

When Jesus Returns ---what then?

**by
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Introduction

The second coming of Jesus has fascinated and inspired Christians for almost two thousand years. That great Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, referred to this momentous event as the “blessed hope” in Titus 2:13. After showing himself to his disciples for forty days after his resurrection, Jesus gathered them together at a familiar place close to Jerusalem called Olivet. The last time they had met together on this mount was on that fateful night of Jesus’ betrayal and arrest there in the garden of Gethsemane. Unlike that night of despair and hopelessness, this meeting on the mount of Olivet was one filled with hope and promise. After giving last minute instructions to his disciples, Jesus was taken up from them in a “cloud”. While the disciples were looking up into heaven witnessing this glorious happening, two angels appeared and declared unto them these unforgettable words:

“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.” (Acts 1:11)

Ever since that historic day, Christians have been divided over the events that would follow Jesus’ promised return. Speculations have run rampant and even churches have

been split because of the differences of opinion concerning this captivating topic. This paper will attempt to discuss some of the most widely held views, and hopefully, will present to the reader a clearer understanding of these future events. This writer believes that the best way to evaluate this much disputed topic is to consider those scriptures which are plain and forthright, and which speak directly to the topic in question, and to avoid those passages which are obscure and riddled with symbolism. With God's help, this I will endeavor to do.

Chapter One

Eschatology is the study of last things. In this field of biblical study there are basically three principal views: amillennialism, premillennialism, and postmillennialism. To those unfamiliar with these technical and somewhat foreboding terms, I will attempt to make them less daunting. The root word of each is “millennial” which simply means one thousand. This term comes from the twentieth chapter of Revelation where it speaks of a “thousand years”. Many Christians believe that there will be a literal “thousand year reign” of Christ on the earth. However, the disagreement comes as to the “when” this period of utopia begins.

For the premillennialist, the rapture of the Church comes before the millennium, hence, the prefix “pre”. In contrast, the postmillennialist believes that the rapture will occur after the millennium, therefore, the prefix “post” is utilized. The amillennialist is in a unique position in that he denies a literal interpretation of the term “thousand years”.

Each one of these groups have within their camp some very noteworthy and obviously knowledgeable biblical scholars. One wonders how there can be such a varied group of opinions where each one is supposedly examining and interpreting the very same scriptures. In fact, cries of “heresy” are oftentimes attributed to any and all who differ

from one's own personal interpretation. Human nature is remarkable in the fact that once you have developed a particular dogma or belief, the chances of changing that accepted belief system, regardless of the evidence presented, becomes almost insurmountable especially as one grows older.

Let's now take a little closer look at each of these prophetic views.

Amillennialism. As I have already pointed out, amillennialists do not believe in a literal 1000 year reign of Christ. Instead, they believe that this reference to the millennial period as found in Revelation 20 is to be interpreted in a figurative or spiritual sense. Furthermore, according to this view, the 1000 years actually represent the Church Age from its inception at Pentecost to its end which is just prior to Jesus' second coming.

Most church historians agree that this millennial view originated in the mid or late 2nd century. However, it did not take prominence until the 4th century as a result of its most famous proponent, Saint Augustine. Today, amillennialism is found in both the Catholic church and many of the Protestant denominations. For example, it is largely embraced by the Lutherans, Disciples of Christ, Christian churches, Church of Christ, Reformed, and a significant following in the more evangelical denominations such as the Southern Baptists.

For those readers who would like to learn more about this particular view, then the following authors would be helpful: Kim Riddlebarger, Michael Horton, Dennis E. Johnson, Robert B. Strimple, Anthony A. Hoekema, Oswald

Allis, and William E. Cox.

Postmillennialism. The reason for placing “post” before “pre” in our discussion is because the premillennial view is somewhat more complicated and diverse in its views and belief system. Consequently, the premillennial section will be examined lastly.

Succinctly, the postmillennial position believes that because of the propagation of the gospel, the world would enter into a Golden Age whereupon society would begin to reflect the ideals of Christian ethics. This was especially popular during the period known as the Great Awakening and the subsequent revivals of the 19th century and including up to the mid 20th century. In other words, the kingdom of God on earth will be realized through the preaching of the gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit. At the end of this long period of righteousness and peace, the return of Christ will occur and the eternal state begins.

This view is widely held by the Presbyterian Church. Some of its most prominent authors include B.B. Warfield, Rousas J. Rushdoony, Lorraine Boettner, Gary North, and Kenneth Gentry.

Premillennialism. Premillennialism, as its name implies, believes that the rapture of the Church occurs before the 1000 year reign of Christ commonly known as the “millennium”. There are basically two main groups within this prophetic camp: historic premillennialists and dispensationalists.

Historic premillennialists are also known as post-tribulation premillennialists. Their view of eschatology

teaches that the second coming of Jesus will occur prior to the thousand year reign, but after that period of great distress referred to as the “tribulation”.

They are given the name “historic” simply because of the fact that many of the early church fathers held to this view. Among the more popular writers who are included within this group are John Gill, Charles Spurgeon, George Eldon Ladd, Francis Shaeffer, and James Montgomery Boice.

Dispensationalism. Finally, our discussion of eschatology comes to the most complex and controversial, and yet, the most popular of the prophetic camps, namely, dispensationalism. The dispensationalists pride themselves in the knowledge that they have a better understanding of the “end times”.

Their characteristic theology embraces a pre-tribulation view of a premillennial rapture, however, some believe that the rapture will be mid-tribulation. Their system of biblical interpretation is based on a series of chronologically successive “dispensations”. These dispensations are divided with respect to the different covenants upon which God deals with mankind. Additionally, a unique feature of dispensationalism comes from the fact of their belief that the nation of Israel is distinct from the Church.

Noticeably, the one feature of dispensationalism that sets them apart from all other groups is the belief of a **two-stage coming** of Christ. According to them, the “rapture” is when Jesus comes back to earth “for” his saints and his “second coming” is when he comes back seven years later after the rapture “with” his saints. The concept of a two-stage coming of Christ was unknown in Church history

until its first appearance around 1830.

Its origin is usually attributed to John Nelson Darby who is generally acknowledged as the “father of dispensationalism”. Darby was one of the early leaders of the Brethren movement. C.I. Scofield, with his widely read Reference Bible in 1909, further popularized this viewpoint.

The popularity of dispensationalism has become pervasive among the Pentecostal and Charismatic groups, the various non-denominational Bible churches, and many of the Baptist churches. However, the mainline Protestants have continued to reject its tenets. Probably the one institution that has made a significant contribution to the rise of dispensationalism is the Dallas Theological Seminary. One writer referred to it as the “flagship” of dispensationalism. Most recently, its resurgence can be attributed to the popular Left Behind series of books and movies.

Hopefully, the reader will now have a little better understanding of the three eschatological views and some of the most relevant terminology in this discussion of the final events of history. As I have previously stated, I believe that if we let scripture interpret scripture, then the truth of this “blessed hope” of the Lord’s return can be more fully revealed and understood.

Chapter 2

To begin our study of what the scriptures reveal, we will first consider those which speak of a certain day marked on God's celestial calendar. Jesus and the disciples referred to this historic day as the "day of judgment".

"Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city." (Matt.10:15)

"But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." (Matt.11:22)

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." (Matt.12:36)

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." (2 Pet.2:9)

"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." (2 Pet.3:7)

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." (1 Jn.4:17)

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting

chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” (Jude 6)

As one studies these verses, it becomes obvious that a specific day is reserved to judge the ungodly of this world. The verse in 1 Jn.4:17 alludes to the fact that even the believers will be judged on this fateful day. Furthermore, Jude 6 clearly intimates that the demons will also be held in judgment for this “great day”.

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;

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.” (Heb.9:27,28)

The writer of Hebrews states the obvious when he says that “it is appointed unto men once to die”. Known to everyone is the fact that death is an inescapable event. When a baby is born, its life’s clock begins to tick. In fact, its day of birth is the day that it begins to die. What is of note, however, is what the author of Hebrews states in the very next clause, that is, “but **after this** the judgment”. Writing with the authority of inspiration, the author further declares that the very next notable event on history’s horizon is “the judgment”. But wait! Many have been led to believe that Jesus’ second coming was to be the next historic happening. This is true, and the writer of Hebrews agrees with this cherished teaching. Notice the juxtaposition of the **judgment** in verse 27 with the **second**

coming in verse 28. Thus, in the mind of the Hebrews writer, these two historic events will be simultaneous. As we shall further see, this fact is reinforced in many other scriptural references.

