A Comprehensive Review of Biblical Prophecy concerning Past, Present, and Future Events

David Scott Nichols MD

Table of Contents

Preface	3
Introduction	5
Christian Apologetics – Evidence of Biblical Veracity	7
Fulfilled Prophecies	7
Biblical "Types"	43
Changed Lives of the Apostles	62
Jesus - Liar, Lunatic, or God	66
The Archeological and Historical Accuracy of the Bible	73
Thematic Consistency of the Bible	81
The Lives of Christian Believers and Their Testimonies	86
Understanding the Basics of Biblical End-Times Prophecy	91
Covenant Theology	94
Dispensational Theology	97
Preterism	103
The Millennial Kingdom	109
The Rapture and the Second Coming	159
Fifty Signs That We are Living in The Last Days	213
Biblical Eschatology	292
Zechariah	293
The Revelation of Jesus Christ	317
Final Thoughts	460
Bibliography	462

***Words of Jesus in red

***Remaining Words of Bible in blue

©DavidScottNichols2011

Eschatology

Preface:

This will be my ninth treatise on topics related directly to the Holy Bible. I have written six over the last three years. These range from an *Old Testament Survey* to the *The Acts of the Apostles and the New Testament Church*. I had written two others, on the topics of *Apologetics* and *Job*, during the previous decade. Not coincidentally, the topic I have chosen for what will be my last planned treatise on a theological subject is that of eschatology… which is the study of end-times prophecy. I have always found this to be a very fascinating topic.

This will be my attempt at writing a comprehensive treatise on this subject of biblical eschatology. Certainly, with the events of the past several decades, the level of interest in this topic has reached an all-time high. I believe this interest is well placed. As will be shown in the pages that follow, there is good evidence to suggest that we are, in fact, living in the end-times.

It is important to point out that the information that is contained in all of these treatises is used primarily for notes to allow me to lecture on these various topics. Power Point presentations are developed to go along with these pages. Together they allow for me the opportunity to teach on the subject that most interests me in my life… God and His Word, the Holy Bible.

Although this subject is fascinating to so many, it is not without controversy. In fact, it is just this controversy that has made this the most difficult treatise that I have written. When I began to write on this subject I was not particularly aware of the multiple different views concerning how to evaluate and understand biblical end-time prophecy. When I began to research the topic, I realized that there are many outstanding and intelligent Christians who simply have major differences of opinions on what is going to happen in the future. Their methods of interpreting the Bible vary. Attempting to explain all of these points of view and then trying to account for these various views in some reasonable fashion when commenting on The Revelation was a very time-consuming and difficult challenge. In fact, I may have gone overboard in this exposition in Section 2. For that reason, I suggest to those readers who do not care to evaluate all of these varying positions in great detail to just skim over much of that section – just hit the high points. However, for those who want to really understand the various methods of interpretation of the Bible and eschatology, that section does present those views in fairly significant detail.

It is important to make clear that the major point of view presented in this treatise is that one day our world will experience the Rapture, followed shortly thereafter by a Premillennial Tribulation lasting seven years. This will be concluded by the Second Coming of Christ with His saints to defeat Satan and set up His Millennial Kingdom on earth. Many other viewpoints will be presented in some detail as well. In fact, to a reasonable degree, even how some of these varying views would change the end-time events will be noted during the commentary on The Revelation.

Undoubtedly, this is an intriguing topic to many people. It certainly has been to me all through my lifetime. The very fact that Jesus will one day come for all of those who have placed their faith in Him is exciting. He is now up in His heavenly home preparing a place for His Church. We should always remember His words as He was about to give His life for those who would only trust in Him. He said… "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. John 14:1-3

One last point should be made. It is very important to understand that even though there are many views of just how the sequence of the final events will unfold on the earth, all do agree on one critical point. When all is said and done, God will set up a beautiful New Heaven and Earth where all who have placed their faith in Jesus will live for eternity in perfect peace, joy, and harmony. That is the future that Jesus has for all who have placed their trust in Him.

Introduction:

This treatise will be divided into four sections:

1. A great variety of evidence will be given to show that we can trust the Holy Bible when it predicts future events.
2. A review of the differing methods that have been used throughout history to evaluate and interpret the Bible, with emphasis on end-times prophecy, will be presented.
3. Fifty different examples will be given to show that it is very reasonable to conclude that we are now living near the time of Christ's return.
4. The future Rapture, seven year Tribulation, Christ's glorious return, and the Millennial Kingdom will be studied in detail via an analysis of the books of Zechariah and The Revelation of Jesus Christ along with other apocalyptic sections of the Bible (including those in Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many other books of the prophets).

