departed, and His return to gather His Bride is imminent." [6]

Both Levitt and Missler are simply wrong. Levitt gives no source for his information. Missler cites the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia to support several of his other points regarding the Jewish customs. But, his own source says plainly on pp. VII. 372-373 that the time of engagement was 12 months. The fact is, the bride knew the length of time of the betrothal; it was agreed upon at the beginning of the engagement. She knew the time of the groom's coming right from the start of the engagement. If not the actual day, at least that it would be at the end of the twelve month engagement. The coming of the groom was NEVER considered by the bride to be "imminent" during the 12 months of their separation. It is simply disingenuous for pre-trib writers to attach the idea of "imminence" to the bride's expectation. Not until the twelve months had passed, and the arrangements made for the consummation of the wedding, did she consider his coming to be "imminent." And even then, she was certainly made aware, in advance, of the day on which to make herself ready and to expect his arrival. His coming was not actually "imminent," in the sense pre-tribbers use the term, until the shout from the young men who ran ahead of the procession.

In "The Parables of Jesus," Joachim Jeremias (authority on Jewish customs) quoted an earlier book written by his father in 1909, which describes the ancient Semitic wedding custom.

"In the late evening the guests were entertained in the bride's house. After hours of waiting for the bridegroom, **whose coming was repeatedly announced by messengers**, at last he came, half an hour before mid-night, to fetch the bride; he was accompanied by his friends; floodlit by burning candles, and received by guests who had come out to meet him. The wedding assembly then moved off, again in the flood of light, in a festal procession to the house of the bridegroom's father, where the marriage ceremony and fresh entertainment took place." [7] (emphasis mine)

This ancient Semitic custom does not fit the pre-trib scheme, where the groom is alleged to arrive at the bride's house secretly to snatch her away, without any warning. The Gospel accounts agree with Jeremias' historical account, also implying that the date of the groom's coming for his bride was fully planned and known by the bridal party prior to his arrival. Jesus' parable of the ten virgins is strikingly similar to the custom described above by Jeremias. This passage of Scripture is the **ONLY** account of a Jewish wedding procession in the Bible dating around the time of Christ.

Matt 25:1-10

1 *"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.*
 2 *"Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*
 3 *"Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,*
 4 *"but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*
 5 *"But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.*
 6 *"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'*
 7 *"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.*
 8 *"And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'*
 9 *"But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'*
 10 *"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.*
 (NKJV)

In Jesus' parable, all ten of the bride's maids had their lamps and oil in them while they awaited the groom's arrival. Are we to assume that the bride's maids were all waiting for a full 12 months with their lamps burning? Hardly! The picture painted by Jesus was of ten virgins accompanying the bride at her home on the day of the groom's planned arrival. He was scheduled to arrive half an hour before midnight in a grand procession, to take the bride to their new home where the wedding would take place. When the shout came that the groom was on his way, they took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

They must have known the day of the groom's arrival, otherwise they could not have known when to bring their lamps and assemble at the bride's house! The whole purpose of the lamps was to participate in the festivities of the lighted procession once the groom arrived to fetch the bride. This fits perfectly with the custom described by Jeremias above. *"In the late evening the guests were entertained in the bride's house. After hours of waiting for the bridegroom,..."*^[8] Apparently, there was some delay in the groom's arrival in Jesus' parable. Jesus said they all fell asleep awaiting the groom's arrival. **At midnight** the announcement was made, *"behold the bridegroom cometh go ye out to meet him."* This fits perfectly with the above custom as well. *"After hours of waiting for the bridegroom, **whose coming was repeatedly announced by messengers**, at last he came, **half an hour before mid-night**, to fetch the bride; he was accompanied by his friends; floodlit by burning candles, and received by guests who had come out to meet him."*^[9] In Jesus' parable, the bridegroom was half an hour late. This is why the virgins fell asleep. Instead of arriving at 11:30PM according to custom, the announcement finally came of his impending arrival at midnight! Even then the bride's maidens scurried around to trim their lamps. The foolish virgins were told to go quickly and buy oil for their lamps. This strongly implies that there was some expected time anticipated between the final shout and the groom's actual arrival at the home of the bride. Alfred Edersheim writes: *"The parable proceeds on the assumption that the Bridegroom is not in town, but somewhere far away; so that it cannot be known at what precise hour He may arrive. **But it is known that he will come that night.**"*^[10] In Jesus' parable, the foolish virgins expected that the groom might come while they were out buying oil. Therefore, both the historical and biblical data strongly refutes the idea of "imminence" at any time during the betrothal period except after the shout on the scheduled day of the groom's coming.

In his Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Edersheim wrote that the custom in Jesus' day was to have the wedding **on a Wednesday**, allowing the first three days of the week for the bride to prepare herself for her groom's coming.

"The marriage followed [the betrothal ritual] after a longer or shorter interval, the limits of which, however, were fixed by law. The ceremony itself consisted in leading the bride into the house of the bridegroom, with certain formalities, mostly dating from very ancient times. **Marriage with a maiden was commonly celebrated on a Wednesday afternoon, which allowed the first days of the week for preparation**, and enabled the husband, if he had a charge to prefer against the previous chastity of his bride, to make immediate complaint before the local Sanhedrim, which sat every Thursday. ... This circumstance enables us, with some certainty, to arrange the date of the events which preceded the marriage in Cana. Inferring from the accompanying festivities that it was the marriage of a maiden, and therefore took place on a Wednesday... On "the third day" after it, that is, on Wednesday, was the marriage in Cana of Galilee." [11]

Notice Edersheim stated clearly that the first three days (Sunday - Tuesday) were set aside for the bride to prepare. Since the day of the week was known (at least three days notice), it was impossible for a bride to be totally caught unaware, as pre-trib writers claim. The day of the groom's coming for His bride was known by both bride and groom. It was also known by the bride's maids who came to her home to await the groom's arrival. And it was known by the friends of the groom, who accompanied him to the bride's home to fetch her.

The ONLY evidence we have in Scripture of the Jewish wedding customs, related to the arrival of the groom for his bride, is the parable of the ten virgins. And it does not support the pre-trib scheme! Rather, it supports a post-trib scheme, where there is some advanced warning. This fits perfectly with Jesus' teaching in this very same Olivet Discourse. Jesus indicated a fixed period of time prior to His coming. The Gospel must be preached in all the world first. He outlined a series of signs that would occur just before His coming "*immediately after the tribulation*" [Matt. 24:29-31]. Then, He told the disciples;

Matthew 24

*33 So likewise ye, **when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.***

(KJV)

After their recognizing the fulfillment of the signs described in verses 15-29, they would know His coming was imminent. This perfectly parallels the prior announcement made in the parable of the ten virgins, "*behold the bridegroom cometh.*" Even the three days notice could be analogous to the time between the abomination of desolation and Jesus' coming, clearly mentioned in Matt. 24:15. Pre-tribbers cannot account for any prior warning, without destroying the concept of "imminence," which is so important to their system.

The Second Cup Indicates Consummation In Christ's Millennial Kingdom

The Jewish custom was for the bride to be given a glass of wine at the time of the engagement. This was called "the cup of acceptance." If she accepted the proposal, she drank from the cup, and the betrothal covenant was sealed. The parallel to the Lord's supper is striking, where Jesus gave the cup to His disciples. Yet, Jesus made an interesting comment at this event.

Matt 26:27-29

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

28 *"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*
 29 *"But I say to you, **I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.**"*
 (NKJV)

We know that at the wedding, the bride and groom again share a cup of wine together **for the first time** since the betrothal covenant was made. Yet, Jesus told the disciples that He would not share in the cup of wine with them again until the coming Millennial Kingdom. This rules out any such activity in heaven during the tribulation. If Jesus had Jewish wedding customs in mind, His statement clearly precludes the pre-trib rapture scenario! The consummation of the wedding must be post-tribulational.

The Seven Days in the "Huppah"

Pre-tribbers point to the fact that the groom would fetch his bride, and bring her into the bridal chamber ["huppah"], where they would resort for seven days immediately following the wedding ceremony. It is alleged that this represents Christ's coming for His Bride in a pre-trib rapture, where she is taken into heaven [the huppah] for seven years. This reasoning depends on some unproved assumptions. First, that "heaven" is the "bridal chamber" [or "huppah"]. Secondly, the seven days are allegorical (meaning years) and represent the seven years of the tribulation, rather than taking them literally. Pre-tribbers point to John 14:1-3 to support the idea of heaven being the "bridal chamber" [huppah]. Jesus said to the disciples, *"I go to prepare a place for you."* It is claimed that this was a reference to the groom's preparing a bridal chamber in his father's house.

It is certainly likely that Jesus had the "huppah" in mind here. But, heaven is not necessarily indicated by the word's *"my Father's house."* See our article [My Father's House](#) for an in depth discussion showing strong evidence that Jesus was referring to His Millennial Kingdom, not heaven, in John 14. Jesus used the phrase *"my Father's house"* earlier to refer to the Temple, [John 2:15-17]. And, the phrase *"house of the Lord,"* used some 250 times in the Old Testament, always referred to the Temple, (many times referring to the future Millennial Temple). Finally, the Hebrew word "huppah" (bridal chamber) is found only once in Scripture, in a prophetic sense, and it clearly refers to the Millennium.

Isaiah 4

2 *In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing for those of Israel who have escaped.*

3 *And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy-- everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem.*

4 *When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning,*

5 *then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a **covering**. [Heb. - "huppah"]*

(NKJV)

Alfred Edersheim says basically the same thing. "[T]he Covenant-union between God and Israel was not only compared to a marriage, but the Tabernacle and Temple designated as 'the bridal chambers.'" [12]

There is one other prophetic passage which indisputably has the Jewish wedding custom in view. And that passage does not fit the pre-trib model either.

Rev 19:1-11

1 *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation,*

and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

*2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for **he hath judged the great whore**, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.*

3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

*7 **Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.***

*8 **And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.***

*9 And he saith unto me, **Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.** And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

*11 **And I saw heaven opened**, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*

(KJV)

The context indicates this is the very end of the tribulation. Notice, those John saw rejoicing over the (past) destruction of Babylon were also rejoicing in anticipation of the "marriage of the Lamb" to come. The "Bride," the true Church, is shown in direct contrast to this false church (Mystery Babylon). It is vitally important to recognize the sequence laid out in this passage. John did not describe any wedding or supper occurring here. He was a witness to a joyous bursting forth of anticipation on behalf of the "Bride" after Mystery Babylon was destroyed. What John actually witnessed, after the destruction of Babylon, was the saints rejoicing **because the time had arrived for the wedding of the Lamb**. John then heard a pronouncement regarding the Bride's wedding garments. Then he heard a blessing pronounced on those called to the wedding supper. Immediately, John saw heaven opened, and Christ descending, followed by the angelic armies of heaven. It is quite clear, from Revelation 19, that at the very end of the tribulation the marriage of the Lamb is still being anticipated right up until the second coming.

Does Revelation's mention of the Bride, the wedding, and the supper fit a pre-trib rapture scenario, where the Jewish wedding customs are followed? No! In fact, according to Judges 14:12, the wedding feast (supper) lasted for the full seven days. If pre-tribbers are right, we would expect the wedding and the feast to commence at the beginning of the tribulation, not after the tribulation as Revelation 19 plainly indicates. If Jesus was referring to heaven as the seven years in the "huppah" in John 14:1-3, the bride should have "made herself ready" before the pre-trib rapture (around Rev. 4). And the "marriage of the Lamb" should have occurred at the beginning of the tribulation, and not at its extreme end. The pre-trib scenario has Jesus being intimate with the Bride in the "huppah" for seven years before Revelation 19 indicates the wedding occurs! Doesn't that make Jesus a fornicator? **Only immediately prior to the second coming do we find the excited anticipation of the impending wedding**. Only then has the Bride finally "made herself ready." And, as we saw, even this passage does not describe the wedding ceremony actually occurring, but simply indicates **the excited anticipation** of the wedding that is about to commence, followed immediately by the post-trib second coming. The expression "*the Bride hath made herself ready*" implies that the Groom is about to go and fetch her!

The anticipation in heaven at the end of the tribulation, is because the rapture is about to occur, and Jesus is about to fetch the remnant of His Bride who have endured the tribulation, and take the

whole body of saints to the place prepared, [the huppah] in the Millennial Kingdom. This view does not have the conspicuous problem of the Bride and Groom moving out of the "*Father's house*" right after the seven days in the "huppah," back to the Bride's house. Since the Millennial Kingdom is where both Bride and Groom will reside, it makes perfect sense that this is where the "huppah" is located. And, it fits the concept of the "Father's House" and "House of the Lord" being the Temple, found everywhere else in Scripture.

The Marriage Supper

The marriage **supper** occurs AFTER the tribulation, on earth, not in heaven.

Isaiah 24:23 & 25:1,2,6-8

23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

25:1 O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee...

2 For thou hast made a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city: it shall never be built....

*6 And **in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast** of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of morrow, of wines on the lees well refined.*

*7 And he will destroy in this mountain **the face of the covering** cast over all people, and **the vail** that is spread over all nations.*

8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.

(KJV)

Isaiah 24:23 indicates the timing of this event, referring to the cosmic signs that accompany Christ's coming "*Immediately after the tribulation,*" [Matt. 24:29], and His reigning in His Kingdom. Isaiah 25:2 refers to the saints rejoicing over the destruction of Babylon the Great (which occurs at the end of the tribulation [Rev. 17&18]). Verse 6 indicates that the Lord will prepare a great feast for His people **ON MT. ZION** in Israel. This is the marriage supper anticipated in Rev. 19, and it occurs immediately following the second coming, where Christ fetches His bride. Notice that verse 8 is the prophecy that Paul quoted in 1 Cor. 15:54 in conjunction with the resurrection & rapture of believers! Paul wrote, "**THEN** (Gr.- "*at that time*") *shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*" Also, notice the reference to the "vail" and "covering" in verse 7. Upon the consummation of the wedding, the vail and covering was removed from the bride and she was intimate with the groom. Notice also that the vail and covering had been spread over **ALL NATIONS**. In this passage Christ is wedding his bride. And, even though the context is clearly "Jewish," the Bride is made up of the redeemed of "all nations."

Contrary to what is commonly taught, the marriage feast does not occur after the 7 days in the huppah. The feast begins right after the marriage ceremony, and lasts the entire seven days, [Gen. 29:21-27, Judges 14:10-18]. Yet, Revelation 19 places both the marriage and the feast at the end of the tribulation. This makes the pre-trib scheme impossible to reconcile with Revelation.

One final thought. Some, including this author, are convinced that the Jewish Feasts give an outline of Christ's first coming in the Spring Feasts, and a pattern of His second coming in the Fall Feasts. If so, the Battle of Armageddon will most likely occur on a Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. This is the day the Jubilee begins, [Lev. 25:9]. The "last trumpet" normally sounds ten days earlier on the Rosh Hashanna, the feast of Trumpets. But, every 49 years, there is one final trumpet, on Yom Kippur, to announce the beginning of the Jubilee. If the Feasts do indeed point to the end-time scenario, the seven days in the huppah should be interpreted literally, and would likely refer to the seven literal days of Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles [Lev. 23:33]. This feast, which occurs five days after Yom Kippur, is symbolic of the coming of the Millennial Kingdom. It is the most joyful celebration of all the feasts. It is the wedding feast of the Messiah, [Zech. 14]. And, John referred to this feast in Revelation, in reference to the saints who "*came out of Great Tribulation,*" [cf. the

"palm branches" in Rev. 7:9 & Lev. 23:40].

I am sure some are thinking this Old Testament stuff refers to Israel, not the Church. Yes, it does refer to Israel. But, so does the New Covenant refer to Israel, and we are included in the New Covenant, [Jer. 31:31-34, & Heb. 8:8-13]. I hate to disappoint you, but the Lord has only one bride. And, she includes all saints of all time, from Israel and the nations.

Rev 21:9-14

*9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, **I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.***

*10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me **that great city, the holy Jerusalem,** descending out of heaven from God,*

11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

*12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are **the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:***

13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

*14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them **the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.***

(KJV)

My Attempts to Track Down the Source of the "Kidnapping" Myth

I have tried to uncover the source of the alleged "kidnapping" of the bride (or "imminent" coming of the groom) by several pre-trib authors, and have been unable to do so. This rumor is being widely taught in pre-trib literature and on the internet. Several authors reference Zola Levitt as a source. I have also corresponded with Messianic rabbis and a pre-trib author who promotes this alleged custom. Neither knew of any shred of historical documentation to support this alleged "any moment" (kidnapping) aspect of the Jewish wedding customs. I have examined the source material listed in the footnotes of some of these pre-trib publications, and have failed to find any real historical data substantiating this claim. In spite of my numerous attempts, I have not been able to track down any historical documentation for it. [13] And there is certainly nothing in the Bible to support it (the biblical evidence seems to refute it).

The following letter, in the [October 2000 issue of Zola Levitt's monthly newsletter, Levitt Letters](#), explains where Zola got his documentation for Jewish Wedding customs.

"Dear Staff at Zola Levitt Ministries,

"I really appreciate your ministry! Your teaching, letters and writing have been a blessing!

"If you would please, tell me where Zola got his historical information on the ancient Jewish wedding. I would like to reference teaching that I am doing scholarship based on evidence. I notice the video from Jewish Jewels (Neil and Jamie Lash) suggests that the procession takes place at the beginning—at betrothal, I believe—taking the bride to the father's house to wait the year before the wedding ceremony (I suppose this could relate to the positional rather than experiential placement in the Lord). Zola's description certainly likes up with my understand of the Scriptures and prophecy, but this version could also be explained in about the same light (with a different slant).

"Whatever the case, I would like to have the credibility of explaining where I got my information on this beautiful ancient ceremony. Thanks so much for your time.

Shalom, K.M. Jer. 29:11

"Dear K.M.,

"I started from a tract by the ministry called Friends of Israel. I believe the author was Marv Rosenthal, who is presently building an Israel model in Orlando, Florida. Over the years, the Lord helped me enhance the study with Scriptural and historical references. Also, see my musical production of Beloved Thief, based on the same story, is available on video (offered [in our online store])." [14]

Zola

It doesn't appear that Zola did much independent research before promoting this alleged custom, which is now presented by many pre-trib teachers as solid research. The above response is typical of the "run-around" I have gotten from other authors when asking for documentation. If anyone is willing to come forward, and provide proper historical documentation for the alleged "kidnapping" custom, I will be happy to add it to this article. If you don't see any additions in the box below, to date no one has come forward with verifiable historical documentation. I wrote to Marv Rosenthal three times over a period of about a year requesting information and confirmation. I got no response.

Historical Documentation for "Kidnapping" the Bride

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Update: I spoke with Marv Rosenthal face to face on Jan. 28, 2003 at his Tampa conference. I asked him specifically about the kidnapping aspect of the alleged Jewish Wedding custom. He confirmed Zola Levitt's claim, that it was originally written by him in a booklet published by the Friends of Israel, his former organization. However, despite my specific and repeated requests for documentation information (or at least name the source), Marv was not able to provide any information for the alleged "kidnapping" aspect of the Jewish wedding customs.

It has been 8 years since I wrote this article (as of March 2006). Despite my personal correspondence with several authorities, and this published challenge having been posted on the Last Trumpet website for 8 years, to this day no one has offered the slightest shred of historical documentation to support the alleged "kidnapping" of the bride on a day of which she was not aware. The evidence I have uncovered suggests that Marv Rosenthal was the first to promote the idea, that Zola Levitt borrowed it from Rosenthal, and other pre-trib writers borrowed it from Levitt and/or Rosenthal. I have no idea where Rosenthal got his information. Since he was not forthcoming with his sources, I suppose my search has come to an end. I'll leave the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Notes:

1. Compare Chuck Missler's **Personal Update**, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp.4,6 to an article written by Dr. Renald Showers, called [Jewish Marriage Customs, Behold the Bridegroom Comes](#). It is quite obvious that Missler plagiarized Showers' article including the footnotes.
2. Jeremias, Joachim: **The Parables of Jesus**, pg.172
3. Gundry, Robert: **First the Antichrist**, pg. 94,95
4. Levitt, Zola: **An Israeli Love Story**
5. Levitt, Zola: **A Christian Love Story**, 1978
6. Missler, Chuck: **Personal Update**, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp.4,6
7. **The Parables of Jesus**, p. 173
8. *ibid*, p.172
9. *ibid*
10. Edersheim, Alfred: **The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah**, V. VII
11. Edersheim, Alfred: **Sketches of Jewish Social Life**, chapter IX
12. **The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah**, p. 663-664
13. Chuck Missler's article [Personal Update](#), Vol. 13, No. 1, pp.4,6, which was plagiarized from Dr. Renald Showers (see note #1), has altered Showers' original wording making it appear that the groom's coming was "imminent." Missler includes the same footnote as Showers. Yet, neither Showers' article, nor the source he cites, makes the claim that the groom's coming was "imminent" during the betrothal period of separation. Showers' original article says *"Although the bride was expecting her groom to come for her, she did not know the **exact** time of his coming. As a result the groom's arrival would be preceded by a shout. This shout would forewarn the bride to be prepared for the coming of the groom."* His point was not that she did not know the day, but did not know the exact moment on the evening of his scheduled coming - hence she prepared herself to be ready on the day of his scheduled coming, and the shout announced when his coming was "imminent." Yet, in Missler's altered version he writes, *"Although the bride was expecting the groom to come for her, she did not know the time [Showers has "exact time"] of his coming. As a result, the groom's arrival was preceded by a shout, which announced her **imminent** departure to be gathered with him [Showers has "the coming of the groom"]" {p.4}*. Then Missler interprets: *"The Bridegroom has departed, and His return to gather His Bride is imminent" {p. 6}*. This is not at all what Showers meant, nor is it supported by the source in the footnote, which was also plagiarized by Missler as though it supported his altered version.
14. [Levitt Letters, Oct. 2000](#)

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The "First Resurrection"

Does it Occur AFTER the Second Coming?

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Revelation 20:4-6 is a powerful argument for a post-trib rapture. Some of the saints who will be raised in the "first resurrection" are the martyrs of the tribulation. If this resurrection is "first," then there can not be a prior resurrection seven years earlier!

Rev 20:4-6

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and (I saw) the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

*5 The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. **This is the first resurrection.***

*6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in **the first resurrection**: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. (ASV)*

Pre-tribbers usually counter by claiming that this resurrection could not be the resurrection Paul spoke of in 1 Thess. 4, which accompanies the rapture, because here it occurs AFTER Christ returns to earth at Armageddon in chapter 19.

However, this argument is bogus. If you look closely at the wording of Rev. 20:4-6, you will see that John did not actually see the "first resurrection" as it was occurring in his vision. He saw and described **the aftermath of the first resurrection**. What he actually saw was those **who had already been raised** ruling with Christ for 1,000 years. He identified some of them as the ones who had been martyred during the tribulation. The Greek verb tenses support the idea that the first resurrection had already occurred in the sequence of events prior to John's seeing the resurrected saints ruling. When John wrote they "**lived**" ..., he meant **living AFTER having been resurrected**. "Lived" does **not** mean *the ACT of being raised*. The act of being raised are the Greek words "egeiro" or "anastasis." The word "lived" in out text comes from the root "zao" (which is the common word for "life" or be "alive"). But, in this passage, the first aorist active indicative of "zao" is used ("ezesan"). This form of "zao" is found in only a few places. Here are two of them.

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.'
(NKJV)

Revelation 2:8

*8 "And unto the angel of the church of Smyrna write: `These things saith the First and the Last, who was dead and IS ALIVE:
(NKJV)*

"Ezesan" in each and every case means **the state of being alive after having been raised**, or, *"having been made alive."* It NEVER refers to the act of being raised. It assumes a resurrection in the past! That is precisely the meaning in Rev. 20. If you wanted to stress the proper verb tense, you could precisely translate what John saw like this:

"...and they were living (after having been raised) and reigning with Christ one thousand years."

John did NOT witness the "first resurrection" in this passage. He described what he saw, and there is no mention of people being raised from the dead. He only witnessed the saints who had been killed by the Antichrist, and who **had been resurrected**, reigning with Christ on thrones in the Millennium. The Greek is very precise in avoiding placing the actual resurrection at this point in time. It speaks of the "first resurrection" as though it was past-tense when these people were seen by John living and reigning with Christ. The Greek here is quite clear, although the English is less precise. But, you can get the idea from the two other verses above that use exactly the same form, first aorist active indicative of "zao," ("ezesan"). And in each case it assumes a prior resurrection.

The fact that he spoke of "souls" does NOT mean they were still as yet unresurrected. Rather, he identified them as the "souls" that he had previously seen "under the altar" at the 5th seal (martyrs).

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.

(NKJV)

John saw these same "souls" now living and reigning with Christ, something that is only possible **after** the resurrection. Also, the words "I saw" just prior to "souls" is not in the Greek text at all, but was added by translators! You will find "I saw" italicised in the KJV, and bracketed in the ASV and NASB, meaning the words are not in the original text. The Greek actually says the following, word for word:

"Kai eidon thronous kai ekathesan ep autous kai krima edothee autois kai tas psuchas ton pepelekismenoon ... kai ezesan kai ebasileusan meta tou Christou chilia etee."

The exact word for word translation follows. The bracketed words are implied but not stated.

*"And (I) saw thrones, and (they) sat on them, **and judgment was given them AND the souls that were beheaded...** And (they) lived (after having been previously raised) and reigned with the Christ one-thousand years."*

This is EXACTLY how the Greek text reads (paying particular attention to the tenses of the verbs), and it clearly implies that John was using the word "souls" to simply identify and include the ones who were previously "under the altar" in this "first resurrection" that had already occurred!

Therefore, it is proper to say that the "first resurrection" occurs BEFORE Revelation 20, but AFTER the last martyr has been killed by Antichrist.

A second attempt to dodge the force of the "first resurrection" by pre-tribbers is to show that there can be other "first" resurrections. They point to Jesus' resurrection, and claim that since He was resurrected before this resurrection, this one cannot be "first" for all time. Therefore, they attempt to say it is only first in relation to the resurrection after the Millennium.

When John spoke of the "first resurrection" he was obviously speaking of **FUTURE events from his point in time** (first century). Remember, after Rev. 4:1, John was recording the FUTURE! So, when

he referred to the "first resurrection," he was obviously speaking of a FUTURE resurrection. Of course he would not take into account past events, like Jesus' resurrection! If I said to you, "Go stand on the curb, and the FIRST car that comes by will be me," do you understand that I mean no other car has ever driven by on that road? Of course not! You understand that "first" applies only to the time following your arrival at the curb! One must view my words from the perspective that I intended them. In the same way, John was speaking of the **first future resurrection** from his point in time, some six decades after Jesus was raised! And his intended audience knew full well that he was seeing and recording FUTURE events! Therefore, in their thinking his words would necessarily exclude the resurrection of Jesus, which Paul said was the "firstfruits" of our resurrection to come. However, if John wrote that this future resurrection after the tribulation is the "first resurrection," and yet there would be another future resurrection for the Church 7 years before this one, that makes John a liar! There can be only one "first resurrection" after John wrote Revelation! And it is **AFTER the tribulation**.

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The Sheep and Goats Parable Who Will Repopulate the Earth?

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Matt 25:31-46

31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

33 "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

36 'I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?

38 'When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?

39 'Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

40 "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;

43 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

45 "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

46 "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."
(NKJ)

The parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matthew 25 is used by pre-tribbers to discount the post-trib position. Two main points are made by pre-tribbers here. The first is the timing of the events seems to conflict with other accounts of the rapture, making it impossible to place the rapture after the tribulation. The second is this parable seems to leave no one left on earth apart from the righteous who, in a post-trib scenario, would all have resurrected bodies. Since resurrected people do not reproduce there is no one left to generate the great multitude of people who revolt at the end of the Millennium in Rev. 20.

The Order of Events

This parable seems to put the separating of the righteous from the wicked AFTER Christ is seated on His Millennial throne. If the separation of the sheep from the goats is the separating of Christians from unbelievers, as a post-trib scenario would require, then why does this seem to occur after the second coming and not during the second coming?

The solution to this problem is found by comparing two other parables Jesus gave concerning the same event, the parable of the Wheat and Tares, and the parable of the Dragnet.

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!

(NKJ)

Notice that this is also a parable regarding the "end of the age." Notice that the ones separating the wicked and righteous here are the "angels" while in Matt. 25 it is Christ Himself. Also notice that the wicked are gathered **first** before the righteous. Is this a different event than the Sheep and Goats parable? Is there two different ends of the age? Is there two different groups of righteous and wicked? Lets look at another parable.

Matt 13:47-50

47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind,

48 "which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.

49 "So it will be at the end of the age. **The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just,**

50 "and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

(NKJ)

Here all are gathered together, then they are separated at the same time. The angles are doing the separating here, not Christ Himself as in the Sheep and Goats. Is this a different event than the parable of the Wheat and Tares? None of these three parables agree with each other in all the details.

Parable of:	Gathered and Separated:	Separated by:
Sheep & Goats	Together	Jesus

Wheat & Tares	Separate	Angels
Dragnet	Together	Angels

What can we conclude from our comparison of these parables? If we employ the pre-trib reasoning, our conclusion would be that these are all separate events, with three different groups of "righteous" and "wicked." But, that is unreasonable, because there is only one "end of the age." The answer then must be that Jesus did not intend to give an exact chronology, but merely to illustrate His main point, that the wicked and righteous would be separated at the end of the age, and the righteous would inherit the Kingdom, and the wicked would be cast into the fire.

But, why would Jesus use imperfect illustrations that seem to conflict in some of the details with the real end-time scenario? The answer is that Jesus was simply using illustrations that were well known to His hearers. In that culture, they all had seen many times how a shepherd would separate the sheep from the goats when he brought them in from the field. They had seen many times how a farmer would have his workers separate the tares first, and then gather the wheat into the barn. And they had all seen how a fisherman would draw the net to shore, and then separate the bad fish from the good. These were all familiar to the Jewish people in a culture of shepherds, fishermen, and farmers. Jesus' intention was simply to use these as illustrations. He was not at liberty to rearrange how a shepherd separated the flock, or how a farmer harvested wheat, or how a fisherman sorted his fish. Had he changed the illustration to suite a perfect eschatology, they would have been confused knowing that this was not how it was actually done. Instead, Jesus borrowed these familiar things to illustrate His main point, that the wicked will be separated from the just. And the righteous will inherit the Kingdom, while the wicked will not. To go beyond this main point and try to press the details of the parable is a huge mistake. This tendency is because we are not that familiar with farming, tending flocks, or fishing, in our culture. We tend to think that Jesus was making up the illustration to fit the eschatological details. He was not. He was using well known illustrations, imperfect as they were, to illustrate only one point.

Who will Repopulate the Earth

Pre-tribbers argue that if the rapture occurs after the tribulation, all raptured and resurrected believers would receive glorified bodies, while all unbelievers would be sent to eternal punishment, leaving no third party to generate an offspring capable of revolting at the end of the Millennium, [Rev. 20:7-10]. This objection is largely based on the Sheep and Goats parable. It appears that no one is left out of Jesus' parable. "All nations" are gathered before Him and separated. Pretribbers believe the "sheep" in Jesus' story are "tribulation saints," saved after a pretrib rapture. They believe the Church will enter the Millennial Kingdom in glorified bodies, while "tribulation saints" will enter in natural bodies, bearing the rebellious offspring. The challenge for posttribbers is to explain how unbelievers could be present on earth towards the end of the Millennium, if all the unsaved are damned, and if all saints receive glorified bodies, incapable of reproduction, at the beginning of the Millennium.

This judgment will occur when Christ appears in glory with the angels to take His seat on the Millennial throne, [Matt. 25:31]. We know that there will be a Jewish remnant who be protected by God through the tribulation, [Rev. 12:14]. They will look upon Christ and be saved when He appears in glory for the battle of Armageddon, [Zech 12:10,11]. They will flee on foot toward the Mt of Olives after Christ and the saints touch down [Zech. 14:4,5]. Since, according to the posttrib view, the rapture takes place just before Christ appears to the world at Armageddon, this Jewish remnant will have missed the rapture. They will enter the Millennial Kingdom as new converts in natural bodies. These could produce many children, some of which will revolt at the end of the Millennium. The "sheep" are all believers who participate in the rapture and resurrection. The "goats" are the unbelievers who worshipped the Beast. The Jewish remnant will be a third party not mentioned in Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats. One important point that adds credibility to this scenario is the fact that Jesus said the "nations" will be judged, some being the sheep and others the goats.

The Greek word for "nations" is usually used in Scripture to denote Gentile nations. It is variously translated "nations," "Gentiles," or "heathen." It usually excludes the Jewish people. This scenario, in my opinion, completely solves the problem raised by pretribbers regarding who will spawn the seed that revolts at the end of the Millennium.

But, there is more to this than just a Jewish remnant. Several Old Testament passages indicate there will be Gentile survivors of the tribulation who will enter the Millennial Kingdom in natural bodies. A few examples follow.

Isaiah 2

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Isaiah 14 1 For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.

2 And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.

Zechariah 14

9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one....

16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

*19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of **all nations** that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

Ezekiel 36

24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God....

36 Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it.

These passages clearly indicate that there will be some unsaved people who survive the tribulation and enter the Millennial Kingdom in natural bodies. Yet pretribbers claim the parable of the sheep

and goats has all the unsaved cast into eternal punishment at the beginning of the Millennium. Some claim this is also implied in Revelation. According to Revelation 13:8, all who are not written in the Book of Life will worship the Beast, and all who worship the Beast will be damned, [Rev. 14:9-11]. The verses in Revelation, however, do not indicate if this damnation occurs before or after the Millennium, or upon the end of their natural life span during the Millennium.

Those who use Matthew 25 and the verses from Revelation to denounce post-tribulationism apparently do not realize that they are creating a paradox for themselves. Post-tribbers can simply point to the Old Testament passages that show some heathen will pass into the Millennium. While some post-tribbers may not be able to adequately reconcile this idea with the parable of the Sheep and Goats, they nevertheless have Scriptural precedent for claiming that some unsaved people will continue to live under Christ's rule, as well as the Jewish remnant who trust Christ when He appears in glory. These will therefore reproduce in the Millennium. Pre-tribbers, who raise this objection to post-tribulationism, do so based solely on their interpretation of Matthew 25. But, this is not a valid objection unless they can reconcile the Scriptures from the Old Testament that indicate some unsaved will indeed enter the Millennium. The problem they create affects all premillennialists equally. It does not favor any single rapture position within the premillennial camp. Since their view of Matthew 25 does not square with the Old Testament passages cited above, there must be something wrong with their interpretation of Matthew 25. The only way to reconcile these Scriptures is to realize that Jesus was making a general statement when He said "all nations," [Matt. 25:32]. He did not mean that every single individual living would be either a "sheep" or "goat," only that every nation will have some "sheep" and some "goats." While Jesus' words do not specifically mention a third party, they do not rule this out either. In the parable of the Dragnet, we could easily infer that not all people will be included in this gathering. In that parable, no one would assume that the dragnet caught ALL fish in the entire ocean. Furthermore, the expression "all nations" does not necessarily mean every person on earth. According to Zech. 14:2, God will gather "all nations" to Jerusalem for the battle of Armageddon. Does this mean every man, woman, boy, and girl, will take up arms and march on Jerusalem at the end of the tribulation? Of course not. Rev. 19 indicates that it is the armies of the nations that march on Jerusalem. Isaiah 2 describes "all nations" coming up to Jerusalem to worship during the Millennium. Yet, Isaiah 34:2 says God will utterly destroy "all nations" at the second coming. Is no one left alive? Haggai 2:6,7 says God will shake "all nations" once more (speaking of the tribulation) and then says these same nations will come up to worship at the Temple in the Millennium! These passages fill in information left out of Matthew 25. The Sheep and Goats parable is not all-inclusive.

Who then are these, mentioned in the passages above, who are neither "sheep" nor "goats," who are left over after the battle of Armageddon and pass into Christ's Kingdom as subjects? The answer is not at all complicated. There will be millions of children on earth when Jesus returns. They will not have worshipped the Antichrist, nor taken his mark because of their young age. They only need the mark to buy and sell, something children seldom do. Not having reached the age of accountability, even if they were forced by their parents to go through the motions of worshipping the Antichrist, God will not hold this against them. Those who go away into eternal punishment are the "wicked," those who **actively opposed Christ** and persecuted or neglected His people, [Matt. 25:41-45]. Little children are precious to Christ, as indicated in the following passage. They are not "wicked," even though they are not yet believers. Children **all meet the criterion to enter Christ's Kingdom.**

Mark 10

13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

*14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: **for of such is the kingdom of God.***

*15 Verily I say unto you, **Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.***

16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

While John 3 indicates that unless a man is "born again" he cannot enter the Kingdom of God, Jesus clearly excluded little children from this requirement. If this applied to children in Jesus' day, how much more to those children are born during or prior to the tribulation, and are facing the establishment of that very Kingdom. There are also several passages in the Old Testament that indicate children will enter the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

Isaiah 11

4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

*6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; **and a little child shall lead them.***

7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Psalms 17

13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword: [Armageddon]

*14 From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, **and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.***

*15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, **when I awake, with thy likeness.** [Millennial Kingdom]*

Speaking of God's restoring Israel's land inheritance in the Millennium, Jeremiah wrote the following.

Jeremiah 3

*17 **At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD;** and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.*

18 In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.

*19 But I said, How shall I put thee **among the children,** and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.*

The Scripture is not very explicit regarding the fate of children in the tribulation. However, we can assume that God will treat them much the same as He has done in the past. Scripture indicates that unless someone believes the gospel he will be condemned. Yet, we know this does not include children under the age of accountability. The Scriptures do not address this issue clearly. But we can make certain assumptions based on the character of God. I am only suggesting that God will do the same with children at the end of the tribulation. When the rapture occurs, only born again Christians will be caught up. No Scripture suggests that unsaved children will be raptured. Children who are not believers will not be raptured. However, they will not fit into the category of the "sheep" (the righteous) or the "goats" (the wicked). The "sheep" (all believers) will enter the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, [Matt. 25:34], while the "goats" (all who worshipped the Beast) will be cast into everlasting fire, [Matt. 25:41]. The children who have not reached the age of accountability will pass into the Millennium still having the opportunity to believe and be saved, or

be rebellious, as some will according to Zech. 14:16-19. These, along with the Jewish remnant, will reproduce and eventually spawn the great multitude who follow Satan at the end of the Millennium.