“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” (Rom.14:10)

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...” (2 Cor.5:10,11)

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them...

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works...

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Rev.20:11,12,15)

From the above passages, we find that the judgment seat of Christ and that judgment that is commonly known as the great white throne judgment are one and the same. They both describe a time and event in which both the godly and the ungodly are judged according to what is written in the

“books”. The fool that says today “There is no God” will, on that day, kneel before God and proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord (see Rom.14:11 & Phil.2:11). In fact, every single person who has ever lived upon the earth who has rejected their Creator will kneel before their Maker and, with this same utterance, give Him glory and honor.

“And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day...

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day...

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”
(Jn.6:39,40,44,54)

“Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” (Jn.11:24)

“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” (Jn.12:48)

In the sixth chapter of John, two phrases are repeated multiple times, “raise him up” and “last day”. Jesus, by using this redundancy, emphasizes the fact that there will be a resurrection at the last day of human history.

Undoubtedly, Jesus must have stressed this concept of a resurrection at the close of history to his disciples and others who followed him. This is why Martha was so well-versed in this established teaching of Jesus. In John 12, again the idea of the judgment at the last day is given prominence. So, what becomes obvious in the plain reading of the scripture is that the resurrection, judgment and last day are all spoken as one historical event.

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice.

And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (Jn.5:28,29)

“And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” (Lk.14:14)

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead...

But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.” (1 Cor.15:21,23,24)

If one were to read these passages without prior bias, then this truth becomes evident. The truth I am referring to is this: (1) there will be a general resurrection, (2) this resurrection includes both the just and the unjust, (3) the

time of the resurrection will be at Jesus' second coming, and (4) this event will mark the consummation.

So far, the idea of a general resurrection at Jesus' second coming is not a new concept, but has already been introduced from the scriptures which we have previously studied. What is new, however, is the fact that at Jesus' return the **consummation** of all things will be realized. Verses 24-28 give a certain insight of that last day in history which is not found anywhere else in the Bible. Here, we get a glimpse of mankind's Savior restoring back to the Father that which was lost over 6000 years ago in the Garden of Eden, namely, man's innocence and righteousness.

“He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and reapers are the angels.

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of the world.

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father...” (Matt.13:37-43)

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

And shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt.13:47-50)

Oftentimes, Jesus would use a literary device known as a parable to portray a spiritual truth. Fortunately, in both the parable of the sower and the net of fishes, Jesus gave to the disciples the meaning of each. Of course, the truth being proclaimed is the same in each parable. They both speak of a harvest (general resurrection), a separation of the good from the bad (the judgment), and a reward (kingdom/heaven). Notice, too, there is only **one** harvest and **one** net. We will bring this point out again later in this paper.

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality; eternal life.

But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” (Rom.2:5-9,16)

Paul gives words of warning to those who have rejected Christ. To them, Paul declares that the day of judgment will be a “day of wrath” because of their impenitent hearts. However, this day of judgment will be a day of rewards to the believers. They will be blessed with glory, honor, and eternal life. In 1st Thess.1:10, Paul states that Jesus had delivered the believers from the “**wrath to come**”. Many of the “prophecy teachers” of today, who belong to the dispensational camp, interpret this verse as “proof” that the rapture will occur **before** the period known as the tribulation. This is an obvious “twisting” of the scriptures. Here, Paul is merely repeating what Jesus taught in John 5:24. In this verse, Jesus stated that those who believed in him would not come into “**condemnation**”, that is, **wrath** (see also Jn.3:36). That this is the truth being proclaimed is further illuminated for us in the following passage.

“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have to need that I write unto you.

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

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.

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day

should overtake you as a thief...

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess.5:1-4,9)

This chapter is merely a continuation of Paul’s thought in the latter part of chapter 4. Although we will discuss 1st Thess.4 a little later, the reader should study it now in order to acquaint himself with the entire topic of discussion. After such a review, it will become obvious that the “rapture” or Christ’s second coming is the primary focus. The original purpose of Paul’s speaking on this matter was to reassure the saints that their loved ones who had died will not be left out of this marvelous event of the second coming of Jesus. In fact, he tells them that those which “sleep in Jesus” will actually accompany the Lord upon his return.

But now, he turns his attention to the ungodly, and again reiterates that “sudden destruction” will come upon them. This destruction is the “wrath” that God will execute upon the ungodly. Notice the contrast: **destruction** to the wicked but **salvation** to the believers. Because the Christians had put their trust in Jesus, they are “not appointed” to God’s wrath. Verse 9 is also used by those who teach a pretribulation rapture. Both this verse and 1st Thess.1:10 are taken out of context by the dispensationalist. The truth that the wicked will receive punishment while the righteous will receive rewards at Jesus’ second coming is a theme that is repeatedly taught in the scriptures.

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the

Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.

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

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

When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." (1 Thess.1:7-10)

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." (1 Thess.2:1)

I never cease to be amazed how someone can read these verses, and yet, come away with the interpretation of two comings of Jesus that are separated by a period of seven years. Of course, the dispensationalist attempts to make a distinction between the "rapture" and the "second coming". They maintain that the rapture or "parousia" (coming--ch.2:1), is a different event from the second coming or "apokalupsis" (revealed--ch.1:7). Both these Greek words are sometimes used interchangeably for Jesus' second coming. Thus, the Greek makes no distinction between the two terms.

What this passage does teach, however, is that upon Jesus' return, the wicked will be punished and the believers will welcome his arrival with much glorification and

admiration for the One who saved them. Of course, chapter two continues with the same discussion and speaks of “our gathering together” unto Christ. This naturally refers to the “rapture” (using the dispensational term).

Now, if we were to accept the idea that there is a difference in the two Greek terms “apokalupsis” and “parousia”, then we would have a problem in the **sequence** of the alleged “two-stage” coming of Christ in this passage. Let me explain. According to the dispensational view, the rapture or “parousia” occurs **first**, then the second coming (sometimes referred to as Day of the Lord) or “apokalupsis” will happen seven years **later**. The sequence is **reversed** in this passage. Of course, if you accepted the plain and simple mechanics of language and what the words state in these verses, then the truth becomes self-evident. Again, the message is the same as in all the other scriptures that we have examined. Namely, Jesus will return and execute judgment on the ungodly and give rewards to the saints. **“That day”**, as verse ten states, is none other than the “judgment day” or “last day” which, incidentally, will also be the “resurrection day” and the “second coming”.

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

And saying, Where is the promise of his coming (parousia)? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

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:

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men...

But 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.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

Looking for and hasting unto the coming (parousia) of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Pet.3:3-7;10-13)

In this chapter, Peter makes a comparison of the judgment of the world during Noah's time, and a future judgment of the world that is yet to come but will happen at Jesus' return. It is by no accident that the terms **"coming"** (parousia), **"day of judgment"**, **"day of the Lord"**, **"day of God"** are all found in this one passage of scripture. The Apostle even instructs the saints that they should be "looking for and hasting" that day to come. As before, these verses look forward to the Lord's second coming at which time he will judge the ungodly and redeem the believers.

As a science teacher, what I especially find interesting in these verses is the description of how and to what degree the Lord will destroy the earth and the heavens. Remember that Paul wrote in 2 Th.1:8 that Jesus would destroy the unrighteous with “flaming fire”, but here, we discover that even the very **elements** will “melt with fervent heat”. One wonders if God will use the laws of physics which he established at the beginning of creation to bring about the demise of all that which he created. Intriguing, too, is the phrase “the heavens shall pass away with a “**great noise**”. The evolutionary cosmologists believe that the universe **began** by a “big bang”. How ironic is it that God will **end** the universe with a “great noise”. The words taken together actually intimates a tremendous sound resulting from a crash. So, I can almost envision the universe collapsing or imploding, thus causing its own incineration.

Thus far, we have shown in scripture after scripture that the resurrection, judgment, and second coming all occur on the last day of human history. However, the dispensationalist objects by saying that there are passages that unequivocally teach that there will be those who are “left behind” at Jesus’ return. Therefore, they maintain that the so-called “last day” couldn’t possibly be the end of all things. By using the scriptural “patchwork quilt” method of interpretation, they can squeeze in a seven year period of the antichrist, the battle of Armageddon, the millennium, and the battle of Gog and Magog. If the reader is unfamiliar with the “patchwork quilt” method, it simply means that a verse or passage is plucked out from various places in the Bible and then “pieced” together to form a

mosaic which they call “dispensational truth”. The reader need not try and research this novel method of interpretation, since it is merely the invention of this author. To be fair, though, let’s consider some of these “left behind” passages. Earlier in this paper, I stated that we would return to First Thessalonians 4:15-17. We will do so at this time.