Certainly, it will be important to spend at least some time to demonstrate the incredible accuracy of Biblical prophecy. Of course, since the Bible is ultimately written through the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, perfection is exactly what one would expect. However, it is still worth pointing out several of the many impressive examples of this predictive accuracy that have already come true. This will be done in the first section. In doing this, hopefully great confidence will be gained as we look at the many biblical prophecies of future events. If the writers of the Bible have been unfailingly accurate in predicting hundreds of events that have subsequently come true… and they have… one can logically believe that those prophecies that concern future events will also come true in the fullness of time. Not only is the Bible demonstrably true when one analyzes its prophetic passages, but there are several other reasons that an objective person should conclude that Christianity is the one true religion. Given that this additional important evidence only adds to the confidence that the Bible's end-time prophecies should be believed, several of these other classic assurances for biblical veracity will be noted in the first section as well.

The second portion of this treatise will present and evaluate the various methods that theologians, down through the centuries, have used to interpret biblical prophecy. There is actually quite a wide range of opinion on this subject. These will be discussed in some detail. It is important to take a close look at the specific reasons why I have chosen to interpret prophetic passages in the manner presented in the last section of this book.

Section 3 of this book will be concerned with the many reasons so many prophecy scholars believe we may well be living in the "terminal generation" (Hal Lindsey coined this term several years ago). Literally dozens of books have been written on this topic, the most popular being the best-selling non-fiction book of the 1980s (excluding the Bible), *The Late, Great, Planet Earth.* This book was written by Hal Lindsey at the onset of that decade. Of course, there have been people from soon after the resurrection of Jesus Christ who have held similar beliefs concerning the end-times. In fact, there have been people in every century who have believed that they would be alive on earth to see the return of Christ in all of His glory.

Having said that, I will present a great deal of evidence to show that this generation of mankind has lived through the fulfillment of many prophecies that suggest strongly that the end is near. Dozens of examples will be given to show how the events that the Bible predicts will occur just prior to the return of Jesus Christ have been coming to fruition at an amazing pace in recent decades. Obviously, this fact makes it all the more interesting and important that people study and learn what to expect upon the return of the Messiah, Jesus. Not only that, but recognizing these truths is an excellent opportunity to build one's faith; it is always impressive to see the power of God as evidenced by the fulfillment of His Holy Word.

In the last section of this treatise, the main topic will be addressed in detail. That is, exactly what does the Bible say will happen at the time of Christ's return and following that time? First, a commentary on a very important Old Testament prophetic book concerning eschatology, Zechariah, will be presented. This will lead us to a detailed discussion of The Revelation of Jesus Christ as told to the Apostle John while he was exiled on the island of Patmos off the southwest coast of Asia-Minor. John was given a vision by God that enabled him to see what would happen during the last years on the earth, just prior to the infamous war, Armageddon. He was also told the outcome of this colossal battle and given information concerning what the world/universe would be like after that time. All pertinent biblical information, from the Old and New Testaments, will be referenced to thoroughly explain these end-time events. Before getting to this study of Revelation, let us begin by showing why we can be so confident about what that amazing prophetic book tells the faithful bible student…

Christian Apologetics – Evidence of Biblical Veracity:

There are many different ways to show why people can trust what the Bible says. Since the whole point of this treatise is to analyze the end-time prophecies as laid out in God's word, it certainly would be valuable to demonstrate that there is every reason to believe that these prophecies will actually come to fruition… just as the Bible predicts. In order to do this, let us review some of the arguments people have used through the centuries to prove the veracity of the Holy Bible.

Actually, there are many different methods used to show that the Bible is the actual Word of God and that Jesus is God incarnate. Let me list the following six:

- Hundreds of God's prophecies can be shown to have come true exactly as predicted in the Bible (in the Old and New Testaments). None have proven false! This is obviously evidence for the Bible being the Word of God. Who else but God can accurately foretell the future with 100% accuracy?
- There are dozens of intriguing types in the Old Testament that found their actualization in the life of Jesus (the concept of types will be defined in a later paragraph). These interesting Old Testament examples are another mechanism that God uses to show that His word in true.
- There are certain changes in the lives of the apostles that give excellent evidence for the divine nature of Jesus Christ as well as His resurrection from the dead. These will be reviewed to show just how they point to Jesus being the Son of God.
- C.S. Lewis popularized an excellent logical argument concerning Jesus that also leads to the conclusion that Jesus must be the Christ… and God the Son.
- Historical and archaeological evidence suggest strongly that the Bible is true.
- An analysis of the human writers of the Bible and certain intriguing aspects of the content that runs through the entire length of the Bible leads to additional evidence that it is the Word of God. These concepts will be discussed as well.
- The lives, words, and testimonies of many great Christians lead credence to the truth of the Bible.