Perhaps some readers are concerned that small children would be left to enter the Millennial Kingdom without their parents. Either their parents were believers and were gathered at the rapture, or else they were unbelievers, and were destroyed at the Battle of Armageddon. Either way, if the above scenario is correct, there will be a multitude of children without guardians present to look after them. I can see how this possibility would not sit well with Christian parents of small children.

As parents, we certainly are concerned with the welfare of our children. But, why should we expect that God would rapture our kids? Although this is a common pre-trib assumption, I see no precedent for this idea in Scripture. Suppose a Christian couple is killed in a car accident. Does God supernaturally rapture the kids? No, they are left to muddle through life as best they can. They will have to endure a very difficult and traumatic experience. I don't see why the rapture would be any different.

I believe the rapture is the same day Christ comes to establish His Kingdom. Consequently, the children will all be in a "friendly" environment following the rapture. Besides, the entire host of angels are coming with Christ, and will participate in both the battle of Armageddon, and in gathering the elect at the rapture [2 Thess. 1:7,8 & Matt. 24:29-31]. But, I suspect they will have another job as well.

Heb 1:14

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

(KJV)

Notice the future tense, "shall be." This implies that the angels are dispatched to aid people BEFORE they are actually saved. I submit to you that after the angels are finished gathering together the "elect," they will be sent with another mission. They are not called "guardian angels" for nothing!

Matt 18:10

10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

(KJV)

The fact is, the Bible really doesn't say exactly how this will play out. I think we just need to trust the Lord that He will do the right thing by us and our kids. The best thing we can do is teach them about the Lord as soon as they are able to understand. Then, leave them in God's hands. However, with all those angels attending Christ's coming, I would be surprised if they just sat around after the second coming with nothing to do!

The Basis for Judgment

One feature of the parable of the Sheep and Goats that puzzles folks is the apparent basis for separation. The Sheep are allowed entrance into the Kingdom prepared for them "from the foundation of the world" because of how they treated "my brethren." The Goats go into everlasting fire because of their apparent rejection of "these my brethren." Some might suppose that this passage teaches salvation by works. At any rate, the results are permanent. Verse 46 says, *"And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."* "Eternal Life" and "eternal damnation" are assigned to the sheep and goats. Therefore, the basis of judgment and separation MUST be connected with salvation. The key to this apparent difficulty is the identity of the "brethren."

Matt 12:46-50

46 While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him.

47 Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You."

48 But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"

49 And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!

50 "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is **My brother** and sister and mother."
(NKJ)

Matt 28:9-10

9 And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.

10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell **My brethren** to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

(NKJ)

Jesus was about to send His disciples into all the world to preach the Gospel. When Jesus sent the disciples out the first time to preach to Israel only, He told them:

Matt 10:11-18,40-42

11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.

12 And when ye come into an house, salute it.

13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

14 And **whosoever shall not receive you**, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

15 Verily I say unto you, **It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.**

16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. ...

40 **He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.**

41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

(KJV)

Verse 40 is the key. To receive the disciples, whom Jesus sent out as His ambassadors with the Gospel, is to receive Jesus. And receiving Jesus is to receive the Father. All of this is demonstrated by how people receive and respond to Jesus' "brethren." Hence, Jesus could say on that day, "in as much as you have done it unto the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me."

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Knowing the Day & Hour Another Bogus Argument

By Tim Warner - 04/2002

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One argument that is often leveled against post-tribulationism is the claim that no one knows the day and hour of Jesus' coming. According to pre-tribulationists, this necessarily rules out a post-trib rapture. Daniel gives us precise numbers of days between the "Abomination of Desolation" and the second coming. It is argued that if we are here during the tribulation, we could simply count the days from the Abomination of Desolation and we would know precisely the day, if not the hour.

From an exegetical perspective of the passage in question, the whole argument is completely bogus. It is an exegetical fallacy! The context clearly shows that the words "**that day and that hour**" (of which no one knows) are pointing to the day and hour of Jesus' post-trib coming in the previous verses! They CANNOT be referring to an alleged pre-trib coming that is nowhere hinted at in the text! Therefore, the whole argument is moot, regardless of whether or not we can account for the alleged discrepancy between knowing or not knowing.

Matt 24:29-36

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.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

*33 So likewise ye, **when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.***

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

*36 **But of that day and hour knoweth no man**, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*

(KJV)

"That day and that hour" is most definately the day and hour just mentioned in the preceeding verses - the "day" and "hour" when the whole world will see Jesus coming in power and great glory "immediately after the tribulation." Therefore, to allege that Jesus cannot be referring to a post-trib rapture, on the grounds that we would know the time, is to completely violate the context and ignore the fact that Jesus most definately DID refer to His coming "immediately after the tribulation" in this manner! So, the whole argument falls flat at this point, and is shown to violate the clear implications of the context. It cannot be used against the post-trib view unless one can show that the CONTEXT at least ALLOWS that Jesus was referring to some other coming not mentioned in the text! It most certainly does not allow this, because "that day and hour" must have an antecedent in the text at hand, or at least in the disciples understanding. Since even pre-tribbers would agree that at this time they knew absolutely nothing of a pre-trib rapture, it is ludicrous to argue that the words "that day and that hour" would refer to some alleged secret coming of which the disciples knew nothing, and is not even hinted at in the context!

Of course, we still need to address the apparent conflict with the passages in Daniel and Revelation, not to get post-tribbers off the hook, but to have a proper understanding of why Jesus said what He did. First, Jesus used the perfect indicative verb for "know" in His statement, literally, "no one has known." The perfect tense indicates action completed in the past with continuing results. The past nature of the perfect tense is relative to the time of the speaker. In short, when Jesus spoke this, no one had received this information (the exact day and hour). He did not rule out someone knowing at some particular point in the future (future indicative - "no one shall know"), or the potential for someone knowing (present subjunctive - "no one may know"). All He said was that at the time He spoke, no one had gained this knowledge, not even Him. This fact is important because the entire discourse was intended to tell the disciples WHEN they could KNOW! The whole point of signs was to alert believers when the time of the end would become imminent. It was to tell them when the countdown to the second coming of Jesus had begun.

Jesus started out in verses 4-6 by telling them of some things that must happen, *"but the end is not yet."* He also told them something big MUST happen BEFORE He returns - the Gospel going to all nations (vs. 14). However, verse 15 is the pivotal point in the whole discourse, because Jesus gave them the very first definite sign that would indicate the beginning of the countdown mentioned in Daniel. He said, ***"when you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, ... whoso readeth let him UNDERSTAND."*** In other words, whoever reads Daniel's words about the "abomination of desolation" could UNDERSTAND. Understand what? Exactly how much time was left until the second coming! The Abomination of Desolation is the trigger of the countdown to the second coming. According to Daniel whom Jesus referenced, the starting point for counting down the days is the "Abomination of Desolation."

Dan 12:10-11

*10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and **none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.***

*11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and **the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.***

(KJV)

Note the comment by Jesus, *"whoso readeth (Daniel's prophecy) let Him understand."* This is a direct reference to verse 10 above. When we read Daniel, after seeing the "Abomination of Desolation," we can UNDERSTAND that there are 1290 days left until the rest of this prophecy is fulfilled!

How does this mesh with the statement that "no one has known?" Simple. Look again at Matt. 24:33. He tells His disciples WHEN they could "know."

*33 So likewise ye, **when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors***

Note the precise wording also in verse 15, *"when you therefore shall see..."* When the things Jesus predicted come to pass, we can "KNOW" that His coming is "at the doors," ie, is imminent, or is about to happen momentarily. Until that time, no one knows the day or hour. No one knew in the first century, and no one knows now because the trigger for the countdown - the "Abomination of Desolation" - has not yet occurred.

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Commentary on Matt. 24

Verses 1-3

During the last week of His ministry, after coming to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, Jesus went up to the Temple Mount daily and taught the people. Worshipers had come from all over Israel, and many from foreign lands, to observe the most important festival of Judaism.



Model of the Temple looking toward the South. Solomon's Porch is on the Southern end.
[Copyright: BibleSoft Computer Bible]

The Chief Priests, scribes, and Pharisees, listened intently, as Jesus taught, for some cause to accuse Him. They were increasingly agitated by His claims, as well as His condemnation of them, the religious leaders. The tension was building daily. The final straw came in the form of parables, designed to publicly convict the Jewish leaders as unfit shepherds of God's people.

Matt 21:33-43

33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.
(KJV)

It was clear to these religious men, that Jesus was referring to them as the wicked husbandmen who had been entrusted with God's vineyard under the Law of Moses. But, Jesus was putting them on notice. The Kingdom of God was about to be taken away from them, and given to someone else. The "faithful husbandmen," who would soon take the place of the Jewish leaders as the caretakers of God's vineyard, were the disciples. Jesus had clearly told them this.

Luke 12:32

32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.
(KJV)

The idea of these rag-tag followers of this self-appointed "Messiah" replacing them, made the Jewish leaders furious. How dare Jesus speak of their eviction from the Temple, and all it represents. They wanted Him dead, no matter what. And, they began to conspire how to kill Him. Jesus knew what they were up to, and continued to aggravate the situation by openly condemning them in front of the crowds. He began to publicly instruct His disciples, as the new "faithful husbandmen," who were being appointed charge of God's flock, and the crowd of worshipers. He told them how to act, and in doing so, condemned the actions of the Chief Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees.

Matt 23:1-12

*1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,
2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:
3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.
4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.
5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,
6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,
7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.
8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.
9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.
10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.
11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.
12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*
(KJV)

These are pretty strong words. But, not as strong as what followed. Jesus next turned directly to the Scribes and Pharisees and continued with an intense condemnation of them. I can picture Jesus standing there under Solomon's porch, pointing to them, reprimanding them publicly, while the crowds watched silently, and the disciples stood with their mouths open.

Matt 23:13-36

*13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.
14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.
15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte,*

and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

(KJV)

Notice, in verse 34, Jesus said He was going to send "prophets, wise men, and scribes" to Israel, but that the Jewish leaders would persecute them also. This prophecy finds its fulfillment in the book of Acts. The Apostles and others, like Stephen, are among the ones who were going to be constantly persecuted by the Jewish leadership. This is an important point, that will become clear as we discuss who the Olivet Discourse was intended for, the Church or Israel.

Following this, Jesus began to lament over Jerusalem, and the Jewish people. Their blindness would cause them great pain and suffering. But, eventually, they would repent.

Matt. 23:37-39

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the

name of the Lord.
(KJV)

With this statement, Jesus turned His back on His own nation, resigned to the fact that they would have to endure the judgment of God before they could be restored to fellowship with their God. This had been prophesied by several Old Testament prophets, most notably by Hosea.

Hosea 5:14-6:3

14 For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him.

15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

6:1 Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

3 Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

(KJV)

Here we see that there was a gap predicted, when Israel would be desolate, without God's care. This is what Jesus referred to when He said, *"Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."*

Having pronounced judgment on Israel, in a cloud of turmoil, Jesus turned and began making His way through the crowd, leaving the Temple complex, with the disciples following.

Matt 24:1-3

1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

(KJV)

Something occurred, between verses 2 and 3 that is not recorded in Matthew, but is included in Luke 21. While still within the Temple grounds, Jesus gave a rather lengthy discourse about the coming destruction of the Temple, [which was fulfilled in great detail in AD. 70]. For a thorough understanding of the Olivet Discourse, I suggest you read Luke 21 in its entirety. While this discourse focuses mostly on the destruction of Jerusalem in AD. 70 [in verses 12-24], it also briefly mentions the second coming of Christ after the tribulation to set up His Millennial Kingdom.

After hearing Jesus describe the total destruction of the Temple, Jesus and the disciples made their way out of Jerusalem, across the Kidron valley, and up the Mount of Olives. No doubt, they were thinking about the events of the day, with Jesus' condemnation of the Jewish leaders, Jesus' prophecy of the disciples replacing the Jewish leaders, as well as the coming destruction of the Temple. However, it seems that the thing the disciples were most interested in, was the second coming of Christ, that Jesus had only briefly described in His discourse on the Temple mount. This is seen in the question they posed to Jesus, as they sat overlooking the Temple, on the Mount of Olives.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when

shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Since Jesus had only briefly mentioned the details surrounding His second coming in the Temple discourse, [not even mentioning the tribulation], and since the disciples were mostly interested in the coming of Christ's Kingdom, they asked a rather straightforward question. How would they know when this day was approaching? What signs exactly would precede Jesus' coming in power and glory to set up His Kingdom? The disciples recognized, from their training in the Old Testament, that after the period of Israel's judgment, Messiah would appear in glorious splendor to set up His Kingdom. This was known as the "Day of the Lord," [See: Joel 3:9-17 & Zech. 14]. They were anxious to rule and reign with the Messiah. They wanted to know what signs would accompany this event, so they could know when it was approaching. They expected to live to see it. Little did they realize, that as a prelude to Christ's Kingdom being established on earth, they first had a great task to accomplish, spreading the gospel among all nations.

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Commentary on Matt. 24

Verses 4-8



View of the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives, where Jesus gave His Olivet Discourse
[Copyright: BibleSoft Computer Bible]

Matt 24:4-8

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

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

*6 And **ye** shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that **ye** be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

(KJV)

Let's make a couple of observations before we proceed. First of all, Jesus' discourse was directed to His disciples. He addressed them separately from Israel. Earlier, Jesus had publicly condemned the Jewish leaders, and pronounced judgment on Israel as a nation, which would not be lifted until they said, "blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." In other words, until they recognized Him as Messiah. He considered His disciples, the ones He personally called from Israel, His "little flock." They were seen in contrast to the Israel that rejected Jesus. They would be the new "husbandmen" who would

receive the care of God's vineyard in place of the Chief priests, Scribes, and Pharisees. And, they are the ones Jesus was soon to send out to preach His gospel to all the nations.

Secondly, Jesus addressed their concerns about what signs they could watch for, as though they might live to see it. This fact has confused many people, because the disciples are long since dead, and Jesus has not returned yet. Some even use this to say that the Olivet Discourse does not apply to the "Church" because those Jesus was addressing would obviously see the events He described, which will occur in the tribulation, many centuries later. But, this objection makes havoc of the grammatical - historical rule of interpretation, [which says that Scripture must be understood in its original setting, and with the original audience in mind]. This discourse was spoken to the disciples, and Jesus repeatedly used the personal pronouns "you," "ye," and "yourselves." He clearly had the disciples in mind. However, this need not be a problem, when we take into consideration that the entire New Testament is written with the understanding that Jesus **could** have returned in the first century. All of the commands in the Epistles instructed first century Christians to watch for Jesus' return. We could raise the same objection to these commands. However, we understand that "watching" for Christ's coming implies that it could indeed occur in the lifetime of those watching. Therefore, since the New Testament repeatedly instructed Christians in the first century to be watching for Christ's coming, we conclude that Jesus **could** have come in the first century. Even Paul expected to live until the second coming. This is clear in several passages, most notably in 1 Thess. 4:13-17, where Paul repeated referred to those who "sleep in Jesus" in the third person, while including himself with those who will be alive at the second coming.

John was the longest living of the disciples, surviving almost until the beginning of the second century. He wrote his Gospel near the end of his life, probably after all of the other Apostles were dead. Notice how he deals with this issue.

John 21:18-24

18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

(KJV)

Here, several decades after Jesus ascended to heaven, John, knowing that he is now an old man, and the last living Apostle, and knowing that he doesn't have a lot of years left, seems to be finally putting to rest the rumor that Jesus would return within his lifetime. John clarified for all, that Jesus did not definitely say that He would return before John died. The early Christians had apparently made this incorrect inference.

The point I want to emphasize is that the Olivet Discourse is written in the same manner as the Epistles. Its instruction assumes that the original audience would live to see the second coming of Christ, and that all of the things included in this discourse, including the tribulation, could have occurred in the first century. This makes the Bible applicable to every generation, regardless of how long Jesus takes to

return. With this in mind, it is quite clear that Jesus intended His instructions, about watching for the signs of His coming, to be observed by Christians of this age.

When Jesus sent these men out to evangelize the gentiles, He intended that His teaching to the disciples be also taught to the gentile nations.

Matt 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

*20 Teaching them to observe **all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.***

(KJV)

The Olivet Discourse contains instructions for the disciples to be watching for the signs of Jesus' coming. Therefore, the Great Commission, if followed exactly as Jesus gave it, must include teaching the new converts from all nations to also watch for the signs of His coming, that He gave in this discourse. Now, let's proceed with verses 4-8 of Matt. 24.

The very first thing Jesus told His disciples, in response to their question, was a warning against being deceived. He said: *"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."* There are two ways of looking at this warning. First, traditionally, Christians have interpreted this to mean that false "christs" would pretend to be the true Messiah. And, we can see from numerous examples in history, that this has occurred. But, when Jesus said these deceivers will say, "I am Christ," it could mean that they acknowledge Jesus to be Christ, yet they will still deceive many with false doctrine. This has also occurred on a massive scale. Later in this discourse [vss. 23-27], Jesus warned against "false Christs." Clearly this means those who make a false claim of "Christhood." With this in mind, it seems that, in verses 4 & 5, Jesus meant false teachers who acknowledge that Jesus is Christ, and thereby deceive many. [Otherwise, verses 23-27 would be redundant].

This means that the deception will be very subtle, since "Jesus is Lord" will be proclaimed by these false teachers. I can think of several "ministries" who proclaim loudly that "Jesus is Lord," yet spew out false teaching that will result in apostasy, and Christians abandoning the Gospel of Jesus Christ when real persecution comes.

Next, Jesus began to list disasters and wars that would increase as a prelude to the "great tribulation." He said there would be wars, and rumors of wars. It is clear, that the 20th century has been the century of war. There have been more people killed as a result of war in this century than in all of recorded history. This is primarily due to the advancement in the technology of war. A pilot can kill hundreds or thousands of people with the flip of a switch. Missiles can be launched to wipe out entire cities with the push of a button. Jesus said "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." He is not being redundant here. There is a big difference in the Greek text between "nations" and "kingdoms." Nations is "ethnos" from which we get "ethnic." Jesus was saying there would be race wars. "Kingdoms" means political entities, that we call "countries." We are also witnessing the huge increase in the other things Jesus mentioned, earthquakes, famines, and pestilence.

Notice in verse 6 that "the end is not yet." In other words, Jesus was informing the disciples that these things must come, but they are NOT the immediate signs of His coming. They are only "the beginning of sorrows." The word "sorrows" means "birth pains," as it is translated in most modern versions. This

term is in contrast to the term "great tribulation" which implies intense labor, such as a woman has while actually giving birth. So, the wars, famines, earthquakes, and pestilence, are only the initial birth pains, which will be followed by great travail. All of the definite signs that announce Jesus' coming are found during the time Jesus calls "great tribulation," as we shall see as we progress. In my opinion, we have already entered the "birth pains," and can expect the "great tribulation" shortly.

Here is one final thing to keep in mind, for those who think this discourse does not apply to us. It is quite clear that the events described in verses 4-8 are occurring right now. So, it is safe to say that we have entered the "beginning of sorrows." When Jesus placed the disciples within these prophesied events, by using the personal pronouns, "you," "ye," etc., His teaching necessarily applies to those of us living during this time. We are the ones that are the results of the disciples obeying the Great Commission. Jesus continued to use the same personal pronouns, thereby indicating that the same group of people He referred to in verses 4-8 would also be present in the remainder of the events described in this chapter. This is common sense. To divide the chapter up, making part of it applicable to us, and denying that the remainder applies, violates sound grammatical rules. It makes nonsense of Jesus' words.

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Commentary on Matt. 24

Verses 9-14

One conspicuous feature of the Olivet Discourse is the absence of any mention of the beginning of the 70th week, commonly referred to as the "tribulation." As we saw in the previous article, Jesus spoke of earthquakes, wars, famines, and pestilence, as increasing prior to the "great tribulation." As we will see when we study verses 15 and following, the "great tribulation" does not actually begin until the mid-point of the 70th week, and lasts for 3 1/2 years. The length of the period of "birth pains" is not indicated. Some have speculated that the "birth pains" are limited to the first 3 1/2 years of the 70th week. However, there is nothing in the text to suggest this. Perhaps it is born out of the need by pre-tribblers to isolate this passage from the "Church age." However, if you are comfortable with the idea that Jesus was predicting events that the Church will see, there is no reason to suppose that the "birth pains" might not cover a substantial period of time. My opinion is that we have already entered the "birth pains," which will continue to increase until the mid point of the 70th week.

In verses 9-14 Jesus addresses the condition of the Church in the last days. We should sit up and take notice, because what He says here concerns you, me, and our loved ones.

Matt 24:9-14

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.

(NASB)

As we approach the mid point of the 70th week, persecution of Christians will become rampant. We shouldn't think that this is far into the future. Christians are being persecuted right now. In fact, according to the "Voice of the Martyrs," there have been more Christian martyrs in this century alone than in all of the centuries since Christ combined. There are hundreds of thousands of Christians suffering in prisons in many countries around the world. Just because we have not seen this kind of persecution yet in our little corner of the world doesn't mean this prophecy has yet to be fulfilled. It will come to where you are. By the time the mark of the Beast is implemented, persecution of Christians will be world wide.

For those who try to confine this prophecy to the nation of Israel, notice that persecution will be on account of Jesus' name. No doubt, Jesus is speaking of Christians here.

In verse 10 He says that when this persecution comes, many will "fall away." Of course, this goes against the Calvinistic theology of many Christians who think that once you have said a "sinner's prayer," you are home-free. However, the Scriptures teach, in no uncertain terms, that a genuine believer can forsake God, and be lost. It is a matter of the will. Believing the gospel is necessary to salvation, and one chooses to believe or not to believe. Likewise, continuing to believe the gospel is necessary for continued salvation. And, one still has a free will after he is saved to continue in Christ, or forsake Him and be lost forever.

The persecution mentioned by Jesus will cause many to abandon the Christian faith.

Apparently, this "falling away" will be on a massive scale. Paul also mentioned it occurring prior to the mid-point of the 70th week.

II Th 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)

No doubt Paul was referring to Jesus' words. He listed the "falling away" as a sign, along with the revelation of Antichrist, that could be easily recognized, and which would precede the coming of the Lord. Apparently, there is going to be a mass defection from the Christian Church. We can already see the beginnings of this, with the push for ecumenism, and the churches returning to Rome. The Roman church is also actively involved in trying to bring other religions into her fold. The apostasy has already begun, and soon true Christians will be compelled to join the new world religion, or suffer persecution. Many will turn away from Christ rather than suffer.

When this occurs, according to Jesus there will be households divided, and friends and family members will betray one another. In another passage, Jesus elaborated on this.

Matt 10:21-22

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

(KJV)

This is probably the most difficult thing for Christians during this time. Family members and loved ones will abandon the faith, and then turn in husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, and children. We must be prepared for this possibility. Our faith in Christ is going to be tested severely. Only those who pass the test, and remain committed to Christ until either they are killed, or they survive until the coming of Christ, will be saved.

In verses 11 and 12, Jesus gave two reasons for this mass apostasy. First, many will be deceived by false doctrine, which will lead them to accept the false gospel, and false Christ. I believe that much of the groundwork has already been laid by "ministries" that teach things like the "prosperity gospel," and the "laughing revivals," etc. Christians are being opened up to demonic influence, and taught that materialism is their right. Also, I am sad to say, certain other doctrines that are commonplace among Evangelicals, like "once saved always saved," and the "pre-trib rapture," are going to reap a devastating harvest when the time of testing arrives for western Christians.

The second reason for the mass apostasy, is the increase in iniquity. Rampant unchecked sin among God's people is also laying the foundation for the "falling away." We tolerate so much in our lives, our families, and our churches, that is clearly in opposition to the Word of God. These things have a corrosive effect on our faith. When the time of testing comes, we need faith like Abraham. What will be our condition if we have not been faithful to Christ prior to the time of testing? Notice that Jesus said because iniquity will abound, MOST people's love will grow cold. The "love" mentioned here is "agape." This word is

only used in the Bible in reference to God or believers. It is God's love shown through true believers. According to 1 John, it is the true test of whether or not we are genuine believers. Yet, Jesus said that MOST people's love will grow cold. Only those who endure to the end will be saved. Do you see the picture here? **Most Christians today are not going to remain faithful to Christ, but will fall away from the faith, and be lost**, either because tolerated sin has so weakened them, or because they will be deceived by false teachers. I don't know about you, but that scares me. Most of the people in your Church are going to forsake Christ, and take the mark of the Beast when it comes. Wow. What are you doing to prepare your family spiritually to stand firm in faith no matter what comes? I know this convicts me, and it should convict you as well.

Paul gave us instructions on how to go about preparing for this situation described by Jesus.

Eph 6:10-13

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

(NIV)

No doubt, many Christians might suppose that I have misapplied this passage, thinking that the "evil day" is referring to trials and tribulations in general. However, the Greek text is quite clear that Paul was referring to a particular "evil day" in the future that Christians knew was coming. This is seen in the fact that he used the definite article twice in the Greek. Actually, he said, "in **the** day, **the** evil one." Since he is speaking in the future tense, he must have been referring to something that was prophesied beforehand. Most likely this is a reference to the "great tribulation" Jesus mentioned in the chapter we are studying. Also, the Early Church Fathers understood this passage as referring to the tribulation, too. Below is a quote from Cyprian.

*"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."... 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." **Let us take these arms, let us fortify ourselves with these spiritual and heavenly safeguards, that in the most evil day we may be able to withstand, and to resist the threats of the devil:** [The Epistles of Cyprian, LV, 1,7-10]*

Peter also gave us instructions regarding this, which we would do well to heed.

2 Pet 1:5-11

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

*10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: **for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:***

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

(KJV)

2 Pet 3:17,18

17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

(KJV)

Are you serious about remaining faithful to Christ in the tough time to come? Then I suggest you get busy implementing these Scriptures into your life, and the lives of your family members.

Finally, Jesus made a profound statement in verse 14. He told the disciples the reason for the long delay in His coming back to earth. It is the completion of the task He assigned to the disciples, and to us as well. The gospel must be preached among all nations before the end will come. Peter also confirmed this in his second Epistle.

2 Pet 3:8-9

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

*9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; **but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.***

(KJV)

The Christian Church has in its power the ability to hasten the coming of Christ. Remember, in an earlier article, I spoke of the fact that the Olivet Discourse is written in such a way that it seems the coming of Christ could occur in the first century? Here is the reason this is so. If the true Church had completed the task, then these events would have come to pass at any point in the history of the Church. In Daniel 9, where the famous passage describes the 70 weeks which will end with Christ's Kingdom, it says the 70 weeks are "determined." This word means that these periods of time are fixed, and nothing can change them. But, we also know that there was a gap predicted, between the 69th week, and the 70th week. The 69th week ended at the crucifixion, and the 70th week begins the final countdown to the second coming. We are living in this gap, which is NOT DETERMINED according to the prophecy of Daniel. It is not "fixed." Why? Because it depends on us, and our work of completing the Great Commission.

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Commentary on Matt. 24

Verse 15

Matt 24:15

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

(KJV)

In verses 3-14, Jesus gave the disciples a series of events that must occur before His coming. But, these events are not definite signs of His coming. Jesus simply said these must come first. What is the difference between these events and "signs?" The events in the previous verses, wars, earthquakes, famines, pestilences, and the Gospel being spread to all nations, have been going on for many years. Each of these are simply increasing in intensity as the coming of the Lord approaches. We have no way of determining just where we are in God's timetable, since all of these things are relative, [except perhaps the completion of the Great Commission]. Even that does not necessarily signal the immediate return of Christ, and, it is not likely that we can know when it has been completed in God's sight. Jesus clearly said, "the end is not yet," when referring to the wars, famines, earthquakes, and pestilences.

However, the disciples' question about what signs they could look for, so they would know when Jesus' coming was near, was directly answered by Jesus. In the above verse, Jesus gave them the first definite sign which linked the coming of Christ to the 70th week of Daniel, and established a timetable.

The "abomination of desolation" that was spoken of by Daniel, is a key element in Daniel's scenario of the last days. In Daniel, it is clear that this event will occur at precisely the middle of the 7 year "week" we call the tribulation.

Dan 9:27

*27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and **in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate**, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.*

(KJV)

In the middle of the 70th week, the Antichrist will commit an abomination that will make the Temple in Jerusalem "desolate." Daniel gives us further information in chapter 11.

Dan 11:31

*31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and **they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate**.* (KJV)

Notice the "abomination" includes "placing" something. Mark's account of Jesus' prophecy also shows that an object will be placed in the Temple.

Mark 13:14

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:

(KJV)

According to Matthew, the abomination of desolation will stand in the "holy place." Apparently, this is an object, most likely the "image of the Beast" referred to in Rev. 13. Paul also indicates that the Antichrist will take his seat in the Temple, and proclaim He is God.

II Thess 2:4

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 the same passage, Paul indicates that this is how the Antichrist will be "revealed." The implication is that prior to this event, while he may be in a position of prominence, we may not know for certain who the Antichrist is. Only when he commits the "abomination of desolation," in the Temple, can we know for sure who he is. And, according to Jesus, this is the very first definite sign which identifies exactly where we are on the prophetic calendar.

Many Christians today are looking for confirmation of an agreement with Israel that will make it possible for the Jews to resume sacrifices. This agreement, prophesied in Dan. 9:27, will likely have to do with the possession of the Temple Mount, and the rebuilding of the Temple. But, Jesus did not even mention this agreement, let alone imply that it was a "sign" of His coming. After all, the disciples asked for the signs. This indicates to me that the confirming of this covenant may not be generally known to the public. Yes, it is the trigger that launches the beginning of the 70th week. But, if we cannot know for certain if and when such a confirmation has taken place, we may not know we are in the 70th week until much later. The way I read Jesus' answer to the disciples, the "abomination" at the mid-point of the week is our first definite marker. From that point on, we know the Lord's coming is 3 1/2 years away. Sure, we might suspect that we have entered the 70th week, if we see the Temple being rebuilt, and sacrifices resume. But, there is nothing in Bible prophecy, as far as I can determine, that forbids this from occurring long before the tribulation begins. The beginning of the 70th week is just a confirmation of a covenant that was already in existence. So, to conclude that the 70th week has begun if and when we see a covenant that allows for the rebuilding of the Temple, is not a reliable sign. We should stick to what Jesus told the disciples, lest we sound the alarm prematurely.

In Matt. 24:15, there is a curious statement, which is enclosed in "()" parentheses.

Matt 24:15

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

(KJV)

Many people mistakenly believe that the statement, "whoso readeth, let him understand," was a comment inserted by Matthew, and it referred to whoever reads his Gospel. But, the same statement is found in Mark's account of this discourse. It is highly unlikely that both Matthew and Mark would place exactly the same comment in exactly the same place in the discourse. Consequently, it is most likely that this comment was actually spoken by Jesus, and both Matthew and Mark recorded it. But, since Jesus was not writing anything, but was simply speaking to the disciples, what could He mean by "whoso readeth?" I believe Jesus was referring to the book of Daniel. He was saying, that whoever reads Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks, now that Jesus has given His prophecy of the last days, could understand the 70 week prophecy. We now understand that there is a gap between the 69th week, when Messiah was "cut off," and the beginning of the 70th week, at the end of which Jesus will return. All of

the events Jesus had previously described, the wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilences, and the gospel being spread to all nations, must occur between the 69th week and the 70th week. Prior to Jesus' prophecy in the Olivet Discourse, there was no indication that there was a real gap of time between the 69th week, and the 70th week. It appeared from this prophecy, as well as several others, that the Millennial Kingdom would be set up at Christ's first coming. Jesus' prophecy clearly places the 70th week at the end of the age.

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Commentary on Matt. 24

Verses 16-22

Matt 24:16-22

16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. (KJV)

Here Jesus instructed Christians living in Judea to flee the area when the "abomination of desolation" takes place. This is when the persecution will become most severe. As Revelation 13 says, all who refuse to worship the "Beast" will have a death sentence. When the Antichrist enters the Temple, in the middle of the 70th week, claiming to be God, and demanding worship, it is time to head to the hills.

Jesus' instructions concerns specifically those living in Judea, because this will be the center of persecution. However, since Revelation indicates that this persecution will be world-wide, we may have to leave the cities as well, finding refuge in "the mountains." No doubt, some places will be much worse than others, so we should seek God for wisdom regarding any evacuation plans. In any case, at this point in time, it will be decision time for many believers. Those with their roots in the materialism of this world will find it difficult to leave their homes, their "stuff," and their family members who refuse to go.

In Jesus' two discourses on this day, the Temple Discourse, and the Olivet Discourse, he twice instructed His followers to pray for something specific.

Matt 24:20

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

(KJV)

Luke 21:36

36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

(KJV)

Why would He instruct them to pray that they would not need to flee in winter, or on the Sabbath? Regarding winter, the reason one would not want to flee to the mountains is because it would be very cold. It is bad enough to have to suddenly flee with basically just the shirt on your back. But, to go to the mountains without adequate shelter and provisions, during winter, when there is no food or shelter, will be extraordinarily difficult. Likewise, fleeing on the Sabbath from Jerusalem and Judea will be very difficult. Jerusalem comes to a standstill on the Sabbath. Borders are closed to some traffic, and retail stores are closed. Getting food and fuel would be very difficult, and a large number of people evacuating past check points will be next to impossible. So, praying for ease of evacuation seems quite practical for

those living in the greater Jerusalem area. Of course, we can make this applicable to our situations, too, depending on where we live. We need to be thinking and praying about our own evacuation plans.

Also, Jesus instructed them to pray that they would be accounted worthy to escape **all these things**. In the context of Luke, where Jesus was instructing the disciples on the Temple Mount, it is clear that "all these things" from which they were command to pray for escape, included both the tribulation AND the destruction of Jerusalem that occurred in AD 66-70. Luke 21:12-24 describes the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, with similar commands to flee when the Roman army surrounded the city. According to Church history, the Christians living in Jerusalem in AD 66-70 heeded Jesus' warnings to flee, and they were spared. But, the Jews, who did not believe Jesus, stayed behind, and were starved, slaughtered, and carried off as slaves by the Romans. But, the same discourse goes on to describe the things that will come on the earth in the tribulation just before Christ comes, in verses 25 and following. So, when Jesus said to "*pray that you would be counted worthy to escape **all these things**,*" He included their escape from both the destruction of Jerusalem, and the events of the tribulation. For us living in the last days, the Christians' escape from Jerusalem in AD 66-70 shows how we might escape the events of the tribulation. And, it was not by a "rapture," but by fleeing to safe areas. We need to be praying about our escape from the intense hardship that will immediately follow the "abomination of desolation."

Matt 24:21-22

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

(KJV)

Here, Jesus made a direct reference to the book of Daniel for a second time. Earlier, in verse 15, He mentioned Daniel's prophecy of the 70th week, with the "abomination of desolation" in the mid-point. Here, Jesus was referring to the following passage.

Dan 12:1

*1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and **there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time:** and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*

(KJV)

Next, Jesus speaks of just how bad it is going to get. He said that unless the days had been shortened, no flesh would survive. That is pretty bad.

The shortening of the days of "great tribulation" has caused some confusion. In fact, the pre- wrath view relies heavily on this verse, claiming that the "great tribulation" that Jesus spoke of will be less than the 3 1/2 years of Daniel's prophecy. But, in my opinion, Jesus is not saying that this period will be shortened beyond the period of time predicted in Daniel. He is simply saying that the great tribulation will be so bad, that if it was allowed to go on beyond 3 1/2 years, nobody could survive. Therefore, it has been limited to 3 1/2 years.

One thing that is interesting about this verse, is that in Mark's parallel account of it, Jesus used the past tense, rather than the future tense, as in Matthew.

Mark 13:20

*20 And except that the Lord **had shortened** those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he **hath shortened** the days.*

(KJV)

So, according to Matthew, God **will** shorten the days, but according to Mark, He **has** shortened the days. This implies to me that the 1260 days are already the "shortened" days. The reason Matthew uses the future tense, is because the tribulation has not arrived yet, but the "shortening" seems to already be figured into the numbers of days given in Daniel and Revelation, in my opinion.

Now, we come to a very important point. Who are the "elect" that Jesus refers to in this verse? No doubt, they are the same "elect" in verse 31, who will be gathered at the sound of the trumpet. The New Testament uses this term much more frequently than the Old Testament. And, in virtually every case, it refers to Christians. The only exceptions are one case where it refers to Jesus, and another to angels. Every other time it refers to Christians. In this context, it is quite apparent that it refers to the disciples, because Jesus repeatedly used the personal pronouns "you," "ye," and "yourselves" in this discourse, placing His followers [to whom He was speaking] in the tribulation scenes. So, in order to be grammatically correct, Jesus' followers, who were seen apart from unbelieving Israel, must experience the tribulation. Secondly, as we saw in the first article on Matt. 24, Jesus had just turned his back on the people of Israel. He spoke of the disciples replacing the Jewish leaders as the shepherds of God's people of faith. It was the disciples who assumed the role of Elders of the Church. They are the ones who Jesus commanded to take this very message to the Gentiles, [Matt. 28:19,20].

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Commentary on Matt. 24

Verses 23-28

Matt 24:23-28

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

25 Behold, I have told you before.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

(KJV)

Here, Jesus warns them that during the Great Tribulation, there will be **false or counterfeit second comings**. The false Christs and false prophets will produce miracles, capable of fooling many. But, the whole point of Jesus' statement above, is that the false "second coming" cannot duplicate Christ's real coming. He [this same Jesus Messiah] will come in a blaze of glory, like lightening shooting across the entire horizon. The false "Christs" will appear "in the desert," or "in the secret chamber." In other words, false messiahs will want you to come to where they are, perhaps to an auditorium, where they might entertain you with magic tricks. Jesus says, don't believe it. He is not going to come in this manner.

New Age theology states that Jesus was just a man, and that he was born of Jewish parents. But, during His baptism, the "Christ Spirit" descended on Him. This was His "Christ anointing" that made Jesus the "Christ." ["Christ" means "anointed one."] Beware of Christian Ministries who teach "the anointing" of Jesus, as being available to others. This is a lie that is being taught by several Charismatic Ministries, like Kenneth Copeland, and several others. [[Click here](#) for more info on Kenneth Copeland.] This is pure New Age theology, and it is setting the stage for the appearance of Antichrist. New Agers believe that during His ministry, Jesus "the Christ" taught Divine truths. But, at His crucifixion, when Jesus "gave up the ghost," the "Christ Spirit" left Him, and he died like any other man. They do not believe in the resurrection.