“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 (precede) them which are asleep.

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

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

From these verses, thousands of sermons have been preached that illuminated in much detail how that millions of people will vanish from the earth. The sermons even give some possible newspaper headlines that would be printed the day after the “rapture”. Some of the stories include accounts of airplanes crashing because the pilots had mysteriously disappeared while in flight. Others cite the hundreds of thousands of cars that were wrecked on the high-ways and no drivers were to be found. The millions of missing persons, of course, were the saints who had been “raptured”.

Paul, in writing these words, was primarily addressing his comments to those believers whose loved ones had passed away. These were words of comfort. We have already covered much of this discussion earlier in this paper. In studying the scriptures, one must be cognizant of the fact that chapter divisions were not placed in the Bible until over eleven hundred years after it was written.

Therefore, we must not let the chapter division obscure our thoughts as we read chapters 4 and 5. The topic remains the same in the bulk of both chapters, namely, the second coming of Christ. Hence, the idea of people being “left behind” has no basis of fact in this passage. We will now turn our attention to those verses which seem to have a stronger argument for this pet theory of dispensationalism.

“And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” (Matt.24:39-41)

“I tell you, in that night there shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.”
(Luke 17:34)

Just a perfunctory reading of these verses does seem to portray the image of the wicked being left upon the earth. For many years of my Christian life, I too, accepted the dispensational teachings of a “two-stage” coming of Christ,

the “rapture” of the Church, and the unsaved being “left” behind to face the next seven years of the antichrist’ reign. After much study in the field of prophecy, I finally came to the conclusion that the scriptures do not support these dispensational tenets. However, I always thought that the word “left” in these verses was somewhat ambiguous. Later, fortunately, I discovered that the ambiguity was due to the translation and not to the words originally found in the earlier manuscripts.

Words are merely vehicles that are used to convey the thoughts of the speaker. Since the New Testament manuscripts were written in Greek, we need to study the two terms under consideration, “taken” and “left”, in their original language. We must do as Paul instructed Timothy to do in 2 Tim.2:15, that is, to “rightly divide” the word of Truth.

We will begin with the word “taken”. This word is Strong’s Concordance #3880. There are 18 Greek words which are translated into the English KJV as “taken”. In fact, we find this word (taken) 68 times in the KJV New Testament. The Greek word found in the verses cited above in Matthew and Luke is **paralambano**. In fact, this is the **only time** it is used in the entire New Testament. It essentially means “**to receive near**”. I like the thought of Jesus receiving us near him.

Next, let’s consider the word “left” which is Strong’s #863. The Greek word is **aphiemi** which literally means “**to send away**”. What a different picture this word paints for us! Instead of being drawn close to Jesus’ bosom, the ungodly are **sent away from his presence** to face the

judgment of everlasting punishment.

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:” (Matt.25:41)

From this understanding, we find that there is **no support** for the idea of the world **continuing** for any length of time **after** the second coming of the Lord.

In this study, we have only examined those scriptures found in the gospels and the epistles which were plain and forthright. One must **never** build any doctrine from apocalyptic literature, which uses much symbolism and imagery, when there are other passages available which are clear and unambiguous and that cover the same topic.

In the following chapters, we will consider a few of the more prominent teachings of dispensationalism. Since the primary objective of our study was focused on the **clear and plain passages** dealing with Jesus’ return, we will now limit our discussion to just a few areas of dispensational thought. These include the rapture, the antichrist, and the great tribulation.

Chapter 3

Rapture. The term “rapture” does not appear anywhere in the Bible. This fact alone does not necessarily invalidate its truthfulness, however. The word itself refers to the “catching away” of the bride of Christ, which is the Church. According to the dispensationalists, the Church will be “taken” from the earth at the “coming” of Christ, otherwise known by its Greek name, the “Parousia”. This event would necessitate people being “left behind”. A seven year period of great distress would follow and, would eventually end at the Second Advent of Christ. Thus, a “two-stage” coming of Jesus is required.

The word “rapture”, however, did not originate until the early part of the 1830’s when it was first coined by John Nelson Darby, the leader of the Brethren movement. This paper will not entertain the controversy of who was actually the first to expound the idea of a “two-stage” coming, whether Darby or a young Scottish woman by the name of Margaret Macdonald. Rather, I will only address the scriptural texts that have been cited in proof of this popular view referred to as the “rapture”. The most referenced biblical passage to support the “rapture” is from First Thessalonians.

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

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

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep.

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

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

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have to need that I write unto you.

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

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.

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

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

(1Thess.4:13-18; 5:1-4,9)

Let the reader be aware that I have intentionally omitted the paragraph division, so as not to interrupt Paul's thought (Paul didn't have paragraph divisions in his letter either).

Paul, in verse 13, tells the Thessalonians that they should not fret or worry about “them which are asleep”. He then begins to outline to them the sequence of events which were to transpire at Jesus’ return. In verse 14, he comforts those who had loved ones, which had previously died, by explaining that God will bring them back with Jesus at his return.

In the next verse, Paul says that what he is teaching them is based on the authority of the “word of the Lord”. In other words, he received this knowledge by direct revelation from Jesus. Next, he states that those Christians who are alive at Jesus’ “coming” (Parousia), will not “prevent”, that is, **precede** them which are “asleep” in Christ. By comparing this thought with 1Cor.15:51&52, we can get a better understanding of what Paul meant by his usage of the the word precede.

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

It becomes evident that these two verses in First Corinthians actually mirror Paul’s teaching here in the Thessalonian passage.

Let’s consider for a moment the last clause in verse 16, “the dead in Christ shall **rise** first”. According to Thayer’s Lexicon, the word rise means to “**cause to appear, bring forward**”. Therefore, the picture being framed for us is not

one in which the dead are raised from literal graves first, but rather, that the “dead in Christ” who are in heaven with their Lord shall receive their immortal bodies first. **Then**, with their resurrected bodies, the dead will return **with Jesus** to meet those Christians who are still alive. **Then**, those believers who are alive will be “changed”, that is, they will receive their resurrected bodies also as they are being “caught up” to be with the Lord. The phrase “caught up” is where the dispensationalists derive the term **rapture**.

After Paul gave comforting words to the Corinthians concerning their loved ones, he then redirects the discussion back to Jesus’ second coming. Paul refers to this event as the “day of the Lord”. If you carefully study what Paul is teaching in the entire section of chapters 4 and 5, then it becomes obvious that only one event is under consideration, namely, the Second Coming. Paul uses the terms “coming” (Parousia) and “day of the Lord” interchangeably. Again, judgment in the form of “sudden destruction” or “wrath” to the ungodly but, “salvation” (vs.9) to the saints are the overriding thoughts in these words of Paul.

“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.” (Rev.4:1)

Remarkably, there are those who maintain that the phrase, “come up hither”, symbolizes the rapture of the

Church and, all subsequent visions relate to those events between the “rapture” and the “second coming” (the seven year period of the antichrist). Of course, I am referring to the dispensationalist. This is a forced interpretation and extremely tenuous, to say the least, since it violates all known rules of hermeneutics (rules of interpreting scripture).

Chapter 4

The antichrist. Probably no other personage in all of Christendom, besides the Lord Jesus, has captivated the imagination of both saint and sinner alike. Books and even movies have been produced centering on this one infamous individual. Since the antichrist is such an integral part of dispensational thought, it necessitates some consideration for discussion.

According to the dispensational view, after the rapture of the church, the antichrist will make his presence known in the world's political scene. He will make a covenant with the Jewish nation, but will break that covenant after 3 ½ years. Also, he will sit in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and declare himself to be the Jews' Messiah. The Jews will reject him as their Messiah and, consequently, he will begin to persecute them. This period of "great tribulation" will last for 3 ½ years ending at the Second Coming, thus precipitating the battle of Armageddon. This is just a brief synopsis of the dispensational teaching regarding the antichrist. There is some variation to this particular interpretation among the dispensation-alists, although its basic tenets are the same.