I will write in some detail on the first four topics above. As the point will have been already made after that review – i.e. that we can trust the Bible, I will then only briefly comment on the last three areas of evidence.

Fulfilled Prophecies: In showing why people can trust the end-time prophecies of the Bible, it is certainly appropriate to spend a significant amount of time writing about some of the already amazing fulfilled prophecies of the Scriptures. It is not reasonable to list all of these prophecies as they run into the hundreds! However, I will point out several dozen to show that the God of the Bible is the one and only true God. I am reasonably certain, that an open-minded person will view the prophecies noted in the next few pages as excellent evidence that these biblical predictions could only have come from God.

The Bible predicts the future on a wide variety of different subject matter. I will divide up those prophecies that will be mentioned below into five different categories:

- Prophecies concerning the future of Israel
- Prophecies concerning other nations
- Prophetic events relating to Israel and their relations with other nations
- Messianic prophecies (those that relate to the coming Messiah)
- The prophecies of Jesus

Prophecies Concerning the Future of Israel: There are scores of prophetic verses in the Old Testament predicting with 100% accuracy what will happen to God's "chosen people", the nation of Israel. Many of these prophecies relate to what will happen to the people and the land of Israel in the latter days. These will be reviewed in some detail in the following portion of this treatise. A selection of approximately ten of God's prophecies relating to Israel will be featured below to demonstrate why we all can have the utmost faith in His Word – it has always proven to be true.

1). "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Gen 12:2-3

In the early chapters of Genesis, God called out Abraham (named Abram originally) to take his family and move west from the region called Ur of the Chaldees to a land that God would show him. That land was also referred to as the "land of promise" and eventually became known as Israel. God promised Abram, later Abraham, several things:

- God would make Abraham's name great
- Abraham would be a blessing to the world
- All the people of the earth would be blessed through Abraham
- God would bless those nations and people who blessed Abraham (and his seed) and curse those who cursed Abraham (and his seed)

Certainly no one would seriously argue that the name of Abraham is not great and that he has not been a blessing to the world through his offspring. King David, and more importantly, Jesus, is from the line of Abraham. Please take note of how nations from the times of Abraham to the present day have been blessed or cursed based to some degree upon how they have treated Israel… the seed of Abraham. That is, all four of the prophetic statements in the verses above have come true.

2). "it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring." Gen 21:12-13

In this communication to His servant Abraham, God tells Abraham that He will make a *special* nation from the seed of his son Isaac… not from Ishmael. Abraham was concerned about the future inheritance of his first son, Ishmael, whose mother was Hagar the Egyptian. God promised him that He would make a nation from this offspring as well, only not the promised nation that would eventually produce the Messiah. Many Arab people and Palestinians trace their heritage back to Ishmael.

3). As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. Gen 15:12-14

God tells Abraham in a dream that his descendents will one day be slaves in a foreign country. This country was, of course, Egypt. After spending the predicted four hundred years in that foreign land, Moses led Israel out of Egypt, eventually leading them back to their land of promise. They were able to take much with them as promised in this prophecy. Egypt suffered the consequences of their mistreatment of Israel. Many historians say that Egypt reached the zenith of their world power during the time when they began the enslavement of Israel. However, after this gross sin, Egypt saw their power progressively lessen. Never has Egypt regained their position of world dominance since that time. Remember that God will curse those who curse Israel.

4). if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: Deut 28:15

The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your fathers. There you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone. Deut 28:36-37

Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods--gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. Deut 28:64-65

God warns the Israelites to be careful not to reject Him and His commands. God tells them specifically what will happen should they not continue to follow Him… they would be scattered to other nations. The last prophecy above had its fulfillment several hundred years after these words were written as the people of the divided kingdom were captured and scattered by both the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Not only that, but ever since Rome leveled Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Israelites have been wanderers throughout the world. Nearly twenty-

five hundred years went by (since they were captured by the Babylonians) before they were officially given back the home that God had promised them over 4,000 years ago.