They also believe that other great religious leaders have been anointed by this "Christ Spirit," including Buddha, and Mohamed. So, the "Christ Spirit" has been the originator of many world religions. Where the teachings of these religions are similar, they claim they are really parts of the larger cosmic truth. Where they differ, they have been perverted by their adherents down through the centuries. Being "the Christ" is sort of like an office that one holds, which, when vacated, is passed on to another. Hence, the blending of all religions into one, that is the trademark of the New Age, and will be the religion of the Antichrist, centered in the Roman Church.

When the Antichrist appears, He will claim to be the latest reincarnation of the "Christ anointing." Notice, Jesus did not say that anyone would come claiming to be Jesus Christ. But, that false "Christs" [or anointed ones] would appear, and deceive. The Antichrist will claim to be the latest successor to the "Christ Spirit." And, with the help of the False Prophet, will claim that all religions are one, and he will demand worship.

But, Jesus' warning, is not to be deceived by this imposter. He is NOT Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself will return, as was clearly stated by the angels at His ascension.

Acts 1:10-12

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)

We are not looking for "a Christ." We are looking for the return of Jesus, the one and only "Christ." The false Christ, while he will be able to do many apparent miracles, cannot duplicate the second coming. Jesus was making it perfectly clear that His coming in power and glory must be taken literally, if we are to avoid being deceived.

Matt 24:28

28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

(KJV)

Jesus is going to destroy this false Christ, and give his armies to the fowls of the air. You can read about this in Rev. 19. For further comments on the this topic, see the article; [As in the Days of Lot](#). This is a discussion of the parallel passage in Luke 17.

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Commentary on Matt. 24

Verses 29-31

Matt 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.

(KJV)

Finally, we come to the climax of the Olivet Discourse. This is what the disciples wanted to know. Everything prior to this pointed to the main event, the coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory. The final sign just before Jesus comes will not be missed by a single living soul. The sun and moon will be darkened, stars [meteors] will fall from the sky, and the powers [or normal cycles] of the heavens will be shaken. This is **THE SIGN** of Jesus' coming. When this occurs, it will be imminent.

This sign is found frequently in the Scriptures. It is seen repeatedly in Old Testament prophecy, announcing the "Day of the Lord." [See: Isaiah 13:9,10, Isaiah 24:23, Joel 2:10, Joel 2:30,31, Joel 3:14,15]. Revelation expands on this scene in chapter six.

Rev 6:12-17

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

(KJV)

Jesus said all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will finally realize that they accepted the false messiah, that the true Messiah is arriving, and they are about to be destroyed. The best they can do is try to save their own skins by hiding among the caves. How will all the nations of the world see Jesus' arrival? Verse 27 said that His coming will be like lightning, that goes from east to west across the sky. Well, you can go from north to south and arrive at the extreme poles. But, you cannot go from "the east, even unto the west" without going around the entire earth. The sun and moon will be dark, and no stars will be seen. Only Jesus will appear with his angels, in blazing glory, streaking across the sky, from east to west, encircling the entire earth, and stopping above the Mount of Olives, while the armies of the Antichrist below, surrounding Jerusalem, watch in horror.

Next, Jesus will sound the trumpet, and dispatch His angels to gather together His elect. Here is the rapture. Notice that the elect will be gathered from one end of the sky to the other. In other words, the whole sky will be filled with glorified saints. This is probably as viewed from the battle scene, the Jerusalem area. The landscape will be lit entirely by Jesus, the angels, and glorified saints.

I have no idea how long this "gathering" will take, but I doubt it will be instantaneous. Paul said the dead would be raised, and we will be "changed" instantly, at the last trumpet [1 Cor. 15:52]. But, he did NOT say we would be caught up in the same instant.

1Thess 4:16-17

*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.***

(KJV)

Now, if the dead are raised, and we are changed incorruptible, instantly when the trumpet is sounded, but, the dead are raised BEFORE we are "caught up," we must be changed while still on the ground, and caught up later. That's right. We will see the sun and moon darkened, and Jesus streaking through the sky from the eastern horizon to the western horizon. We will hear the shout and trumpet blast, and instantly we will be "changed" right where we stand. At the same instant, the angels will be dispatched from the sky above the Mount of Olives to pick us up. We will know exactly what is happening, as we wait for the angels to arrive at our location to gather us together. That's why Jesus said in Luke 17...

Luke 17:31-34

31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

32 Remember Lot's wife.

33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

(KJV)

When you see these things, and you hear that trumpet sound, when you are instantly changed, don't bother going back to your house. Don't bother checking on your stuff, or your loved ones. The angels are already on their way, brother. You are going for a ride! The wicked will try to hide to save themselves, but to no avail.

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Commentary on Matt. 24

Verses 32-36

Matt 24:32-36

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

(KJV)

Verse 32 is often misunderstood. Many say that Israel is the "fig tree." And, that, when we see Israel "bud" Jesus' coming is near. They claim that the generation that sees Israel being reborn will be the generation that sees the second coming of Jesus. Well, Israel was "reborn" in 1948. Jack Van Impe believed that a "generation" was 40 years. So, he calculated that 40 years from 1948 meant that the second coming of Jesus would be in 1988. He then subtracted 7 years for the tribulation, and predicted that a pre-trib rapture would occur in 1981. Well, as you might have guessed, he was flat wrong. Subsequently, he decided that maybe the starting point should be 1967, when Israel recaptured all of Jerusalem during the six day war. So, even after being burned once, he set the date again. This time, calculating 40 years from 1967, placing the second coming in 2007. Then subtracting 7 years for the tribulation, he now thinks the rapture will be in 2000. Well, wrong again, Jack!

First of all, the ones who "see the fig tree putting forth leaves" are the same ones who will "see the abomination of desolation." In other words, we will see the tribulation. There is no pre-trib rapture, Jack.

Matt 24:15

15 When **ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation**, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

(KJV)

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)

Secondly, the "fig tree" is not Israel. The "fig tree" is just a fig tree. Jesus was not giving them some kind of riddle here. He was explaining HOW we should watch for His coming, and He used the "fig tree" as an example. Notice the parallel passage in Mark and Luke.

Mark 13:28-29

28 Now learn **a parable** of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:

29 So **ye in like manner**, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

(KJV)

Luke 21:29-31

29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold **the fig tree, and all the trees;**

30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

(KJV)

In Mark, it is clear that Jesus meant that the "fig tree" was just an example. In the same way we know when summer is approaching, by looking for the signs [the sprouting of the fig trees], **IN THE SAME MANNER** we will know when Jesus' coming is near, by watching for the signs He gave in this discourse.

In Luke, which records the Temple Discourse, Jesus included "all the trees" in His example. So, He was not using the "fig tree" as a symbol of Israel, or else what are all the other trees that also will sprout leaves?

The "fig tree" is a parable. It illustrates HOW we should be watching for the signs. Let's look at these verses again.

Matt 24:32-36

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)

When we see "all these things" we will know that Jesus' coming is "at the doors." This phrase means "imminent." Yes, the second coming will be "imminent." But, it is NOT imminent now. It will only be imminent AFTER we see "all these things." What things? Obviously, all of the signs that Jesus gave the disciples in this discourse. After all, the whole purpose of this discourse was to answer the disciples' question; "what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the age?" This series of signs culminate in the final sign, the darkening of the sun and moon, in verse 29. Only after we have seen "all these things" will Jesus' coming for us be "at the doors" [or imminent]. So, don't be fooled by all the alleged "signs" that people throw around that are supposed to point to an imminent rapture. Jesus told us plainly that His coming for us will only occur AFTER **all** of these things have come to pass.

In verse 34, Jesus said "this generation" would not expire until Jesus returns. What generation was He speaking of? Many people think Jesus was saying that He would definitely return in the generation in which He lived. But, in the context of this chapter, that is clearly not the case. Remember, Jesus gave a series of events that must first come, but He said "the end is not yet." In other words, these things must come, but they are not the signs of His coming. There is no guarantee that the generations that see earthquakes, wars, famines, and pestilences, would also see the second coming. These things have gradually been increasing over a long period of time. But, the ones who see the definite signs, like the "abomination of desolation," and all the signs that follow, will definitely see the second coming of Jesus Christ. It is this generation that Jesus spoke of.

Matt. 24:36

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

(KJV)

Isn't it funny that pre-tribbers frequently use this verse to show that the rapture could be "at any moment," yet the context clearly shows that Jesus was speaking of His coming "immediately after the tribulation?" When you see this verse in light of what Jesus had just said in verse 33, that only AFTER we see all the signs come to pass could we know His coming was imminent, this verse makes perfect sense. The reason no one knows the day or hour, is because the signs have not yet all been fulfilled. It is that simple. Once we see the first definite sign fulfilled, we can and will know that His coming is 3 1/2 years away. Once we see the final sign, we will know it is "at the doors." The words "no man knoweth" is present tense. It does NOT forbid people knowing once the abomination takes place. That is the whole point of Jesus' words. Until the "abomination" occurs, no one knows, or can know, the day or hour.

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Commentary on Matt. 24

Verses 37-44

Matt 24:37-44

37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

(KJV)

In the days of Noah, people went on living in their sin, without paying heed to Noah's preaching that judgment was coming, and the end of the age was fast approaching. Jesus likened this to the situation in the tribulation. Despite all the apparent signs, people will refuse to believe that the end of this present world system is imminent. They will carry on with their lives oblivious to the fulfilled signs. They will refuse to repent despite all the disasters of the tribulation.

Rev 9:20-21

20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

(KJV)

It seems hard to imagine that this earth can sustain the series of plagues Revelation describes, and yet the vast majority of people will refuse to acknowledge the judgment of God. No doubt, they will devise all kinds of scientific reasoning for these plagues, in order to justify their continued rebellion against God. But, Jesus assures us that He is coming, right on schedule.

Peter alluded to Jesus' teaching here in his second Epistle. Like Jesus, he used the attitude of the people of Noah's day to illustrate how it will be just before the Day of the Lord comes.

2 Pet 3:3-10

3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

(KJV)

The destruction that will come on the Day of the Lord will overtake the wicked totally by surprise. But, notice that this is also the **same coming** of Jesus that is our hope of rescue. There is only one coming of Jesus mentioned here. It will be a day of sudden destruction for the wicked, and a day of hope for Christians. This comes from Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse. This is the unanimous teaching of Scripture. It appears to me that Peter was simply reiterating what Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse.

Next, Jesus referred again to the rapture.

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

This was a brief reminder of what Jesus had previously taught them in Luke 17. The righteous will be gathered by the angels [Matt. 24:31], and the wicked will be left behind. [[Click here](#) to go to a separate article on Luke 17.] Jesus instructed them to be watching for His coming in glory "immediately after the tribulation."

Finally, Jesus used the famous parable about the "thief in the night."

43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

The obvious point of this statement is that if one knows when a thief is coming, he can watch for him, and prevent a bad outcome. In the same manner, if we are keenly aware of the **signs Jesus gave His disciples**, we can prevent the surprise of Jesus' coming. In effect, if we are paying attention, we can know when His coming is imminent, and take proper action. In the mean while, we are to watch for the signs Jesus gave, because, until the signs are fulfilled, we cannot know when He is coming. It is clear then, that "watching" in this context means watching for the accompanying signs that Jesus gave His disciples. Paul carried this idea further in the following passage.

1Thess 5:1-6

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.***

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

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

(KJV)

Notice that Paul was alluding to Jesus' comments. The "thief in the night" statement was coined by Jesus in reference to His post-trib coming. Yet, Paul applied Jesus' warning to the Thessalonian Christians. He wrote that Christians will NOT be surprised by Jesus' coming, while the wicked will be totally surprised. Why? Obviously, because Paul expected that Christians will heed the warnings Jesus gave, and be watching for the specific signs that occur during the tribulation.

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Commentary on Matt. 24

Verses 45-51

Matt 24:45-51

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

(KJV)

Notice, the "servants" Jesus specifically referred to are those whom He has made "rulers over his household." Certainly, Jesus did not intend to include all Christians in this statement. He was referring specifically to His Apostles, and all others whom He would call to be the leaders of His Church. If you are a pastor, evangelist, teacher, or hold a position of authority in Jesus' Church, then you need to take notice of this parable. It is specifically for you.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus gave this same parable, but in much greater detail. I believe it is best if we examine the fuller version, in order to understand it's application to the Olivet Discourse. As you read this passage, pay particular attention to the four types of "servants," all of whom have been made rulers over the Church by Jesus Christ Himself. And, notice the four different rewards / punishments.

Luke 12:41-48

*41 Then Peter said unto him, **Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?***

*42 And the Lord said, **Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?***

#1. The Wise servant.

43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

Jesus described the servant who heeds Jesus' warning in this chapter. He "feeds the flock" as Jesus instructed. He is a watchman, looking for the signs of Jesus coming, and exhorting and equipping the sheep to be faithful to Christ. His reward will be much greater authority in Christ's Millennial Kingdom.

#2. The Wicked servant.

45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

*46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, **and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.***

This servant does exactly the opposite of what the Master commanded. Instead of "feeding the flock," he beats the flock. Instead of being sober, and watching for his Master's coming, he becomes a party animal, seeking to gratify the desires of his flesh. He ignores the signs of Jesus' coming. In this case, Jesus made a very solemn statement. This servant, whom Jesus had previously called and placed in a position of authority over His Church, will be cut in pieces, and will join the unbelievers. I am afraid that there are many of Christ's "servants" who will meet this end.

#3. The Lazy servant.

47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

This servant willfully ignored the Master's charge to him. Knowing full well that He was commanded to "feed the flock," and to be a watchman on the wall, looking for the signs of Jesus' coming, and exhorting the sheep to be ready, instead he got lazy. He thought it was not that important. Or, he let other things hinder his obedience to the Lord. He will be punished severely, but not cast out, as the "wicked servant."

#4. The Ignorant servant.

*48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. **For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.***

(KJV)

This servant honestly didn't know what His Lord's will was. Perhaps he had been taught wrongly by his mentors. Perhaps he did not study the Scriptures sufficiently. But, he is still responsible to find out his Master's will, and do it. He will be punished, but not severely.

Notice the last statement in verse 48. It sums up this whole teaching by Jesus. Those who are given much, will be judged much more harshly than those given less.

But, why would such a parable be found in the Olivet Discourse? Because this passage is one of the most important teachings of Jesus, that He wants to be taught to His flock by the servants He has made rulers over His household. This passage is about watching for the coming of the Master. It contains all the signs. It contains warnings about watching for the signs. Yes, contrary to what many Evangelical preachers tell you, eschatology is crucial to the Christian walk.

Trying to live the Christian life, without knowing exactly where it is leading, is like starting to run in a race that you have no idea how it is supposed to end. One is easily discouraged, and it doesn't take much to turn aside after other things. God saw fit to lay out His plans in the Scriptures. Jesus gave clear teaching regarding the exact order of events leading up to His coming. And, He commanded the Apostles to take all of His teaching, to them, to every nation, until the end of the age, [Matt. 28:19,20]. A proper understanding of the events leading up to the second coming, motivates Christians to keep their minds on Christ's Kingdom, instead of this present evil age. A clear eschatology is a clear goal. A fuzzy eschatology is a fuzzy goal.

1 John 3:2-3

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

(KJV)

The Olivet Discourse was more than just something to satisfy the disciples curiosity. It is essential

Christian teaching that motivates Christians to walk in such a way as to hear, "well done, good and faithful servant."

Let me close this commentary with the following quote from the closing statements of Jesus in His Olivet Discourse, according to Mark.

Mark 13:33-37

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)

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Revelation's Chronology

Introduction

By Tim Warner - Revised 03/2002

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The exact order of events in Revelation has been a much debated topic in Bible prophecy. Some believe Revelation is sequential, others believe it contains several visions that repeat and recap. This question is critical to our overall eschatology.

Those who promote the sequential theory believe this is the most natural way to understand Revelation. But, though they claim to interpret sequentially, they rarely do. While they place the seals, trumpets, and vials, in sequence, they usually recognize some recapitulation. This is especially apparent in chapters 12 through 14. In practice, a purely sequential understanding will not fit with any of the rapture views. This is demonstrated by adding up all the time periods given in the book.

1. Jerusalem will be trodden under foot for 42 months. [Rev. 11:2]
2. The two witnesses will prophesy for 1,260 days. [Rev. 11:3]
3. Israel will be protected in the wilderness for 3.5 years. [Rev. 12:14]
4. Antichrist will continue 42 months. [Rev. 13:5]

This gives us a total of fourteen years. And, it does not take into account the time necessary for the seven seals, the first six trumpets, and all seven vials. Obviously, there is some recapitulation in Revelation. The two descriptions of the battle of Armageddon, [chapters 14 and 19], the twice mentioned destruction of Babylon, [14:8 and chapters 17&18], and the establishing of Christ's Kingdom twice, [11:15-18 & 20:1-4], give substantial evidence that Revelation is not entirely sequential. This should come as no surprise to us, however, since Revelation's sister book, Daniel, is not sequential either.

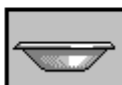
Since Revelation was patterned after Daniel, a look at Daniel's format gives us clues to the format of Revelation. In Daniel, the major outline of prophetic events is given first in the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image. Then it elaborates on portions of it with more detailed accounts throughout the rest of the book. Recapitulation seems to be the pattern in other prophetic books as well. Isaiah follows a similar format, as does Ezekiel and Zechariah.

The real debate in Revelation, however, concerns the numbered groups of seven. There are seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials. Certainly, the numbered groups are sequential within each group. That is why they are numbered one through seven. But this does not necessarily mean that one group follows another in succession. If this was the case, one would expect to find a single group of twenty-one judgments. Pre-tribulationists, with some exceptions, generally believe each of these groups follow the previous group. This author is convinced that Revelation follows a similar format as Daniel, with each series of seven being a recapping and magnification of a portion of the tribulation covered in the previous sequence. The view presented here is illustrated by the diagram below, where the prophetic portion of Revelation is divided into four sections, each climaxing with the second coming of Christ.

1. 4:1 - 8:1 The seven seals give an overview of the entire tribulation, with Jesus' coming at the 6th seal, along with a glimpse at the beginning of the Millennium in chapter 7.
2. 8:2 - 11:19 The seven trumpets recap the latter half of the tribulation.

3. 12:1 - 14:20 This view gives an explanation of the activities of the Antichrist, along with the rapture and Armageddon. 4. 15:1 - 22:22 The seven vials (bowls) give a recapping of the last days of the tribulation, the second coming, the Millennium, and the eternal state.

The seven seals give the big picture of the entire tribulation period, and establishment of Christ's Kingdom. The trumpets then go back and focus on the last half of the tribulation, with the seventh trumpet bringing the second coming and establishment of Christ's Kingdom. Chapters 12-14 give more recapping and explanatory material. The vials again recap the final days of the tribulation, and again describe the second coming of Christ, and the battle of Armageddon. At the 7th vial, Babylon is destroyed. Yet, chapters 17 & 18 then recap and give a detailed view of her destruction, followed by the second coming in chapter 19. Unlike the previous views which stop at the beginning of the Millennium, the last one continues through the Millennium, and all the way to the eternal state (ch. 20-22).

Revelation	Tribulation	S	Kingdom	L	Eternity
Chapter		E		A	
4:1 - 8:1		C		S	
8:2 - 11:19		O		T	
12:1-14:20	666	N		J	
15:1-22:21		G		U	
				D	
				G	
				M	
				E	
				N	
				T	

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Revelation's Chronology

The Seven Letters

When reading chapters two and three of Revelation you will soon see a pattern which is followed in each letter. First, Jesus commended each church for their good works. Then He rebuked them for their evil works. Next came the command to repent, followed by a promise to those who overcome. Let's look at these promises.

1] To Ephesus. [2:7] "...to him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the tree of life,"

2] To Smyrna. [2:11] "...He that **overcometh** shall not hurt of the second death."

3] To Pergamos. [2:17] "...To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the hidden manna..."

4] To Thyatira. [2:26] "...And he that **overcometh**, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron..."

5] To Sardis. [3:5] "...He that **overcometh**, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life..."

6] To Philadelphia. [3:12] "...Him that **overcometh** will I make a pillar in the temple of my God..."

7] To Laodicea. [3:21] "...To him that **overcometh** will I grant to sit with me in my throne,..."

In these letters Jesus did not go into detail about what He meant by overcoming. However, we find the answer later in the book.

*Revelation 12 11 And they **overcame** him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

Christians will overcome Satan and the Antichrist by not denying the Lord Jesus Christ, even when faced with certain death.

Revelation 14

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.

Revelation 7

14 ...These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 20

4 ...I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their

foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

To overcome, means to overcome Satan, Antichrist, and the world system. In Revelation, Jesus warned the churches to overcome, and then went on to show them what they must overcome, in chapters four through eighteen. Then, in chapters nineteen through twenty-two, we see the final rewards for the overcomers, the glorious coming of Christ, the Kingdom which follows, and the New Jerusalem. In chapter twenty-one, after all the events of the tribulation are described, we find this promise.

Revelation 21

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Jesus expects His Church to overcome Satan and Antichrist. This is the message of Revelation to us today.

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Revelation's Chronology

The Seven Seals

The seven seals give the big picture, covering the entire seven years of Daniel's seventieth week. The most notable feature of the seven seals is that they exactly parallel the Olivet Discourse. Jesus' description of the "beginning of sorrows," the "great tribulation," and His post-tribulation coming, complete with the cosmic sign, are fulfilled in the same sequence in Revelation 6. Many have seen this parallel. But unfortunately, few have seen its significance in determining the chronology of Revelation. The sixth seal is the most important, describing the celestial phenomenon, the darkening of the sun and moon. This event anchors the seals to two other definite events, the end of the tribulation [Matthew 24:29], and the beginning of the "Day of the Lord" [Joel 2:31].

First Seal

Rev. 6:1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

Olivet Discourse

Matt 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many....

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Second Seal

6:3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

Olivet Discourse

Matt. 24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: ...

Third Seal

6:5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

Olivet Discourse

Matt 24:7 ... and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

Fourth Seal

6:7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with

hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Olivet Discourse

Matt 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Fifth Seal

6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were 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, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

Olivet Discourse

Matt 24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake....

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Sixth Seal

*6:12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and **the sun** became black as sackcloth of hair, and **the moon** became as blood;*

*13 And **the stars** of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.*

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Olivet Discourse

*Matt 24:29 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.

Seventh Seal

*8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was **silence in heaven** about the space of half an hour. [The Kingdom has come to earth]*

Olivet Discourse

Luke 21:31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

The clear parallel between the seals and the Olivet Discourse carries great weight. In my opinion, the

sixth seal is conclusive proof that Revelation contains more than one chronology. Therefore, the seven seals are a description of the entire tribulation, ending with Christ's Kingdom. The following comparison demonstrates that the sixth seal occurs in conjunction with the battle of Armageddon. Notice the many parallels of the sixth seal to other passages.

1. Great earthquake, every mountain and island moved out of their places, [Rev. 6:12,14].

- a. At the seventh vial, "...there was a great earthquake, ... and every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." [Rev. 16:18,20]
- b. Isa. 2:19,22, and Isa 13:13 describe this great earthquake when the "Day of the Lord" comes.

2. Sun and moon darkened, Rev. 6:12.

- a. Jesus said this will occur "immediately after the tribulation." [Matt. 24:29].
- b. Joel places this sign before the Day of the Lord, [Joel 2:31].
- c. The sign occurs at the time of the battle of Armageddon, and Christ begins to reign immediately thereafter. [Joel 3:9-18]
- d. Isaiah connects this sign with the coming of the Day of the Lord and the battle of Armageddon. [Isaiah 13:3-13].

3. There will be a meteor shower; "even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind."

- a. Again this is a direct reference to the coming of the Day of the Lord in Isaiah 34:4 which says of the stars: "their host shall fall down, as a leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree."
- b. Jesus also mentioned this in Matt. 24:29, "immediately after the tribulation...the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."
- c. At the seventh vial there is also this meteor shower, [Rev. 16:21].

4. "The heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together;" [Rev. 6:14]. This is a direct quote from Isaiah 34:4, where the context clearly has the battle of Armageddon on the Day of the Lord in view.

5. The kings and mighty men hide in the caves and rocks, [Rev. 6:15,16]. This comes from Isaiah's description of the Day of the Lord.

Isaiah 2

10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty.

11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

12 For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud....

19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

6. "The great day of His wrath is come," [Rev. 6:17]. This is also a direct reference to Isaiah's description of the coming of the Day of the Lord, [Isaiah 13:9 & 34:8].

In my opinion, the accumulated evidence from the preceding parallel passages prove that the tribulation ends and the Day of the Lord begins at the sixth seal. The passages from Isaiah place the battle of Armageddon on the Day of the Lord. And, Joel three ties together the sun and moon sign, the battle of Armageddon, and the setting up of Christ's Kingdom. This being the case, the trumpets and vials must be a recapitulation of events during the seals.

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Revelation's Chronology

The 144,000

The 144,000 Jews

We saw previously, that Christ's second coming occurs at the sixth seal. Chapter seven intervenes between the sixth and seventh seals. The sixth seal does not actually describe the battle of Armageddon, but only the fear of mankind as they realize the "great day of his wrath is come," when they see Jesus coming in the clouds. The sequence is interrupted in chapter seven by an angel.

Revelation 7

3 Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads.

One hundred and forty four thousand faithful Jews are then sealed for protection from the wrath of God that falls at the final battle. This is the Jewish remnant which will be saved when they see Jesus coming in glory and realize who He is. Zechariah wrote of this day as follows:

Zechariah 12

10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Paul also spoke of this day when all of the remaining Jews will be saved.

Romans 11

*25 For I would not brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.
26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, 'There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:
27 For this is my covenant with them, when I shall take away their sins.*

Joel 3

*13 Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats 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 the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.
16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.
17 So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more....
21 For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.*

For more Scripture regarding this Jewish remnant, see: Zeph. 1:12-18, Zeph. 2:1-3,7,9, Zeph. 3:8-13, Zech. 14:1-9.

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Revelation's Chronology

The Great Multitude

The Great Multitude

Immediately following the sealing of the 144,000 Jews, the scene changes to the celebration of the saints on earth as the Kingdom of God is set up. "These are they which came out of great tribulation," [Rev. 7:14]. The great multitude celebrating before the throne of God in Revelation seven must take place at the beginning of the Millennium if our chronology of the sixth seal is correct. There is plenty of evidence to support this conclusion from the text itself. In Revelation seven there are several clear allusions to Old Testament passages which are indisputably "Millennial."

1. The saints are holding "palm branches." This is a reference to the "Feast of Tabernacles." Throughout this feast, which occurs from the fifteenth to the twenty-first of the seventh month, God's people were commanded to cut off palm branches and celebrate before the Lord, [Lev. 23:34,40]. The Feast of Tabernacles will also be celebrated every year during the Millennium as a memorial to God's bringing us through our "wilderness" into the promised land, His Kingdom, [Zech. 14:16-19].

2. They are wearing their white robes, [Rev. 7:9]. According to Rev. 19:7,8 the Bride is granted permission to wear white robes immediately before the second coming. Therefore this scene takes place some time after the scene in Rev. 19.

3. They are worshipping before the Throne in the Temple, [Rev. 7:15]. This is the Millennial Temple described by Ezekiel in chapters 40-44. Ezekiel specifically states that God's Throne, (which is portable, complete with living creatures, with wings and retractable landing gear, who carry the Throne, [Ezek. 1:1-28]) will be moved to the Millennial Temple, [Ezek. 43:1-9]. Daniel also describes the Throne of the "Ancient of Days" moving to earth at the time when the "Son of man came with the clouds of heaven," [Dan. 7:9,13,14,21,22, see also Jer. 3:16,17]. This appearance of Jehovah coming on His Throne, (as in Ezekiel's vision of chapter 1, [cf. Ezek. 43:3 & Ezek. 1:1]) and the appearance of Christ on the white horse beside Him, is what strikes fear in the hearts of men at the sixth seal. "...hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of His [Their] wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" [Rev. 6:16,17]. Jesus said to those who were about to crucify Him; "ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." [Mark 14:62]. No doubt He was referring to the Day of the Lord. The armies gathered around Jerusalem to wipe out the Jewish remnant, and defeat the "Messiah," will suddenly find their arrogance turned to terror when the sun turns black, the moon turns blood red, meteors begin raining down, the earth begins to quake violently, and they see a brilliant light engulfing the clouds over the Mount of Olives, [Matt. 24:29-31]. As the clouds roll back like a scroll, and they see Jehovah sitting on the Throne, and the Warrior on the white horse at His side, with millions of saints and angels in their wake, no wonder they call for the rocks to fall on them to hide from the face of the Almighty. [Read: Psalm 2:1-12, Isaiah 13:3-13, Isaiah 26:21, Joel 2:1-11, Micah 1:3.]

4. God has come to dwell among His people, not the other way around, [Rev. 7:15]. Compare this to: Ezek. 43:7,9, Joel 3:17, Zech. 2:10-13, all Millennial settings.

5. Rev. 7:16,17 is a clear quote from Isa. 49:10 and Isa. 25:8 which are describing the Millennium.

Revelation 7

*16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.
17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

Isaiah 49

*10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.
25:8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; ...*

When Revelation quotes passages from Isaiah, which are clearly Millennial, applying them to the scene following the cosmic sign, we can be certain that Revelation is describing the Millennium in chapter seven.

6. Rev. 7:17- "Living waters" come from Millennial passages. David, Ezekiel, and Zechariah, all describe a river of living water flowing from the Millennial Temple, [Psalm 46:6, Ezek. 47:1-10, Zech. 14:8].

7. Rev. 7:17- "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." This is a very important quote from Isaiah 25:8 "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces;" Not only is this promise in a Millennial setting, but Paul quoted the first sentence, claiming its fulfillment at the rapture, when the "last trumpet" sounds. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" [1 Cor. 15:54]. The fact that Paul quoted Isaiah 25:8, and clearly said that it would be fulfilled at the rapture, and John also quoted from the same verse, placing its fulfillment immediately after the sun and moon signs, is powerful evidence that these events are the same.

8. The Seventh Seal, in Rev. 8:1, brings total silence in heaven. Based on what we have learned so far, heaven is empty during the entire Millennium. Before heaven moves to earth on the Day of the Lord, heaven has experienced the sounds of continuous praise.

Revelation 4

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

The fact that there is silence in heaven indicates the perpetual praise of Jehovah no longer rings out there. The thirty minutes of silence represents the fact that all worship of Jehovah has transferred to earth for the Millennial Kingdom, just as Revelation 7:9-12 indicates.

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Revelation's Chronology

The Seven Trumpets

In the previous articles, we saw that the seals give an overview of the entire tribulation. The trumpets then, go back and recap events which will occur before the seventh seal. I believe the sixth seal, and the seventh trumpet both occur together, and are both descriptions of the second coming of Christ. It is difficult to determine exactly when the trumpets begin. But, I believe they likely cover the last half of Daniel's seventieth week which Jesus called "great tribulation." This lasts for 42 months [Rev. 11:2], or 1,260 days [vs. 3]. Each of the seven trumpets bring another disaster to the kingdom of the Antichrist. The seventh trumpet brings us to the end of the tribulation and the coming of Christ to set up His Kingdom.

I believe the passage dealing with the two witnesses, found between the sixth and seventh trumpets, is an explanation of the entire 42 month period during which the trumpets will sound. They have power over the plagues, they can turn water into blood, something that will occur at the second and third trumpets. It would seem that the trumpets will sound and the plagues follow, at their command. Antichrist attempts to rule from Jerusalem after defiling the Temple, [Dan. 11:45]. Yet the two witnesses will prophesy for the entire period of his reign right under his nose in Jerusalem, calling plagues down from heaven on him and his followers. I can't help but see a parallel to Moses' and Aaron's calling down plagues on Pharaoh, while God's people were protected, and gained strength and encouragement from this display. Revelation 11:4 says these two witnesses "are the two olive trees and the two lampstands." This comes from Zechariah 4:1-14. Here the two olive trees feed olive oil through two golden pipes to the seven lamps, [Zech. 4:11-14]. Verse 6 indicates that the message of the vision of the olive trees and the seven lamps is: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD." In Revelation, the seven lampstands are the churches. If we apply Zechariah's prophecy to Revelation, and we should because Rev. 11:4 makes that connection, the two witnesses will be a source of encouragement and power to the churches in the tribulation. And, the exhortation, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD," has direct application to the Church in the tribulation! We should take this statement very seriously.

According to Rev. 11:3,12-15, the seventh trumpet occurs at the end of the 1,260 day period when the two witnesses prophesy. Verses 2 and 3 indicate that the period of 42 months, when Jerusalem will be trodden under foot, covers the same time the two witnesses prophesy, the latter half of the seventieth week. Daniel 8:13 indicates this will occur after the abomination of desolation. Therefore, the Seventh Trumpet occurs 1,260 days after the abomination of desolation. This places the Seventh Trumpet AFTER the tribulation, and is strong evidence that Revelation is not chronological. The vials must recap, not follow the trumpets.

The seventh trumpet finishes the "mystery of God," as declared to the prophets, [Rev. 10:7]. The Day of the Lord, (the coming of Christ to destroy the ungodly and restore Israel,) is the theme of most of the prophets. There is no doubt in my mind this statement refers to the coming of the Day of the Lord, and the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is apparent with the events that occur when the seventh trumpet sounds.

1. The kingdoms of the world become the Kingdom of Christ, [Rev. 11:15]. This can only occur when the Millennium begins. Verse 17 says He begins to reign.

2. Verse 18 says "Thy wrath is come." This is similar to the statement at the sixth seal, "the great day of His wrath is come." No doubt this anticipates the coming of the Day of the Lord. [See also: Rev. 14:7,19, & Rev. 19:15]

3. The judgment of the saints takes place at the seventh trumpet. Verse 18 clearly includes all saints both Old Testament and New. This must include saints of the tribulation, implying that the tribulation is over. It also includes both the living and the dead, which implies a resurrection. Other New Testament passages also place the judgment of Christians at the beginning of the Millennium. These include: Matt. 16:27, Luke 19:15, 2 Tim. 4:1,8 [KJV]. Romans 2:5-10 speaks of the "day of wrath" when God will judge both the saints and the ungodly. This agrees with the parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew twenty-five. Also, Revelation 22:12 indicates Christ will bring rewards with Him when He comes for us. This would make no sense if we were being rewarded in heaven during the tribulation. Therefore, we can conclude that the seventh trumpet again brings us to the end of the tribulation.

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Revelation's Chronology

The Woman, the Beast, and the Dual Harvest

Revised June 27, 2006

In chapter twelve, the woman represents the people of faith, the righteous seed, the "Church." I am using the term "Church" the way the early Church Fathers used it, and the way I believe the Scriptures use it. The woman is *"Abraham's seed - both the natural seed and the adopted seed,"* [Gal. 3:7,14,29, 6:16]. This includes all the people of faith. There are two distinct groups of people in the tribulation who will ultimately be born again. The first group is what we call the "Church" consisting of both Jewish and Gentile believers. But there is another group of Jews who are not yet believers during the tribulation, but come to Christ at the close, when they *"look on Him whom they have pierced."* Paul describes the unbelieving nation of Israel as "enemies" of the Gospel yet still *"beloved for the sake of the patriarchs."* [Rom. 11:26-29]. Because this group has not yet been born again, they must be handled gently so that not one of them whom God has chosen will die before they see Christ returning and the blindness is removed from their eyes. Therefore, God will supernaturally protect them from the Antichrist in the wilderness from any harm, [Rev. 12:6,14-16]. They will not be martyrs, because that would mean their damnation. Many Christians believe this special Jewish remnant will flee to Petra in southern Jordan. This ancient fortress is a ready made hideout, with thousands of cave / houses carved out of the rock surrounding this incredible abandoned city.



Petra [Copyright: BibleSoft Computer Bible]

When Satan is hindered from destroying the elect Jewish remnant, he will turn his attention to the

remnant of the Church who keep the commandments of God, and **have the testimony of Jesus Christ**, [cf. Rev. 12:17 & Rom 2:28,29, Gal. 3:6- 9,14-16,29].

I have only one question from chapter 13. Why did Jesus give the Church the means to recognize the Beast [Rev. 13:18]? Answer: *"But he indicates the number of the name now, that when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware of who he is..."* [Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V, XXX, 2, Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, pg. 559].

Chapter fourteen begins with 144,000 people worshipping God. They are in heaven during the tribulation, since they were redeemed *"from the earth,"* [vs. 3]. They are not the same 144,000 in chapter seven. The other group is saved at the end of the tribulation. This group is already in heaven. Verse four says they are the **"firstfruits"** to the Lamb. James gives us some insight here.

James 1

*1 James, a servant of God, and of the Jesus Christ, to the **twelve tribes** which are scattered abroad, greeting.*

*18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of **firstfruits** of his creatures.*

Both John and James are referring to one of the Jewish Feast days. The Feast of *"Firstfruits"* took place on the Sunday following Passover. This occurred at the beginning of the wheat harvest. Males were required to come to Jerusalem with a token sheaf of wheat to be offered to God before they partook of their harvest. It was called *"Firstfruits"* because the very first bundle of wheat was given to God. When they returned home they reaped their fields for the next seven weeks. After this period of harvest, they appeared before the Lord at the Temple to give another offering to thank God for a good harvest, on the fiftieth day, the Day of Pentecost. When John calls the 144,000 of Rev. 14 the *"Firstfruits"* unto God and the Lamb, he is saying that they are the elect Jews who believed the Gospel when Christ came. James confirms this for us in the above verses. They were the first offering to God of the harvest of this age. The other group of 144,000 Jews are the "Pentecost" offering at the very end of the harvest. It is no coincidence that at the end of this chronological sequence Christ's coming is compared to a harvest.

The fall of Babylon occurs in Rev. 14:8. According to Rev. 16:19-19:3 Babylon falls immediately before Christ returns. This indicates that the seven vials do not follow the two harvests of chapter 14, but precede them, unless Babylon is destroyed twice. The alternative is that the accounts are parallel.