The word "**antichrist**" is only found five times in Scripture and only mentioned by one apostle, namely, John. However, Paul explicitly refers to the antichrist calling him the "man of sin" and "son of perdition" in Second Thessalonians. He implicitly references him in First

Timothy by ascribing to him certain causal attributes. Thus, these are the only two apostles who even addresses this evil personage, and, the following passages are the only texts that we can rightfully or critically examine in order to glean information concerning the antichrist.

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us...

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” (1John 2:18,19,22)

“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” (1Jn.4:3)

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” (2John 7)

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

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

God.” (2Thess.2:3,4)

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.” (1Tim.4:1-3)

Both Paul and John describe this person as one who is a “deceiver” and one who perverts the Gospel. Essentially, it is someone who teaches error, false doctrine, tradition, or otherwise, would cause apostasy within the Church. In fact, John states that there are those who are in the Church, in his time, who have this “spirit of the antichrist”. It is someone who is **within** and **not** someone who is **outside** of the Church who is trying to destroy its teachings.

Paul goes into a little more detail about this infamous personage. He warns that this person will try and usurp God’s authority and will sit in the **temple of God**, that is, **in the place of God**. The prefix “**anti**”, in the Greek, can mean either (1) over; against, or (2) **instead of, in place of**. The **context** must determine which is correct. Here, this man of sin sits in **the temple of God**, as if he were God. Whenever Paul uses the term, **temple of God**, he is referring to the **Church** and **not** the Jewish temple (see 1Cor.3:9,16,17). Thus, the antichrist is someone **inside the Church** who attempts to destroy it by leading it into

apostasy.

Paul, in writing to Timothy, gives to us some of the sequences in which this “falling away” or apostasy will come about. Notice the following clauses which he uses: “giving heed to seducing spirits, doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and abstain from meats”.

I personally believe that the fathers of the Reformation were correct in identifying the antichrist with the pope or papacy. Let me explain why. To begin with, Paul said that before the coming of the Lord, there would be a “falling away” or apostasy. When the Emperor Constantine allegedly became a Christian, after the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 A.D., he legalized Christianity in 313 A.D. The Encyclopedia Britannica recorded that “**pagans by the multiplied thousands**” entered the Church in order to obtain favor from the Emperor. Thus began the departure from the Faith.

Finally, in 476 A.D. upon the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the bishop of Rome (pope) became, not only the ecclesiastical leader, but also the civil authority as well. (Just as a point of interest is the fact that the last emperor of Rome was named Romulus Augustus. He takes his name from the founder of Rome and the first Emperor of the Roman Empire). As the light of the Church began to “flicker” and go out, the world was plunged into the Dark Ages. Originally, the Dark Ages was considered by many historians to occupy the bulk of the Middle Ages which lasted from the 4th century to the 14th century. The light of the world did not begin to “flicker” back on until the 14th

century upon the arrival of John Wycliffe, who is referred to as the “morning star of the reformation”.

I will now provide to the reader a list of quotes from Catholic authors and even some from the popes themselves. Let the reader judge whether these quotes support what both Paul and John had to say about the antichrist.

“We declare, state, define and pronounce that for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pope is altogether necessary for salvation”

“The pope is of so great dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man, but as it were God, and the vicar of God...The pope is as it were God on earth.”

“We (the popes) hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty.”

“The pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, but he is Jesus Christ, Himself, hidden under the veil of human flesh.”

“The pope and God are the same, so he has all power in Heaven and earth.”

“The pope has power to change times, abrogate laws, and dispense with all things, even the precepts of Christ.”

“We confess that the pope has power of changing scripture and of adding to it, and taking from it, according to his will.”

I sincerely hope that the reader understood the sinister intent of the words spoken in the above quotes. These quotes primarily address Paul’s description of the antichrist

as found in Thessalonians. The following history of catholic heresies and the dates of their adoption is taken from an article written by Dr. Jack L. Arnold coincide with Paul's words as found in Timothy.

“Prayers for the dead”--300 A.D.

“Veneration of angels and dead saints”--375 A.D.

“Beginning of exaltation of Mary, the term Mother of God applied to her by Council of Ephesus”--431 A.D.

“Doctrine of Purgatory by Gregory I”--593 A.D.

“Fasting from meats on Fridays and during Lent”--998 A.D.

“Celibacy of the priesthood”--1079 A.D.

“The Inquisition”, Council of Verona--1184 A.D.

“Sale of Indulgences”--1190 A.D.

“Auricular Confession of sins to a priest instead of to God”, instituted by pope Innocent III--1215 A.D.

“Bible forbidden to layman, placed on the Index of Forbidden Books” by Council of Valencia--1229 A.D.

This list is just a sampling of the many “doctrines of devils” that were instituted by the papacy. Its greatest sin lies in the fact of the millions of Christians that were slaughtered during the Dark Ages of the Church. One historian, in his estimate of 150 million that were killed by the papal system, made this statement, “the Church of Rome has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind.”

As mentioned earlier, the dispensationalist believes that the antichrist will make a pact or covenant with the Jews. I

will now examine their “proof” text which they use to support this dispensational dogma.

We must turn to the famous prophecy of Daniel’s Seventy weeks in order to find this alleged “proof”. After reading Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning Israel’s seventy years of captivity, Daniel prays and God dispatches Gabriel in answer to his prayer.

Daniel’s Seventy Weeks.

“At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

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.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

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.

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.”
(Dan.9:23-27)

These verses found in Daniel constitute one of the most controversial passages found in the Bible. From the early church fathers to the modern commentaries, this prophecy has been interpreted with a plethora of views. There are those who maintain that this prophecy was fulfilled in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes in approximately 168 B.C. However, many place its fulfillment during the time of the life of Christ. Still, others say that its ultimate fulfillment extends to the time of the antichrist toward the end of the church age. Let's see if we can wade through the maze of difficulties that this passage presents and, hopefully, discover its true intent and meaning.

Verse 24. Most expositors agree that the “seventy weeks” represent 70 weeks of years, that is, 490 years. According to Keil and Delitzsch in their Commentary on the Old Testament, the word “determined” meant that these seventy-sevens were to be viewed as a whole, in other words, in a **continuous** period of 490 years. However, the dispensationalist believes that there is a parenthesis between Daniel's 69th week and the 70th week. According to H.A. Ironside, “God's prophetic clock stopped at the

crucifixion and will not start again until the rapture of the Church and the seven year tribulation period begins”. This type of interpretation is a flagrant violation of the rules for interpreting scripture.

Gabriel, God’s messenger angel, informed Daniel that this period was “determined” or decreed upon “thy people”, the **Jews**, and upon “thy holy city”, **Jerusalem**. Gabriel further states the purpose of the 490 years: (1) to finish the transgression, (2) to make an end of sins, (3) to make reconciliation for iniquity, (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, (5) to seal up the vision and prophecy, and (6) to anoint the most Holy. Therefore, we will search the scriptures to find the fulfillment of this prophecy.

To finish the transgression / to make an end of sins.

In order to understand the thought being presented in these two clauses, one must view them within their proper context. Remember, it was to “thy people” of which the prophecy rightly belongs. Daniel received this vision as he was contemplating the end of the seventy years of desolation as was foretold by the prophet Jeremiah. It was because of Israel’s sins that they had to go into captivity for 70 years. In like manner, Gabriel tells Daniel that Israel will once again be judged for their apostasy against God. However, this future judgment will have a note of finality to it.

“To finish the transgression” means to restrict or prohibit the revolt or rebellion. In other words, Israel’s sins will have a limit to which they can go with impunity. When their sins reach that breaking point, judgment will follow. Notice how this agrees to Paul’s statement in 1 Thess.2:14-

16 and Jesus' words in Matthew.

“For ye brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men.

Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.”

(1Thess.2:14-16)

“Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.”

(Matt.23:31,32)

To make reconciliation for iniquity / to bring in everlasting righteousness.

Reconciliation means to cover, to atone, to expiate sin. The Passover, the Day of Atonement, and every sin offering ever made in the Old Testament all pointed to the day when there would come the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”. The writer of Hebrews had this to say about Jesus' death: “But this man, after he had offered one **sacrifice for sins forever**, sat down on the right hand of God”.

When Jesus picked up the scroll of Isaiah there in the synagogue of Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry, he

boldly announced that he was the fulfillment of that prophecy. Within that text of Isaiah, it states that men would be called “trees of righteousness” and that they would be clothed with “garments of salvation” and be covered with the “robe of righteousness”. Because of the sacrifice of the sinless Son of God, he brought to mankind the promise and hope of “everlasting righteousness”. Malachi, speaking as the last prophet of the Old Covenant, spoke of this historic event: **“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings”**.