5). "Behold the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated, until this day, shall be carried to Babylon, nothing shall be left." Isaiah 39:6

This is what the LORD says: "**When *seventy years* are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place**. **11** For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jer 29:10-11

Here in Isaiah, is the prophecy that everything in Judah will be captured and brought to Babylon… this included both people and possessions. This verse actually implies that the Temple will be totally destroyed… and it was. Nothing was left. The Lord also told the Israelites in Judah that they would remain under captivity for seventy years. After this amount of time, God would come and bring them back to Jerusalem. This is what happened. Judah was captured by Babylonia is 606 B.C. They were given the decree to return to Jerusalem approximately 70 years later. The Temple was destroyed in 586 B.C., and the rebuilding of the new Temple was complete by 515 B.C. – also about 70 yrs later.

6). "This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to **Cyrus**, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, Isaiah 45:1

I am the Lord…….who says of **Cyrus,** 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."' Isaiah 44:28

Here are two incredible prophetic verses found in the book of Isaiah. That great prophet of God wrote over 150 years before the actual event occurred in history that a king named Cyrus would be responsible for allowing the Temple of God to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. This prophetic word came long before the Israelites were captured and taken to Babylon. Isaiah wrote these words over 100 years before King Solomon's Temple was destroyed! Most amazing was the naming of the actual king who would send out the Israelites to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem. Almost 300 years later, the history of these events was written in the Old Testament…

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. 2 Chron 36:22-23

It is interesting that this amazing prophecy, where God actually names the foreign king that He would enlist to carry out His will, is found right in the middle of several verses where God also points out that He is the only one who can foretell the future. He states this as blatant evidence of His omniscience and omnipotence… and as evidence of being the only true God of the universe. He states this in verses such as…

the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them." Isaiah 42:9

For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, [10] Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,' Isaiah 46:9-10

7). "O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, **a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David**; and on you he shall **sacrifice the priests of the high places** who burn incense on you, and **men's bones shall be burned on you**.' " 1 Kings 13:2

In the early days of the Divided Kingdom of Israel, God pronounced judgment on the pagan alter that the new King Jeroboam had built in Bethel. The king had placed golden calves as idols on an altar in the Northern Kingdom in an attempt to appease his followers and hopefully keep them from returning to Jerusalem for proper worship experiences. This happened in the first generation following the death of Solomon. Approximately 300 years later, this prophecy of judgment came true as reported in 1 Kings. Josiah was the king from the house of David at that time.

Even the altar at Bethel, the high place made by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin--even that altar and high place he demolished. He burned the high place and ground it to powder, and burned the Asherah pole also. Then **Josiah** looked around, and when he saw the tombs that were there on the hillside, he **had the bones removed from them and burned on the altar to defile it**, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by the man of God who foretold these things. [17] The king asked, "What is that tombstone I see?" The men of the city said, "It marks the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and pronounced against the altar of Bethel the very things you have done to it." [18] "Leave it alone," he said. "Don't let anyone disturb his bones." So they spared his bones and those of the prophet who had come from Samaria. [19] Just as he had done at Bethel, Josiah removed and defiled all the shrines at the high places that the kings of Israel had built in the towns of Samaria that had provoked the LORD to anger. [20] **Josiah slaughtered all the priests of those high places on the altars and burned human bones on them.** Then he went back to Jerusalem. 2 Kings 23:15-20

As is noted above, God did leave undefiled the tomb of the ancient Israeli prophet who had warned King Jeroboam. However, all those involved in the previous sacrilege had their remains defiled.

8). When King Hezekiah's officials came to Isaiah, [6] Isaiah said to them, "Tell your master, 'This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard--those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. [7] Listen! I am going to put such a spirit in him that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own country, and there **I will have him cut down with the sword.**'" 2 Kings 19:5-7

There is an intriguing story of an amazing event involving the Assyrian invasion of Judah just after Israel (the Northern Kingdom) fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. King Hezekiah, the King of Judah, was forced to pay tribute to the Assyrian King Sennacherib in an ever expensive method of keeping that king from taking away more and more of the land of Judah. Eventually, the Assyrian king sent some of his henchmen to attempt to intimidate Hezekiah into surrendering Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah. Sennacherib's power, previous string of victories, and almost 200,000 man army certainly had the Jewish king mightily concerned. However, the great prophet Isaiah spoke the calming words noted above as well as …

"Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria:
"**He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. [33] By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the LORD.** [34] I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant." [35] **That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp**. When the people got up the next morning--there were all the dead bodies! [36] So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. 2 Kings 19:32-36

The Assyrian king never did defeat Jerusalem. Instead, as Isaiah prophesied, King Sennacherib returned to Nineveh and, soon thereafter, was murdered by his sons! This is well documented in secular history.