The dual harvest at the end of chapter 14 is the only description of the rapture in Revelation. The first harvest is executed by the *"Son of man" from the clouds*, [vs. 14]. This agrees with James 5:7,8 which likens the rapture to a harvest. Matt. 13:30 also likens the rapture to a harvest of wheat. This also agrees with 1 Thess. 4:17 and Matt. 24:29-31. Revelation does indeed contain a description of the rapture of the Church, which, in my opinion, is required because of the promises to the Church, *"Behold I come as a thief,"* [Rev. 16:15], and *"Behold I come quickly,"* [Rev. 22:7].

Immediately following the rapture, the wicked are thrown into the winepress of the wrath of God. This passage was borrowed from Joel 3:9-17. **Joel adds the sun and moon signs, and dubs it "the Day of the Lord."** This is powerful evidence that the second harvest of Rev. 14 is after the tribulation, on the *Day of the Lord*.

It is interesting that blood flows for approximately 180 miles. This will be the scope of the battle of Armageddon. If you draw a straight line from Damascus to Bozrah, you go right through Jerusalem. This is about 180 miles. The armies that surround Jerusalem will be slaughtered over all of Israel, [Isa. 63:1-6].

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Revelation's Chronology

The Vials of Wrath

The seven vials of the wrath of God begin the last chronological sequence in Revelation. This wrath is **selectively** poured out on the Antichrist and his followers. Those who have God's seal upon them are exempt from these plagues.

Revelation 16

2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and greivous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

In chapter nine the plague of locusts was only upon *"those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads."* Believers will be present during these plagues but will be exempt from their effects. If Christians were not present, the statement that the plagues fell upon those with the mark of the beast would be redundant. We are the ones with the seal of God, it is the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1

13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory

2 Corinthians 1

21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Ephesians 4

30 And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

These verses show that believers will not need to be resealed for protection during the tribulation. All Christians are already sealed if they have the Holy Spirit. The seal is the means of identifying those whom God will protect from His wrath. The Jewish remnant will be sealed after the sun and moon sign of the sixth seal, as they see Jesus coming, and believe on Him. Revelation is very clear; those with God's seal will be exempt from His wrath.

There are other verses which show that God's wrath is dealt selectively. When the seventh vial is poured out, the destruction of Babylon follows. But John heard a warning to the Christians who are in the city.

Revelation 18

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues.

Christians will be warned in advance to evacuate this city before it is destroyed. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus gave a warning to those in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas, to flee when Antichrist defiles the temple, [Matt. 24:15,16]. Advanced notice is only one of the ways God will protect His people. The protection of the children of Israel in Egypt is a perfect illustration of how God deals out wrath.

Immediately prior to the second coming of Jesus, we find the following scene in heaven. All of the saints who have died are singing in joyous anticipation of the marriage of the Lamb.

Revelation 19

5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. 7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready,

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the white linen is the righteousness of the saints.

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true sayings of God...

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war...

14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean.

Here, John heard a great multitude praising God because "*the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*" How has the bride made herself ready? By overcoming Satan and Antichrist. [Rev. 12:11] "*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.*" Then John heard a decree made. [vs.8] "*And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white.*" Notice, here, at the very end of the tribulation, and immediately prior to the second coming, the marriage of the Lamb has not yet taken place. Only at this point in time has the Bride made herself ready. One would think, if the rapture was pre-tribulational, the marriage would have occurred at the beginning of the tribulation. The bride would have been ready then. The fact that she is only ready after all of the martyrs have been killed by the Antichrist suggests that the saints in the tribulation are a part of the Bride of Christ.

Next, John heard a blessing pronounced. [vs. 9] "*And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*" There is no record of the marriage supper taking place here. John was only told to write the blessing. Immediately John saw heaven opened and Jesus descending with the armies of heaven. Who makes up this army? They are the millions of saints who have gone on to be with the Lord since the beginning of time, including Old and New Testament saints and the martyrs of the tribulation. **The marriage of the Lamb is simply the union with Christ of all saints at the second coming**, as he sends out the angels to gather together His elect from the north, south, east and west. The marriage cannot take place until the bride is complete and those who are alive and remain are picked up at the rapture.

The marriage supper will not take place in heaven. It will take place on earth in Israel, when Jesus sets up His Kingdom.

Isaiah 24

23 Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

25:6 And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.

7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the LORD God shall wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.

These verses describe the marriage supper on mount Zion, at the beginning of Christ's Kingdom. Jesus may have had this very passage in view at the last supper.

Luke 22

16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

Jesus was referring to the feast of meat and wine described by Isaiah. Jesus will not participate in a feast until the Kingdom of God comes. This rules out a marriage supper in heaven.

Chapter nineteen concludes with the most complete description of the battle of Armageddon. In chapter twenty, John described the resurrected saints being given places of authority in Christ's Kingdom.

Revelation 20

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

*5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. **This is the first resurrection.***

6 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.

This resurrection of the saints is the only one in the book of Revelation. Notice that John did not actually see the resurrection of the saints, 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 post-tribulational, 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 to 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! 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 post-tribulation resurrection of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The final chronological sequence concludes with the last judgement, the new earth, and the final reward of all God's children, the New Jerusalem. To the faithful who will overcome in the tribulation, he wrote;

Revelation 21

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5 And he that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful.

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

*7 **He that overcometh** shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

All saints will inherit these things, but God has a special place for those who overcome in the final hour of testing.

The Bible teaches that Christ's Kingdom on earth will last forever, [Isaiah 9:6,7, Dan. 7:13,14, Luke 1:31-33]. This is not contradicted by the statements in Revelation twenty-one. Here John saw a "*new heaven and new earth*." The word "*new*" means "*fresh*". It does not mean a different earth.

Psalm 104

*5 Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it **SHOULD NOT BE REMOVED FOREVER**.*

The "*new heaven*" is a new atmosphere, and the "*new earth*" is this earth, reborn. All sin, and all sinners, will forever be removed from this planet. Then, the new Jerusalem built by God himself can descend onto an earth pure and holy.

In Revelation 21:2, John saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven "*prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*." The unveiling of this incredible city is likened to a virgin bride in her wedding garments. In Bible times, the bride was completely covered until after the wedding. John's analogy, of this city to a virgin bride covered until the consummation of the wedding, indicates that no saints have ever set foot within the New Jerusalem until the unveiling at the end of the millennium. It is not likely that she had previously been defiled by the presence of anyone during the tribulation. Some believe Christians will live in this city temporarily during the tribulation, only to evacuate and return to earth for the Millennium. However, I believe the analogy to a virgin bride forbids this view. Not until the end of the Millennium will we set foot on the streets of gold.

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Revelation's Chronology

Concluding Remarks

I have briefly described the way Revelation repeats and recaps. It is critical that we understand the sequence of this book. Without this knowledge, it is impossible to locate the rapture. The overview I have given is the most natural interpretation possible. Each of the sequences converge at Christ's coming in glory. This view is not forced at any point, and is supported by comparing many parallel passages. It demonstrates that the wrath of God is poured out upon the followers of Antichrist in response to the persecution of the Christians, with the final consuming wrath reserved for the *"Day of the Lord."*

The book of Revelation has given no evidence of a pre-tribulation rapture in my opinion. Pre-tribulationists either claim that Revelation does not address the rapture at all, or else force this doctrine by spiritualizing the seven letters, John's being caught up, and the twenty-four elders. They improvise a separate group called "tribulation saints." They place the judgment of the saints in heaven without any biblical support. Instead, the judgement of the saints is found at the Kingdom of God, according to Revelation 11:15-18 and 2 Timothy 4:1,8, and Jesus said He will bring His rewards with Him when He comes, according to Rev. 22:12. They claim we will dine at the marriage supper in heaven during the tribulation. But, Isaiah shows that the supper will be in Israel, and Jesus clearly said that He will not eat or drink until the Kingdom of God comes. They say the "saints" in Revelation are not a part of the "Church," when all evidence supports the opposite view. Their doctrine forces them to disconnect the "Church" from the saints in the tribulation. But, the word *"saints"* is used in reference to the *"bride of the Lamb"* in Rev. 19:8. Christians in the tribulation have the *"testimony of Jesus"* [Rev. 12:17]; they overcome Satan by the *"blood of the Lamb"* [Rev. 12:11]; they have the *"faith of Jesus"* [Rev. 14:12]; they *"die in the Lord"* [Rev. 14:13]; they are called *"my people"* [Rev. 18:4]; and, they are told to watch for Jesus' coming *"as a thief"* [Rev. 16:15]. All of these things can be said of the Church.

The pre-trib arguments are makeshift, and a clear violation of the meaning God intended to convey with His Revelation. The book, like each of the seven letters it contains, is meant to comfort us, to correct us, to warn of what lies ahead, to prepare us to overcome, and to show us the great things God has in store for those who overcome in the final hour of temptation. Those who do not heed the warning will be like the five foolish virgins, they will have no oil in their lamps. Like the foolish man, they will build their house upon the sand. When the floods come and the winds blow their house will fall.

I know that many men and women who are mightily used by God to carry out His work are pre-trib. I certainly do not question their character or integrity. I believe they hold to that view because they believe it is biblically correct. But, just because God has used them to spread the gospel does not mean they are correct on all points. Most of the Reformers were amillennialists. They believed they were living in the tribulation and identified the Antichrist as the Pope and Babylon as the Roman Catholic Church. Yet, God used them in a mighty way. During the Reformation, and even within the last two centuries where pre-tribulationism has been so popular among Evangelicals, correct eschatology may not have been of utmost importance. However, the closer we get to the end of the age, the more crucial it becomes, because it affects how people prepare. The eschatology of the last generation of Christians will be critical.

If the pre-tribulation view proves to be wrong, what will be the legacy of this two hundred year old system? Will it have caused believers to become strong in their faith, ready to meet the onslaught of the

Wicked One like the martyrs of the early Church? Or, will it have caused Christians to become complacent, spiritually flabby, and unable to endure intense persecution? Could it contribute to the *"falling away"* that will occur during the final hour of trial? You can rest assured, Satan will take full advantage of any lack of preparation by using the element of surprise. With the dual weapons of deception, and intense persecution, he will make havoc of an ill-prepared Church.

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The Temple

Must be Rebuilt First



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In Matthew 24, the disciples asked Jesus about **the sign** of His coming, and the end of the age. Jesus gave them a list of events that must occur before His coming in glory after the tribulation. If you read this chapter carefully, you will see that all of the events before verse 15, while occurring before Christ's coming, are not necessarily "signs" of His coming. In other words, they must occur first, but even when they do occur, we still have no idea how long before Christ returns. These things are already occurring, and will continue until Christ returns.

Matt 24:6

*6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for **all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.***

(KJV)

However, when we get to verse 15, Jesus finally gives **the sign** that lets us know His coming is at hand. And that sign is something well established in Scripture.

Matt 24:15-18

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

(KJV)

Notice that the "abomination of desolation" will occur in Judea. This is the area surrounding the Temple Mount. And, those living in Jerusalem and the surrounding area are instructed to flee to the mountains for safety. Why? Verses 21 and 22 provide the answer.

Matt 24:21-22

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

(KJV)

Notice also that the "abomination of desolation" will occur in the "holy place." This term was immediately recognized by Jews to refer to the Temple, specifically the part that housed the altar of incense, the menorah, and the table of showbread. The enclosure which housed the ark of the covenant was called the "most holy place."

Exodus 26:33-34

*33 And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between **the holy place** and **the most holy**.*

*34 And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in **the most holy place**.*

(KJV)

If you follow this phrase through the Scriptures, you will find that in nearly every place it occurs, it refers to the Temple. It is used in the books of Moses more than 40 times.

Jesus said that this event will fulfill the prophecies of Daniel.

Dan 11:31

*31 And arms shall stand on his part, and **they shall pollute the sanctuary** of strength, and shall **take away the daily sacrifice**, and they shall **place the abomination that maketh desolate**.*

(KJV)

Notice the sequence of events here. First, the "sanctuary" will be polluted. How? It will be defiled by the presence of Antichrist. The forces of the Antichrist will enter the Temple. Next, the "daily sacrifice" will be stopped. This is the morning and evening sacrifice mentioned in Numbers 28:1-10. Finally, an object will be erected in the Temple. We know this is an object, because Mark 13:14 refers to it as a thing.

Mark 13:14

*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:*

(KJV)

Notice that this object will be "standing." This is a rather unusual term to be used of an object. However, we find in Revelation 13:14,15, that an image of the Beast will be erected, which is given the power to speak. And, all are commanded to worship it or die. I think we can be fairly certain that what Mark refers to as "standing" in the holy place, and what Daniel mentions as being "placed" in the sanctuary, is this image of the Beast. This is what causes the "abomination."

The Apostle Paul elaborates further on this event in the following passage. He also sees this as a sign that must occur **before Christ returns**, and we are gathered together unto Him.

II Thess 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)

One of the reasons this event is **the sign** of Jesus' coming is found in Daniel 9. The prophecy of the 70 weeks indicates exactly how much time will elapse between this "abomination of desolation," and Christ's return. The 70th week is divided into two parts, with the "abomination" occurring in the "midst of the week." [The "week" here is 7 years].

Dan 9:27

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

(KJV)

We have further confirmation that the coming of Christ will occur 3.5 years later from the following passage.

Dan 12:1-6

1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river.

6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?

(KJV)

Here the conclusion of the matter is revealed to Daniel. He had previously seen the coming of Christ to defeat the Antichrist in Dan. 2:44, 7:13,14, & 8:25. Now, he is told that the resurrection of the righteous will occur then, and they will rule with Christ in glory. Throughout this book, whenever Daniel is given a vision, he seems to be mostly concerned about the timing of when Christ's kingdom will come. This passage is no exception. Daniel takes special note, in verse 6, concerning when all the things he has seen in his visions will be accomplished.

*7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that **it shall be for a time, times, and an half**; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.*

*8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, **what shall be the end of these things?***

*9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed **till the time of the end.***

10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.

13 But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.
(KJV)

This is one of the most fascinating passages in the Bible. Yet, it has been one of the most perplexing. It clearly gives the exact numbers of days counting from the "abomination of desolation." The question is, why the two different numbers, [1290 & 1335], and why does this seem to differ from the 3.5 years in verse 7, and the periods in Revelation, [1260 days]? Well, that's a topic for another article. The main point I want you to see, is that the "abomination of desolation" is the sign of Christ's return. It begins the countdown to His coming in power and great glory.

One final passage we should consider, clearly shows that the Temple will be standing and be in use when the events of Revelation unfold.

Rev 11:1-3

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

(KJV)

Those who claim that the Temple need not be rebuilt in order for the "daily sacrifice" to commence should consider this passage. This is clearly speaking of the Temple in Jerusalem. And, it refers to the fact that gentiles will occupy the court. How is this possible? If the Temple Mount is shared with the Dome of the Rock, [the Temple being built to the north of the Dome], the Dome would literally occupy where the court of the Temple should be. The two witnesses will prophecy while the Temple is standing. Apparently, the Antichrist will defile the Temple, placing his image there for all to worship, while the two witnesses will continually harass him, calling down plagues from heaven, just like Moses and Aaron did before Pharaoh.

I believe the evidence is overwhelming that a literal Temple must be rebuilt on the Temple Mount in order for these prophecies to be fulfilled. Since the "abomination of desolation" will occur in the Temple, 3.5 years before Christ returns, it must be constructed either before, or during the first half of the 70th week. I believe all of the dates that are being set by post-tribblers, and the claim that we are already in the last half of the 70th week, must be seen as impossible in light of these Scriptures. Unless the prophecy of the "abomination of desolation" given by Jesus in Matt. 24:15 is seen literally, it loses all of its significance as "the sign" of His coming. Jesus did not instruct us to watch for a 7 year treaty to be signed so we would know when His coming was near. He told us to watch for this event. All of the dates given so far will turn out to be a disappointment.

Many of the Jewish rabbis believe that the Temple will only be rebuilt on the authority of the Messiah when He comes. Since we know that the Antichrist will impersonate the Messiah, his ordering the Temple to be rebuilt, as a part of his "covenant with death," will give the Jews every reason to accept him as Messiah. Without this occurring, it is not likely that they would accept him. Of course, a remnant of Israel will not accept him as Messiah, and will be preserved by God, [Rev. 12], to be saved at the second coming of Christ, [Zech. 12:8-10].

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The Early Church

the Temple, and the 70th Week

In several articles on this website I have argued that the second coming of Jesus will not come until certain things are fulfilled. One of these things is the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. The reason this is necessary is because Jesus predicted the "abomination of desolation" in the "holy place" prior to His coming [Matt. 24:15], and Paul predicted the same [2 Thess. 2:4-6]. Daniel also predicted the stopping of the "Daily Sacrifice" in connection with the "abomination" [Dan. 11:31]. These things require the existence of the Temple on the Temple Mount. I have also argued for a literal 1260 day period between the "abomination of desolation" and the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Nearly all pre-tribbers would agree with this scenario. However, I have received quite a bit of opposition from other post-tribbers. Some of them believe we are already well into the tribulation. Some have set dates. Some believe the Oslo Accord begun in 1993 is the 70th week. Since there is still no Temple in Jerusalem, some are saying that a literal Temple is not necessary to fulfill prophecy. Other post-tribbers claim that the 70th week was either partially fulfilled, or entirely fulfilled in the past. Some think this is just part of modern pre-tribulationism. I assure you, it is not. It is a very ancient belief, dating all the way back to the early Church.

Following are a few quotes that establish these things were held by the early Christians. The quotations are from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, dating from the second and third centuries. They establish a belief that the 70th week is a literal 7 years at the end of the age, and the "abomination of desolation" will occur when the Antichrist defiles the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem. [Remember, these were written after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.]

Irenaeus:

*"This he does, in order that they who do [now] worship the devil by means of many abominations, may serve himself by this one idol, of whom the apostle thus speaks in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians: "Unless there shall come a failing away first, and the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that **he sitteth in the temple of God**, showing himself as if he were God." The apostle therefore clearly points out his apostasy, and that he is lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped — that is, above every idol — for these are indeed so called by men, but are not [really] gods; and that he will endeavor in a tyrannical manner to set himself forth as God. 2. Moreover, he (the apostle) has also pointed out this which I have shown in many ways, **that the temple in Jerusalem** was made by the direction of the true God. For the apostle himself, speaking in his own person, distinctly called it the temple of God. Now I have shown in the third book, that no one is termed God by the apostles when speaking for themselves, except Him who truly is God, the Father of our Lord, by whose directions **the temple which is at Jerusalem** was constructed for those purposes which I have already mentioned; **in which [temple] the enemy shall sit, endeavoring to show himself as Christ, as the Lord also declares: "But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which has been spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place** (let him that readeth understand), then let those who are in Judea flee into the mountains; and he who is upon the house-top, let him not come down to take anything out of his house: for there shall then be great hardship, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be."'" [Against Heresies, Book V, XXV,1&2]*

"This is also the unjust judge, whom the Lord mentioned as one "who feared not God, neither regarded man," to whom the widow fled in her forgetfulness of God, — that is, **the earthly Jerusalem**, — to be avenged of her adversary. Which also he shall do in the time of his kingdom: **he shall remove his kingdom into that city, and shall sit in the temple of God**, leading astray those who worship him, as if he were Christ. To this purpose Daniel says again: "**And he shall desolate the holy place**; and sin has been given for a sacrifice, and righteousness been cast away in the earth, and he has been active (fecit), and gone on prosperously." ... And then he points out the time that his tyranny shall last, during which the saints shall be put to flight, they who offer a pure sacrifice unto God: And **in the midst of the week**, he says, the sacrifice and the libation shall be taken away, and **the abomination of desolation shall be brought into the temple**: even unto the consummation of the time shall the desolation be complete. **Now three years and six months constitute the half-week.**" [Against Heresies, Book V, XXV, 2]

"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." [Against Heresies, V, XXX, 4]

Hippolytus:

"For the deceiver seeks to liken himself in all things to the Son of God. Christ is a lion, so Antichrist is also a lion; Christ is a king, so Antichrist is also a king. The Savior was manifested as a lamb; so he too, in like manner, will appear as a lamb, though within he is a wolf. ... The Savior raised up and showed His holy flesh like a temple, **and he will raise a temple of stone in Jerusalem**. And his seductive arts we shall exhibit in what follows. But for the present let us turn to the question in hand." [Hippolytus, Extant Works, Part II, 6].

"Now Daniel will set forth this subject to us. For he says, And one week will make a covenant with many, and it shall be that in the midst (half) of the week my sacrifice and oblation shall cease. **By one week, therefore, he meant the last week which is to be at the end of the whole world** of which week the two prophets Enoch and Elias will take up the half. For they will preach 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth, proclaiming repentance to the people and to all the nations." [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 43, 47]

"For he says, I shall make a covenant of one week, and in the midst of the week my sacrifice and libation will be removed. **For by one week he indicates the showing forth of the seven years which shall be in the last times. And the half of the week the two prophets, along with John, will take for the purpose of proclaiming to all the world the advent of Antichrist, that is to say, for a thousand two hundred and sixty days clothed in sackcloth.**" [Appendix to the Works of Hippolytus, XXI]

"Then, when he is elevated to his kingdom, he will marshal war; and in his wrath he will smite three mighty kings, — those, namely, of Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia. And after that **he will build the temple in Jerusalem, and will restore it again speedily, and give it over to the Jews**. And then he will be lifted up in heart against every man; yea, he will speak blasphemy also against God, thinking in his deceit that he shall be king upon the earth hereafter for ever; not knowing, miserable wretch, that his kingdom is to be quickly brought to nought, and that he will quickly have to meet the fire which is prepared for him, along with all who trust him and serve him. **For when Daniel said, "I shall make my covenant for one week," he indicated seven years; and the one half of the week is for the preaching of the prophets, and for the other half of the week — that is to say, for three years and a half — Antichrist will reign upon the earth.** And after this his kingdom and his glory shall be taken away. Behold, ye who love God, what manner of tribulation there shall rise in those days, such as has not been from the foundation of the

world, no, nor ever shall be, except in those days alone. Then the lawless one, being lifted up in heart, will gather together his demons in man's form, and will abominate those who call him to the kingdom, and will pollute many souls." [Appendix to the Works of Hippolytus, XXV].

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The "Day of the Lord" According to Paul

1 Thess. 5:1-9

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In 1 Thess. 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 Thessalonians 5

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.
(KJV)

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. Pre-tribulationists claim the "Day of the Lord" includes the alleged pre-trib rapture and the entire tribulation. This allows them to reconcile 1 Thessalonians 5 with pre-tribulationism, 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 pre-tribulationists trying to stretch the Day of the Lord forward to include the entire tribulation and pre-trib 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 pre-trib 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 definite biblical 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 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, **before the great and terrible***

day of the Lord come.

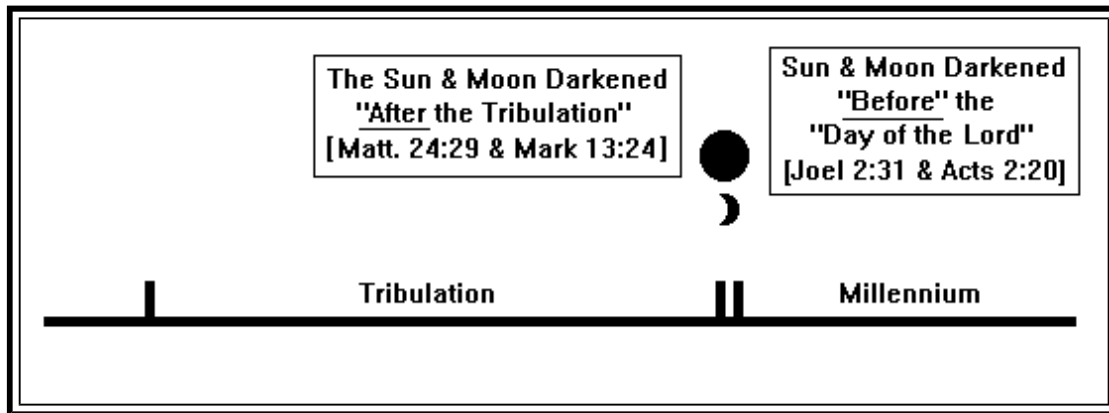
(KJV)

Matthew 24

29 **Immediately after the tribulation** of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, ...

(KJV)

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:

Isaiah 2

10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.

11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and 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 be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:...

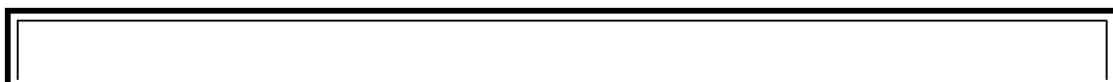
17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and **the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.**

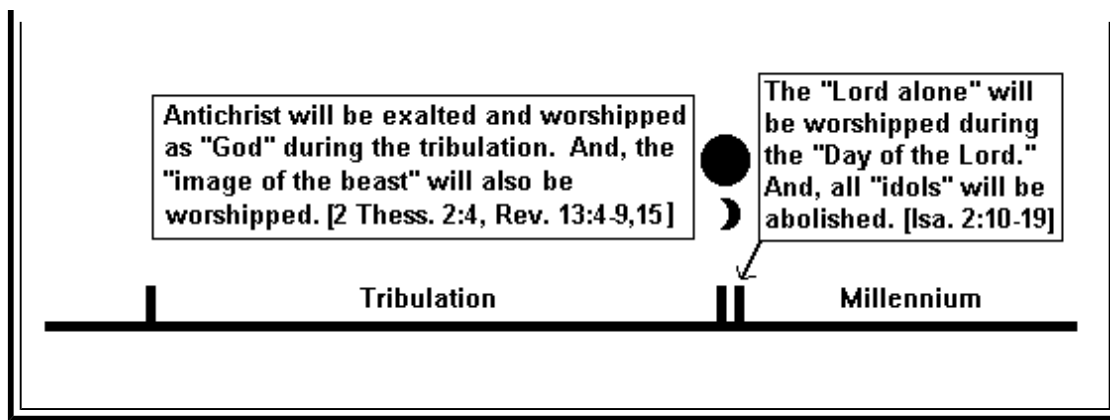
18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

(KJV)

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 pre-tribbers attempt to do. Furthermore, Paul made another clear statement which eliminates the possibility of the "Day of the Lord" including the entire tribulation and supposed pre-trib rapture.

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)

Most translations read "Day of the Lord" in verse 2. There is a variation in the Greek manuscripts here. Some ancient manuscripts read "day of Christ" and others read "day of the Lord." I don't want to get into a debate on which is correct. It really doesn't matter. If "Day of the Lord" is correct, the text indicates that the "Day of the Lord" comes after the tribulation, because events that occur during the tribulation, [the falling away and revelation of Antichrist], are said to come **before** the "Day of the Lord." If the "Day of Christ" is the correct reading, then this verse alone settles the pre-trib / post-trib debate, since the phrase "Day of Christ" is only used by Paul elsewhere to refer to the rapture of the Church. In this case, Paul is saying that the rapture cannot come until after the falling away and the Antichrist.

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 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.***

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

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

(KJV)

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 was coming as a *"thief in the night?"* 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.
(NKJV)*

Obviously, Paul was referring to Jesus' teaching! His reminding them of Jesus' "thief" illustration leads to the conclusion that he was confirming the chronology Christ gave. The following table shows 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 the disciples. In effect, he was applying the teaching of Jesus to them, connecting their "watching" for the rapture with Jesus' instructions to be watching for His coming "immediately after the tribulation."

Paul Referred to Jesus' Teaching	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 the Olivet Discourse, which only teaches a post-trib coming of Christ, to answer their questions about the rapture. This is substantial evidence that Paul taught a post-trib 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 pre-tribulationism, in my opinion. 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!

[Click here](#) for 9 reasons why the Day of the Lord cannot include the tribulation.

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The Day of the Lord Cannot Include the Tribulation

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Following are nine biblical reasons why the Day of the Lord cannot include the tribulation, as pre-tribblers claim, but must follow it.

1. Joel 2:31/Acts 2:20 and Matthew 24:29/Mark 13:24 place the same cosmic signs between the **end** of the tribulation and the **beginning** of the *Day of the Lord*. The two cannot overlap, otherwise these verses could not be true.
2. In Isaiah two, the very first time the *Day of the Lord* is mentioned in the Bible, Isaiah wrote that **the Lord alone will be exalted in that day**. This is an exclusive statement. Since, during the last half of the tribulation, the Antichrist will be worshipped as God, the two cannot overlap [cf. Isaiah 2:11,12,17 & Rev. 13:12]. The Antichrist cannot be worshipped in the Day of the Lord, since Isaiah says the Lord ALONE will be exalted. Also, all idols will be abolished during the *Day of the Lord*. Yet, during the tribulation, the image of the Beast, and other idols will be worshipped. [cf. Isaiah 2:18 & Rev. 9:20,21 & Rev. 13:15].
3. Zechariah 14:7 indicates that the *Day of the Lord* is a 24 hour day. The Hebrew text says: "*that day shall be one.*" [See also: Isa. 10:17]
4. Three times the phrase "*the Day of the LORD **cometh***" is used in the Old Testament. [Isaiah 13:9, Joel 2:1, Zech. 14:1]. In each case the text immediately begins to describe the battle of Armageddon. The word "**cometh**" is the Hebrew word "bow" [Strong's #935], a verb meaning to come or arrive. It implies the beginning of the Day of the Lord. In all three cases, the **arrival** of the *Day of the Lord* brings the battle of Armageddon. In the New Testament, twice it is said the Day of the Lord "**cometh**" as a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:1,2 & 2 Peter 3:10). In both cases the immediate destruction of the wicked occurs. Paul says "sudden destruction" overtakes the wicked, and Peter says the land will be devoured by fire along with the scoffers.
5. Joel 3:9-17 describes the gathering of the armies of the nations around Jerusalem for the battle of Armageddon, the cosmic signs, and the coming of the Lord. **After** the armies are gathered, but **before** the cosmic signs, Joel wrote that the *Day of the Lord* is "**near.**" The Hebrew word means "*at hand,*" "*imminent,*" or "*next in sequence*" [Strong's #7138]. The *Day of the Lord* must begin **after** the armies of the nations are gathered for the battle, which occurs at the end of the tribulation, according to Rev. 16:13-16.
6. According to Revelation 16, The armies of the nations are gathered at the end of the tribulation for "*the battle of the great day of God Almighty*. Therefore, the "*Day of God*" is clearly after the tribulation when the battle occurs. Peter shows us that the terms "Day of God" and "Day of the Lord" are synonymous, by using them interchangeably when repeating himself [2 Peter 3:10,12]. (This is the only other occurrence of the phrase "*Day of God*" in the Bible.)
7. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 NASB/NIV says the "*Day of the Lord*" will not come until **after** the "*falling away,*" and the revelation of the "*man of sin.*" Verse 4 indicates how he will be revealed, by defiling the Temple at the mid-point of the tribulation, [see: Matt. 24:15]. Therefore, the *Day of the Lord* cannot begin before the mid-point of the tribulation.

8. According to Mal. 4:5, Elijah the prophet will come **before** the *Day of the Lord* comes. Most agree that Elijah is one of the two witnesses in Revelation. Therefore, the *Day of the Lord* cannot begin until after the two witnesses come.

9 There are many synonyms for the "Day of the Lord" in the New Testament. We know that on the Day of the Lord, the "Lord" who comes in power "with all His saints" in Zech. 14:1-6 is Jesus Christ [cf. Zech. 14:1-6, Acts 1:9-12, 1 Thess. 3:13]. We also know that there are various combinations of Jesus' name in the New Testament, including; Jesus, Christ, Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus Christ, and Lord. Since the simplest explanation is almost always correct, it is very likely that all of the following phrases are speaking of the same day. *Day of Christ* [Phil. 1:10], *Day of Jesus Christ* [Phil. 1:6], *Day of the Lord Jesus Christ* [1 Cor. 1:8], *Day of the Lord Jesus* [1 Cor. 5:5], *Day of the Lord* [1 Thess. 5:2], *Day of God* [2 Pet. 3:12], *Day of God Almighty* [Rev. 16:14]. [See also references to "*the Great Day*:" Zeph. 1:14, Jude 1:6, Rev. 6:17, Rev. 16:14.]

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Second Peter Three & the Day of the Lord

By Tim Warner - Nov. 2001

(Scripture citations are from the NKJV unless otherwise noted)

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2 Peter 3 is a passage that has caused a lot of confusion among pre-millennialists. Peter seems to speak of the burning of this present earth, and a "new heaven and new earth," at the time of Christ's second coming. He speaks of the "Day of the Lord" coming "as a thief," **in which** the dissolution of the present earth and heaven will take place. He speaks of a "new heaven and new earth" in which righteousness dwells. This seems to follow immediately on the second coming in Peter's eschatology. Yet, Revelation speaks of a "new heaven and new earth" at the end of the Millennium, placing a 1,000 year interval between the second coming and the "new heaven and new earth."

The typical solution is to claim that the "Day of the Lord" is the entire Millennium. The burning could be said to occur IN the "Day of the Lord" (albeit at its extreme end). But, as we shall see, such a view destroys Peter's whole point, that the Day of the Lord and burning of the earth is threatening the scoffers who say, "where is the promise of His coming?"

When we look at a particular New Testament prophecy, it is important to distinguish whether it is NEW revelation, or whether the author was simply reiterating previous prophecy. Sometimes Paul spoke of NEW revelation, with comments like, "*behold, I show you a mystery*," etc.. However, Peter was not giving NEW revelation in 2 Peter 3. He certainly gave no hint he was sharing something new. He wrote as though his readers were already familiar with these details. He explicitly said that his purpose for writing these things was to REMIND them of what they already knew **especially the words of the Old Testament prophets** (cf. 2 Pet. 1:12,13 & 2 Pet. 3:1,2), as well as the command of Christ through the Apostles. Likewise, Peter's comment, "*seeing that ye look for such things*" (vs. 14) strongly implies that his readers were already looking for a "new heaven and new earth" prior to Peter's writing this epistle. Therefore it would be wise to find similar previous prophecy with which to compare Peter's words, rather than assuming he was speaking of something that was not revealed until three decades later when John wrote Revelation.

I. Verses 1&2 INTRODUCTION

2 Pet 3:1-18

1 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),

2 that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,

Peter's main point for writing this second epistle was to remind believers of what they already knew:

1. The words spoken by the Old Testament Prophets
2. The commandment given by Jesus to and through the Apostles.

The "*words spoken by the prophets*" is in reference to the "Day of the Lord" that Peter explains in verses 10-12. The coming of the Kingdom of God is a central theme in his Epistle. 2 Peter 1:4-11 is exhortation on how to obtain an "abundant entrance" into this Kingdom. In Peter's second sermon in Acts, he spoke particularly of the return of Christ to set up His Millennial Kingdom as having been prophesied by "*all the holy prophets since the world began.*"

Acts 3:21

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 theme of "all the holy prophets" was the "Day of the Lord," when the earth would be restored to its pristine condition, and Christ would begin to rule over all the earth.

Next Peter said he wanted to remind them of "the commandment" given by Jesus to the Apostles. Of course, Jesus gave many commandments to and through the Apostles. But, notice two things. First, the "commandment" is singular with the definite article, indicating one particular commandment that his readers would immediately identify. Secondly, the disciples were not called "Apostles" until they were sent out to preach. The word "apostle" means one who is sent on a mission (an ambassador). It implies a message and a mission. Peter seems to be zeroing in on THE commandment, the "commission" of Jesus to the disciples, which itself made them "Apostles." That is, the Great Commission. The disciples became "Apostles" when Jesus sent them out on a mission to preach the Gospel.

Some might ask, "What does the Great Commission have to do with the Day of the Lord?" The answer is: Jesus tied the two together in the Olivet Discourse. After the disciples asked Jesus the signs of His coming and the "end of the age," Jesus said the following.

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.**

He also mentioned the "end of the age" in the Great Commission itself.

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.

The one and only thing that withholds the second coming of Jesus Christ is the completion of the Great Commission. The job MUST be finished before Jesus will return. Jesus' coming is NOT imminent until after the Great Commission is complete. The "Day of the Lord," or as Peter puts it in Acts 3:21, "the times of restoration of all things," cannot occur UNTIL we as believers finish carrying the Gospel to all nations. The book of Revelation indicates that there will be believers from **every tribe, nation, and people**. Therefore, the Gospel must not only go to each country, but to the various tribes in remote places.

After the resurrection, the disciples wanted to know if the Day of the Lord was imminent. They asked Jesus if He was now going to restore the Kingdom to Israel. Notice Jesus' reply.

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.**"

Jesus was referring them back to His Olivet Discourse and the Great Commission. Again He was implying that the end of the age would not come UNTIL they had preached the Gospel to all nations.

In the introduction to this chapter, Peter has reminded us that:

1. The "Day of the Lord" is coming (**our future hope**)
2. We must complete the Great Commission before it will come (**the reason for the apparent delay**)

The rest of the chapter expands on these two points.

II. Verses 3-7 THE APPARENT DELAY

3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,

6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.

7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

In these verses, Peter began to deal with the apparent delay in Christ's return. In the last days scoffers will arise who deny the second coming. This passage is remarkable because it seems to anticipate that the second coming was still some considerable distance away. Here he speaks of the "last days" as being in the future, or at least the scoffers were considered future. In his earlier use of the term "last days" on the Day of Pentecost, Peter was quoting Joel's prophecy of the coming of the "Day of the Lord." Peter used the term "last days" to refer to the interval of time in which we live, when God's Spirit is being poured out on all flesh. This time would end (according to Peter and Joel) with the coming of the "Day of the Lord."

Acts 2:16-21

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.**'*

Peter seems to interpret Joel as saying that the "last days" include the entire period of time from Pentecost until the "Day of the Lord." And the "Day of the Lord" comes AFTER the cosmic signs (which are after the tribulation - cf. Matt. 24:29-31). Note the connection to the salvation of the lost in this interim, as in 2 Pet. 3. However, in 2 Peter 3, Peter seems to have used "last days" in a more narrow way, referring to the very last of the "last days" just prior to the coming of the Lord.

In verses 4-7, Peter explained the reasoning of the scoffers. All things appear to be continuing without judgment by the creator since the beginning. Therefore, no judgment is coming. But, Peter pointed out the fallacy in this kind of thinking. The "old world" perished by God's judgment of sin. The long interim between creation and the flood was only made possible by God's longsuffering nature, and His compassion, in withholding His judgment. God is gracious and merciful, and allows ample time to repent, not to mention the continuous preaching of Noah over a 100 year period. But, His judgment is swift, sure, and total.