To seal up the vision and prophecy / to anoint the most Holy.

It was revealed to Daniel that 490 years would be allotted to Daniel’s people, the Jews. The end of this definite period would complete this prophetic vision. It would also bring into history the anointing of the long-awaited promised Messiah. In Luke 4:18, Jesus declared that God has **“anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives.”**

Verse 25. Here, Gabriel revealed to Daniel when the **beginning** of this prophecy would actually start. He also cautions Daniel to “understand”. From the study of Ezra, we find that there were **three** decrees issued from the kings of the Medes and Persians that dealt with the Jews returning to their homeland in Israel. The first decree was made by Cyrus in approximately **536 B.C.** that gave the

Jews permission to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the “house” of God. However, it was during the reign of Darius that a second decree was proclaimed that gave authority for the Jews to again resume the construction on the temple. This was in **519 B.C.** It was in **457 B.C.** that Artaxerxes made a decree that gave permission for Ezra to return to Jerusalem for the purpose of teaching Israel the “statutes and judgments” of the law, in other words, to re-establish the religious system of the Jewish nation. He was further given the authority to return to the temple the vessels that were taken from it by Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B.C. Although the temple had been rebuilt, the streets and the wall lay still in ruins. This was yet another purpose of the decree and Ezra was assisted in this task by Nehemiah some 13 years later. From the study of Nehemiah, we find that the Jews were in constant battle against Sanballat in his effort to sabotage their efforts. Thus, the building of the wall was finished during “**troublous times**”.

According to this verse, the end of the 69th week would usher in the Messiah. This would mean that the Messiah would be ministering in the 70th week, contrary to dispensational thought.

Verse 26. As a result of the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish people, God’s judgment on the covenant people as a nation was to be the destruction of their city and their temple. As the Apostle John so aptly said, “**He came unto His own and His own received Him not**”. Jesus, as he stood on the mount overlooking Jerusalem, being grieved in his spirit, made this prophetic utterance, “**Behold, your**

house is left unto you desolate”. Notice the somber words spoken by both Jesus and Paul concerning the Jews in the following passages.

“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it...

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” (Luke 19:41,43,44)

“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh...

For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.” (Luke 21:20,22)

“Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.”

(1Thess.2:15,16)

In verse 25, Messiah the **Prince** is mentioned, but in this verse, the **prince** “**that shall come**” is referred to. Obviously, since this **prince** will be instrumental in the destruction of the city and the sanctuary, the reference must be applied to the Roman General Titus. He is a “**prince**”

by virtue of him being the son of the Emperor Vespasian.

The bulk of verse 26 describes what happens to the Jewish nation as a result of the Messiah being “**cut off**”. In fact, this insertion about the “prince that shall come”, lies **not** within the 70 weeks, but only serves to show the consequence of the rejection of the Messiah. It’s fulfillment is actually about forty years later after the 70 weeks (490 years) have been accomplished.

Verse 27. So that the reader does not have to refer back to the original quote of Daniel 9, I will provide it to them at this time.

“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.”

To the dispensationalist, the “he” in this verse refers to the antichrist. According to their interpretation, the antichrist will make a covenant with the Jewish people. However, after three and one half years, he will sit in the rebuilt temple and declare himself to be God. At this point, the Jews will rebel against him and will acknowledge Jesus as the promised Messiah. This will be the start of the “great tribulation” which will last for three and one half years. This is a brief synopsis of the dispensational view.

Instead of using the “patch quilt” method of interpreta-

tion, let's see if we can scripturally determine who in reality will "confirm the covenant". If one were honest with the scriptures, then only one person is described as "confirming" the covenant, namely, Jesus. Notice the prophecy found in Malachi.

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts." (Mal.3:1)

Of course, the first "messenger" referred to is John the Baptist. He was, according to Matt.3:1, **"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."** The passage before us is explicit in the fact that the "messenger of the covenant" was none other than the Lord Jesus. Notice the prophecy found in Isaiah 42:6,7. **"I the LORD have called thee in righteousness...and give thee for a covenant of the people (Jews), for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison."** Again, the reference to Jesus is obvious. I will cite two more passages that support the thesis that Jesus is the "messenger of the covenant". They are both self-explanatory with no need for commentary.

"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith...Though it be a

man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed...And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ..." (Gal.3:14,15,17)

"Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." (Rom.15:8)

The scriptures plainly teach that Jesus was the one who was sent to **"confirm the covenant"**. Accord-ing to verse 27, the confirmation period of this covenant was to last seven years. However, this same passage tells us that exactly **"in the midst of the week"** the **"sacrifice and the oblation"** were to **"cease"**. The word "midst" means in the middle, that is, after three and one half years ($\frac{1}{2}$ of seven). Jesus' ministry lasted exactly $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. Also, Luke in his gospel (Lk.23:45,46), recorded that at the moment of Jesus' death, the veil of the temple was torn completely in half. This symbolized that the "sacrifice and the oblation" had **"ceased"**. Upon the death of Christ, God no longer accepted and recognized animal sacrifices, since the ultimate sacrifice had now been paid.

After rejecting their only savior, the Jews now faced certain judgment. Remember, at the trial of Jesus, the crowds' incessant cry, **"let his blood be upon us and upon our children"**. No wonder Jesus said, **"Behold, your house (temple) is left unto desolate"**. Within that generation, the Roman armies would come and destroy both Jerusalem and its temple. Let the reader notice that there were still $3\frac{1}{2}$ years left of Daniel's 490 year period that was promised to the Jews. It now becomes clear why

Jesus said he came only to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel”. He had to completely fulfill all scripture.

Specifically, the gospel to the gentiles could not start until the end of the 70th week ended. It is no accident that Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, was called in Acts 9 and, Peter delivered the gospel to the first gentile, Cornelius, in Acts 10. Most probably both these events began as Daniel’s weeks of years ended.

This brief study of Daniel’s seventy weeks was necessary in order to explain the truth about the so-called “antichrist” in this remarkable prophecy. The alleged reference to the “antichrist” in Daniel’s prophecy is, in reality, a prophecy concerning Jesus and the New Covenant, which culminated from his death on Calvary’s cross. The other reference about the “prince that shall come” is an obvious reference to Titus who came with his armies to destroy Jerusalem.

Again, I must remind the reader that it is necessary to study the most referenced texts that the dispensationalists use, in order to show how they have been taken out of context, or else, completely misinterpreted.

The next major passage most often quoted in prophetic circles is Matthew 24, more commonly referred to as the Olivet Discourse.

The Olivet Discourse.

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for the show him the buildings of the temple.

And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matt.24:1-3)

The apostles believed, as did most of the Jewish people, that when the Messiah came, he would free Israel from political oppression. Notice the question posed to Jesus by the disciples just before his ascension in Acts 1:6. **“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?”** In their minds, Jerusalem would take preeminence over the cities of the world. The beloved temple complex would achieve an unparalleled and elevated status in the Messianic kingdom. Consequently, it was to their shock and amazement when Jesus uttered the unthinkable, **“There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”**

It is no wonder that the disciples thought that this cataclysm would be consummated at Jesus’ second coming. From Jesus prior teaching, they knew that his coming would be at the “last day” or, in other words, at the end of the world. Therefore, when they asked “when shall these things be?”, they were in effect asking for signs of his second coming. Even today, many confuse the signs of the destruction of the temple with signs of his second coming.

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” (Matt.24:4,5)

Less than two years after Jesus’ ascension, there was a Samaritan named Dositheus who boldly proclaimed himself to be the Messiah foretold by Moses. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, twelve years after the death of Christ, another deceiver whose name was Theudas persuaded a multitude to follow him to the river Jordan. Supposedly, the river would divide at his command. Irenaeus, in his writings “Against Heresies”, stated that Simon Magus, the sorcerer mentioned in Acts 8, claimed to be the Son of God and creator of angels. In fact, during the reign of Nero, history records that there were so many imposters that “many of them were apprehended and killed every day.”

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...” (Matt.24:6,7)

When Jesus gave this prophecy, the Roman Empire was experiencing a general peace within its borders. But in just a short period of time, the empire was filled with strife, insurrection, and wars. The Roman historian Tacitus, in his Annals, recorded the following accounts: “war in

Armenia”, “commotions in Africa”, “disturbances in Germany”, “commotions in Thrace”, “intrigues among the Parthians”, and “the war in Britain”. Even among the Jews, many thousands were killed in Selencia, Alexandria, Syria, and Caesarea during the Jewish revolt of 65/66 A.D.