9). 'For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. [12] As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will **I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered** on a cloudy and dark day. [13] **And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land;** I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. [14] I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. Ezek 34:11-14

"Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying: 'Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you. [3] For behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that **I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,**' says the LORD. 'And **I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.**' " Jer 30:2-3

"I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside;
Zechariah 10:6

As can be seen, many Old Testament prophets spoke of the day when God would "round-up" His people, the "chosen people" of Israel, and bring them back to the "promised land". As we shall see in a later section of this treatise, this and many other prophecies along this line have already recently come to fruition.

Prophecies Concerning Other Nations: Josh McDowell does an excellent job collating the prophecies against the following cities in his book, *A Ready Defense*:

Edom/Petra: The nation of Edom came primarily from the progeny of Esau. It was destined to be at odds with the Israelites throughout the majority of its history… and it has been. Several of the Old Testament prophets have written many prophecies concerning Edom. Several are listed below:

- **Thorns will overrun her citadels, nettles and brambles her strongholds. She (Edom) will become a haunt for jackals, a home for owls. Desert creatures will meet with hyenas, and wild goats will bleat to each other;** Isaiah 34:13-14
- "Edom will become an object of horror; all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff because of all its wounds. As Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown, along with their neighboring towns," says the LORD, "**so no one will live there; no man will dwell in it.** Jer 49:17-18
- the Sovereign LORD says: I will stretch out my hand against Edom and kill its men and their animals. **I will lay it waste, and from Teman to Dedan** they will fall by the sword. Ezek 25:13
- I will make Mount Seir a desolate waste and **cut off from it all who come and go.** I will fill your mountains with the slain; those killed by the sword will fall on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines. I will make you desolate forever; Ezek 35:7-9
- From generation to generation it will lie desolate; **no one will ever pass through it again**. Isaiah 34:10
- For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah and **a great slaughter in Edom**. Isaiah 34:6

Obviously, the Lord had every intention to destroy Edom completely and let its land lie dormant down through history. Indeed, that is what has happened. Josh McDowell notes that a visitor to these ruins, Capt. Mangles, described the sight when viewing Petra in the following manner, "the screaming of the eagles, hawks, and owls, who were soaring over our heads in considerable numbers, seemingly annoyed at anyone approaching their lonely habitation, added much to the singularity of the scene." (*A Ready Defense*, p. 69) There are many lions, leopards,

scorpions, wild goats and other wild animals in and around Petra. Edom is now a wasteland… just as God said it would become.

Tyre: In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, because Tyre has said of Jerusalem, 'Aha! The gate to the nations is broken, and its doors have swung open to me; now that she lies in ruins I will prosper,' therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: **I am against you, O Tyre**, and **I will bring many nations against you,** like the sea casting up its waves. They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; **I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets,** for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. She will become plunder for the nations, and her settlements on the mainland will be ravaged by the sword. Ezek. 26:1-6

Then they will know that I am the LORD. "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: **From the north I am going to bring against Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, with horsemen and a great army. He will ravage your settlements on the mainland with the sword;** Ezek. 26:7-9

14 I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. Ezek. 26:14

I will bring you to a horrible end and you will be no more. You will be sought, but you will never again be found, declares the Sovereign LORD." Ezek 26:21

Note the following fulfillment of prophecies:

- God is against Tyre since they were against Israel.
- Many nations will come against Tyre – Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia came against Tyre and succeeded in demolishing mainland Tyre. Most of the people had moved to an island off the coast. Alexander the Great, 250 years later, laid siege to that island by using stones and rocks from the mainland debris, and built a causeway across to the island. He scraped the mainland clean (like a "bare rock"). After an impressive battle, Alexander was victorious because he was able to bring in an effective naval force to put down the resistance of Tyre. By 332 B.C., Tyre lay in ruins.
- "The larger part of the site of the once great city is now bare as the top of a rock." (Philip Myers, secular historian, *General History for Colleges and High Schools*, Boston, 1889)
- It is now a place where fisherman literally spread their nets to dry.
- Tyre has been deserted for many centuries – it now lies in ruins, never having been rebuilt since its last known activity during the Roman Empire