Pay particular attention to Peter's graphic language regarding the destruction of the earth in the

flood. He was speaking in hyperbole here, not literal language. *"The world that then existed perished,"* said Peter. And he referred to the present age as a different "earth" and "heaven" (vs. 7). Peter was implying that from Noah's perspective, after the flood there was a "new heaven and new earth." Was the whole earth and heaven destroyed by the flood? No. Only the breathing creatures were destroyed. Yet, Peter's words clearly imply total destruction of the old world, and a new heaven and new earth after the flood. Verse 7 then projects this same model of judgment to a future day. *"But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."* The new heaven and new earth after Noah is similarly being preserved for a future day of judgment, a day that will overtake these scoffers. It is a day of fire and the vengeance of Almighty God, and will again be followed by a "new heaven and new earth."

Verse 7 is crucial to understanding verses 10-12 which speak of the destruction of the earth by fire. While some pre-millennialists place this at the end of the Millennium, such an interpretation destroys Peter's whole point, that this day of fire and judgment will indeed overtake the scoffers who deny the second coming of Christ. The burning of the earth on the "Day of the Lord" in verses 10-12 is the very day Peter claims will overtake these scoffers by surprise. Therefore, the purging by fire is at the end of this age, not at the end of the Millennium. It occurs at the second coming.

III. Verses 8 & 9 THE REASON FOR THE DELAY

8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

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.

Here Peter elaborated on the reason for the delay. First, he reminded them that time is not an issue with God. When the Bible told first century Christians that Jesus is coming soon, and instructed them to be watching for His coming, it is not a contradiction even though two millennia have passed. With God, two thousand years are but a couple of days. Peter seems here to anticipate the very long interval of time that has transpired without Christ's return. This chapter is the answer to the preterists who insist that such terminology as "behold I come quickly" etc. requires that Jesus already came in some non-literal way in the first century.

Verse 9 explains further the connection to the Great Commission. Notice the reason Christ seems to be slow in returning is His "longsuffering." But, longsuffering to whom? While the Lord is not willing that any perish, His "longsuffering" is directed toward US, not to the lost. Is Peter saying that believers might be lost? No! He is saying that God is patient with US to complete the Great Commission, to preach the Gospel to all the nations so that many from every tribe and nation whom God loves will not perish! Peter places the responsibility squarely (albeit gently) on the shoulders of Christians. Corporately, we are the ones who delay or hasten the coming of Christ, the Day of the Lord, and the destruction of the wicked.

IV. Verses 10-14 THE DAY OF THE LORD

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

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?

13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace,

without spot and blameless;

Here, Peter finally arrived at the climax of His Epistle. Remember, his terminology regarding the flood was total destruction of the earth, followed by a new heaven and new earth. Here he used precisely the same type of hyperbole to describe the day of destruction of the scoffers by fire. While the KJV/NKJV says the earth will be "burned up," the NIV says it will be "laid bare." In either case, Peter was not saying that the earth will be totally destroyed any more than it was totally destroyed by the flood. Rather, he was borrowing some Old Testament terminology where purging fire and destruction accompanies the second coming of Christ and the Day of the Lord.

Again, remember what Peter said in verses 1,2 that he was REMINDING them of what they already knew from the Old Testament prophets. That they were already familiar with this is also evident in his comments that his readers were presently **looking for** a "new heaven and new earth" in vss 13,14. This strongly implies Peter was relying heavily on Old Testament prophecy, and was NOT giving new revelation previously unknown to his readers. He was encouraging them toward certain spiritual goals based on their present knowledge and anticipation of these things. Therefore, to properly understand his words, we need to carefully consider the Old Testament passage Peter had in mind, and no doubt his readers also immediately identified.

There are quite a few Old Testament passages that refer to the coming "Day of the Lord." These passages speak of the earth continuing after Christ's coming, albeit altered geographically. [Joel 3:9-17, Zech 14]. However, there is one passage that uses the exact terminology Peter used, referring to a "new heaven and new earth."

Isa 65:11-66:24

11 "But you are those who forsake the LORD, who forget My holy mountain, who prepare a table for Gad, and who furnish a drink offering for Meni.

12 Therefore I will number you for the sword, and you shall all bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not hear, but did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight."

13 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry; behold, My servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; behold, My servants shall rejoice, but you shall be ashamed;

14 Behold, My servants shall sing for joy of heart, but you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and wail for grief of spirit.

15 You shall leave your name as a curse to My chosen; for the Lord GOD will slay you, and call His servants by another name;

16 So that he who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he who swears in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hidden from My eyes.

*17 "For behold, I create **NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH**; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.*

18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

20 "No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.

21 They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

22 They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

24 "It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.

25 *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," says the LORD.*

CHAPTER 66

1 *Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?*

2 *For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," says the LORD. "But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.*

3 *"He who kills a bull is as if he slays a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, as if he breaks a dog's neck; he who offers a grain offering, as if he offers swine's blood; he who burns incense, as if he blesses an idol. Just as they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations,*
4 *So will I choose their delusions, and bring their fears on them; because, when I called, no one answered, when I spoke they did not hear; but they did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight."*

5 *Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at His word: "Your brethren who hated you, who cast you out for My name's sake, said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy.' But they shall be ashamed."*

6 *The sound of noise from the city! A voice from the temple! The voice of the LORD, who fully repays His enemies!*

7 *"Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male child.*

8 *Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? **shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children.***

9 ***Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?" says the LORD. "Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb?"** says your God.*

10 *"Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her; rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her;*

11 *That you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom, that you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory."*

12 *For thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. Then you shall feed; on her sides shall you be carried, and be dandled on her knees.*

13 *As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."*

14 *When you see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like grass; the hand of the LORD shall be known to His servants, and His indignation to His enemies.*

15 ***For behold, the LORD will come with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire.***

16 ***For by fire and by His sword the LORD will judge all flesh; and the slain of the LORD shall be many.***

17 *"Those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves, to go to the gardens after an idol in the midst, eating swine's flesh and the abomination and the mouse, shall be consumed together," says the LORD.*

18 *"For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory.*

19 *"I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles.*

20 *"Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.*

21 *"And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites," says the LORD.*

22 *"For as **THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH** which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "So shall your descendants and your name remain.*

23 *And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD.*

24 *"And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."*

It is evident from this passage that Isaiah sees an earthly kingdom after Messiah returns to judge WITH FIRE. Isaiah calls this earthly kingdom, after the earth is purged by the fire of the Lord, the "new heaven and new earth." Clearly, the PRESENT city of Jerusalem will remain. There are other definite allusions to this prophecy in the New Testament. Particularly, 66:7-13 was referenced by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse, when He spoke of "the beginning of birth pains" and "great tribulation (travail)."

We know that the present planet Earth will never be destroyed. David said the foundations of the earth will last forever (Psalm 104:5). Isaiah's and Peter's point was that man's works will be purged from the surface of the earth (vs. 10).

Based on all these considerations, it is my opinion that Peter was referring to the beginning of the Millennium (and Isaiah 65 & 66 in particular) when he spoke of the "new heaven and new earth." The elements melting is a hyperbolic description of the "Day of the Lord" mentioned by the prophets. This world system will come to an end and be replaced by the Kingdom of God on this planet that has been purged by the fire of God.

It is also quite likely that Joel 2 describes the actual process of this burning on the Day of the Lord. It is not a complete destruction of the entire planet.

Joel 2:1-11

1 *Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for **the day of the LORD is coming**, for it is at hand:*

2 *A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations.*

3 ***A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them.***

4 *Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run.*

5 *With a noise like chariots over mountaintops they leap, **like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble**, like a strong people set in battle array.*

6 *Before them the people writhe in pain; all faces are drained of color.*

7 *They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks. 8 They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down.*

9 *They run to and fro in the city, they run on the wall; they climb into the houses, they enter at the windows like a thief. 10 The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness.*

11 *The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For **the day of the LORD** is great and very terrible; who can endure it?*

Here we have the angelic army of the Lord playing an active part in the purging of the earth by fire on the Day of the Lord. Zechariah 14 describes the fate of the wicked on this day, saying that their flesh will consume away while they are still standing on their feet!

One more Old Testament passage deserves note, which shows people still present on this earth after the burning on the "Day of the Lord."

Mal 4:1-3

1 *"For behold, the day is coming, **burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do***

wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the LORD of hosts, *"That will leave them neither root nor branch.*

2 But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves.

*3 You shall trample the wicked, for **they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,***" says the LORD of hosts.

Do not overlook Peter's comment in verse 12 that we as Christians are "*hastening the coming of the Day of God.*" How? By being busy with the Great Commission, of course!

Within this section, Peter reminds us of the purifying effect of eschatology on the life of the believer. It is through "*looking for these things*" that we are motivated to conduct ourselves in a holy and pure way, while we anticipate the coming of Christ for us. Peter's comment about being found "*without spot and blameless*" is in reference to the bride's preparation to meet her groom (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2, Rev. 19:7). Notice that our "being found" in this condition implies that we will be present on earth when the "Day of the Lord" comes. (Note: the "Day of the Lord" and the "Day of God" are used interchangeably. See Rev. 16:14 for the only other use of the term "Day of God" in Scripture.)

V. Verses 15-18 CONCLUSION

15 and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation-- as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,

16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

Note the connection between the "longsuffering" of the Lord and the "salvation" of the lost, again pointing us toward the Great Commission.

Peter's reference to Paul and His epistles is particularly helpful here. This passage shows that Peter endorsed Paul's teaching, and has substantial ramifications regarding dispensationalism. It also implies that Peter was actually writing to Gentiles, since Paul's Epistles were written to Gentiles and Peter was addressing the same people. Notice also that Peter said Paul wrote of "these things" in all of His Epistles. In verses 11 & 14, Peter spoke of "these things" in the context of the coming "Day of the Lord" (in which Christ will return to earth). So, "these things" in verse 16 must still be referring to the coming day of Christ's return, in fire and judgment on the wicked, and to rescue believers. I must point out here, for those who believe this passage refers to the events accompanying the end of the Millennium, that Paul never mentioned "those things" in ANY of His Epistles! But, Paul definitely spoke of Christ's coming at the end of this age in ALL of His Epistles. There can be no doubt then that Peter's rather hyperbolic description of the Day of the Lord is indeed the day of Christ's return at the end of this age. Here is one of Paul's references to this day of fire and judgment. Like Peter, he also indicates our deliverance on the very same day the wicked are destroyed by fire! In both passages we have the rescuing of Christians at the same coming of Christ which destroys the wicked by fire.

II Thess 1:5-10

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.

Paul also used precisely the same terminology regarding the "Day of the Lord." Both Peter and Paul were borrowing from Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:42,43). Peter said "*The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night*" (vs. 10). Paul said exactly the same thing in reference to the second coming.

1Thes 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.

Basically, Paul wrote the Day of the Lord will overtake the wicked "*as a thief in the night.*" But, it will NOT overtake believers "as a thief" who are watching! Those who heed the warnings will be ready to meet the Lord in the air at His coming. This is precisely what Peter was teaching. The wicked scoff, and will be overtaken unexpectedly by the day of fiery judgment. But wise believers are watching, preparing to be found "without spot," and are "hastening" the coming of that day by their obedience to the Great Commission.

Verse 17 is a final warning against falling short. In chapter 2, Peter warned of the false prophets who seduce believers away from the faith, just as Jesus and Paul warned that many believers would fall away in the days before Jesus' coming (cf. Matt. 24:9-13 & 2 Thess. 2:1-3). We should see this warning by Peter as the consequence of ignoring his earlier exhortation at the beginning of this Epistle, regarding how we might assure our abundant entrance into Christ's Kingdom.

2 Pet 1:2-11

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 And beside this, **giving all diligence**, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, **give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:**

11 **For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.**

(KJV)

Notice the theme in this Epistle is the preparation of believers to have an abundant entrance into Christ's coming Kingdom. Chapter two warns of the pitfalls along the way that have and will bring ruin to many believers. Chapter three deals with the eschatology of Christ's coming Kingdom and its

role in encouraging us to be found in Him without spot and blameless, as well as motivating us to complete our task of world evangelism. We as Christians can hasten the coming of the Day of the Lord. But we need to be ready to meet Him when He comes.

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Joel & the Day of the Lord

By Tim Warner - 11/2001

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The "Day of the Lord" is one of the most debated topics in Christian eschatology. How we define the "Day of the Lord" has a dramatic effect on the rapture question. In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul wrote that Christians should be watching for the Day of the Lord, implying that we will be here when it comes. He wrote that it will overtake unbelievers "as a thief." But because we are watching, believers will not be surprised when the Day of the Lord comes. Since the Day of the Lord is the day of Christ's coming at the end of the tribulation, the rapture can only be after the tribulation. For an in-depth discussion of 1 Thess. 5, see our article [The Day of the Lord in 1 Thess. 5.](#)

Pre-tribbers recognize the problem here, and have developed a view of the Day of the Lord that can accommodate their scenario. Basically, they say the Day of the Lord is the rapture and entire tribulation period, allowing Christians to still be here when the beginning of the tribulation comes. However, all Scripture regarding the Day of the Lord is compatible with a single day scenario. Post-tribbers take the term "day" literally, rather than stretching it into several years, as pre-tribbers do. In our article [The Day of the Lord does not include the tribulation](#) we have given nine biblical reasons why the Day of the Lord cannot include the tribulation but must follow it.

Another pre-trib attempt to sidestep the problem is to claim there are multiple "days of the Lord." In this way they can claim that the "Day of the Lord" Paul connects with the rapture in 1 Thess. is not the same "Day of the Lord" which follows the cosmic signs in Acts 2:20 & Joel 2:31. In support of their thesis, they point to the book of Joel, claiming that Joel referred to a past plague of locusts that devoured Israel's crops as a "Day of the Lord."

One point that needs to be stressed is that in each and every case where the Day of the Lord is mentioned in Scripture, it is in the future tense. Not once is the Day of the Lord referred to in the past tense, even in Joel. Furthermore, never is the Day of the Lord referred to in the plural. It is always singular.

When pre-tribbers use Joel to support a past "Day of the Lord," they have completely misunderstood the purpose of the book. Joel did NOT refer to the past plague of locusts as a "Day of the Lord." Rather, he referred to the disaster of the plague of locusts as an illustration of the FUTURE Day of the Lord to come at Christ's coming. Following is Joel chapter one. Pay particular attention to the tenses of the verbs which are color coded for simplicity. In verses 1-14, while describing the plague of locusts that God sent among Israel as a form of judgment, the **past tense** is used throughout. When speaking of the current results of the plague, the **present tense** is used. But, when Joel mentions the Day of the Lord, he always speaks of it in the **future tense**.

Past tense verbs are red.

Present tense verbs are blue.

Future tense verbs are green.

Joel 1:1-2:1

1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

2 Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?

3 Tell your children about it, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.

4 What the chewing locust *left*, the swarming locust *has eaten*; what the swarming locust *left*, the crawling locust *has eaten*; and what the crawling locust *left*, the consuming locust *has eaten*.
 5 Awake, you drunkards, and weep; and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it *has been* cut off from your mouth.
 6 For a nation *has come* up against My land, strong, and without number; his teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a fierce lion.
 7 He *has laid waste* My vine, and *has stripped* it bare and *thrown* it away; its branches are made white.
 8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.
 9 The grain offering and the drink offering *have been* cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests mourn, who minister to the LORD.
 10 The field *is wasted*, the land mourns; for the grain *is ruined*, the new wine *is dried up*, the oil *fails*.
 11 Be ashamed, you farmers, wail, you vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley; because the harvest of the field *has perished*.
 12 The vine *has dried up*, and the fig tree *has withered*; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree-- all the trees of the field *are withered*; surely joy *has withered away* from the sons of men.
 13 Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; wail, you who minister before the altar; come, lie all night in sackcloth, you who minister to my God; for the grain offering and the drink offering *are withheld* from the house of your God.
 14 Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.
 15 Alas for the day! For **the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come** as destruction from the Almighty.
 16 Is not the food *cut off* before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God?
 17 The seed *shrivels* under the clods, storehouses *are* in shambles; Barns *are broken down*, for the grain *has withered*.
 18 How the animals *groan*! The herds of cattle *are* restless, because they *have* no pasture; even the flocks of sheep *suffer* punishment.
 19 O LORD, to You I cry out; for fire *has devoured* the open pastures, and a flame *has burned* all the trees of the field.
 20 The beasts of the field also *cry out* to You, for the water brooks *are dried up*, and fire *has devoured* the open pastures.
 (NKJV)

Chapter two begins speaking about the future Day of the Lord.

Joel 2:1-2

1 Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for **the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand**:
 2 A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations.
 (NKJV)

This chapter continues to describe the future Day of the Lord, where God's angelic army will devour the wicked with fire and destruction. Joel uses language that is nearly identical to the description of the plague of locusts mentioned in chapter one. This is done to drive home to the Jews the totality of the destruction that is coming, while the results of the locust plague was still fresh in their minds. The message is REPENT before the Day of the Lord overtakes them. If they repent, God promised to restore their crops that the locusts had eaten (vss. 25-27).

This is followed by a famous prophecy of the Day of the Lord quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost. Here again, the Day of the Lord is referred to in the future tense.

Joel 2:28-32

28 "And it shall come to pass afterward that *I will* pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters *shall prophesy*, your old men *shall dream dreams*, your young men *shall see visions*.

29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants *I will pour out* My Spirit in those days.

30 "And *I will show* wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke.

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.***

32 And it *shall come to pass* that whoever calls on the name of the LORD *shall be saved*. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there *shall be deliverance*, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

(NKJV)

Again, the Day of the Lord is consistently FUTURE. The last chapter goes into detail, giving the events of the Day of the Lord in graphic detail.

Joel 3:9-17

9 Proclaim this among the nations: "Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up.

10 Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I am strong.'"

11 Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD.

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.

17 "So you *shall know* that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem *shall be holy*, and no aliens *shall ever pass through* her again."

(NKJV)

It is clear, in verses nine and following, that the Day of the Lord begins AFTER the armies have gathered for the battle of Armageddon. We know that the darkening of the sun and moon occurs "immediately after the tribulation," according to Matt. 24:29. Yet, according to Joel, after the armies have gathered and the sun and moon are darkened, the text says the Day of the Lord is "NEAR in the valley of decision." This implies that the Day of the Lord FOLLOWS the cosmic signs (as 2:31 explicitly says) and that the Day of the Lord is intimately connected with the Battle of Armageddon.

There is no biblical reason to suppose that the "Day of the Lord" is anything more than a single 24 hour day. It is the day of the second coming after the tribulation.

The fact is, pre-tribbers' attempts to get around the problem of 1 Thess. 5 are all doomed to failure. The Day of the Lord is a single day, immediately following the darkening of the sun and moon (Joel 2:31 & Acts 2:20) which immediately follows the tribulation (Matt. 24:29). Since Paul indicates that we as Christians are watching for the coming of the Day of the Lord, and connects the rapture with this day, the rapture is necessarily post-trib, and occurs the same day Jesus destroys the armies gathered at Armageddon. (See also our article [As in the Days of Lot](#), and [We Rest After the Tribulation](#), for more evidence that the rapture is **the same day** the wicked are destroyed.)

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The Day of the Lord is One Day

By Tim Warner - 11/2001

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All of the various rapture views, except post-trib, see the "Day of the Lord" as an extended period of time. For pre-tribbers, it includes the entire 7 year tribulation and pre-trib rapture. This is in order to account for Paul's encouragement for Christians to be watching for the Day of the Lord in 1 Thess. 5:1-9. How could we be watching for the Day of the Lord if we are raptured out of here 7 years before it comes? Consequently, they must stretch it forward to a time when we are still here prior to the tribulation in order to maintain their view. Many also include the entire Millennium in order to harmonize Peter's comments in 2 Peter 3 with Revelation. Peter places the burning of the earth on the "Day of the Lord." So, for these pre-tribbers, the "Day of the Lord" is 1007 years long! Quite a stretch for the little word "day!" Even pre-wrath folks view the Day of the Lord as at least several months in order to accomodate the trumpets and vials of Revelation, one of which lasts 5 months.

There is really no biblical reason to abandon the literal meaning of the word "day." It is the day of the second coming after the tribulation. It follows the darkening of the sun and moon (Joel 2:31 & Acts 2:20) which follows immediately after the tribulation (Matt. 24:29 & Mark 13:24).

Some pre-tribbers claim that too many things are said to occur on the Day of the Lord that cannot fit within a 24 hour period. But, that is simply not true. When pressed to produce these things, they typically do not go to passages that specifically mention the Day of the Lord. Rather, they point to several passages in the Old Testament that refer to "that day," claiming the term "that day" is a synonym for the Day of the Lord. But, "that day" does not necessarily point to the Day of the Lord. Sometimes it does, especially in the New Testament. But, there are scores of examples where "that day" clearly does NOT refer to the Day of the Lord. Such a non-specific phrase must be interpreted in its context. "That day" simply refers to whatever day the particular context has in view, rather than having a specific technical meaning itself, like the phrase "the Day of the Lord." In prophetic passages, sometimes "that day" refers to the tribulation, and sometimes to the Millennium. Yes, sometimes "that day" does refer to the Day of the Lord, when the context clearly indicates the Day of the Lord is in view. But, in order to sustain the pre-trib argument that too many things occur within the Day of the Lord to fit within a 24 hour period, one must stick to passages that are indisputably referring to the Day of the Lord. If you look at all of the passages in Scripture **that specifically mention the "Day of the Lord,"** all of them are compatible with a single 24 hour day. Here are all Scriptures that mention the Day of the Lord. (Isaiah 2:12, Isaiah 13:6,9, Jer. 46:10, Ezek. 13:5, Ezek. 30:3, Joel 1:15, Joel 2:1,11,31, Joel 3:14, Amos 5:18,20, Obadiah 1:15, Zeph. 1:7,14, Zech 14:1, Mal. 4:5, Acts 2:20, 1 Cor. 5:5, 2 Cor. 1:14, 1 Thess. 5:2, 2 Thess. 2:3 NASB/NIV, 3 Peter 3:10).

The most important evidence that the Day of the Lord is a single 24 hour day comes from Zechariah 14.

Zech 14:1,6-7

*1 Behold, **the day of the LORD cometh**, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. ...*

*6 And it shall come to pass **in that day**, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark:*

*7 But **it shall be ONE DAY** which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that **at evening time it shall be light.***

(KJV)

In this case, "that day" in verse 6 is clearly referring to the Day of the Lord in verse 1. Zechariah says "the day of the Lord cometh" and then immediately speaks of the coming of Christ to defeat the armies of the nations gathered against Jerusalem. The word "cometh" implies arrival. The Day of the Lord will arrive when Christ returns at the end of the tribulation. But, notice verse 6 and 7. Terminology that can only apply to a single 24 hour day is applied to "that day" - the "Day of the Lord." While the word "day" in the Bible sometimes refers to longer periods, in this case such a view is impossible. Zechariah's description of the Day of the Lord presents "day" contrasted with "night," and "evening" with "morning." The "Day of the Lord" has a "morning" and an "evening." And the unique lighting conditions of that "day" are contrasted with normal 24 hour "days." Creationists insist that everything was created in six literal days, because Genesis describes each of the six days as having an "evening" and "morning." Why would not the same logic apply here? The lighting conditions on the Day of the Lord will be unlike any other "day" in history. That is what Zechariah is saying. Several passages indicate that the sun and moon will be darkened just prior to the coming of the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:31 & Acts 2:20). Perhaps the day before, or a few days before. But, sometime during the evening of the Day of the Lord, a new source of light will appear against the backdrop of total darkness. We know from many other passages that this source of light is the glory of Christ Himself, as He appears in the sky (Matt. 24:29-31). That is what the "glorious appearing" is all about. Christ's glorious appearing will be against the background of total darkness. (See also: Joel 2:1,2, Amos 5:18-20, Zeph. 1:15,16).

Another passage that deserves note is Isaiah 10:17. This passage does not mention the "Day of the Lord" by name, but I am convinced from the context that it is referring to that day.

Isa 10:12-23

*12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, that **when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem**, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.*

13 For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man:

14 And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.

15 Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.

16 Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

*17 **And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day;***

18 And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standardbearer fainteth.

19 And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.

20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

21 The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.

22 For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

23 For the Lord GOD of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land.

(KJV)

This passage parallels several others that speak of Christ's coming as being a day of consumption of the wicked and the land by fire (See also: Isaiah 66:15,24, Joel 2:1-11, Zech. 14:12, Mal. 4:1-5, 2 Thess. 1:7-10, 2 Peter 3:10-12). Notice the phrase "in one day" in verse 17. While we cannot prove

that this "one day" is the Day of the Lord because that phrase is not specifically mentioned, by comparing it to these other passages we can be fairly certain.

See our article [The Day of the Lord does not include the Tribulation](#) for 9 reasons why the Day of the Lord is after the tribulation.

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Sequence of events

on the Day of the Lord

The **Day of the Lord** is the climax of all Bible Prophecy. It is the day Christ is manifest in all His glory, and puts an end to Antichrist and his followers. This article deals with the sequence of events that will occur on that day, to the best of my understanding. This sequence is based on harmonizing many passages of Scripture. I could be mistaken about the exact order of some of these events. But, I am convinced that it is generally correct.

1. Before the Day of the Lord, the armies of the nations mass around Jerusalem for the battle of Armageddon [Joel 3:9-14, Rev. 16:13-16]
2. The sun turns black and the moon turns dark red "immediately after the tribulation" [Matt. 24:29, Mark 13:24], perhaps hours or moments before the "Day of the Lord" [Joel 2:31, Acts 2:20].
3. Jesus sitting on a white horse, the Father coming on His Throne [Ezek. 43:1-7 (cf. Ezek. 1:4-28), Dan. 7:21,22, Mark 14:62, Rev. 6:16,17], the angels, and saints who have died, descend from heaven, circle the earth from east to west for all to see [Matt. 24:27, Rev. 1:7], and hover above the Mount of Olives in a thick cloud cover [Zech. 14:4,5b, Joel 2:2, Zeph. 1:15].
4. Jesus sounds the trumpet, the dead believers are raised and the living changed [1 Cor. 15:50-54], His angels are dispatched over the whole earth to gather together His elect in the clouds above the Mount of Olives [Matthew 24:29-31, Mark 13:24-27, 1 Thess. 4:13-17].
5. Meteors fall from the sky [Isa. 34:4, Matt. 24:29, Rev. 6:13, Rev. 16:21].
6. The cloud cover over the Mount of Olives rolls back, revealing Christ, the Father, saints and angels [Isa. 34:4, Rev. 6:14], the people gathered for battle run for cover among the rocks [Isa. 2:10,19, Rev. 6:15-17].
7. The Jewish remnant, preserved by God throughout the tribulation [Isa. 26:20,21, Rev. 12:6,14], recognize Jesus as the Messiah, repent and believe, and are saved and sealed [Isa. 10:20,21, Isa. 66:8, Joel 2:32, 3:21, Zech. 12:9,10, 13:1,8,9, Mal. 3:1-3, 4:16-5:3, Rom. 11:26,27, Rev. 7:3-8].
8. Christ descends to the Mount of Olives [Zech. 14:4, Acts 1:11,12], the world's largest earthquake occurs [Isa. 2:19,21, Isa. 13:13, Isa. 24:18-23, Ezek. 38:19,20, Joel 3:16, Hag. 2:6,7,21, Nahum 1:5,6, Heb. 12:26,27, Rev. 6:14, Rev. 16:18], the Mount of Olives splits in two from east to west, and the faithful Jewish remnant flees toward Christ, through the valley created by the splitting of the mountain [Zech. 14:4,5].
9. The battle ensues, Christ throws the Antichrist and False prophet into the lake of fire and destroys the remaining kings [Rev. 19:11-21].
10. The angelic army takes care of the rest of the armies of the nations with fire [Isa. 13:3-11, Isa. 66:15,16, Joel 2:1-11 (cf. 2 Kings 6:17), Zech. 14:12, 2 Thess. 1:7-10].

11. The Lord destroys the remaining Jews who have worshipped the image of the Beast [Amos 5:15-20, Zeph. 1:all, Zech. 13:7-9]

12. The earth is purged by fire and the curse removed [Isa. 10:17-23, Nahum 1:2-6, Mal. 4:1-3, Romans 8:19-23, 2 Peter 3:10-12 (cf. Isa. 65:17-25)]

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Millennium Fever

and Date Setting

By Tim Warner - April 1999

As we approach the end of the millennium, many Christians seem to be consumed with the prospect of Christ's imminent second coming. "Looking for that blessed hope" [Titus 2:13] is a good thing. Paul repeatedly tells us to focus our hope on Jesus' return for us.

Phil 3:20-21

*20 For our conversation is in heaven; **from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ**
21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*
(KJV)

Peter points to the hope of the revelation of Christ in glory as the source of strength to go on through our trials.

1 Pet 4:12-13

*12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:
13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*
(KJV)

1 Pet 1:5-7

*5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:
7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory **at the appearing of Jesus Christ:***
(KJV)

John tells us that this "hope" of the second coming of Jesus Christ is the source of motivation towards holiness and Christian maturity.

1 John 3:2-3

*2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, **when he shall appear**, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.
3 And **every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself**, even as he is pure.*
(KJV)

Jesus Himself warned us to be on the alert, and to watch for the signs He gave.

Mark 13:32-37

32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

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)

Scanning the internet prophecy websites, and some discussion forums, one might get the impression that Christians are doing exactly what the Bible commands us to do. There is so much talk of Christ's soon return, and so much speculation about times and dates, that one wonders if some Christians might be devastated if Jesus doesn't come in the next few years.

Is this phenomenon new to late 20th century Christians? Not hardly. A look at Church history reveals that Christians have been speculating about such things since the early days of the Church. Even a casual reading of the Early Church Fathers [AD 100 - AD 325] reveals a strong expectation of "last days" events in their lifetimes. Irenaeus [2nd century] wrote exhorting Christians not to spend so much time trying to figure out who the Antichrist might be [by calculating the numeric value of names of contemporary public figures that add up to 666] and to simply await the fulfillment of clear prophecy. Such speculation reached a fever pitch at the end of the last millennium, too.

Many Christian movements, and some cults, have come and gone, formed around "date setting" for the return of Christ. The Jehovah's Witnesses have set several dates that have come and gone without incident. What is the effect of these raised hopes, only to be dashed at a later date? Try, discouragement, disillusionment, and last but not least, publicly discrediting the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Overzealousness regarding the second coming, and "millennium fever" is not good for the Christian Faith in general, nor is it good for individual Christians. Paul faced, and had to deal with, "millennium fever" in the Thessalonian church.

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)

Here Paul was trying to calm down a situation where believers were placing too much expectation in the imminent return of Christ. Apparently, such undue excitement and agitation was interfering with normal Christian behavior. Paul reminded them of Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse. Not only did Jesus tell us to be watching for His coming, but He said certain things MUST come BEFORE the last days scenario would play out, and we could expect the return of Christ. So, "watching" according to Jesus did not just mean watching for His actual appearing in the sky. It had to do with watching for particular signs that would signal His return. This is what Paul reminded the Thessalonians. The two things that MUST precede Christ's return are;

#1. A mass apostasy or defection from the Christian faith

Paul - *"that day shall not come except there come a falling away first..."*

Jesus - *"And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."* [Matt. 24:10-13].

#2. The Antichrist must defile the Temple.

Paul - *"that day shall not come except ... the man of sin be revealed ... who sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God."*

Jesus - *"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]

In effect, Paul [and Jesus] are saying that until such things occur, there is no reason to suppose that Christ's coming is imminent.

Elsewhere, Paul instructed Christians to **patiently** await Christ's coming.

Rom 8:25

*25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we **with patience** wait for it.*
(KJV)

Similarly, James gives us an illustration to put all of this into perspective.

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)

Notice the illustration of the farmer being applied to our waiting for Christ. The farmer knows that there is a season for the harvest. He awaits the rainy season, knowing that harvest follows. So too are we to await with patience the growing season, looking for the specific signs [rainy season] that Jesus gave us. James says to "stablish our hearts." He instructs us to stabilize ourselves, and not be so anxious and agitated about an imminent coming of Christ. The "coming of the Lord draweth nigh" means it is steadily approaching. But it does not mean it is about to occur immediately. Yes, we are to fix our hope on Christ's soon return. But, we are not to be unduly anxious or agitated, supposing that it is imminent, when the signs given by Jesus have not yet occurred.

The problem with all of the date setters of the past, and even all of the date setters of the present, is their "dates" are based on unscriptural methods. Lets look at why such dates have always failed.

Dan 9:24

*24 **Seventy weeks are determined** upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.*
(KJV)

Most Evangelical Christians recognize that this is a definite prophecy of the length of time until both the first and second coming of Christ. In the following verses, Daniel is given the exact length of time until the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, 69 weeks of years, or 483 years from the command of King Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem. But, there is also a remaining "week of years" to be fulfilled before the second coming of Jesus, the 70th week. Hence, there is a gap between the crucifixion and the beginning of the last seven years. But, the thing I want you to notice is the word "determined" in the above verse. This word means

"fixed" or "decided." This will not be changed. This implies the gap between the 69th and 70th week, in which we now live, was not "determined" or "fixed." So, as far as we are concerned, once the 70th week begins, there will be no stopping the second coming of Christ after 7 years. However, we can not determine the time of Christ's coming prior to the beginning of the 70th week.

But, let's go one step further. In Matt. 24, the disciples specifically asked Jesus about this question of the time of His coming, and what signs believers could expect that would indicate His coming was near. Jesus' answer shows that most modern speculations are way off base. You might want to read this chapter in detail, but allow me to summarize it for you. Jesus responded by warning them about false Christs, wars, famines, earthquakes, etc. Many make the mistake of looking at the fulfillment of these things in our generation as "signs" of Christ's imminent coming. But, they overlook the fact that Jesus specifically said these are NOT signs of His coming. He said in verse 6, "***see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.***" In other words, don't get anxious! These things will happen before Jesus returns, but they do not indicate the end of the age necessarily.

Jesus went on to describe the apostasy that will characterize the Christian Church in the last days, with most believers abandoning the Faith before Jesus returns. But, in verse 15, Jesus gave the Disciples the first **definite** sign, and He even linked it to the prophecy of the 70 weeks in Daniel, showing that once this occurs, the exact time of His coming can be determined.

Matt 24:15

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

(KJV)

Some have speculated that the words "*whoso readeth let him understand*" are the words of Matthew as a narration, and not the actual spoken words of Jesus. But, this is wrong. Jesus was saying that whomever read Daniel's prophecy of the "abomination of desolation," which is contained within the 70 week prophecy of Daniel. 9, could know the time of Jesus' return. And, according to Daniel, the "abomination" will occur "in the midst of the week" [or, 3.5 years before the second coming of Jesus Christ].

Jesus went on to describe the 3.5 year "great tribulation" in the following verses, and His coming with power and glory to gather His elect, in verses 29-31. Notice the cosmic signs in verse 29, as well as the "sign of the Son of Man" in verse 30.

Finally, Jesus told us exactly how we should react to these things.

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)

Many prophecy teachers have mistakenly interpreted the "fig tree" as Israel, and come up with all kinds of nonsense about Israel's reestablishment as a nation in 1948, etc. being a sign of Jesus' return. But, it is clear from the text that Jesus was NOT giving a "prophecy" about Israel, but was giving an **illustration** or **parable** demonstrating how we should react to the other signs He gave previously. Notice the words "parable" in verse 32, and the word "likewise" in verse 33. Jesus was saying that only after such signs are seen by believers can we expect His coming. And, the very first definite sign He gave was the "abomination of desolation." He did not mention a treaty or covenant between the Antichrist and Israel, or the rebuilding of the Temple. His prophecy takes for granted that the Temple will be standing in order

for the "abomination" to occur in the "holy place." But, there is no indication how long the Temple would be standing prior to this. Therefore, we have no business assuming that any Middle East treaty, even one that allows the rebuilding of the Temple and resumption of sacrifices, is the one mentioned in Dan. 9:26,27. In order to be certain, we have to await the "abomination of desolation." Only then can we know for sure the time of His coming.

Some no doubt will object to the idea that we can ever know the time of Christ's return, even at the mid point of the tribulation. But, when Jesus said "no man knows the day or hour" of His coming, He used the present tense. In the context of this entire discourse, He means that until such signs are fulfilled, or until you see "all these things," no one would know the day or hour of His return. He does NOT rule out knowing AFTER the series of definite signs begin to unfold. Otherwise, this would contradict verse 33, where He says "***know that it is nigh, even at the doors.***" So, until then, no one "knows." But, after these events, "know." That is what Jesus taught, and that is exactly what we should do.

These days, employing the Feast Days as a pattern, Christians are speculating about dates. I am not implying that the fall Feasts are not connected with the second coming. They clearly are. But, they cannot be used to set dates as of yet, because the other signs Jesus gave have not come.

Probably the single biggest reason for "millennium fever" among Christians is the 6,000 year theory. There is some reason to suppose that the earth would go on for 6,000 years under the curse, and the Millennium would correspond to the last 1,000 years, or "Sabbath" of a 7,000 year "week" of millennia. This theory, while not being explicitly taught in Scripture, may be implied in Heb. 4:9 & 2 Pet. 3:8. And, it was firmly believed by the early Church, as attested to by many of the Church Fathers. Yet, calendars are uncertain, and we really don't know for sure how many years have elapsed since creation. According to the Jewish calendar, we still have over 200 years to go. But, even if our Gregorian calendar is correct, we have no assurance that the 6,000 year theory is correct. So, at best, it might give us an approximation within a decade or so. That is about it.

Some have based their date setting on Hosea 6:1,2. The "two days" is interpreted as 2,000 years. This seems to fit, as the period of time mentioned is the time God turns away from Israel temporarily, or what is sometimes called the "Church age." Yet, if you take a look again at the prophecy, it does not say Israel would be restored at the end of the "two days," but during the "third day." This could mean at the very beginning of the third millennium [after Christ], or some indefinite time afterwards. Once again, such things are too speculative and imprecise to attach any dates to them.

In conclusion, I think we do a disservice to Christianity when we prematurely speculate about exact dates, even when we put our disclaimers on them to save our reputations when things don't pan out. Instead of thinking up all kinds of ways to short circuit Jesus' words in the Olivet Discourse in order to satisfy our curiosity, we need to focus on getting our house in order, while keeping tuned to current events, and watching for the specific signs Jesus gave. The Bible teaches we should have a healthy expectation of Christ's coming, and it should motivate us to holiness, especially when we come to terms with how much of the world we have allowed to enter and pollute us. Instead of becoming agitated and excited about our getting out of here, we should be allowing the "blessed hope" to purify our lives. We should be spending our time getting ready to meet Christ, as a spotless virgin meets her groom.