As the time drew closer to 70 A.D., the fateful date of the destruction of Jerusalem, the Roman Empire was shaken to its very foundation. Notably, 68 A.D. was referred to as the “year of the four Emperors”. In that one year, amid insurrections and civil turmoil, four men ascended to the office of Emperor.

“...and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

(Matt.24:7,8)

The Bible records that there was **famine** “through-out all the world which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar” who reigned from 41 A.D. to 54 A.D. (Acts 11:28). Jerusalem and Judea suffered much from the famine during those years. Paul, writing to the churches in Rome and Corinth, spoke of collecting offerings for the “poor” saints in Jerusalem. The poor suffered the most during the famine. The Roman historian Tacitus wrote of a “failure in crops, and a famine consequent there upon.”

Pestilences, that is, diseases often become the counterpart of famines. Sickly bodies, a consequence of starvation, become the breeding grounds for disease. Another Roman historian, Suetonius, recorded that the pestilence at Rome in the days of Nero caused the death of

30,000 people in just one season.

With regard to **earthquakes**, history is full of accounts of earthquakes which devastated entire cities. Tacitus mentions that there were “twelve populous cities of Asia” which were destroyed as a result of earthquakes. In 60 A.D., the cities of Hieropolis, Colosse, and Laodicea were almost destroyed from an earthquake. In 63 A.D., Pompeii was greatly damaged by earthquake. Of course, its ultimate demise was from the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 A.D.

“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.

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.” (Matt.24:9,10)

In Luke 21:12, it states that **“But before all these”**, that is, everything that has been prophesied thus far, the following will happen first. The book of Acts is a historical document of the events and development of the early church. It gives a detailed account of the lives of the disciples as they began to spread the Gospel.

In Acts 4, we read how that Peter and John were both taken and put in **prison** after healing a lame man. In the very next chapter, all of the apostles were put into **prison** and **beaten** for preaching Jesus to the people. In chapter 7, scripture relates the story how that Stephen was **stoned to death**, thus becoming the first martyr. Acts 8:1 states **“at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem.”** In Acts 12, Luke

records that James, the brother of John, was **killed** by the sword by order of King Herod. In chapters 21 and 22 of Acts, Paul was **beaten** and brought before **rulers**, before whom he testified. Upon reading the book of Acts, we find that Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled in every detail. They were hated, imprisoned, beaten, killed, and testified before rulers and kings.

“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.24:11-13)

In Acts 13:6 as Paul and Barnabas set sail to Cyprus, they came into its capital, Paphos. It was there in which they encountered a “certain sorcerer, a **false prophet**, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus.” Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, spoke of “**false apostles, deceitful workers**” (2 Cor.11:13). In 2 Tim.2:17 & 18, Paul specifically names two **false prophets**: Hymenaeus and Philetus who “concerning the truth have erred...and overthrow the faith of some.” In Titus, Paul even states that “there are many unruly and vain talkers and **deceivers**...who subvert whole houses” (Tit.1:10,11). John, who also heard Jesus give the prophecy about false prophets recorded the following: “Many **false prophets** are gone out into the world” (1 Jn.4:1); “Many **deceivers** are entered into the world” (2 Jn.7). The reader must bear in mind that all these accounts

were recorded prior to 70 A.D., the date of Jerusalem's demise.

“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.” (Matt.24:14)

Many televangelists today often cite this scripture when trying to raise funds to pay for their air time. Surely, it is a noble and worthy cause since it will, in effect, speed up the second return of Christ by spreading the gospel to the world. I agree that it is always a good thing to preach the gospel to those still living in spiritual darkness and ignorance. However, I must disagree as to their interpretation and use of this verse in support of their purpose and goal. Please allow me to explain my position.

To begin with, I always try and allow scripture to interpret scripture whenever possible. With this thought in mind, let's first turn our attention to the second chapter of Acts. In verse 5, we find that Jews and proselytes **“out of every nation under heaven”** had come to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. As a result, Peter was given the opportunity to preach the first gospel message. Later when persecution came against the church, the believers at Jerusalem were scattered and **“went every where preaching the word”** (Acts 8:1,4). Notice that in Romans 16:25-26, Paul says that the gospel is **“made manifest”** and has been **“made known to all nations”**.

By the time Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians, he proclaimed that the gospel has **“come unto you, as it is in**

all the world” (Col.1:6). In this same chapter in verse 23, Paul again says that the gospel **“was preached to every creature which is under heaven.”** In Romans 1:8, Paul commends the church there by saying that their **“faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”** What becomes obvious in these passages is that both Jesus and Paul, when making reference to “all nations” or “the whole world”, are referring to the Roman Empire, that is, the then known world at that time.

The real issue in the verse before us, however, is exactly what **“end”** is Jesus referring to. The Greek word used for “end” in verse 3 is different from the word used in verses 6, 13 and 14. In these verses, the word is **telos**, and essentially means, “the limit, termination, or uttermost of a purpose or state.” In verse 3, the word is **sunteleia**. This word means “consummation”. Paul, in speaking of the Jews, had this to say in 1Thess.2:16, **“...to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.”** The **end** was the terminus of the old covenant represented by the temple and Jerusalem. Jesus gives very insightful instructions to the disciples in Matt.10, especially verses 22 and 23.

“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.”

Notice that Jesus was specifically speaking to the apostles. The “**end**” in this passage is the same time as when the “**Son of man be come**”. Observe also, that the disciples would barely have time to preach the gospel into all the cities of Israel before the “Son of man be come.” Unless this passage is completely taken out of context, the “**end**” in view is the destruction of Jerusalem when Jesus “**came**” in judgment. As Jesus stood before Pilate, remember the words of the Jews in Jerusalem, “let his blood be upon us and upon our children.” Since they rejected their only Savior, Jesus made this solemn proclamation, “**Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.**” Many times when Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees about the judgment that was to come upon them and their nation, he repeatedly used the phrase “**this generation**”, that is, the generation then living.

“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).

Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains...

And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days...

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” (Matt.24:15,16,19,21)

Since I have already covered the Daniel prophecy, I will not belabor the point here. However, I would like to quote

this same passage taken from Luke's gospel. Luke removes all ambiguity and plainly reveals that the **time** of the "abomination of desolation" occurred during the destruction of Jeru-salem in 70 A.D.

"And when ye (the apostles) shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter therein.

For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

...for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people." (Luke 21:20-23)

We come now to a highly debatable and much discussed topic. I am referring, of course, to the **"great tribulation"**. By previously referencing the "holy place", "Judea", and the "Sabbath day", Jesus is narrowing this "great tribulation" as a time of distress that targets the Jews. In fact, in keeping with contextual integrity of the entire Olivet discourse, the Jewish nation is the clear object and recipient of the thrust of the prophecy (it answers the question posed by the disciples). Jesus was not prophesying about a future tribulation, some two thousand plus years from that time, which was to come upon the Jews, or for that matter, even the Christians. This tribulation was to occur the same time as the destruction of

the Jewish temple that was **then standing**. Jesus states that this distress or tribulation would be the worst ever encountered since the creation, or, ever will be.

Some would object and say that, since there were over 6 million Jews killed during the holocaust, then, this prophecy of a **great tribulation** could not possibly refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. It is true that many more were killed in the holocaust; however, there are several reasons which make the destruction of Jerusalem the worst calamity and the most devastating event ever, or will ever, be experienced by the Jewish people. Josephus, the Jewish historian who was an eyewitness to the destruction of Jerusalem, gave many graphic details of the Jewish wars of 66 A.D. to 70 A.D. I will cite just a few from his The Wars of the Jews.

“And now there were three treacherous factions in the city, the one against the other...set fire those houses that were full of corn...almost all the corn was burnt, which would have been sufficient for a siege of many years.”

“They fought against each other, while they trod upon the dead bodies as they lay heaped one upon another.”

“But the famine was too hard for all other passions, and it is destructive...insomuch that children pulled the very morsels that their fathers were eating out of their mouths...so did the mothers do as to their infants.”

“They also invented terrible methods of torment to discover where any food was, and they were these: to stop up the passages of the privy parts of the miserable

wretches, and to drive sharp stakes up their fundaments!”