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Revelation 20

& Pre-millennialism

Revelation 20 is one of the most disputed passages in the Bible among students of prophecy. This is especially true when a-millennialists debate pre-millennialists. For those not familiar with the two terms, let me give a brief description. There are actually 3 positions on the "millennium" as follows.

"Pre-millennial" simply means Christ's second coming is "pre" [before] the 1,000 year period mentioned in Revelation 20:2,4,5. This view says Christ will physically rule on earth from Jerusalem with the saints for 1,000 years. After this, there will be the general resurrection and judgment of the dead at the Great White Throne.

"Post-millennial" means Christ's second coming is after the "millennium." This view sees Christianity making great inroads into the governments of the world, with such great social impact, that there will virtually be "peace on earth" while Christians rule for 1,000 years. After this, Jesus will return. This view was popular before the two world wars, but is not held by many today.

"A-millennial" means "no-millennium." This view does not take the 1,000 years literally, but sees this as just a symbolic term to describe a long period of time. A-mills believe Revelation 20 is describing this present age, with the saints ruling with Christ from heaven now. Consequently, they do not think Rev. 20 follows chronologically after Rev. 19 [which describes the second coming]. The strongest point in favor of this view from the text of Revelation, is the Battle of Armageddon in Chapter 19 is believed to be a parallel to the battle mentioned at the end of the 1,000 years in Rev. 20:7-9.

I believe there is a lot of evidence for "pre-mill" elsewhere in the Scriptures. But, Revelation 20 gives "proof" in my opinion. In this article I would like to focus strictly on Rev. 20. The key question is, does Rev. 20 [which describes the Millennium] follow chronologically after Rev. 19 [which describes the second coming of Christ]? If so, then pre-mill must be right. If not, then a-mill or post-mill could be right.

Rev 20:1-6

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 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.
(KJV)

The crucial point I want you to see, is the ones being raised to reign with Christ were killed for their resistance to "the Beast."

"...which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands..."

The implication is clear that the "first resurrection" includes the martyrs of the tribulation. According to Rev. 13:5, the Beast is allowed to "continue" for 42 months. And, according to Rev. 19:20, the "Beast" is thrown into the lake of fire at Christ's second coming. Therefore, the Beast rules for the last 42 months before Jesus comes. And, since those slain because they refused to worship the Beast or his image, or take his mark, are raised to reign with Christ for 1,000 years, the 1,000 years must necessarily be after the second coming of Jesus. Or, to state it another way, Jesus will come BEFORE [pre-] the 1,000 years, [millennium].

Verse 5 says the "rest of the dead" [those not raised in the "first resurrection"] will be raised AFTER the 1,000 years to stand trial before the Great White Throne.

A-mills point out the similarity of the battle in Rev. 20:7-9 with Armageddon, in Rev. 19. But, they are not the same battle. Why?

Rev 19:19-20

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

*20 And **the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet** that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. **These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.***

(KJV)

Both the "Beast" and the "False Prophet" are cast into the lake of fire at the Battle of Armageddon. But...

Rev 20:7-10

7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

*10 And **the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are**, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

(KJV)

Notice that when Satan is cast into the lake of fire at the battle after the 1,000 years, the Beast and False Prophet are already there! This means they were cast into the lake of fire BEFORE this battle in Rev. 20. This is PROOF that the battle in Rev. 20 is not the same as Armageddon, but follows chronologically after Armageddon. Therefore, the 1,000 years mentioned in Rev, 20 must be between Armageddon and this battle. Consequently, a-mill cannot be correct.

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A-Millennialism

50 Points Answered

By Tim Warner - 03-2002

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The following is our rebuttal of 50 points made by an a-millennialist against pre-millennialism. These points that are supposed to prove A-millennialism and disprove pre-millennialism were originally posted on our message board.

I.

A-mill: Number of passages in the Bible mentioning a 1000 year period = 1

Number of passages in the Bible mentioning a 1000 year period on earth. = 0

Number of passages in the Bible mentioning a 1000 year period for the Jews = 0

Pre-mill: While Rev. 20 is the only passage that mentions the length of time between the resurrection of the righteous and the last judgment, it is NOT the only passage that refers to the physical Kingdom of God on this earth AFTER the second coming. Many OT passages clearly speak of this including, Joel 3, Zech. 14, Ezek. 47, etc.

II.

A-mill: Interpretive assumptions for the kingdom of God:

1. Scripture interprets Scripture. Progressive revelation: The N.T. apostles interpret the O.T. prophets, not vice versa. The apostles' interpretation supersedes all others, including the "literal hermeneutic."
2. Ethnic Jews (as opposed to the chosen nation of Israel) will be restored to God (Rom. 11) in Christ, in the Church (probably during the Tribulation.)

Pre-mill: 1. I agree that the Apostle's interpretive methods are valid. The problem is, they typically used literal interpretation, especially regarding OT prophecy. A case in point is Hebrews 12:25-29 quoting Hag. 2. The prophecy in Hag. 2 concerns the rebuilding of the Temple. God promises that the glory of the latter Temple will be greater the Solomon's Temple, and that all nations will come to see His glory there.

Hag 2:3-9

3 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?

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!'

6 "For thus says the LORD of hosts: "**Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land;**

7 'and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.

8 *'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts.*
 9 *'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts.*
'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts.'
 (NKJ)

Yet, Hebrews 12 quotes this prophecy as yet future.

Heb 12:25-29

25 *See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,*
 26 *whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "**Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.**"*

27 *Now this, "**Yet once more,**" indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.*

28 *Therefore, **since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken,** let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*

29 *For our God is a consuming fire.*

(NKJ)

2. I agree that the Jews who are restored become part of the Church. But that fact does not necessarily support a-mill or counter pre-mill.

III.

A-mill: 1. What is the name of the kingdom, "the kingdom of earth" or "the kingdom of heaven?" "...the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 5:3, 5:10, etc.) Where is the kingdom presently head quartered, on earth or in heaven? "...the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 5:3, 5:10, etc.)

2. Did Christ intend to establish a kingdom on earth at His 1st coming? "Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone." (Jn. 6:15)

Pre-mill: 1. The expression "kingdom of heaven" does not necessarily mean it is IN heaven. The language could just as easily mean the "kingdom FROM heaven." The expression "kingdom of heaven" is used by Matthew only. The other Gospels and the Epistles all use "Kingdom of God." Furthermore, the Old Testament clearly refers to the kingdom of God as being on earth AFTER the second coming.

Dan 7:13-14,18,27

13 *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like **the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven**, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.*

14 *And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed....*

18 *But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. ...*

27 *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of **the kingdom UNDER the whole heaven**, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*

(KJV)

2. Christ came to die for our sins, and to call out a remnant of Israel who would inherit His Kingdom. What a-mills fail to perceive is the Kingdom has two stages. The first stage is the "gathering" or "harvest" stage, where those who will reign with Christ are converted and trained for their future role as rulers together with Christ. The second stage is where they actually reign with

Him on the earth. In the verse you quoted above, Jesus did not reject the idea of a physical Kingdom. He merely knew it was not TIME for that stage of His Kingdom. This is proven in Luke.

Luke 19:11-15

*11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and **because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.***

12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

(KJV)

This parable indicates that the Kingdom would NOT immediately appear. The mistake of the Jews was NOT that it would appear physically, but that it would IMMEDIATELY appear. Jesus' parable shows that His going away to heaven and coming back again INTERVENES before he reigns. The rewarding of the servants in verses 16-19 prove this conclusively. After He returned, having received the Kingdom, THEN His servants were judged and rewarded. Their rewards were to have authority over various CITIES in His Kingdom. This proves that the physical part of the Kingdom is future, after the second coming and rewarding of the righteous.

When Jesus was before Pilate, being accused of the Jews that He was their King, Pilate asked Him about His Kingdom. Here is Jesus' reply.

John 18:36

*36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: **but NOW is my kingdom not from hence.***

(KJV)

The word "now" means at this time. Jesus was saying that His kingdom was not an earthly Kingdom YET. But this strongly implied that it would be in the future.

IV.

A-mill: When is the King's coming, at His 2nd coming only or at His 1st coming also? "...Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey..." (Mt. 21:5)

Pre-mill: Jesus was the King from the moment He was born. But, that does not mean He was reigning yet. He awaited His Kingdom to be established. In fact, the Bible clearly says that Jesus' position in heaven now at the Father's right hand is a place of WAITING UNTIL His Kingdom is established.

Heb 10:12-13

12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand

of God.

13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool,
(NIV)

This is in fulfillment of the following Psalm.

Psalm 110:1

1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, UNTIL I make thine enemies thy footstool.
(KJV)

Therefore, there is an interval between Christ's atonement and His reigning over His enemies.

V.

A-mill: How does the kingdom come, all at once or gradually and progressively? "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree..." (Mt. 13:32; The kingdom grows.) "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." (Mt. 13:33; The kingdom spreads.)

Pre-mill: The Kingdom is in two stages, as I have already shown. Other passages refer to the coming of the Kingdom at Christ's second coming.

Luke 21:27-31

*27 And then shall **they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.***
28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.
29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;
30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.
*31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that **the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.***
(KJV)

Other NT passages speak of believer entering the Kingdom at a future date. This would not be possible if all there was to the Kingdom was the spiritual Kingdom present now, of which all believers are members.

2 Tim 4:1

1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;
(KJV)

Heb 12:28

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:
(KJV)

James 2:5

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?
(KJV)

2 Pet 1:11

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

(KJV)

Rev 11:15

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

(KJV)

Rev 19:14-15

14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: **and he SHALL rule them with a rod of iron:** and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

(KJV)

VI.

A-mill: How does the kingdom come, visibly or invisibly? "The kingdom of God does not come with observation (visibly)" (Lk. 17:20)

Pre-Mill: It depends on the stage of the Kingdom to which the context refers.

VII.

A-mill: When is Satan defeated, at Christ's 2nd coming or His 1st coming? "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man" (Mt. 12:28-29) "Then the 70 returned...I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." (Lk. 10:17-18) "now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to Myself." This He said, signifying by what death He would die" (Jn. 12:31-33) "...I go to my Father and you see me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." (Jn. 16:10-11) "having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." (Col. 2:15) "that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14) "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (1 Jn. 3:8)

Pre-mill: Conquering Satan is not the same as binding Him universally. Jesus bound the demonic powers over certain individuals when he cast out demons. That is not the same as binding Satan across the board so he can no longer deceive the nations. According to Rev. 20, Satan is BOUND so that he can no longer deceive the nations UNTIL the end of the 1000 years. If Satan is bound now, and is unable to deceive the nations, you'd better tell him, cause he is doing it on a grand scale! ALL of the nations are deceived NOW. None follow God. ALL follow Satan and are going along with his grand scheme. Christ's seeing Satan fall from heaven was prophetic, of the scene in Rev. 12. Furthermore, his falling from heaven in Rev. 12 does not stop him from his activities on earth. In fact, it seems to INCREASE it. Satan's being "judged" also does not have anything to do with his being bound. His judgment is not carried out UNTIL the end of the Millennium. Making a public spectacle of Satan's activities in no way binds Satan. Jesus' destroying the Devil is FUTURE, not past. Destroying the works of the devil is the ultimate goal, it has not been fully accomplished yet.

VIII.

A-mill: When is the kingdom received by Christ, at His 2nd coming or at His ascension? "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return (Lk. 19:12)

Pre-mill: You forgot to read the rest of the parable. He went to heaven to receive the Kingdom. That won't work in an a-mill scheme, where the Kingdom is alleged to have begun with the crucifixion. Furthermore, the parable goes on to say that Jesus returned "having received the kingdom" and THEN he gave authority to His servants to rule over various cities. The implication is clear that their ruling with Him in His Kingdom is AFTER the second coming and their being judged.

IX.

A-mill: When is the time that Christ is glorified, during a future millennium or now? "ought of the Christ to have suffered these things and too enter into His glory?" (Lk. 24:26) "...He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." (1 Pet. 1:11) "...for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (Jn. 7:39) "...the hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified" (Jn. 12:23) "...the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus..." (Acts 3:13)

Pre-mill: What does being "glorified" have to do with the Millennium? Christ is now glorified at the Father's right hand. Yet the same Bible says He is AWAITING His enemies to be placed under subjection to Him. While Jesus is now glorified, He is NOT yet reigning as King over the nations.

X.

A-mill: When does the kingdom come, in the future or now that He is glorified? "...there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.'...and He was transfigured (glorified) before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light." (Mt. 16:28-17:2)

Pre-mill: The vision on the Mount of Transfiguration was of the FUTURE coming Kingdom. Peter clearly says so.

2 Pet 1:16-18

*16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you **the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. (KJV)

Jesus promised the disciples that some of them would see the coming Kingdom. The next day He took them up into the mountain where they saw the vision of the future Kingdom. That does not mean the Kingdom CAME at that time. It means they were given a glimpse of what it will be like when it does come.

XI.

A-mill: When is all authority in heaven & earth given to Christ, in the future only, or also now? "All

authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." (Mt. 28:18)

Pre-mill: That authority is not fully exercised UNTIL the second coming. Do you really think that God's will is NOW being done on earth as it is in heaven? If so, then God's will is pretty dismal!

XII.

A-mill: When is Christ ruler over the kings of the earth, only in the future, or also now? "Jesus Christ...the ruler over the kings of the earth." (Rev. 1:5)

Pre-mill: That Jesus is "King of kings and Lord of lords" or "Ruler of the Kings of the Earth" is His title, just as Messiah (Aramaic) or "Christ" (Greek) is His title. The title "Christ" means "anointed one" in reference to His being the King. According to Luke 2:11, the angels who announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds said, *"For unto you is **born this day** in the city of David a Saviour, **which is Christ the Lord.**"* Clearly, Jesus was the "Christ" (anointed King) from the moment of His birth. But, did He rule the nations from the manger? No. Much needed to be accomplished before He could rule the nations. Similarly, such titles as "King of Kings," "Lord of Lords," "Ruler of the Kings of the Earth," do not necessarily indicate a present position of exercising His Kingship over the nations. David was the prototype for the "Anointed one," and Jesus is to rule on the throne of David. David was anointed King of Israel by Samuel, yet he had to wait for years until God removed Saul. This is precisely the situation now. Jesus IS the "Christ" (anointed King). But, like David, He is WAITING until his enemies are placed under subjection to Him.

Psalms 110:1

*1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
(KJV)*

Matt 22:44

*44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?
(KJV)*

Acts 2:34-35

*34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord,
Sit thou on my right hand,
35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.
(KJV)*

Heb 10:12-13

*12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand
of God.
13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool,
(NIV)*

These verses are not compatible with a-mill. Jesus is seated at the Father's side ONLY UNTIL His enemies are put in subjection to Him. This implies that once His enemies are subjected to Him, he will NO LONGER be seated at the Father's side! Furthermore, in the last verse above, Paul clearly indicates that Jesus was STILL WAITING some 25 years after the ascension!

Heb 2:7-9

*7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and
didst set him over the works of thy hands:
8 Thou hast 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 see not yet 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 honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.
(KJV)

XIII.

A-mill: When does Christ reign, after His enemies are subdued or until His enemies are subdued? "Rule in the midst of Your enemies" (Ps. 110:2) "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." (Acts 2:34-35, 1 Cor. 15:25, Heb. 1:13, Heb. 10:13)

Pre-mill: Christ is NOW seated at the Father's side WAITING for His enemies to be subdued. If He was already reigning over them, they would be subdued already.

XIV.

A-mill: When & where is Christ's reign from David's throne, in the future on earth or in heaven now? "He would raise up Christ to sit on His (David's) throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ...Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God...Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." (Acts 2:30-35)

Pre-mill: That is a misapplication of that passage. Peter is not arguing that Jesus was already ruling. He was arguing that Jesus IS the Messiah who IS TO RULE on David's throne. See my article on this topic: [Is Jesus Seated on the Throne of David?](#)

XV.

A-mill: When must Christ reign, after or until the resurrection of the dead? "...the resurrection of the dead...even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign (presently) till ("until," not "after") He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death...So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality (the resurrection), then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' (1 Cor. 15:21-26, 54)

Pre-mill: The reigning here is AFTER Christ's coming. This passage gives a SEQUENCE to resurrections. He begins by saying that ALL die through Adam, and ALL will be resurrected through Christ. BUT, every man in his own ORDER. This word means "sequence." The mere fact that there is a SEQUENCE to resurrections proves there is more than one general resurrection. Paul puts Christ's resurrection first, as a prototype of the resurrection of believers. Next, he says that ONLY those who belong to CHRIST will be raised at His coming. The word "afterward" means NEXT IN SEQUENCE. That is, next after Christ's resurrection. Paul has EXCLUDED the wicked from this resurrection at Christ's coming. "THEN comes the end..." The word "then" also means "next in sequence." This is AFTER the millennium, when Jesus turns over the Kingdom to the Father. It is AFTER referring to the second coming that Paul speaks of Christ's reigning. The Greek does not allow for the "end" when Christ has destroyed the last enemy (death) to occur at the second coming, because the word "THEN" in verse 24 (eita - "after that") proves that he is speaking of a later time after the second coming. Since Paul is giving a sequence of resurrections, this is the THIRD in his sequence (just as in Rev. 20). ONLY those who belong to Christ are raised "at His coming." The rest are raised at "the end."

XVI.

A-mill: When is Christ's reign, only in the future or also now? "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." (Mt. 28:18)

Pre-mill: "Authority" is not the same thing as reigning.

XVII.

A-mill: "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son...and has given Him (the Son) authority to execute judgment also..." (Jn. 5:22, 27)

Pre-mill: "Judgment" is not the same as reigning.

XVIII.

A-mill: "God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior..." (Acts 5:31)

Pre-mill Being a prince does not translate into actively reigning. As pointed out in part 1, David was anointed King of Israel, but had to wait years until his enemy Saul was taken out. Why would you expect anything different from the one who is to sit on David's throne. Furthermore, Jesus is now seated with His Father on HIS throne. Only after the second coming will Jesus be seated on HIS OWN throne, the "throne of David."

Rev 3:21

*21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.
(KJV)*

Matt 25:31

*31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:
(KJV)*

Jesus is now ONLY seated beside His Father in the Father's throne. That implies a position of waiting, as Hebrews 10:12,13 clearly says.

XIX.

A-mill: "...He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion...And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:20-22)

Pre-mill: His being head over all things is TO THE CHURCH, not to the whole world. ONLY the Church is presently under His direct rule. He is still waiting UNTIL the rest of mankind is subdued.

XX.

A-mill: "...those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." (Col. 3:1)

Pre-mill: What does this prove? Jesus is seated at the Father's side waiting until His enemies are

made His footstool.

XXI.

A-mill: "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth..." (Rev. 1:5)

Pre-mill: This is His title, but not yet realized. It is the same sort of title as "King of kings and Lord of lords." It is the same sort of title as "Christ" (Anointed one). This also has specific reference to Jesus' role as King, yet He was called "Christ" from the moment of His birth. And we know that He was not reigning then (Luke 2:11).

XXII.

A-mill: "...And her Child was caught up to God and His throne..."

Pre-mill: Rev. 12:5 shows that the context of His reigning in this passage is FUTURE.

Rev 12:5

*5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, who WILL rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.
(NIV)*

The phrase, "who WILL rule all the nations..." is an explanatory note, and should be viewed in the context of the time John received his visions (AD96). The future tense indicates He was not yet RULING the nations even by AD96. This fact is also proven in Rev. 19:15, which speaks of Christ's ruling the nations in the FUTURE TENSE at His second coming. At present Jesus is ruling His Church only (which constitutes His spiritual Kingdom). But, He does not rule the NATIONS until after the second coming, when He sits on His own throne.

XXIII.

A-mill: Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come..." (Rev. 12:10)

Pre-mill: This verse is in the context of the latter part of the tribulation, AFTER Satan has been overpowered by Michael. The words "now comes" (in reference to the Kingdom) precludes the possibility of this Kingdom being present previously! This is a statement anticipating the imminent appearing of the Kingdom AFTER the tribulation. It cannot refer to a kingdom that had been in place for 2000 years! The word "comes" means it arrives. Furthermore, at the 7th trumpet, the 24 Elders proclaim that *"the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever."* Not until the 7th trumpet does Jesus take the role of ruler of the nations. The verb tenses indicate that Jesus AT THAT TIME takes possession of the kingdoms of the world. The expression "he SHALL reign" is future tense. In essence, it says at the 7th trumpet, Jesus takes His place as ruler of the kingdoms, and from that point on He WILL reign.

XXIV.

A-mill: Who can see and enter the kingdom, both unregenerate & regenerate or the regenerate only? "...unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (Jn. 3:3) "...unless one is

born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (Jn. 3:5)

Pre-mill: Jesus was speaking to the first century Jews. If they did not believe, they would not see the Kingdom because they would not be resurrected at the beginning of the Millennium in order to see it. Same with entering the Kingdom. That He was not referring to His spiritual Kingdom that was established at the crucifixion, is proven by the fact that these Jews did indeed see that Kingdom.

XXV.

A-mill: When do we enter into the kingdom, in the future or now? "...It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire..." (Mk. 9:47)

Pre-mill: Jesus was using hyperbole here. He did not intend for people to pluck out their eyes. Furthermore, entering the Kingdom is in direct contrast to being thrown into hell fire, something in the future. It stands to reason that entering the Kingdom was also future, as the alternative to being thrown into hell fire.

XXVI.

A-mill: "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13)

Pre-mill: There are two stages to the Kingdom. Here Paul is referring to the present stage which is a spiritual Kingdom.

XXVII.

A-mill: When are saints raised to live with Christ, in the future only (physically) or also now (spiritually)? "But even Moses showed in the bush that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him." (Lk. 20:37-38) "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will...he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life... the hour is coming, and now is (1st century), when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live... (Jn. 5:21-25) "just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be (united together) in the likeness of His resurrection...we believe that we shall also live with Him...He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord...but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead...you have your fruit to holiness, & the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ" (Rom. 6:4-23) "even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved, & raised us up together..." (Eph. 2:5-6) "...you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses & the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him...If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above..." (Col. 2:12-3:1)

Pre-mill: The Bible sometimes refers to salvation using "resurrection" in a metaphorical sense. That is not license to claim that any reference to the resurrection is spiritual and not physical. This distinction is not difficult to make in the Greek text, because when "resurrection" is used with the definite article, it ALWAYS refers to an EVENT, THE resurrection of the dead. Rev. 20 uses the definite article with "resurrection" and therefore refers to the EVENT called "the resurrection" and

not to some spiritual resurrection.

XXVIII.

A-mill: When do saints reign with Christ, in the future only, or also now? "those who receive abundance of grace & of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ... grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life... (Rom. 5:17, 21)

Pre-mill: *Rom 5:17*

17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) (KJV)

Reigning is FUTURE tense from Paul's perspective. It should be PRESENT tense if a-mill was correct.

Rom 5:21

21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. (KJV)

This verse is not referring to PEOPLE reigning, but the principle of GRACE having victory over SIN in the life of the believer. It has nothing to do with reigning over the nations.

XXIX.

A-mill: "made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6, cf. 1:20)

Pre-mill: Again, this is a metaphor, in a series of metaphors. Paul speaks of our being "dead" in sin (metaphorically), and then "raised" (metaphorically) referring to salvation, and then seated with Christ in the heavenlies (also metaphorically).

XXX.

A-mill: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal (kingly) priesthood, a holy nation..." (1 Pet. 2:9) "has made us kings and priests..." (Rev. 1:5-6) "I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ..." (Rev. 1:9)

Pre-mill: There are two stages to the Kingdom. We presently are in Christ's Kingdom. But neither He nor us are ruling the nations.

XXXI.

A-mill: Who are the primary subjects of the kingdom, Jews or Gentiles? "...All nations (gentiles) shall serve Him...All nations (gentiles) shall call Him blessed." (Ps. 72:11, 17) "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days (last days)...Many nations (gentiles) shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of God...He shall judge between many peoples..." (Mic. 4:1-3) "...I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west (Gentiles), and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom (Jews) will be cast out into outer darkness." (Mt. 8:10-12) "...He will declare justice to the Gentiles." (Mt. 12:18) "...the kingdom of God will be taken

from you (Israel) and given to a nation (1 Pet. 2:9) bearing the fruits of it." (Mt. 21:43) "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations (gentiles) ..." (Mt. 24:14) "All authority (kingly rule) has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations (gentiles)..." (Mt. 28:18-19) "...He who shall rise to reign (as king) over the Gentiles..." (Rom. 15:12) "...In you all the nations (gentiles) shall be blessed." (Gal. 3:8) "She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations (gentiles) with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne (Christ's coronation as king)" (Rev. 12:5)

Pre-mill: I have no disagreement that Jews and Gentiles (who make up the body of the redeemed) will rule in the Millennium.

XXXII.

A-mill: Which will be ushered in at Christ's return, a millennium or the new heavens and a new earth? "Jesus Christ...whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things" (new earth) (Acts 3:20-21)

Pre-mill: The word "restoration" does not mean something entirely new or different. It means to restore the PRESENT earth. This is the Millennium. Furthermore, Peter says this is what was spoken by ALL THE PROPHETS. Please show me WHERE in all the prophets the eternal state (as understood by a-mills) is to be found??? Nowhere! The prophets predicted a physical Kingdom ON THIS EARTH with the present city of Jerusalem restored. It even refers to geographical changes, such as the Dead Sea being purified and having abundant fish. If, as a-mills do, you spiritualize these passages that refer to the Kingdom, placing their fulfillment in the present age, then you are left with NOTHING in OT prophecy about the age to come! Yet, Peter said clearly that Jesus would come AGAIN at the time of the "restoration of all things spoken of by all the holy prophets." This proves that the pre-mill understanding of the OT is correct, ie., that these prophecies of the "kingdom" are indeed AFTER the second coming of Jesus.

XXXIII.

A-mill: "Where is the promise of His coming?...But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men...the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat ... we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth..." (2 Pet. 3:4-13)

Pre-mill: This does occur at the second coming. But, it does not refer to the complete destruction of this planet. Rather, it describes a purging of the earth by fire to remove the curse. Several OT passages speak of it, including Joel 2 and Mal. 4. Peter was referring to Isaiah 65, where the "new heaven and new earth" refers to this present earth, WITH the present city of Jerusalem inhabited. (See my article, [2 Peter 3 & the Day of the Lord](#).)

XXXIV.

A-mill: Which is our primary hope, a millennium or the new heavens and new earth? "...since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 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? Never-theless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth..." (2 Pet. 3:4-13)

Pre-mill: Peter was speaking metaphorically about the heavens and earth passing away. He did the same thing earlier in the chapter in reference to the flood, where he said the world PERISHED. He

then said that the fiery destruction would be IN THE SAME MANNER. You said that you read my article on this, so you should be aware of this fact.

XXXV.

A-mill: When do we receive the kingdom, before or after the removal of the created earth? "...the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made (the created earth), the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken..." (Heb. 12:27-28)

Pre-mill: He is not referring to the removal of the earth, but this world system under the control of the Gentile nations. The earth will remain forever, according to Psalm 104:5

XXXVI.

A-mill: When will Christ return from heaven, before or after the times of restoration of all things? "Whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things (the new earth)" (Acts 3:21)

Pre-mill: We did this one already. Restoration means renovation NOT something totally new.

XXXVII.

A-mill: How many judgment(s) will there be, multiple judgments or only one? "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous revelation of God who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil..." (Rom. 2:5-9)

Pre-mill: This merely refers to the FACT that all will be judged, not the timing of it. Rev. 20 clearly has the saints reigning with Christ 1000 years before the "rest of the dead" are judged. Are you suggesting that they reign BEFORE they are judged?

XXXVIII.

A-mill: When Christ returns, will the wicked enter into His kingdom and repopulate the earth or be cast into the fire?

Pre-mill: The wicked who worship the Beast will be cast into the fire. BUT, there will be some unbelievers who enter the millennium in natural bodies.

Zech 14:16-19

16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to

keep the feast of tabernacles.
(KJV)

XXXIX.

A-mill: "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...as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age...will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire.'" (Mt. 13:30-42) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire." (Mt. 13:47-50) "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Mt. 24:50-51) "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them...and cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness." (Mt. 25:19, 30) "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'" (Mt. 25:41, 46) "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return...But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me." (Lk. 19:12-27) "...when the lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 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. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes in that Day..." (2 Th. 1:7-10)

Pre-mill: This will be the fate of the vast majority of the unsaved (those who worship the Beast). But, as Zech. 14 shows, there will be SOME who enter the Millennium.

XL.

A-mill: Which will saints do in the resurrection, marry, have children, & repopulate the earth or remain unmarried? "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, nether marry nor are given in marriage." (Lk. 20:34-35)

Pre-mill: No pre-mills I know of suggest that the resurrected believers will repopulate the earth. This will be done by a small number of Jewish converts who are saved at the second coming, AND by the children who were born just before Jesus' coming.
www.geocities.com/lasttrumpet_2000/repop.html

XLI.

A-mill: When is the saints' bodily resurrection, 1000-1007 years before the last day or at the last day? "...everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (Jn. 6:40, cf. 39, 44, 54) "...I know that he (Lazarus) will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." (Jn. 11:24)

Pre-mill: Jesus referred to distinct "ages" (this age and the age to come). So it is natural to understand the expression "last day" in reference to the last day of this age.

XLII.

A-mill: When will the just and the unjust be physically raised, 1000 years apart or at the same hour? "...And at that time...And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan. 12:1-2)

Pre-mill: You need to look again. First of all, the NASB gives the most accurate rendering of this verse.

Dan 12:2

*2 "And MANY of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, THESE to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.
(NASB)*

The word "many" proves that not ALL are raised at this time. Many means only SOME, but certainly not all. THESE (many) will arise to everlasting life. The words "the others" means those BESIDES the "many" who arise. These OTHERS who did not arise will go to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

XLIII.

A-mill: "the hour is coming, in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." (Jn. 5:28-29)

Pre-mill: Jesus refers to two different resurrections. One is the "resurrection of life" and the other is the "resurrection of condemnation." The word "hour" does not necessarily indicate that they are at the same time. It could just as easily mean that each has his "hour" to be raised. The definite article in the KJV is not found in the Greek text. Without the definite article "hour" does not necessarily refer to any specific hour or time. It is properly translated, "a time is coming when all in the graves will hear the voice..." This construction can easily mean that each person in the grave has his time to hear and be raised. John 16:2 uses precisely the same construction, yet is perfectly clear from the context that Jesus was not referring to one specific day or hour, but to a general time period sometime in the future, which could and would be different for each one involved.

John 16:2

*2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.
(KJV)*

XLIV.

A-mill: "...there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." (Acts 24:15)

Pre-mill: This indicates TWO resurrections. The word "both" means TWO. The Greek text actually reads, "resurrection there shall be, just and also unjust." The Greek grammar allows either interpretation, and does not require that they be at the same time.

XLV.

A-mill: Will this present age ever be characterized by righteousness or always by evil? "...that He might deliver us from this present evil age..." (Gal. 1:4)

Pre-mill: That is not a characterization of this age. It is merely a promise of OUR deliverance from it. It says absolutely NOTHING about a change in the world itself. Furthermore, if this age is presently "evil," and if Satan is bound as a-mills claim, why is he still deceiving the nations?

XLVI.

A-mill: Is all of history and time divided into three ages (incl. a millennium) or two ages? "...not only in this age but also in that which is to come." (Eph. 1:21)

Pre-mill: That proves nothing, except there is another age after this one.

XLVII.

A-mill: Are you still a millennialist, yes, not sure, or no? See answer in Acts 2:30-35

Pre-mill: Yes, absolutely. After seeing these arguments that are so easily refuted, I am moreso a premillennialist. :)

XLVIII.

A-mill: Christ in His glorified body must live on a cursed, non-glorified earth. Saints in their glorified bodies must live on a cursed, non-glorified earth. Those with glorified bodies & those with non-glorified bodies live together.

Pre-mill: When Jesus was raised from the dead He had a glorified body. He lived on a cursed earth for 40 days among the disciples who did not have glorified bodies. Paul says we will have bodies like His glorified body. Romans 8 says the earth will be renovated for the Millennium, so there is no reason to think the earth will still be "cursed."

XLIX.

A-mill: There is no millennium in Rom. 11, the primary passage on the future of the Jews.

Pre-mill: Well, the word "millennium" might not be found in Romans, but it does speak of the restored creation in chapter 8. How could the whole creation be groaning under the curse, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, if it was going to be destroyed at that time???

L.

A-mill: Belief in a literal earthly kingdom was the reason the Jews rejected Jesus Christ.

Pre-mill: Nonsense! The inability to distinguish between Jesus' first and second comings, both of which were prophesied in the Old Testament, is what contributed to their rejection. As Luke tells us regarding the parable of the talents, the misconception among the Jews was that the Kingdom would IMMEDIATELY appear in physical form. Jesus' parable corrects the misconception by pointing

out that there would be a rather lengthy delay, and that He must go away and then return with the Kingdom. After which His servants would be judged and rewarded, being given places of ruling in His Kingdom.

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Sacrifices in the Millennium?

Isa 56:7

7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

(KJV)

Question: When in the history of the world has the Temple been a "house of prayer for ALL PEOPLE?"

Answer: NEVER! One might argue that the word "people" in Isaiah 56:7 does not necessarily have to mean everyone, but could refer to all of Israel. However, we find Jesus interpreting this passage a bit differently, when he cast out the merchants from the Temple.

Mark 11:17

17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. (KJV)

Here the word "nations" is the Greek word "ethnos" [from which we get "ethnic"] which is the word normally translated "Gentiles" in the New Testament. So, according to Jesus, Isaiah's prophecy predicted a future time when the physical Temple would be a place of prayer for ALL NATIONS [Gentiles]. The only possible fulfillment of this prophecy, that I can see, is a physical Temple in Jerusalem during the Millennium [as Zechariah 14 describes, where all nations will come to keep the festivals]. I don't see how one could claim this is an allegory, when it is clear that Jesus is referring to the stone Temple in Jerusalem while interpreting Isaiah's prophecy!

The Temple built during the tribulation will be defiled by the Antichrist. When Jesus returns, it will not only be cleansed, but rebuilt entirely on a much grander scale. The Temple in Ezekiel 40-48 is the Millennial Temple, and the Temple that Isaiah [and Jesus] had in mind, as well as Zechariah. According to Ezekiel, this Temple will be on a much larger scale than any previous Temple, much larger than the present Temple Mount will support.

There is some controversy about the interpretation of Ezekiel 40-44, and whether this grand Temple should be understood literally. Some object to the idea of any Temple, whether Millennial or not. But, one of the clearest passage on the fact of a "Millennial Temple" is Zechariah 14. Notice the clear reference to the Feast of Tabernacles and the Millennial Temple AFTER the battle of Armageddon.

Zech 14:1-11&16-21

1 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.

2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward

the south.

5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

6 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark:

7 But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.

8 And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. 9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

10 All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.

11 And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. ...

16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations [GENTILES] that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

20 In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar.

21 Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

(KJV)

The fact is, this passage clearly says that there will be a Temple AND sacrifices, as well as GENTILES coming to keep the Feast of Tabernacles AFTER the battle of Armageddon, when Christ returns to the Mount of Olives with "all His saints."

Different Kinds of Sacrifices

As to the alleged problems created with passages such as Heb. 10, where Christ's atonement is "once for all," and there is no need of further sacrifice for sins, one must recognize that not all sacrifices were "atonement" sacrifices. Technically, the atonement sacrifice was done only once a year, on the "Day of Atonement." On the 10th of Tishri, the high priest took the blood and entered into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled the Ark of the Covenant. This is clearly what Hebrews has in view when referring to Christ's atonement being "once for all."

Heb 9:22-28

22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

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

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, **as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;**

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

(KJV)

It is clear, by the reference to the priest entering the Temple once a year with blood, that this passage is speaking of the "Day of atonement."

The Feast of Tabernacles [Zech 14] and the Passover [Ezekiel 45] will be celebrated in the Millennium. But NOT the Day of Atonement. Notice the Festivals that will be celebrated in the Millennium in the following passage. And notice the absence of Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement.

Ezek 45:21-25

21 ***In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten.***

22 And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock for a sin offering.

23 And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the LORD, seven bullocks and seven rams without blemish daily the seven days; and a kid of the goats daily for a sin offering.

24 And he shall prepare a meat offering of an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and an hin of oil for an ephah.

25 ***In the seventh month, in the fifteenth day of the month, shall he do the like in the feast of the seven days, according to the sin offering, according to the burnt offering, and according to the meat offering, and according to the oil.***

(KJV)

The "Passover" was a one day feast that began the seven day "Feast of Unleavened Bread" [Lev. 23]. So, in the above passage, since the "Passover" continues for 7 days, it is clear that the entire Passover/Unleavened Bread/Firstfruits festivals are being kept. However, what is not mentioned is Pentecost, which was 50 days after the Sunday [Firstfruits] following Passover. Also, of the feasts of the 7th month, Trumpets [Tishri 1], the Day of Atonement [Tishri 10], and the Feast of Tabernacles [Tishri 15-21], only Tabernacles is mentioned. The question is, why? I believe at least part of the answer is that the "atonement" was fulfilled in Christ. Jeremiah makes it clear that the "Day of Atonement" will NOT be celebrated in the Millennium.

Jer 3:14-17

14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

16 And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, ***they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.***

17 ***At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD;*** and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

(KJV)

The "ark" was only "visited" once a year by the High Priest, when he sprinkled the blood on it, making ATONEMENT for the people. The rest of the time, it simply sat there in the Holy of Holies never seeing the light of day. When Jeremiah says "*neither shall that be done any more,*" he is saying that the High Priest entering the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement [Tishri 10] will not be done any more. Then he tells us why! Because, in place of the "ark of the Covenant," the Lord's Throne will be there! In other words, in OT times, the "ark of the Covenant" was TEMPORARY and a SUBSTITUTE for the physical presence of the Lord on His Throne in His Holy Temple! God has been on His Throne in the Heavenly Temple, as described in Revelation. And the Temple on earth was just a copy, or representation of the Temple of God in Heaven [Heb. 8:5]. The "Ark of the Covenant" was the representation of the Throne of God. The priest going into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the Ark was a symbol of Christ's entering the Temple in Heaven with His own blood!

Heb 9:12

*12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but **by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place,** having obtained eternal redemption for us.*
(KJV)

Isn't it great how all this fits together so nicely! In the Millennium, there will be no Priests restricted from entering the Temple except once a year! The Throne of the Lord will be in the Holy place, and the veil will be OPENED! People will have full access to the Lord on His Throne! They will come to Jerusalem to worship, and bring their offerings to the Lord.

The sacrifices offered will NOT be atonement for sin. Christ took care of that once and for all. However, there will be many sacrifices as offerings of praise, and memorials. Actually, this is what the Passover was, a memorial of God's deliverance from Egypt, as well as a prophecy of the crucifixion. And the Feast of Tabernacles was a memorial of the trek through the wilderness, as well as a prophecy of the Millennium! These Festivals will be grand feasts, in memorial of what God has done for us, just as we now keep the "Lord's supper" as both a memorial of the crucifixion, AND a prophecy of the Millennial Kingdom, when we will sit down and dine with Jesus Himself.

Luke 22:15-20

*15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:
16 For I say unto you, **I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.**
17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:
18 For I say unto you, **I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.**
19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.
20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*
(KJV)

You can see both the memorial aspect of the Lord's supper here as well as the prophetic aspect. All of the Festivals are the same way. And, once we are on the other side of the second coming of Jesus Christ, what was "prophetic" will then be "memorial!"

It seems to me that all of the sacrifices mentioned in relation to Ezekiel's Temple would have to be commemorative, looking back to what has already been accomplished, in the same way we celebrate the crucifixion with bread and wine.

Some might object that any sacrifices of any kind would be blasphemous. But, what were the sacrifices to begin with? Was there any power in them to atone for sins in the first place? The writer of Hebrews says

no!

Heb 10:1-4

1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

3 But in those sacrifices there IS a remembrance again made of sins every year.

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.
(KJV)

His point is NOT that the sacrifices can no longer atone for sin, once Christ died. His point is clearly that they NEVER COULD atone for sin in the first place! If they could, then there would have been no requirement for it to be done every year. So, even in OT times, the sacrifices were never intended to actually make atonement, but to be a reminder to Israel of their sins on a yearly basis. **The sacrifices pointed to Christ.** The problem for Israel was that they attached too much meaning to the sacrifices not realizing their PROPHETIC significance, but expecting that there was some merit in the blood of "bulls and goats" that cleansed their sins. So, they rejected the only real atonement for sin.

If the animal sacrifices were never actually "atonement" for sins, and were prophetic in nature, then what is really the problem with a sacrifice that is offered as a memorial of the fulfillment of this prophetic type? Nothing!

Is it a sin to observe the Passover now, to kill a lamb, and eat it with your family remembering God's deliverance from Egypt? Of course not! But, when one recognizes the prophetic aspect of the passover, and how it points to Christ, and one celebrates the Passover in faith, and in worship of Christ, it's meaning is full.

Those who argue that such things are blasphemous on the grounds that Christ died once for all should apply the same principle to the Lord's Supper! Does not celebrating using wine and bread do the same thing? Yes it does! It is symbolism pointing to Christ! Did not Jesus Himself say He would observe **Passover** with His disciples in the Kingdom?

Luke 22:15-16

*15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat **this passover** with you before I suffer:*

16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.
(KJV)

Who is the Mysterious "Prince" of Ezekiel's Temple?

Ezek 44:1-3

1 Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it was shut.

2 Then said the LORD unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.

*3 It is for **the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD**; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.*
(KJV)

Ezek 45:16-17,21-22,25

16 All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the prince in Israel.

*17 And it shall be **the prince's part to give burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel. ...***

21 In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten.

*22 And upon that day shall **the prince** prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock for a sin offering.*

*25 In the seventh month, in the fifteenth day of the month, **shall he do the like in the feast of the seven days**, according to the sin offering, according to the burnt offering, and according to the meat offering, and according to the oil.*

(KJV)

It will be the Prince's job to officiate the sacrifices and festivals. But, who is this "Prince?" Many pre-millennialists believe it is Jesus. But, I find that idea rather odd. Jesus will be "King over all the earth" according to Zech 14:9. The Prince seems to be leading the worship, not being worshipped himself, as Jesus will be. Actually, Ezekiel gives us the answer, as do some of the other prophets.

Jer 30:7-10

7 Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

8 For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:

*9 But they shall serve the LORD their God, **and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.***

10 Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.

(KJV)

Ezek 34:23-24

*23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, **even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.***

*24 And I the LORD will be their God, and **my servant David a PRINCE among them;** I the LORD have spoken it.*

(KJV)

Ezek 37:19-25

19 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

20 And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.

21 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

22 And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:

23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

*24 **And David my servant shall be king over them;** and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also*

walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

*25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: **and my servant David shall be their PRINCE for ever.***

(KJV)

Hosea 3:4-5

4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim:

*5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, **and David their king;** and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.*

(KJV)

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Proper Eschatology & Evangelism

By Tim Warner - 03/2000

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What good is knowledge of God's plan for the ages, and particularly the end times? Unfortunately, many Christians who have a good handle on prophecy do nothing with it except beat other Christians over the heads. We post-tribbers are famous for being vocal about all the dangers of pre-tribulationism. But, if that is all that comes of our studies in Bible prophecy, we are a miserable lot. Our mission is much more than saving pre-tribbers from a false hope and great disappointment.

Jesus didn't tell the disciples the sequence of end-time events in the Olivet Discourse just to quench their thirst for knowledge. Nor was it primarily to satisfy their longing to be ruling alongside the Messiah in His Kingdom. Rather, it was to motivate them toward world evangelism.

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.
(NKJ)*

Remember, this discourse was a response to the disciples' question about the signs of Jesus' coming again. The things Jesus listed, wars, famines, earthquakes, cosmic signs, abomination of desolation, could all have occurred in a very short space of time. So, from the disciples' perspective, there was not the necessity of hundreds or thousands of years. Perhaps not even many decades. However, Jesus made it clear that there was one thing that was dependant on them! And the end of the age would not come until they had completed the huge task assigned to them, evangelization of the whole world.

Peter stressed this later when explaining the seeming long delay in Christ's return.

2 Pet 3:1-9

*1 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds **by way of reminder**),*

*2 **that you may be mindful** of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, **and of the commandment of us**, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,*

3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,

6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.

7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

*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.***

(NKJ)

Peter began this chapter by saying his purpose was to remind believers of two things. First, to remind them of the words spoken by the holy prophets. That would refer to the passages regarding the second coming mentioned in verses 10-12, and the coming Kingdom. He also said he wanted to remind them of THE COMMANDMENT given by the Lord Jesus to (and through) the Apostles. Note that this commandment is singular. Peter is referring to a particular commandment of Jesus. But what is THE commandment? It is the Great Commission!

Peter then launched into a discussion about the delay in Christ's coming, telling them that scoffers will mock them, denying that Jesus will actually return. But, in verse nine, Peter explicitly stated the CAUSE of the delay. The Lord is longsuffering to US! He did not say He is longsuffering to the lost. His concern is for the lost, that "all might come to repentance." But His longsuffering is toward us. In other words, God is patient with US (believers) because He wants to save the lost. The only logical explanation is that God is patient with us to evangelize the lost, to complete the Great Commission!

Matt 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

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.

(NKJ)

Note the exact phrase "end of the age" that is also found in Matt. 24:3. There is no question that the end of the tribulation is also the "end of the age." In Matt. 24:14 the Gospel would be preached until the end of the age, when Jesus returns "immediately after the tribulation." In the above passage, Jesus told them that He would be with them in their task of evangelism until "the end of the age" (i.e. the end of the tribulation). And, He told them to teach the new converts to observe everything Jesus taught His disciples. This requires teaching the new converts to be expecting and watching for the post-trib coming of Jesus as described in Matt. 24:29-31. **Any evangelistic outreach that does not disciple new converts by teaching Jesus' commandments (including those in the Olivet Discourse) is not in conformity to Jesus' greatest commandment.** In other words, Evangelicals are not obeying the Great Commission in its entirety unless they are teaching the Olivet Discourse as relevant Church doctrine.

Two days after Jesus' Olivet Discourse, and the night before the crucifixion, Jesus told the disciples in the upper room about the coming of the Holy Spirit. What was the purpose of the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost?

Luke 24:49-50

*49 "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued **with power from on high.**"*

50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

(NKJ)

In Acts, Luke gives us more information linking the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost with world evangelism and taking the gospel to all nations.

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."
(NKJ)

Note the clear connection here, linking the Upper Room Discourse (where the outpouring of the Spirit was promised) to the Olivet Discourse. In the Olivet Discourse they asked Jesus about the signs of His return. He told them that the Gospel must first be preached among all nations. Here, they asked again if it was time yet for the Messianic reign of Jesus Christ. Jesus reminded them of His teaching BOTH in the Olivet Discourse (where He told them the Gospel must first go to all nations), and the promise of the Holy Spirit for the power to complete the task. It is clear then that the coming of the Holy Spirit was to empower them to carry out the Great Commission in order that Christ can return at the "end of the age." And when we move into Acts 2, we see that Peter continued this theme of the Holy Spirit's outpouring until the very end of the tribulation, when the cosmic signs occur that Jesus said were "immediately after the tribulation."

Acts 2:16-20

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.'
(NKJ)

Note the connection between the Pentecostal power and the end of the age, when the cosmic signs occur. Also note that during this time leading up to the cosmic signs and the Day of the Lord, all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. In short, the present day of salvation extends all the way until the end of the tribulation, and so does the power to finish the job.

Yes, it is our responsibility to FINISH the Great Commission. Many Evangelicals who are pre-tribbers have done a fine job in taking the gospel to the nations. Unfortunately, they have been less that what Jesus requires regarding discipleship. However, it is up to us post-tribbers to bring back the focus of the Great Commission to the Olivet Discourse and Pentecost. We have a lot of work to do!

Who do you think the following people are in Bible prophecy?

Rev 7:9-17

*9 After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,*

10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

12 saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

*14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, **"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.***

15 *"Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.*
16 *"They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;*
17 *"for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*
(NKJ)

My brothers and sisters, this great multitude of people from every nation are the future fruits of what Jesus has assigned us to do. They are the many faces waiting now for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There will be a great multitude of believers who are saved in the tribulation, and those who are already saved and persevere through the tribulation. God has given us a glimpse, not only of the fields waiting for harvest. But, He has basically assured us of a good harvest from every nation, and shown us a snapshot of that glorious scene!

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to personally hasten the coming of Jesus Christ by participating in this massive undertaking. Your assignment is to do your part in making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and then teaching them to observe everything Jesus taught His disciples. This particularly includes being prepared for the "birth pains" and "intense labor" yet to come as the Kingdom of God is birthed on the earth. Are you prepared to answer the call? Or are you just one of those pew potatoes who likes to flaunt your knowledge of Scripture, but does nothing to harvest the Master's fields?

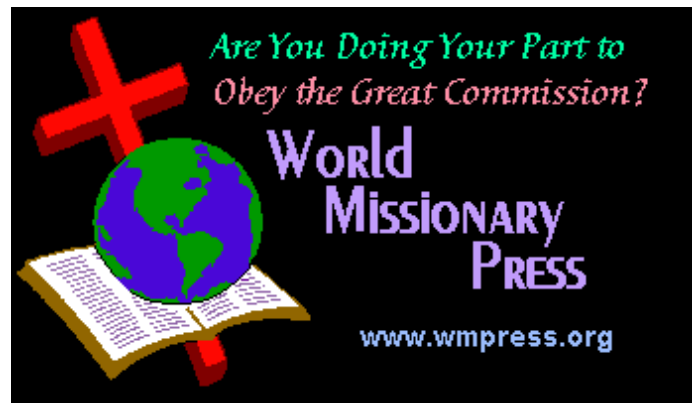
How can we as post-tribbers be most effective? We obviously need to support those ministries that are already making converts and teaching them to be disciples of Jesus. One of the most effective ministries that we can support is:

World Missionary Press

P.O. Box 120
New Paris, IN 46553.

They provide millions of free printed Scripture booklets, Bibles, New Testaments, and Bible studies, in 300 languages to missionaries around the world free of charge. They raise all of the money themselves for printing and shipping. They stick to the Scriptures rather than the opinions of men. The Gospel is their main emphasis. But they also teach new converts how to be overcomers in persecution and tribulation, and to be faithful to Christ unto death. They are non-denominational, but the founders were Christian Missionary Alliance missionaries, and are very sound doctrinally. All of the paid staff, including the president, receive \$6.75 per hour. The rest of the funds go directly towards publishing the Word of God among all nations. I highly recommend supporting this ministry.

Its time for us to put hands and feet to our faith. I believe we need to stop funding the stained glass museums and begin directly funding the work of the Lord. If you would like to receive World Missionary Press' newsletter, get more information, or send financial support, please visit their website [World Missionary Press](http://www.worldmissionarypress.org) or e-mail them at: mailroom@wmpress.org



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The Numeric Value of the Greek Alphabet

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Revelation 13:18 gives us the number of the name of the Antichrist [666]. There is a lot of speculation today about exactly what this means, and how to arrive at a number for a given name. When the New Testament was written, this was no mystery at all to the readers of Revelation. This is because the Greek language had no numerals. The letters of the alphabet each had a numeric value. In Greek, every word had a numeric value, which was understood by adding up the value of all of the letters.

In the text of Revelation 13:18, the oldest manuscripts do not spell out the number 666, but simply have three Greek letters. The first letter equals 600, the second letter equals 60, and the third letter equals 6. Here is the actual quote from the Textus Receptus. "και ο αριθμος αυτου, χξς'." Translation - "and the number is 600, 60, 6." Some later manuscripts spell out the number as follows; "και ο αριθμος αυτου, εξακοσιοι, εξηκοντα, εξ." Translation - "and the number is, six-hundred, sixty, six."

The fact that three letters were used in the oldest manuscripts, rather than spelling out the names of the numbers, as some later manuscripts do, indicates that the name of the Antichrist should be calculated by simply adding up the letters of his name in Greek. So, in reality, not only does this passage tell us the value of his name, it also illustrates the correct procedure for calculating his name.

Another common myth is that the computer bar codes are the mark of the Beast. Some people believe that the first, middle, and last marks in the universal bar codes, are equivalent to 666. That is really not true. While all three marks are indeed sixes, it does not equal 666. Three sixes equals eighteen, not six hundred, sixty, six. ($6+6+6=18$). The Mark of the Beast will be equivalent to six hundred, sixty, six.

Books have been written which play all kinds of games with the system of numbers and letters. But, I think it is safe to assume that the system God intended is very straightforward, and is based on the Greek alphabet.

I have listed below the entire Greek alphabet, and the number values for each of the letters. If you suspect someone is a good candidate for being the Antichrist, you need to transliterate the name into Greek. This is not that difficult. Just transliterate each letter according to its sound. I have included the English sound equivalent for each Greek letter to make transliteration possible. Then, add up the value of all the letters. Be aware though, that your transliteration may not be entirely accurate. So, before you announce to the world who the Antichrist is, have your spelling checked by someone who is fluent in Greek. I have found that in most cases, a simple transliteration using this method is fairly accurate. You might encounter some confusion where certain letters sound very much alike, like "ξ" [Xe], "χ" [Chi] or "κ" [kappa]. Also, there are some sounds in English which have no equivalent sound in Greek, like the letter "W." I believe the "υ" [upsilon] is as close as possible to "W." There is also no "J" equivalent in Greek, but the two letters "Ιη" [iota & eta] are usually translated "J" in English. The same two letters are used for the "y" sound in English. The combination of these letters give the "ee-ay" sound. In fact, this is how "Jesus" is spelled in Greek,

" Ἡσοϋς " [pronounced "ee-ay-soos"]. Have fun.

Greek [Upper / Lower case] (Sound) = Numeric value

Alpha [Αα] (a) = 1

Beta [Ββ] (b) = 2

Gamma [Γγ] (g) = 3

Delta [Δδ] (d) = 4

Epsilon [Εε] (eh) = 5

*** [Ζζ] (-) = 6

Zeta [Ζζ] (z) = 7

Eta [Ηη] (ay) = 8

Theta [Θθ] (th) = 9

Iota [Ιι] (i) = 10

Kappa [Κκ] (k) = 20

Lambda [Λλ] (l) = 30

Mu [Μμ] (m) = 40

Nu [Νν] (n) = 50

Xe [Ξξ] (ks) = 60

Omocron [Οο] (o) = 70

Pi [Ππ] (p) = 80

*** [Ρρ] (-) = 90

Rho [Ρρ] (r) = 100

Sigma [Σσς*] (s) = 200

Tau [Ττ] (t) = 300

Upsilon [Υυ] (oo) = 400

Phi [Φφ] (f) = 500

Chi [Χχ] (ch) = 600

Psi [Ψψ] (ps) = 700

Omega [Ωω] (O) = 800

*** These letters became obsolete shortly after the NT was written. But, they were still used for their numeric value.

* The letter "sigma" has two lower case characters. The "σ" is used unless it is the last letter of a word. In this case "ς" is used. The value is the same.

Here is an illustration. The name Bill Clinton is transliterated as follows.

B - β = 2

i - ι = 10

l - λ = 30

l - λ = 30

C - Κ = 20

I - λ = 30

i - ι = 10

n - ν = 50

t - τ = 300

o - ο = 70

n - ν = 50

Totals - Bill=72, Clinton=530, Total=602

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Popular Rapture View is both Recent and Unbiblical

By Tim Warner - Feb. 2002

The following article was featured in the Religion section of **The Waterford News**, Stanislaus County, California

The recent popularity of the *Left Behind* series gives the impression that Christians typically agree with this fictitious portrayal of the last days. However, there are a variety of views among contemporary Christians regarding end-time Bible prophecy.

The Tribulation

One key debate is the question of how much Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled, particularly prophecies of a period of "great tribulation" mentioned by Jesus, some of the Old Testament prophets, and in the book of Revelation. Those who see the "tribulation" as having been fulfilled in the first century destruction of Jerusalem are called "preterists." Those who understand the tribulation as covering the entire age of the Church are called "historicists." And those who see the tribulation as a short period of time just before Jesus returns to earth are called "futurists." Most Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christians would fit into the futurist category.

The Millennium

Then there is the question of the Millennium mentioned in Revelation 20. Some believe Christian political activity and evangelization will bring about one thousand years of peace and prosperity, after which Christ will return. Those who hold this view are called "post-millennialists." This view was popular a couple of centuries ago, but is rare today except among some liberal groups, and some radical Charismatic groups. A second more common view is called "a-millennialism." This view dominated Christianity from the fourth century until the Reformation. It was the Roman Catholic view and is also held by some mainline Protestant denominations. Basically, this view spiritualizes the Millennium, making it Christ's rule from heaven over the earth in this present age. However, the most popular view today among Evangelical and Fundamental Christians is "pre-millennialism." Pre-millennialism looks forward to the soon return of Jesus, after which He will reign on the earth for one thousand years with the saints. Pre-millennialism was the earliest Christian view of the Millennium, dominating Christian eschatology for the first three hundred years. It has also seen a great revival since the early nineteenth century.

The Rapture

The third question, which is probably the most hotly debated, is the timing of the rapture in relation to the tribulation. Those who see the rapture/resurrection before the tribulation are called "pre-tribulationists." Those who see the rapture in the middle of the tribulation are "mid-tribulationists." Those who see the rapture towards the end of the tribulation are called "pre-wrath." And those who see the rapture as occurring at the extreme end of the tribulation are called "post-tribulationists." The rapture question is very important because it means the difference between our having to endure some or all of the horrors of the tribulation, or being taken to heaven prior to it (assuming it occurs in our lifetimes).

Obviously, we all would prefer a pre-tribulation rapture. But, God didn't ask us what we prefer. He simply asks us to remain faithful to Him until the end, no matter what we have to endure in this life. Jesus also repeatedly told us to be in a state of watchfulness. In order to do so, we need a good understanding of what is coming, and exactly for what we should be watching.

In America, the pre-tribulation view is very popular among Evangelical Christians. Hence the strong sales of the LaHaye-Jenkins *Left Behind* series. But consumers of this kind of fictitious literature wrongly assume pre-tribulationism has always been the orthodox as well as the majority view. The fact of the matter is, there is simply no trace of pre-tribulationism in the first 1700 years of Christianity. And even now, as popular as it is in the West, it is still the minority view world-wide. John Walvoord, one of the best known defenders of the pre-trib view, and past president of Dallas Theological Seminary, wrote the following:

"Unquestionably, the majority view as far as the rapture is concerned is the posttribulational view, namely, that Christ will come for His church in connection with His second coming to the earth. This is the view advocated by the amillenarians and postmillenarians and by some premillenarians. They contend that to divide the rapture from the second coming to the earth by a period of at least seven years is to bifurcate what the Scriptures intend to be a single event." (Walvoord, Future Work of Christ-Part I: The Coming of Christ for His Church - BibSac Vol 123 #489)

The post-trib view is and has always been the majority view. A single future coming of Christ, both to rapture the Church and defeat the Antichrist, has been the standard view of Christian eschatology since the earliest recorded Christian writings.

So, why are so many western Christians convinced that Jesus will come to get them before anything bad happens? Most would probably say because that is what the Bible teaches. But where does it teach this? No passage of Scripture places any future coming of Christ before the tribulation. No sequential passage includes more than one future coming (a separate rapture and second coming). And no Scripture implicitly demands a pre-trib rapture. The Bible explicitly places Jesus' coming *"immediately after the tribulation,"* at which time Jesus will dispatch His angels to gather together "His (Jesus') elect" (Matt. 24:29-31). Of course, pre-tribbers balk at this passage, claiming it is for the Jews. Yet, the immediate context indicates Jesus was addressing His own disciples. He gave them instructions to be watching for and expecting this post-trib coming.

Just before ascending to heaven, Jesus gave these same disciples the Great Commission. In making disciples of all nations, part of their responsibility was *"teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"* (Matt. 28:19,20). Integral to Jesus' earlier instructions to them was watching for His post-trib coming (Mark 13:24-37). In essence, Jesus told His disciples to pass on all of His teaching to them to all new converts. Not merely teaching them about what Jesus taught, but teaching them to *observe* all of the commands that Jesus gave His disciples. And those commands include specific instructions regarding watching for His post-trib coming (Matt. 24 & Mark 13). How could the disciples obey Jesus and not teach new converts to expect to go through the tribulation and be gathered *"immediately after the tribulation?"* There is no doubt that the Great Commission was meant to continue until the *"end of the age"* (Matt. 28:20). That is, the very same teaching must be reproduced and obeyed in every generation until Jesus returns, including teaching each generation to take up the cause of the Great Commission itself. Unless new converts are taught to obey Jesus' teaching in Matt. 24 and Mark 13, the Great Commission is not being carried out as Jesus intended! That means most Evangelical Christian churches are not obeying the Great Commission. If they are teaching Christians that the Church will be raptured before the tribulation, and we don't need to worry about enduring the tribulation, then they are teaching contrary to what Jesus commanded to be taught.

Pre-tribbers are not off the hook by appealing to later revelation. There is no later revelation that indicates anything contrary to what Jesus taught. All of the teaching of Paul and Peter later in the New Testament is in perfect harmony with Jesus' chronology in Matt. 24 and Mark 13. In fact, some of their teaching absolutely requires a post-trib rapture. For example, 2 Thess. 1:7-10 indicates Christians will finally have relief from persecution at the same time Jesus comes to destroy the ungodly. 2 Thess. 2:1-3 indicates that *"our gathering together unto Him"* occurs after the apostasy and revelation of the Man of Sin. Revelation doesn't help pre-tribbers either. There is

simply no pre-trib rapture there. Pre-tribbers are forced to abandon sound rules of biblical interpretation and "*spiritualize*" John's being taken to heaven in order to force their view on Revelation.

Pre-tribulationists have done further damage by denying believers the tools they need to prepare for the dark days ahead. In their quest to distance Mathew's Gospel from the Church in order to escape Matthew 24, they have also eliminated another key passage regarding preparation. That passage is the Sermon on the Mount, contained in Matthew chapters five through seven. In this sermon to His disciples, Jesus gave them ten of His own commandments. These were also implicitly included in Jesus' Great Commission. At the end of this crucial sermon, Jesus made the following statement.

Matt 7:24-27

24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

25 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26 "Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

27 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

We have Jesus' word that habitual obedience to His commandments in this sermon guarantees us a position of strength when the storm arrives. But, pre-tribbers typically discount this passage as well as not applicable to the Church. The Scofield Bible, which is largely responsible for the spread of pre-tribulationism, has the following note attached to this sermon. "*The Sermon on the Mount gives neither the privilege nor duty of the Church*" (Scofield Reference Bible, p.1000).

Furthermore, after describing some of the tribulation events in Luke 21, Jesus said that we should "*pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass*" (Luke 21:36). Notice, He did not say to escape the tribulation itself, but the particular events contained in it. That is, to make it through unscathed. How many Christians are praying continually that they might be found worthy to escape these things? I dare say no pre-tribbers are doing this because they think they already have a ticket out of here before it happens. But if that were so, why would Jesus command us to pray? The pre-trib view completely undermines these and many other words of Jesus.

The bottom line is this. Within the last 200 years, western Christians have been seduced into a false sense of security, and a blatant disregard for what Jesus taught. Sure, a pre-trib rapture is appealing and fits nicely with our western lifestyle. It may be largely harmless as long as nothing really bad happens to us. But the rapidly escalating conflict with terrorism and deteriorating situation in the Middle East may indicate we are very close to the unfolding of these end-time events. The western Church may be on the verge of a big surprise. Its time to stop pretending, and get back to what Jesus taught. It is time for the Church to equip the saints for the battle ahead.

Eph 6:11-13

11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.



Granville Sharp's Rule

**Remarks on the uses of the Definite Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament,
Containing Many New Proofs of the Divinity of Christ,
from Passages which are Wrongly Translated in the Common English Version.**

By Granville Sharp - 10th June, 1778

Rule I.

When the copulative **και** connects two nouns of the same case, [viz. nouns (either substantive or adjective, or participles) of personal description respecting office, dignity, affinity, or connection, and attributes, properties, or qualities, good or ill,] if the article **ho**, or any of its cases, precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle: i.e. it denotes farther description of the first-named person, as -

Mat. 12:22. τον τυφλον και κωφον
the blind and dumb

2 Cor. 1:3. ὁ Θεος και Πατηρ
the God and Father
ὁ Πατηρ των οικτιρμων και Θεος
the Father of the compassions and God

2 Cor. 11:31, ὁ Θεος και Πατηρ
the God and Father

Eph. 6:21, ὁ αγαπητος αδελφος και πιστος διακονος
the beloved brother and faithful minister

Heb. 3:1, τον αποστολον και αρχιερεα
the apostle and high priest

2 Pet. 2:20, του Κυριου και Σωτηρος
the Lord and Saviour

2 Pet. 3:2, του Κυριου και Σωτηρος.
the Lord and Saviour.

2 Pet. 3:18, του Κυριου ημων και Σωτηρος
the Lord of us and Saviour

Philippians, 4:20, τω δε Θεω και Πατρι
the Now God and Father

Rev. 16:15, ὁ γρηγορων και τηρων
the one watching and one keeping

Col. 2:2, του Θεου και Πατρος
the God and Father

1 Thes. 3:11, ὁ Θεος και Πατηρ
the God and Father

James, 1:27. τω Θεω και Πατρι
the God and Father

And there is no exception or instance of the like mode of expression, that I know of, which necessarily requires a construction different from what is here laid down, EXCEPT the nouns be proper names, or in the plural number; in which cases there are many exceptions; though there are not wanting examples, even of plural nouns, which are expressed exactly agreeable to this rule. ...

The rules which follow are intended only to illustrate the particularity of the several sentences which fall under the first rule, by showing, in other sentences, the different senses that are occasioned by adding, omitting, or repeating, the article, as well with the copulative as without it.

Rule II.

A repetition of the article before the second noun, if the copulative be omitted, will have the same effect and power: for, it denotes a farther description of the same person, property, or thing, that is expressed by the first noun. Examples:

Luke, 1:47. τω Θεω τω Σωτηρι
the God the Saviour

Luke, 2:26. του Πνευματος του αγιου
the Spirit the holy.

John, 1:29. ὁ αμνος του Θεου ὁ αιρων
the lamb of the God the taking

John, 4:42. ὁ Σωτηρ του κοσμου, ὁ Χριστος
the Saviour of the world, the Christ

John, 5:23. τον πατερα τον
the father the [One]

John, 6:27. την βρωσιν την απολλυμενην,
the food the perishing.

την βρωσιν την μενουσαν
the food the remaining

ὁ Πατηρ εσφραγισεν ὁ Θεος
the Father sealed the God

John, 20:31. ὁ Ιησους εστιν ὁ Χριστος ὁ Υιος
the Jesus is the Christ the Son

Heb. 13:20. τον ποιμενα των προβατων τον μεγαν
the shepherd of the sheep the great

εν αιματι διαθηκης αιωνιου, τον κυριον
in blood covenant of an eternal, the lord

Except when genitive cases depend on one another in succession, as -

2 Cor. 4:3. του ευαγγελιου της δοξης του Χριστου
of the gospel the glory of the Christ
ος εστιν εικων του Θεου του αορατου
who is image of the God of the invisible

Coloss. 2:2. της πληροφοριας της συνεσεως, εις
of the full assurance the of understanding for
επιγνωσιν του μυστηριου του Θεου
full knowledge of the mystery of the God

Rule III.

And the omission of the copulative between two or more nouns (of the same case) of personal description or application, even without the article before the second noun, will have the same effect: viz. will denote farther description of the same person, property, or thing, that is expressed by the first noun, as in the following examples:

Rom. 2:19,20. οδηγον ειναι τυφλων, φως των εν
a guide to be of blind [persons] a light of the [ones] in
σκοτει, παιδευτην αφρωνων,
darkness an instructor of foolish [persons]
διδασκαλον νηπιων,
a teacher of infants

Ephes. 5:20, 21. του Κυριου ημων Ιησου Χριστου,
of the Lord of us Jesus Christ

Tit. 1:1. Παυλος, δουλος Θεου, αποστολος δε Ιησου
Paul a slave of God, apostle and of Jesus

1 Tim. 1:1. Παυλος Αποστολος Ιησου Χριστου
Paul apostle of Jesus Christ
θεο σωτηρος ημων,
of God saviour of us

Rule IV.

Yet it is otherwise when the nouns are not of personal description or application; for then they denote distinct things or qualities: as -

1 Tim. 1:2. χαρις, ελεος, ειρηνη
grace, mercy, peace

2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4 χαρις, ελεος, ειρηνη,
grace, mercy, peace

Rule V.

And as also when there is no article before the first noun, the insertion of the copulative kai before the next noun, or name, of the same case, denotes a different person or thing from the first: as in the following examples -

Ephes. 4:31. πικρια, και θυμος, και οργη, και
bitterness and anger and wrath and
κραυγη, και βλασφημια,
clamor and blasphemy

This last sentence contains four examples of the fifth rule.

2 Cor. 1:2. Χαρις υμιν και ειρηνη
Grace to you and peace
Θεου Πατρος ημων και Κυριου
God Father of us and Lord

Ephes. 1:2, Gal. 1:3, Philem. 3. Ephes. 6:23*

Ειρηνη τοις αδελφοις και αγαπη
Grace to the brothers and love

Πατρος και Κυριου
Father and Lord

Ephes. 4:6. Εις Θεος και πατηρ
one God and Father

Rule VI.

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. η χαρις και η αληθεια
the grace and the truth

John 2:22. τη γραφη, και τω λογω
the scripture, and the word

John 11:44 τους ποδας και τας χειρας
the feet and the hands

Col. 2:2. του Θεου και Πατρος, και του Χριστου,
of the God and Father, and of the Christ,

της σοφιας και της γνωσης
of the wisdom and of the knowledge

2 Tim. 1:5 τη μαμμη σου Λωϊδι και τη μητρι
the grandmother of thee Lois and the mother

1 Pet. 4:11. η δοξα και το κρατος
the glory and the might

Except distinct and different actions are intended to be attributed to one and the same person; in which case, if the sentence is not expressed agreeably to the three first rules, but appears to be an exception to this sixth rule, or even to the fifth, (for, this exception relates to both rules,) the context must explain or point out plainly the person to whom the two nouns relate: as in -

1 Cor. 1:24. ΘΕΟΥ δυναμιν και ΘΕΟΥ σοφian
 of God power and of God wisdom

Rev. 20:2. τον οφιν τον αρχαιον, ος εστι
 the serpent the old, who is
διαβολος και σατανas
 Devil and Satan

Exceptions to the fifth rule,
 and in -

1 Thess 3:6. ελθοντος Τιμοθεου προς ημας αφ' υμων
 coming Timothy to us from you
και ευαγγελισαμενου ημιν
 and announcing good news to us

Rev. 1:17,18. εγω ειμι ο πρωτος και ο εσχατος,
 I am the first and the last.
και ο ζων*
 and the living [one]

John 20:28. Και απεκριθη ο Θωμας, και ειπεν
 and answered the Thomas and said
αυτω ο Κυριος μου και ο Θεος μου
 to him the Lord of me and the God of me

Rev. 2:8 ταδε λεγει ο πρωτος και ο εσχατος,
 These things says the first and the last.

Rev. 22:13. εγω ειμι το Α και το Ω,
 I am the Alpha and the Omega,
ο πρωτος και ο εσχατος.
 the first and the last.

Exceptions to the sixth rule.

The various uses of the article and copulative, expressed in the last five rules and their exceptions, must amply illustrate, to every attentive reader, the difference and particularity of those sentences which fall under the first principal rule; and therefore I may now proceed with more confidence to point out several important corrections that ought to be made in our common translation of the New Testament, if the several sentences, which fall under the first rule, be duly weighed and considered; - corrections which may be fairly defended, I apprehend, by the authority of the several examples from which those rules were formed.

Notes on Sharp's Rules

By Tim Warner

Sharp's rules are usually illustrated with a three, four, or five letter designation, as follows: TSKS, TSTS, TSS, SKS, TSKTS. "T" represents the definite article (the) in Greek. "S" represents the "substantive" which can be a noun, adjective, or participle. "K" represents the copulative "kai" (the Greek word for "and"). Therefore, the first rule, where the construction in Greek is "article - substantive - kai - substantive" would be illustrated as a "TSKS" construction.

Rule I (TSKS - singular, personal)

Sharp made it clear that his intent was only to prove rule I absolutely without exception. The other five rules are given to show contrast with rule I. However, the other five are quite helpful to the interpreter as well. Sharp himself claimed that Rule I was absolutely without exception in the New Testament when applied to **personal, singular nouns, that are not proper names**. However, the same rule holds true **in most cases** even with plural and non personal nouns. A typical TSKS construction would be Eph. 1:3, "the God and Father." Both "God" and "Father" refer to the same person.

Rule II (TSTS - personal)

The second rule states that even with the article before the second noun, if "kai" is omitted, the effect is the same as the first rule. Both nouns refer to the same person.

Rule III (TSS - personal)

The third rule modifies the second, both nouns still refer to the same person, whether the article is included or omitted before the second noun, as long as "kai" is also omitted.

Rule IV (TSS - non-personal)

The fourth rule is really an exception to the second and third rules. If the nouns are non-personal (things), the effect is just the opposite -- they refer to different things.

Rule V (SKS - personal or non-personal)

The fifth rule specifically applies to both personal and non personal nouns. When neither noun has the article, they refer to different persons or things.

Rule VI (TSKTS - personal or non-personal)

The sixth rule also applies specifically to both personal and non-personal nouns. The effect is exactly the same as the fifth rule. When both nouns have the definite article, they refer to different things. Sharp was careful to explain the exceptions, which apply to both the fifth and sixth rules. Notice that only personal nouns may fall under the exception, which is: when both nouns are clearly stated within the context to refer to the same person. Examples are Thomas' exclamation, "My Lord and my God." Since in the context he was clearly addressing both nouns to Jesus' person, this falls within the exception. Another example, where the same person is addressed with two nouns, is Jesus' statement, "I am the first and the last." Since Jesus specifically applied both titles to Himself within the context, this also falls within the exception to the sixth rule. When no such direct statement occurs within the context

applying both nouns to a single person, the nouns refer to different things or persons. Sharp was clear that any alleged exceptions to the fifth or sixth rules MUST have a clear singular personal application or they cannot be considered exceptions. A case in point is Matt. 28:19. *"the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"* (TSKTSKTS). The use of the article before each noun indicates each of these are distinct persons. A similar construction occurs in 1 John 2:22 & 2 John 1:9, *"the Father and the Son"* (TSKTS). Both of these passages, when viewed using Sharp's sixth rule, refute the Modalist (Oneness) view which denies the Trinity, claiming that Jesus and the Father are one and the same person.

Many modern Greek Grammars include a section on Sharp's rule, and usually summarize at least the first rule. Here is Vaughn & Gideon's summary.

"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. If only the first noun has the article, the second noun refers to the same person or thing referred to in the first." [Vaughn and Gideon, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), p. 83.]

You may notice that Vaughn & Gideon's version of Sharp's first rule does not limit it to exclusively personal, singular nouns, but also includes plural and non-personal nouns in the first rule. The reason is because Sharp's initial version of his rule was broad, as stated by Vaughn and Gideon. It included plural and non-personal nouns as well. However, there were occasional exceptions to the rule. Because Sharp's goal was to convince the skeptic that there were several passages of Scripture that prove the deity of Christ, which were wrongly translated in the KJV not appearing to support the deity of Christ (as Titus 2:13), and because those skeptics, seeking to discredit Sharp's rule, found some exceptions to the first rule when applied to plural or non-personal nouns, Sharp responded by more narrowly defining the first rule so that it was without any exceptions in the entire New Testament, restricting it to personal singular nouns. However, we have found that even with an occasional exception, Sharp's first rule is quite trustworthy as more broadly defined (as in Vaughn & Gideon's version above). To our knowledge, there is no such thing as a grammatical rule that never has an exception. Sharp's rule more broadly defined is at least as reliable as any other grammatical rule. We therefore recommend its use as a general rule even with plural and non-personal nouns unless there is something within the context that forbids such an interpretation. But the burden of proof should always be on the one who says Sharp's rule does not apply in a specific Sharp construction.