“So the soldiers (Romans) out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest; when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses wanting for the bodies.”

“The upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine; and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also and the young men wandered about the market-places like shadows, all swelled with the famine, and fell down dead where ever their misery seized them.”

“A deep silence also, and a kind of deadly night, had seized upon the city; while yet the robbers...brake open those houses which were no other than graves of dead bodies, and plundered them of what they had; and carrying off the coverings of their bodies, went out laughing, and tried the points of their swords on their dead bodies.”

“Yet did another plague seize upon those that were thus preserved...a certain person who was caught gathering pieces of gold out of the excrements of the Jews’ bellies...Nor does it seem to me that any misery befell the Jews that was more terrible than this, since in one night’s time about two thousand of these deserters were thus dissected.”

“Some persons were driven to that terrible distress as to search the common sewers and old dung-hills of

cattle, and to eat the dung which they got there.”

“Thus did the miseries of Jerusalem grow worse and worse every day...And, truly, the very view itself of the country was a melancholy thing; for those places which were before adorned with trees and pleasant gardens were now become a desolate country every way, and its trees were all cut down.”

“Moreover, their hunger was so intolerable, that it obliged them to chew everything...they did eat from their girdles and shoes; and the very leather which belonged to their shields they pulled off and gnawed.”

“And as soon as she had said this she slew her infant son and then roasted him; she ate the one half of him, and kept the other half by concealing it.”

Finally, Josephus sums up the horrors that he witnessed during the destruction of Jerusalem with this melancholy statement:

“I shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly: That neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world.”

Notice the remarkable similarity of language between the words spoken by Jesus and the above statement by Josephus. In 70 A.D., the Jewish nation **lost** their capital city, **lost** their beloved temple, **lost** whatever remnants of hope for a Messiah that would deliver them from political

oppression, **lost** in death over a million Jewish people, **lost** to captivity and slavery almost another one hundred thousand people, **lost** during the siege and famine the dignity and humanity of their race, and finally, **lost** for almost two thousand years the land that was theirs since the time of Abraham. Truly, the words of Jesus in verse 21 about the “**great tribulation**” described the tragic truth and reality of the **demise of the Jewish religion and culture**. Without a temple, the Jews were deprived of a means of sacrificial worship.

“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.

For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” (Matt.24:27,28)

To many, these verses speak of Jesus’ second coming, commonly known as the rapture. However, I believe that they refer to Jesus’ **coming in judgment** in 70 A.D. It is all in context with the “abomination of desolation” and the “great tribulation”. Jesus is telling the disciples in these verses, that the coming judgment upon Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, will not come as a surprise. In point of fact, Jesus alludes to passages in Jeremiah in verse 28.

“And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven...Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth...the land shall be desolate.” (Jer.7:33,34)

“And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcasses will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven...And I will make this city desolate...in the siege.” (Jer.19:7-9)

In verse 29, Jesus states that “after the tribulation”, apocalyptic signs would be seen in the heavens. Let the reader notice that this is said in conjunction with the “coming of the Son of man” in verse 27. Again, more evidence of the **context** being referenced to the time of Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 A.D.

“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:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”
(Matt.24:29-31)

Many Bible scholars believe that the signs spoken of in verse 29 will literally occur, especially those from the dispensational camp. Just a brief review of some Old

Testament passages, however, would negate this interpretation and conclusion. I will provide to the reader a few of these passages that utilize this same genre of apocalyptic imagery. The message is the same: **the demise and judgment of a nation.**

“Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt...

And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.

All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God.” (Eze.32:7,8)

“And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the tree.

.....and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea (Edom). For it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance” (Isa.34:4,6,8)

“The burden of Babylon...Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.” (Isa.13:1,9,10)

From the above passages, the reader can readily see that the poetic, or rather, apocalyptic language is used for something climatic and historic. Of course, in these Old Testament examples, the reference is to God's judgment on ungodly nations. Similarly, the same language is used to describe the judgment upon the nation of Israel, including the terminus of its sacrificial system of worship as represented by the destruction of the temple.

Those from the dispensational camp might counter and say that surely verse 30 refers to the second coming of Christ. At first glance, it does appear that it may point to that conclusion. However, there are several reasons why it **still** represents the judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

To begin with, notice the "then" in verse 21, the "immediately" in verse 29, and the "then" in verse 30. These terms are used to describe the sequence or order of events that was to happen. In fact, when the word "then" is employed in a sentence, it is normally used to connect the previous thought with the very next thought. Therefore, the "then" in verse 30 connects the thought of verse 29, which we have previously shown to refer to the demise of Jerusalem and its temple.

Secondly, the phrase "tribes of the earth" do not refer to the nations of the world. The term "tribes" is a descriptive word for the Jewish nation. Everyone is familiar with the "twelve **tribes** of Israel". Also, the use of the word "earth" signifies the "**land**" of Israel.

This verse is almost identical with Rev.1:7. The passage in Revelation is referencing the destruction of Jerusalem. This is further explained in my paper entitled,

Understanding the book of Revelation. I will simply quote the verse in Revelation so the reader can see the apparent similarity with Matt.24:30.

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds (tribes) of the earth shall wail because of him...” (Rev.1:7)

The Jewish rabbis often referred to the Messiah as “bar nivli”, meaning “son of the clouds”. In Daniel 7:13, it states that **“the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven...”** Furthermore, in the Old Testament, God “coming in the clouds” spoke of his judgment upon the ungodly. Jesus told the high priest that he would still be alive when he witnessed the Son of man “coming in the clouds of heaven”. Josephus records that Caiaphas the high priest **was alive** at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. In Zechariah 12 there are prophecies of Jesus’ first advent. I will provide to the reader at this time a couple of these verses to show the relationship to the phrases found in Matt.24:30 and Rev.1:7 (**“tribes of the earth mourn” and “kindreds of the earth shall wail”**).

“...and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourned for his only son...

In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem...” (Zech.12:10,11)

Finally, in verse 31, the angels are sent forth to “gather together his **elect**” from all parts of the world. Again, most would view this “gathering” to occur at Jesus’ second coming. Nevertheless, we must interpret scripture in the light of its context. The **context** is still speaking of the specific signs preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. How then can we explain this verse? Since I know that **“all these things”** (verses 33 and 34) **must** be fulfilled before and during the period of the judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D., then the interpretation of verse 31 must be found somewhere else. The writer of Hebrews will help us in this pursuit.

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”
(Heb.1:14)

The phrase “**shall be** heirs of salvation” obviously refers to the “elect”. Although the preaching of the gospel is done by man, they are aided by the angels. God, in his omniscience, knew who the “**elect**” were before the foundation of the world. Thus, we see in this verse, the angels as ministering spirits carrying out the ultimate will of God in gathering together the elect.

“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

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

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

But of THAT DAY and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”

In these verses, Jesus is explaining to the disciples that just as you can tell that summer is coming by the fig tree putting forth its leaves, so too, can you tell when the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple will be by discerning the specific signs that he had just given them in verses 4-31. This is evident by his double use of the phrase, “**all these things**”. He further points out that “all these things” will happen in this generation, that is, the generation then living. In verse 35, Jesus is essentially saying that you can “take it to the bank and cash it”, using today’s vernacular.

We now come to the pivotal point of the discourse. In verse 36, Jesus now focuses on the second question as posed by the disciples, namely, his second return. Although the disciples thought all this would occur at Jesus second advent and the end of the world, Jesus separates the two and clarifies it for them. Here, Jesus emphatically declares that his second coming (**THAT DAY**) is a day unknown to man and the angels. In point of fact, Jesus only gives one sign that would be a hint as to the approximate time of his coming. That one sign is that it would be much like the days of Noah.

In the next chapter, I will give more information about

the days of Noah, and also, some additional signs that Jesus gave to the “beloved disciple”, John.

Chapter 5

“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

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,

And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”
(Matt.24:37-39)

Here, Jesus is stating that life will go on as normal **until** the very moment of his return, just as it did when judgment came upon the ungodly in Noah’s time. The question is asked, “what was the ‘**normal**’ during the time leading up to the flood?” To find the answer to this question, we must turn to the sixth chapter of Genesis.

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

And God said unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”
(Gen.6:5,11-13)

From these verses, we discover that before the flood “**all flesh**” was corrupt, that is, decayed, rotten, putrified. Their wickedness had become a stench in the nostrils of God. Since we know from Solomon’s writings, that there is “no new thing under the sun”, then we can probably surmise some of the sins which the antediluvians (before the flood) were guilty. Judging from the account of Sodom and Gomorrah, we could rightfully conclude that many of the antediluvians practiced homosexuality. In conjunction with this particular sexual perversion, they also probably engaged in multiple other forms of sexual sin, including, but not limited to, rape, incest, bestiality, and pedophilia.

In Jeremiah 2:34, we find an obscure phrase alluding to the sin of abortion in which Israel had become guilty of. I call it “obscure” since there is not a consensus as to its interpretation. Many take the word “skirts” in a metaphorical sense, however, I believe it should be taken literally.

“Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents...”

Some may think that abortion is a modern procedure, however, it is actually ancient. The first recorded evidence of induced abortion is found in an Egyptian papyrus dated 1550 B.C. Since abortion became legal in 1973, there have been over 45 million abortions just in the United States alone.

Also, found prominent in this chapter of Genesis, is the sin of **violence**. In the fourth chapter, we notice that Lamech, who was the seventh generation from Adam, committed the second recorded **murder**. I can only imagine to what extent that the violence had escalated to by the tenth generation, that is, the generation of Noah. Even in the time of the minor prophet Micah, he records that, **“And they covet fields, and take them by violence...”** (Micah 2:2). In the antediluvian time, this type of behavior was probably a typical response. Because “violence had **filled** the earth” and the thoughts of man was “only evil **continually**”, there were **only** 8 people saved from the world’s destruction by the flood. It has been conservatively estimated that the population of the earth at the time of the flood might have been one billion.

There are a few more signs that we can glean from the Scriptures that reveal more about the world in the time of Noah. We can find these nuggets of truth in the book of Job. I believe that Job lived during the 5th or 6th generation after the flood. In other words, Job probably lived less than 200 years after the flood.

“I will shew thee, hear me; and that which I have seen I will declare;

Which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it:

Unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them.

The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor.

A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him...

For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengthened himself against the Almighty.” (Job 15:17-21,25)

If one were to carefully read this passage, he would discover that one of Job’s friends, Eliphaz, states that he actually talked with some of the sons (wise men) of Shem, Ham or Japheth (their fathers). We can surmise this from the fact that the fathers were alone in the earth and “**no stranger passed among them.**” The wise men told Eliphaz that the “wicked” lived in “prosperity” when the “destroyer”, that is, God, in his judgment destroyed them via the flood.

Not only was prosperity indicative of the period of the antediluvians, but also, a long life was enjoyed by them. In fact, the average age of that pre-flood era was 912 years, excluding the age of Enoch who was translated and did not experience death. This bit of information can be inferred from the last clause in verse 20: “the number of years is hidden to the oppressor.” The meaning of this clause is obscure from the reading in the KJV. However, if you consider the individual words in their original Hebrew, then

it becomes more clear. For example, the word “hidden” has the meaning to **hoard** or **esteem**. The word oppressor denotes someone who is **tyrannical**. In order to give further light upon this idea, I will quote from another of Job’s friends, Zophar, in Job 20:19,23,28 and 29.

“Because he hath oppressed and hath forsaken the poor; because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not...

When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating...

The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath.

This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God.”

Notice the play on words of “rain” and “flow away” in verses 23 and 28. By combining the discourse given by Eliphaz and Zophar and also remembering that in Genesis 6 that there were **giants** in the earth, we can come to the following conclusion:

Since some, perhaps many, of the antediluvians were giants who relished in the fact of their longevity, they violently took away whatever possessions they desired from those less fortunate. Thus, they were able to amass great fortunes. However, the great Judge of the Earth, saw fit to “rain” down his judgment upon them and caused all their possessions to “flow away” even while they were “eating”.

“But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

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

And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”
(Matt.24:37-39)

I would like to examine one more phrase as found in verse 20: “the wicked man travaileth with pain all his days.” The Hebrew word translated “pain” in this verse can mean **anguish**, **grief** or **sorrow**. Consequently, even though the antediluvians had become quite prosperous in their tyrannical acquisition of wealth, they were still miserable and unhappy all during their long lives, simply because they had rejected the only One who can give peace and contentment.

Perhaps the reader noticed the strange phrase, “a dreadful sound is in his ears” in verse 21. The word “dreadful” means “alarm, terror”. The word “sound” means “proclamation”, “a call”. The word “ears” denotes “to hear”. Thus, these wicked antediluvians heard a proclamation that instilled terror into their hearts. This, of course, refers to the warning of impending destruction by the preaching of Noah (2Pet.2:5). However, this “call” to repentance did not change their hearts or their lifestyle.

Finally, in verse 25, we find our last clue as to the conditions of the world prior to the flood. Man in his

rebellion against God, even went so far as to challenge his Creator. This is very reminiscent of Nimrod who was the third generation after the flood. The very name of Nimrod means **“let us rebel”**. In Genesis 10:9, we read that Nimrod was “a mighty hunter before the Lord.” The word “before” actually means **“against”**. The Hebrew word denotes “face to face” confrontation, so it was also in the days before the flood.

I ask the reader, “Is the world **today** filled with violence, sexual sin (homosexuality, rape, incest, bestiality, pedophilia), murder, abortion, evil thoughts, the incessant desire to acquire wealth, having a longer life, and is there a general unhappiness and emptiness of soul?” Could it be that we are living in that generation much like Noah’s generation? I personally believe that we are getting **ever closer** to those same conditions that existed before the flood. If you were born before 1950, then you will remember the innocence of that era. The advance of evil and an anti-God sentiment in the world has rapidly eroded that innocence. I will offer to the reader additional hints from scripture that we are very close to the time of Jesus’ second coming.

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

And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth...

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.” (Rev.20:7-9)

Although I cover these passages in more detail in my paper Understanding the book of Revelation, I will briefly try and give the reader the essence of my thoughts regarding this text. To begin with, I believe that the 1000 year period mentioned here refers to the Church Age. Satan was only “bound” with respect to his “deceiving the nations”. Prior to the First Advent, all nations were deceived except the Jews. The preaching of the gospel throughout the world has lasted for almost 2000 years now. However, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, there has been an onslaught of anti-God sentiment sweeping the world scene.

In 1859, Charles Darwin published his Origin of the Species. **Evolutionism** was now given prominence, and was accepted enthusiastically, since it removed God from creation. This became the foundation for some other “isms”, which also removed God from man’s conscience. As a result of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, **communism** began to spread like a cancer throughout the world. Both communism and socialism are based upon Karl Marx’s pamphlet, The Communist Manifesto. One of Karl Marx’s stated goals was to “dethrone God”. In 1933, the Humanist Manifesto was signed. This marked the birth of **humanism**. Humanism is man’s attempt to become his own “god”. As with the other “isms”, it also removes God from the picture. So, the binding thread of these three isms is **atheism**.

As a result of this “loosing” of Satan, the world is being

plunged into an anti-God sentiment and, consequently, will seek to oppress the Church. This oppression will end at the second coming of Jesus.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to introduce to the reader the three principal prophetic views, and also, to distinguish between the popular dispensational view with the clear teachings of the last days by Jesus and the apostles. The writer chose to use those passages of scripture from the gospels and the epistles which describe events of the future, that is, future relative to the time of their initial utterance. Too many biblical expositors try and build a prophetic doctrine, using as their foundation, passages from books of the Bible which use much symbolism and imagery. By so doing, they are forced to take scriptures out of their intended context and attempt to “piece together” an interpretation that they want to have. As this writer has previously maintained, in order to “rightfully divide” the scriptures, one should just take the plain and clear passages of scripture in their intended context to properly understand them.

Additionally, I attempted to take some of the main texts used by the dispensationalists and explain them in their proper context. Instead of using the “patchwork quilt” method of interpretation, I have endeavored to simply

interpret the scripture in its proper context. If an idea or thought is expressed in clear and plain texts, and also, in texts which are undoubtedly ambiguous, then always use those texts which speak forthrightly on the subject when formulating a doctrine.

Finally, I have attempted to provide to the reader a glimpse of what I believe the scriptures reveal to us concerning the **general** signs leading up to Jesus' return. He gave **specific** signs to the disciples pointing to the destruction of Jerusalem, but only a general sign with regard to his second coming. I believe that Christianity will face dark days ahead, as Satan will use every conceivable means to oppress the saints. Be that as it may, let us echo the words of John as he closed the book of Revelation, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus".