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T W O
ACADEMICAL EXERCISES
ON
SUBJECTS BEARING THE
FOLLOWING
TITLES;
MILLENNIUM,
LAST-NOVELTIES.

PUBLISHED BY
M O R G A N . E D W A R D S, A. M.
AND QUONDAM FELLOW OF *R. I.* COLLEGE.

**May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou
speakest, is? for thou bringest certain strange things to our
ears: We would know, therefore, what these things mean.**
ACTS xvii. 19. 20

PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED BY DOBSON AND LANG, IN SECOND STREET,
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M.DCC.LXXXVIII.

MILLENNIUM

Rev. xx. 4,5

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished: This is the first resurrection.

AND is it come to my lot to treat of the *Millennium*, or Christ's thousand years reign on earth? Thousand pities, sir, that you had not allotted the task to one of these older and abler students! But, since it is your pleasure, I will do my possible: and in the attempt will work by a rule you have often recommended, viz. "to take the scriptures in a literal

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sense, except when that leads to contradiction or absurdity." I need say no more to inform you, sir, that I wish to be understood as a *minister of the letter* only while I treat of the said *Millennium*. Very able men have already handled the subject in a *mystical*, or *allegorical*, or *spiritual* way: and could I rest satisfied with their sentiments, I might have collected those sentiments, and deliver them (perhaps) with applause; as that would shew my reading, — and at the same time, free a novice from the affectation of singularity and *taking too much upon him*, like another *son of Levi*. And glad I am that I may speak freely to the matter. It is what I could not have done in a late reign, for fear of being called a *fifth monarchy man* (as Verner and his company); and being cut to pieces by soldiers: But George the second is not Charles the second: George (whom God long preserve) is not afraid of the *fifth monarchy*, nor would be loth to give up his kingdom to him *by whom kings reign and princes decree justice*. But enough of preambing. Come we now to the doctrines of the *Millennium*: some of which are visible in my text: as

I. *There will be two resurrections;*

For a *first* resurrection supposes a *second*: and the *supposing* and

supposed are in my text. Paul advances the same doctrine in his first letter to the Thessalonians — "The dead in Christ shall rise first." (chap. iv. 16). But more of this in another place.

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II. *The distance between the first and second resurrection will be somewhat more than a thousand years.*

I say, *somewhat more*—; because the dead saints will be raised, and the living changed at Christ's "appearing in the air" (1 Thes. iv, 17); and this will be about three years and a half before the *millennium*, as we shall see hereafter: but will he and they abide in the air all the time? No: they will ascend to paradise, or to some one of those many "mansions in the father's house" (John xiv. 2), and so disappear during the foresaid period of time. The design of this retreat and disappearing will be to judge the risen and changed saints; for "now the time is come that judgment must begin," and that will be "at the house of God" (1 Pet. iv. 17): to this refers that part of my text, "and I saw thrones; and judgment was given," viz. the saints were judged, and their rewards specified; of which, more hereafter. Knowing all this, the devil will follow to accuse the brethren to judge; and will continue at it day and night in hope of preventing their acquittance: their pleas against him will be those borrowed from the "blood of the lamb, and the word of their testimony:" by these they will prevail in judgment; and their accuser will be hurled down to the earth by the strong arm of Michael; and with him will come that notable voice; "Woe unto the inhabitants of the earth; for the devil is come

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down among you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time," viz. three years and a half, as before (Rev. xii. 7-11). —Add to the above, That between the end of the *millennium* and the second resurrection the devil is to be let loose, and Gog and Magog's army to be destroyed, which will require a considerable time, though John calls it "a little season," (Rev. xx. 3.)

III. *Christ's personal reign on earth will be a thousand years at least.*

I call it personal, to distinguish it from the proximal dominion which he hath exercised on earth since he quitted it, and retired to heaven. And I have added — at least a thousand years — because he will not

quit the earth, nor resign his delegation till after the last judgment; and the presentation of all the saints before God, with a "Behold I, and the children which thou hast given me!" (Heb. xi. 13). Then his mediatorial kingdom and reign will cease; and he and they be subject to the father till the new earth be prepared for another kind of reign.

IV. Christ's kingdom on earth will be universal.

No people or state will be left out. And herein it will exceed the Roman, Grecian, Persian, or Babylonian monarchies, which also laid claim to universality; for Christ will "reign from sea to sea, and

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from the river to the ends of the earth" (Zech. ix. 10). "The kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of Christ." (Rev. xi. 15). "All kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him." * (Psal. xxx): surely David had in his eye that son, who was also his Lord; for to his son Solomon the above text is by no means applicable. See Dan. viii.

V. That spot of earth which Christ will make the seat of his government is mount Zion, in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem and the temple will be rebuilt, as we shall prove by and by; and the temple will be the house of Christ's kingdom. A prophet and an angel assure us that the above doctrine is true, "He will reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem before his ancients gloriously," saith the prophet (Isai. xxiv. 23); and that he means what we mean is evident from the New Testament, where the words are quoted, and applied to this very subject. Gabriel adds his message thus, "God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever." (Luke i, 32,33): this throne has not yet been given to the son of David, but the

* Many more passages might be quoted to support our fourth and our other doctrines; but this would be superfluous; as one text, rightly applied, is proof sufficient of any religious point.

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millennium will make steadfast the words spoken by angels.

VI. The risen and changed saints shall reign with Christ on earth a thousand years.

I do not mean that all will be kings; for some are to be Christ's priests, some judges, some rulers over cities, some over his household, some over his goods, (as we shall see anon) and some his special choristers and musicians: neither does my text authorize any such fancy; for the thrones and judgments there, are for persons of a particular description, viz. such as "were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and had not worshipped the beast nor his image, nor had received his mark in the forehead or hand." — And I said, in my doctrine, that they shall "reign" with Christ on EARTH—; for in heaven they cannot reign: how will they find subjects there? they will not reign over one another; nor yet over angels in heaven, though they will on earth (1 Cor. vi. 3): in heaven (while they continue * there) they and their lord will be subjects and not kings (1 Cor. xv. 24); therefore [if] they reign with Christ at all they must reign with him on earth; he supreme king and they subordinate, as Caesar and Herod reigned over

* That continuance will be no longer than while the old is burning, and the new earth created; for after those events he and they will descend to the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness forever. 2 Pet. iii. 13.

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the Jews at the same time. And so, saith my text, "The saints shall reign with Christ (on earth) a thousand years." Other texts say, "That all kingdoms and dominions under the whole heaven shall be given to the saints." (Dan. vii. 18, 27): "That the saints shall judge men and angels." (1 Cor. vi. 2,3). Miserable work do the Antimillennarians make of these texts. And as miserable of the following; "When the son of man shall sit on his throne [my twelve disciples] shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matt. xix. 28). "I appoint unto you a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom." (Luke xxii. 29,30). "Henceforth I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my father's kingdom." (Matt. xxvi. 29). "To sit on my right hand and on my left [in my kingdom] is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my father." (Matt. xx. 23). "The meek shall inherit the earth." (Matt. v. 5). "Thy kingdom come, " &c. (Matt. vi. 10). Literal *millennarianism* alone will do justice to these texts and many others; for if all the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of Christ (and he reside in Jerusalem), he must have deputies to manage the civil and religious affairs of foreign countries: the saints will be the men; and thus the saints will be his *kings* and *priests*: thus the kingdoms of [the] world will be given to the saints:

thus the saints will judge the world: and as the world to come will

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not (like the present) be in subjection to angels but to the saints, * (Heb. ii. 5) it follows that the angels will be superseded, and the saints take their authority from them: thus the saints will judge angels. And if the twelve tribes return to their former inheritance, and a throne of government be set up in each tribe (as will be shown presently) who fitter to fill those thrones than their countrymen? thus the twelve apostles shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel: and if some must sit on Christ's right hand and left in his kingdom, it cannot be the kingdom of heaven, else some would sit between him and the father. The last judgment will admit of no partnership or assistant judges; neither of juries, or something equivalent to juries, which is the usual way of accounting for the saints judging angels and men. Again, if Christ reside in Jerusalem, and his vice-roys, judges, priests and ambassadors attend his court to pay homage to the universal monarch, he must have tables to entertain them at: thus the saints shall eat and drink at his table in his kingdom. I am aware of what philosophy and vain deceit will object, viz. "That the raised and changed saints are not capable of

*It is plain that angels have authority in the government of this world: hence we read of one Michael who had charge of the Jews and their affairs (Dan. x. 21); of another who managed the affairs of the Persian empire (ch. x. 13). Some have power over the elements, as fire (Rev. xiv. 18), water (ch. xvi. 5), light (ch. xix. 17); the winds (ch. vii. 1); the bottomless pit (ch. ix. 1,2). It would be endless to enumerate all the instances wherein this world is in subjection to angels: not so the world to come or *millennium*.

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"eating and drinking, because their bodies are spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal." I fear not the objection. Did not Christ (after his resurrection) eat and drink? (Acts x. 41). And, for fear some cynical theologian should subtilize fact into phantasm, the species of eatables are mentioned, viz. bread, fish, and honey-comb (Luke xxi. 30,42) and why may he not eat and drink in his kingdom? Or, why may not the risen saints eat and drink in with him? are their bodies more refined than his? Are we not told that angels ate on earth? Nay, do they not eat in heaven? How else come we to read of angel's food? (Psal. lxx. 25). And if the Israelites despised it as *too light* for their gross bodies it well suits the refined nature of angels and saints. (Rev. 11. 17). It

appears to me that all created beings stand in need of some alimentary accessions, though their bodies were pure aether. Milton laughs to scorn those theologians, who explain scripture otherwise than in a literal sense, when angels are said to eat and drink; and finely describes the manner in which superior natures are nourished by the inferior. (Par. I. 65, I. 405).

VII. Prelusive to the millennium, and preparatory for it, are the following events.

1. The present usurpers of the country given to Abraham and his seed will be dispossessed, viz. the

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Turkish or *Ottoman* empire will be demolished *; for otherwise the right owners cannot possess their inheritance. The said demolition of the Turk (or beast that started out of the earth) is exhibited at the opening of the first seal, when a horseman with his bow issues forth conquering and to conquer, (Rev. vi. 2): his exploits are specified at the sounding of the first trumpet, (ch. viii. 7), and the pouring of the first vial, (ch. xvi, 2). The fifteenth chapter of Esdras is a prophecy of these events wherein Asia is particularly mentioned, (ver. 46)

2. The twelve tribes (as observed before) will return to their ancient inheritance, else how can the twelve apostles be their judges? Men have thought that the ten tribes are lost, viz. have dwindled away, so as to cease to be a people, like many other nations; but Christ saith that the Jewish nation shall not pass away till he come in his glory. (Matt. xxiv. 34.) The other two tribes are in being yet, and are seen in most parts of the world, a different people. But all Israel must be saved, according to Paul (Rom. xi. 25,26); therefore the ten tribes are in being, and a distinct people: a prophet ** of their own faith "that, after

* The present situation of the Turkish empire commands attention from all that look for the coming of the Lord Jesus to reign on earth: the combination of the empress of Russia and the emperor of Germany, and their success the last year (1787) against that empire [is] the reason: should they prevail, the Jews (like the crusades) will repair from all quarters towards the holy land.

** It may be observed, that the books of Esdras were, by the primitive Christians (for near four hundred years) esteemed canonical, as appears by three catalogues yet extant; among some western Christians they are yet so esteemed; but granting they are not canonical, yet Esdras's account of the ten tribes is more credible than any other profane history; because he must be better acquainted with the fact he relates.

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Shalmaneser had led them captive, they assembled together, crossed the Euphrates, and marched in a body for a year and a half till they came to a country where no man dwelt. The name of that far country is Arsareth." (2 Esd. xxi). This account is the more credible, because they are expressly said to cross the Euphrates, in their way back to their own country. (Rev. xvi. 12). But the western Jews will return before them, "Jerusalem shall be inhabited again, and the Lord shall save the tents of Judah first. (Zech. xii. 6,7) and when they are returned they will all coalesce into one body, as before the division in Rehoboam's time, and no longer be styled the kingdom of Israel, and the kingdom of Judah, but be one, and their name one: this is particularly described by Ezekiel, (ch. xxxvii), and is full to our purpose, because the prediction was not fulfilled at the return of the jews from the Babylonian captivity. (John iv. 9). In this united capacity they will rebuild Jerusalem in its place, and the temple in its place on mount Zion; for in this temple will antichrist sit as god, and be the abomination * mentioned by Daniel, and referred to by Christ,

* The abomination mentioned by Daniel is supposed to be that which Antiochus Epiphanes set up in the temple; but that was before Christ's time many hundred years: the Romans set up no abomination in the temple; for it was destroyed before they could gain possession of it; therefore Christ refers to a thing that is yet to come; and to a temple that is not yet extant.

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as a prelude to his coming to reign; and an alarm to the Jews to flee for their lives (Matt. xxiv. 15-35). Into the same temple will Christ come after the destruction of Antichrist, and there fix his residence (Zech. xiv. 4,5). Ezekiel is more particular in his forty third and forty fourth chapters. The same Ezekiel describes this temple in the eight last chapters of his prophecy: it is vain to say "that he means the temple begun by Zerubbabel and finished by Herod." Let anyone read the description of this temple in Josephus, and compare it with Ezekiel's temple, and he will soon see that they are not the same, and that the latter has never yet had an existence.

3. Another event prior to the *millennium* will be the appearing of the two witnesses mentioned in Rev. xi. and Zech. iv. one of which will be Elias: this I gather from Malachi, (iv. 5) and from Matthew, "Elias truly shall come and restore all things" (ch. xvii. 11): this, indeed, is applied to John the baptist in the next verse, but it is in a way of

accommodation of prophecy, and not of accomplishment; for John was come (and *gone* too) at the time that Christ saith in the future, *Elias SHALL come*: besides; John was a setter forth of *new* things rather than a *restorer* of the old, which is the description of Elias: add to all, that John had denied that he was Elias whom Malachi spake of, and the Jews inquired after,

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(John i. 21), and Christ does not contradict him—.

The other witness I take to be John. My reasons for it follow: of this apostle, Jesus saith, "if I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee?" (John xxi. 22): now Christ did not use *lightness* in any of his intimations, which would have been the case, if he did not mean that John should not die, for so the disciples understood the matter (ver. 23): in another place he saith, "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till the son of man come in his kingdom" (Mat. xvi. 28); that "coming" of his in the "glory of the father, and with his angels" (ver. 27) is yet a thing future; and therefore there be some alive *now* that were alive *then*, and will be alive till Christ makes his appearance in the air to raise the dead and change the living. But plainer than all is what the angel told John in the isle of Patmos, "Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings," (Rev. 11.): this he never did; and therefore has it to do in a future day. Add to all, That the accounts we have of John's death are so very fabulous, that nothing surer can be inferred from them; that the people of Ephesus knew not what became of the old man: the truth is, he (like Elias) was caught up to paradise, which is in the third heaven, (2 Cor. xii. 2.4.) and was, in all likelihood, that angel that was seen "flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people on the earth" (Rev. xiv. 6)—. Where these two witnesses will prophesy or preach is not hard to guess: Elias, no doubt

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will minister to the Jews to take the veil off their eyes when they read Moses: and to *restore* * his economy to its primitive exactness both as to sentiments and practices (wherein the Jews were very corrupt; and had been corrupt long before their dispersion) and so prepare them for the reception of their long expected Messiah, that they may know him

* The composer of the above paragraph was aware how subject to objections is his representing Elias as the restorer of the Mosaic economy, viz. that it would be restoring types and shadows, which had vanished at the coming of the substance. The same objection has been made against the return of the Jews to their own country; and rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, &c: but the proofs of these last events among prophets and apostles are too plain to be controverted: the description of Ezekiel's temple alone authorizes the supposition. But there is a wide difference between restoring types and shadows as emblems of good things to come; and restoring them as emblems of good things past: in this last sense Paul used circumcision, vows, purification, &c. (Acts xvi. 3. ch. xxi. 24): in the same sense a great number of priests that believed, and other Jews, used temple worship many years after (Acts xxi. 20.): in this sense the apostles, and all Christian ministers since, make use of Moses types and shadows to preach up the Messiah that is already come: in the same sense will the priests (under the instruction of Elias) preach over their circumcision, sacrifices, divers washings, sprinklings, &c. I do not wonder therefore that Luther was so positive, that the temple services would have continued to this day, had the Jews understood matters before their dispersion, as they will after their restoration; or as the apostle and succeeding Christians did, and do understand them (Com. on Gal. ch. iii). And how Elias must fulfill the prophecy, viz. be the restorer of all things in the law of Moses.

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when he appears in the air, and may shout, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" (Mat. xxiii. 39)—. The other witness, viz. John, will preach to the Gentiles; for the peoples, nations, tongues, and kings are applicable to none but them-. When these witnesses will appear is hard to say; for though their time of prophesying in sackcloth is 1260 days or three years and a half (allowing thirty days to a month) yet they may preach out of sackcloth long before; for the 1260 days refer only to the time that the holy city and the outer court of the temple shalt be trodden under foot of the Gentiles (or Antichrist and his army) viz. 42 months, which make exactly 1260 days, allowing 30 to a month (Rev. xi. 2): but the ministry of the witnesses requires many more years to perform than the time of their wearing sackcloth; and there are no more than about 204 years between now and their death: I would therefore expect that their appearance in not far off. I have hinted before that the two witnesses and Antichrist will be in Jerusalem during the said 42 months: they in the temple defending it; and Antichrist and his army in the town besieging the temple: and he will prevail notwithstanding the dreadful powers the witnesses are armed with (Rev. xi. 5), and will bring them out into the street of Jerusalem, and there slay them (Rev. xi. 7.8). I say, *into the street of Jerusalem*; for the street of the city *where our Lord was crucified* can be no other: it is *spiritually* Sodom and Egypt, but *literally* the city where our Lord was crucified, and where the temple was which John measured (Rev. xi).

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4. The struggling of Antichrist *(towards the mastery of the world, and his assumption of Godhead) will also precede the millennium. Who this Antichrist will be is hard to say. I take him for the last of them, who have plagued the world under the names of Popes; for Antichrist is to be destroyed at Christ's coming to reign (2 Thess. ii. 8.): and popery will last till then; and will become universal and incontrollable, and therefore more cruel than ever: it began to strive for mastery in Paul's time, but was checked by the Roman empire (2 Thess. ii. 8): when that empire fell it prevailed exceedingly, till checked again by the reformation in Germany, and the starting up of the protestant states: it has begun to prevail over these (for though the power of the popes is lessening, his votaries multiply), and will prevail till checked anew by the two witnesses mentioned in the book of Revelation: when he has slain them, the then pope will spring up to godhead, "exalting himself above, and opposite all gods, showing himself in the temple of God (at Jerusalem) to be the god and lord of all the earth (Zech. iv. 14. Rev. xi. 4). Then, and not till then, will that wicked one be revealed who has hitherto assumed no higher title than "the vicar general of Christ on earth;" but then off goes the mask. He will hold his godhead for 2300 days according to Daniel (ch. viii. 14); but according to John only for 42 months; viz. 1260

* Besides Antichrist, the same person (or succession of persons) is otherwise names, The "man of sin" (2 Thes. 11. 3) "the little horn" (Dan. viii. 9). "The god of the earth" (Rev. xi. 4) "The beast" (Rev. xix. 20) &c.

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days, allowing 30 to a month; the difference between these two numbers is 1040 days: and these are the days which the Lord hath shortened for the sake of the elect nation of the Jews, lest they should all be destroyed. (Matt. xxiv. 22); so that the last and most dreadful persecution will continue but three years and six months, instead of six years two months and twenty days. Blessed therefore (saith Daniel) is he that cometh to the end of the 1260* days; for then Christ will begin to reign, and Daniel will *stand in his lot* in his own country (ch. xii. 12.13), and Antichrist be no more.

5. Another event previous to the *Millennium* will be the appearing of the son of man in the clouds, coming to raise the dead saints and change the living, and to catch them up to himself, and then withdraw with them, as observed before. This event will come to pass when Antichrist be arrived at Jerusalem in his conquest of the world; and

about three years and a half before his killing the witnesses, and assumption of godhead. The signs of Christ's appearing in the clouds will be extraordinary "wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes and famines," &c. (Matth. xxiv. 6-8.) I say *extraordinary*; for otherwise they would be no signs at all; because such things had been before, and have since; the

* The number referred to by Daniel (ch. xii 13) contains 75 days more than his number in verse 7; the reason is, the last begins at the time of the visions; the other at sealing the book that contained the visions, which made a difference of 75 days. This being granted, the two numbers agree with that of St. John, as they surely must; because both of the writers speak of the same event.

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wars, it should seem, will be those of Antichrist; that is, of the kingdoms that aid and oppose him: the famines and plagues will be those inflicted by the two witnesses: the earthquakes will be those which will cause the earth to rock to and fro, so as to make the stars appear to fall, as they do at sea when the ship heels; for in no other sense can real stars fall to the earth.— The signs of his coming, in the heavens will be "the trump of God, vapor and smoke, which will darken the sun and moon, and make them look like blood (as they often do in very hazy weather), and also cause those meteors called '*falling stars*'." (Acts ii. 19. Matth. xxiv) The effect will be "the terror and wailing of all the kindreds of the earth, and their hiding in caves and dens, bidding the rocks and mountains to cover them," &c. Matt. xxiv. Rev. xi.) But the fright will soon be over with wicked men, as with the wicked Israelites when the terrors of Sinai ceased. And therefore, now, Antichrist (with his false prophets and three wonder-working spirits of devils) will take occasion to counterfeit the preceding wonders in heaven and earth, (as the Egyptian magicians did those of Moses) causing "fire to come down from heaven," &c. (Rev. xiii. 13 chap. xvi. 13): by which means he will not only take the attention of the people from the foresaid miracles of Christ, but arrogate them himself, as reasons why he should be entitled to godhead. And that godhead he will now assume, after killing the two witnesses, and gaining the temple. Behold then, "the man sitting in the temple of God, showing that he himself is God," (2

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Thess. ii. 4.) Now the great persecution of the Jews will begin; who

(though bad men) cannot submit to him as God; and such a persecution as would extirpate the whole race had not God cut off 1040 days of Antichrist's reign, as was before observed. Such of the Gentiles, as had so much sense as to refuse him in the character of a god, would have shared the same fate, had they not hid themselves in the wilds and deserts for *time, times, and half a time*, which measure the length of his reign as a god (Rev. xii. 14). Nevertheless, it appears that many of the nominal Christians, and Jews outwardly will apostasize to him, and become his idolaters (Matt. xxiv. 10. Dan. xi. 35.)

6. Another event previous to the *Millennium* will be, the destroying of that Antichrist or false god. And this will come to pass about a month before said *Millennium*: I say, about a month before: for there is another number in Daniel which supposes as much, "From the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination which maketh desolate is set up, is 1290 days," (chap. xii. 11): but he will maintain his godhead only for *time, times, and half a time* (chap. xii. 7); that is, for a year, two years, and half a year, or 1260 days, as observed before: the difference between these numbers is 30 days, or one month: time little to demolish his godship, bury his army and cleanse the temple, &c. The manner of his destruction is thus described by Daniel, (chap. viii. 25) "He shall be broken without hand:" and well did he foresee; "for he will be consumed with the spirit of Christ's mouth," and not with hands (2 Thess. ii. 8.).

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7. Another event prior to the *Millennium* is the binding of Satan and shutting him up in the abyss for a thousand years (Rev. xx. 1,2,3.). An event this long forseen and dreaded by the devils (Matth. viii. 29.). Poor work do the Antimillennarians or spiritualizing Millennarians (who are much the same) make of the matter: They say that the devil was bound when Christ came in the flesh; because (forsooth) oracles were silenced, and possessions checked: but if the devil has not been loose these thousand years past, and for seven hundred and forty-two years besides, he was never loose in his life. It is not long ago that I heard a grave divine maintaining, "that Satan was bound when the Hebrew boy was born, according to a prophecy of the Sibyls;" and yet before he finished his sermon he cautioned his flock against the temptations of the devil: some happened to laugh at the inconsistency; and his reverence broke the thread of his discourse to admonish them. But is it fair to tickle one first and then break one's

head for laughing? Is it not more like truth to say, "that the devil has been loose, is loose, and will be loose till the *Millennium* begins?" However, the wicked during that *millennium* cannot say, as they do now, "the devil tempted us."

8. The last event, and the event that will usher in the *millennium*, will be, the coming of Christ from paradise to earth, with all the saints he had taken up thither (about three years and a half before) to justify, against the accuser of the brethren; and to settle their future business and rewards, "The time is come that thou shouldest give rewards to thy servants the

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prophets, and to the saints," &c. (Rev. xi,18.) as it is written, "Be thou ruler over all I have — have thou authority over ten cities — thou over five — be thou ruler over all my goods — thou over all my household — be thou judge of such a tribe of Israel — thou king of such a kingdom — thou priest of such a parish, &c. &c. (Luke xii, 42. xix, 7.8. Matt. xxiv, 47.48).— The number of these saints is said to be 10000 (Jude 14); a definite for an indefinite number surely! for we read of 144,000 that "follow the lamb whethersoever he goeth." (Rev. xiv. 4): these are his suit or retinue, who attend his person in his tours through his vast dominions; and consequently in his coming to earth! millions and millions of saints will have been on earth from the days of the first Adam, to the coming of the second Adam. All these will Christ bring with him. The place where they will alight is the "Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east." (Zech. xiv. 4). The mountain will cleave and form a valley, and the water, which Ezekiel speaks of, will spring from the sanctuary and fill the chasm. (Ez. xlvii). Then Christ will enter the city by the east gate, which will ever after be kept shut, as a memorial, that through it the Lord came into the temple, and filled the house with glory, (Ez. xlv). — "And now behold the son of David, sitting on the throne of his father!" Behold the prophecy concerning Jerusalem fulfilled. "The Lord is there." Behold the happy *millennium* begun! O my God, let me be there, if it were only to be servant of servants to my Lord the king!

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VIII. Coincident with the Millennium will be the following events.

1. Reducing to the obedience of Christ all the kingdoms and states that will refuse submission to him, or to the viceroys that he shall appoint over them. Resistance will be made, notwithstanding the wonders in the heaven above, and in the earth beneath, which happened but three years and a half before; and notwithstanding the recent and awful destruction of antichrist, and the descent of Christ and his saints, from heaven to earth, which will be fresh in all memories. Paul intimates that resistance will be made; where else would be the occasion of Christ's "putting down under his feet all rule, power and authority? (1 Cor. xv. 24). Why else should he command the enemies that would not that he should reign over them, to be brought to his presence and slain before him? (Luke xix. 27). Why else this caution, "Kiss the son lest he be angry and ye perish; for then God shall have set his king on the holy hill of Zion, to rule the heathen kings that rage; and to dash them to pieces as a potters vessel?" (Psal. ii. 1-9). Why else should his vice-roys "have power over the resisting nations, to rule them with a rod of iron?" (Rev. ii. 26,27). After this quelling of the refractory, the most eminent of Christ's saints shall reign in peace, as observed before. After this will Christ's priests reform religion where it is, and plant it in countries

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where it is not, so as to cause pure religion to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. (Hab. ii. 14). Now begins the spiritual reign, or latter day glory, which divines talk so much of, though none of them (to my knowledge) has assigned it to its proper time and place. By the same means another branch of popery will be overset; for the popes have already put kingdoms and churches in subjection to the saints: but popish saints and Christ's saints may not be alike: I suspect that St. Thomas a Becket must resign his church; and that St. George, St. David, St. Andrew and St. Patrick must give up their kingdoms to their betters. In this reformation of religion the *Lord's Supper* will be discontinued; for that is to be used no longer than till the Lord come. (1 Cor. xi. 26), Not so baptism. But instead of the Lord's supper another feast will be instituted, as we shall see by and by.

2. Another notable event that will commence with the millennium is, taking away the enmity and hatred between man and man; "for men will no more learn the art of war, but beat their swords into plow-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks. * Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah

* By the above account it is certain that the vine dressing and agriculture will be used in the millennium state of the world; and if agriculture, then the beasts will be employed, but not abused; and if lions and serpents, &c. will be there, why not all other animals, if harmless? Sure it is that fishing will be continued, though the fishes will not devour one another, as now. (Ez. xlviii. 10). I can see no reason why trade, navigation, and all other useful and innocent employments should not be carried on, as at present. Marrying and propagation will remain among all, except the raised and changed saints; and, by reason of a [unintelligible word] state of earth and air, and the good government of Christ's kings and priests, and regularity and sobriety in living, it seems that there shall be no infant of days among them, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: the child shall die an hundred years old, and the days of the people shall be as the days of a tree. (Isai. lxx. 20, 22.)

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vex Ephraim, nor the English the French, nor the French the English, nor any other nation envy or vex one another." (isai. ii. 4 ch. xi. 13). The variance and violence between animal creation shall cease. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard with the kid, the calf with the lion, and a child shall lead them; a child shall play on the hole of the asp, and put his hand into the cockatrice's den, and not be hurt." (Isai. xi). Now the dumb beasts shall no longer groan for the cruelty of man, or their own cruelty to one another; nor the souls under the altar cry, "*how long?*" The earth will be restored to a condition far better than the present. "God will make the wilderness as Eden, and the desert as the garden of God." (Isai. li. 3). Besides plenty and peace, something sanative will be part of the millennium-earth furniture: Ezekiel gives a specimen of it in chapter xlvii; for the water of his river (which sprang from the sanctuary when Christ lighted on the mount of olives) *healed wherever it ran, and the fruit of the trees by its side serve for meat and medicine*; so he expresses their virtue.

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3. Another affair that will be set up in the beginning of the *millennium*, and will continue with it, is, an annual feast to be celebrated in and about Jerusalem. Of this feast Zechariah speaks largely under the name the *feast of tabernacles*: but that he means not the Jewish feast of tabernacles is evident; for that was to be observed only by Israelites born. (Lev. xxxiii. 42); this by the heathens also, even some out of all the families of the earth. (Zech. xiv. 16-18); that in commemoration of tabernacles used in the wilderness; this, to *worship the king*: the penalty of neglecting that is not mentioned; the penalty of neglecting this is very extraordinary, "countries used to rain shall have none, if they come not up to the

feast year by year, and countries that have no rain shall have the plague." (chap. xiv. 17,18). Besides; the prophet throughout the chapter is speaking of things that have not yet had existence. Nothing plainer therefore than that he does not mean any *Mosaic* feast, but a millennium feast; he calls this last a *feast of tabernacles* for an obvious reason, viz. because it must be celebrated in *tabernacles*, or *tents*, or *booths*; for it will be impossible to find houses for all that will then resort to Jerusalem to feast and worship the king. This annual resort accounts for the long and particular descriptions which the prophets give of the fine and safe roads to Zion, through deserts, and across rivers and mountains. Isai. xi. xxxv. Zech. viii. Rev. xiv.

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IX. Subsequent to the millennium are the following events.

1. The loosing of the devil from the bottomless pit; and his going about the world to seduce all the hypocrites from their allegiance to Christ, and his vice-roys, though they, and their progenitors, had experienced the happiness of his reign for a thousand years. The effects will soon show themselves, St. John's * Gog and Magog (whoever they be) will raise an army numerous as the sand on the sea shore, and will march along the breadth of the earth with their rebel clans towards Jerusalem: and when they are come, and have encompassed the camp of the saints (who had retired to their Lord to give notice of the insurrection) and are sure of victory, then fire will come down from heaven, and devour them all. (Rev. xx. 7-9.)

2. Sometime after will come on the second resurrection, hinted at in my text; a resurrection both of the just and unjust: for during a ministry of a thousand years we must suppose that Christ's priests had made many converts, who died; and that many will be alive at that time: and if so, those must be raised, and these changed, as in the first resurrection. After

* His Gog and Magog cannot be the same with those of Ezekiel; because there is so much difference between the countries whence they are come, their exploits, and the places and manner of their overthrow. I rather think the latter will make their appearance between the establishment of the Jews, and the millennium.

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this the judgment will sit; and when trial is over and sentences pronounced, the devil and the wicked will be cast into the *lake*; and

the righteous, with their lord, will ascend to heaven to be presented to God; with a *behold I and the children thou hast given me!* And there they will abide till the old earth be burnt, and the new earth created, and the new Jerusalem built in heaven: then they and he will descend in that amazing city, and abide on earth forever, in all the happiness human nature is capable of.

I have now done, Sir, except expressing a wonder or two.

1. I wonder that Christ's thousand years reign is not more thought of by modern Christians; for in the earliest ages of christianity it was a sure article of faith, and a favorite topic of conversation: the writings of the three first centuries are full of it, with but one exception of any note, and he discarded the book of Revelation from the canon of scripture, which was a tacit confession that the doctrine was there. And I wonder the more for the following reasons; Christ has retained expectations of it ever since he sat down at the right hand of God (Heb. . x. 13); the four living creatures in the midst of his throne, and the four and twenty elders who surround it, make this the burden of their sons. *We shall reign upon the earth* (Rev. v. 10); the apostles, even after the day of pentecost, were expecting it, and wishing for it; nay the whole animal creation, by a kind of instinctive prescience, groaned for its delay, as well as all they who had the first fruits of the spirit (Rom. viii. 19-23); Paul recommends it as a comfortable

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theme of meditation (Thess. iv. 18). But what little effect have these things on the present generation! Should Christ now appear in the clouds he would hardly find upon earth any faith in the *millennium!* Surely the signs of Christ's coming do now appear; for when he had spoken of that coming in Matthew (ch. xxiv.), he adds in the same discourse, *While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.* In the fourth and following centuries the Christians had a reason for being shy of the doctrine, which we have not: then kings of the earth became *christian*, and consequently were jealous of the fifth monarchy.

2. I wonder that none (to my knowledge) have written of the millennium in a simple and literal manner; especially as that involves in it no absurdity or improbability, or any thing contrary to sound faith and good manners: and I wonder the more, as so many parts of the bible point to the subject in that light, and can have no meaning

suitable to the words and dignity of prophets and apostles, but upon a supposition, that such a thing will be in reality, and not in some *mystical* or *allegorical* whimsies. Let anyone try his skill (for instance) with Ezekiel's temple, and with many other texts quoted in this piece, and see if all men of sense (manners permitting) will not laugh at him, except *mystics*? I will recite only that petition in the Lord's prayer — thy kingdom come; — the kingdom of grace was come at that time; the kingdom of glory is never to come to men: the millennium kingdom therefore is the object of that petition;

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and when it is come, the petition will be improper.

3. I wonder that so many great men have taken upon them to fix the time when the millennium and its preceding events are to take place, by arbitrary use of Daniel and John's numbers: I say arbitrary; for what they denominate days their commentators denominate years, and then rummage through their histories of Rome-pagan and Rome-papal for points to begin at; and yet their gross mistakes, discovered by time, give no warning! I have taken the arithmetic of those two divine chronometers under the denomination which themselves give their figures (but with what success time will show); and am content with the old, and hitherto, unconfuted hypothesis, viz. "that this world is to last seven thousand years, and that at the end of the sixth thousand the *millennium* will begin." This hypothesis is grounded partly, on a prophecy of Elias, which the Jews have among them; where they got it we cannot tell, any more than we can tell where Jude found the prophecy of Enoch: and partly on Moses *septenaries*, such as the *seventh* day, and the *seventh* year, &c. which day was a day of rest to man and beast, and which year was a year of rest to the land; and if one day be a thousand years with the Lord, (2 Pet. iii, 8), it follows, that the six days of the week are six thousand years, and that the seventh is a thousand years of rest: Paul confirms this signification of the seventh day by making it typical of the sabbatism which remains for the people of God. (Heb. iv. 4-9). To the above we may add the *septenaries* of saint John, such as the *seven*

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seals, the *seven* trumpets, the *seven* vials, &c. for under the opening of the sixth seal, the sounding of the sixth trumpet, and the pouring of

the sixth vial (all which I take to be synchronic) we may find passages that exactly correspond with the near approach of Christ coming to reign; and under the *seventh* seal, *seventh* trumpet, and *seventh* vial we have him and his saints on earth. Let me add, that I have not met with any of the fathers of the three first centuries who as much as questioned the validity of the above hypothesis. I ask their venerable leave to join issue with them; and to assert, that from the present year (1788) to the commencement of the millennium are but two hundred and eight years. I make it out thus; from the creation (according to the Hebrew chronology) to the birth of Christ 4004; from the birth of Christ to the present year, 1788; these years added together, make 5792; and 208 added to these make 6000: it is true, a late chronologer places the birth of Christ in A.M. 4007; and makes it out that Dionitius Exiguus fixed the Christian era 3 years too late: if so, there are but 205 between us and the *millennium*. Time little enough to bring forth the events we have already mentioned, viz. the destruction of the Ottoman empire; the restoration of the Jews, and their rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple; the exploits of Antichrist towards the mastery of the world, &c. Therefore we may expect soon to see the *fig tree budding and putting forth* its leaves.

4. I wonder, Sir, if your patience be not exhausted with the length, and perhaps, nonsense of my sermon?

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The reply of the tutor was to this effect.

"You finished your discourse with the supposition that the length and nonsense of it had tried my patience. If you used lightness you are to blame. But as I hope you are always in earnest when you study the things of God, I have to assure you that the novelty and ingenuity of your attempt have entertained me not a little. And when you are more master of time than at present, I advise you to study your subject closely, and you will see cause to alter some parts of your plan, and correct the errors of others. — You have dropped a hint of two touching the New Heaven and New Earth, which sounded a little strange. Let us hear what you have to say on those subjects, when it comes to your turn to appear in that desk again." —

Let me tell thee, gentle reader, that the tutor's advice was taken by the composer of the millennium: and it has undergone several alterations and corrections since the protograph was exhibited in the said desk.

Let me tell thee further, that the other advice, or rather command of the tutor was attended to; and a discourse delivered in the same desk, on the New Heaven and New Earth. A copy of which follows under the title, Last Novelties. And if thou like it half as well as I do, thou wilt not begrudge the eleven-penny bit it cost thee.

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E R R A T A:

The following errors escaped notice in some of the preceding sheets—*if* is left out before *therefore* in p. 10, l. 25, is for are, p. 14. l. 5, of the note.

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The above *errata* have been corrected in the electronic text
Spelling has been updated to modern English spelling

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