Sidon: The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face against Sidon; prophesy against her **22** and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says:
'"I am against you, O Sidon, and I will gain glory within you. They will know that I am the LORD, when I inflict punishment on her and show myself holy within her. **23** I will send a plague upon her and make **blood flow in her streets. The slain will fall within her**, with the sword against her on every side. Then they will know that I am the LORD. Ezek 28:20-23

Note the following concerning this prophecy:

- There is no mention that this city will be abolished (as with Tyre) – Sidon still stands today) in the same place as when this prophecy was given by Ezekiel.
- Blood and destruction will come to the inhabitants of this city – In 351 B.C., while under attack from the Persian king, 40,000 of the citizens of Sidon killed themselves by setting fire to their own houses. They chose this end rather than face the torture from their Persian enemies. As the Bible had predicted, many were slain and blood flowed in the city streets.

Egypt: "Egypt is a beautiful heifer, but a gadfly is coming against her from the north. **21** The mercenaries in her ranks are like fattened calves. They too will turn and flee together, they will not stand their ground, for the day of disaster is coming upon them, the time for them to be punished. **22** Egypt will hiss like a fleeing serpent as the enemy advances in force; they will come against her with axes, like men who cut down trees. **23** They will chop down her forest," declares the LORD, Jer 46:20-23

I am going to give Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will carry off its wealth. He will loot and plunder the land as pay for his army. Ezek 29:19

'Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the nations where they were scattered. **14** I will bring them back from captivity and return them to Upper Egypt, the land of their ancestry. **There they will be a lowly kingdom. 15 It will be the lowliest of kingdoms and will never again exalt itself above the other nations. I will make it so weak that it will never again rule over the nations.** Ezek 29:13-15

The essence of God's prophecy against Egypt is that it would never again become the great and powerful nation that it had been for so many centuries up to the time of these prophecies. There is no mention that the nation of Egypt would be destroyed, as with so many of the other nations surrounding Israel in that time. Yet, God did punish this nation for their attitude and actions against Israel. In fact, Egypt has become the type of nation pictured in these prophecies. It has never again ruled over other nations.

Samaria: The people of Samaria must bear their guilt, because they have rebelled against their God. They will fall by the sword; their little ones will be dashed to the ground, their pregnant women ripped open." Hosea 13:16

I will make Samaria a heap of rubble, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations. 7 All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned with fire; I will destroy all her images." Micah 1:6

Note on Samaria:

Samaria was the capital city of the Northern Kingdom, Israel. It fell by the sword numerous times in its history. In 722 B.C., Assyria came and defeated the Northern Kingdom and its capital city. Alexander the Great also conquered this city in 331 B.C. In 120 B.C., John Hyrcanus lay siege and took control over the city. All of these wars resulted in much bloodshed and suffering.

Although Samaria was a great capital city of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and rose again to become an impressive city during Herod's time, Samaria would fall, as the prophecy foretold. It has now become only a huge heap of stones. Much of the ruins of that ancient town have rolled down the side of a hill. These stones are now scattered all over that area. The shafts of about one hundred of what must have been grand Corinthian columns are still standing, and attract much attention, although nothing definite is known regarding them. Note how this is exactly what the prophecy stated would happen. John Urquhart, in his book *The Wonders of Prophecy* wrote that the foundations of Samaria have been discovered and that now portions of old Samaria are covered with corn and olive gardens. Again, this is consistent with the Old Testament prophecies.

Gaza/Ashkelon: I will send fire upon the walls of Gaza that will consume her fortresses. 8 I will destroy the king of Ashdod and the one who holds the scepter in Ashkelon. I will turn my hand against Ekron, till the last of the Philistines is dead," says the Sovereign LORD. Amos 1:7-8

For the day has come to **destroy all the Philistines and to cut off all survivors** who could help Tyre and Sidon. The LORD is about to destroy the Philistines, the remnant from the coasts of Caphtor. 5 **Gaza will shave her head** in mourning; Ashkelon will be silenced. Jer 47:4-5

Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon left in ruins. At midday Ashdod will be emptied and Ekron uprooted. 5 Woe to you who live by the sea, O Kerethite people; the word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of **the Philistines. "I will destroy you, and none will be left**." The land by the sea, where the Kerethites dwell, will be a place for shepherds and sheep pens. 7 **It will belong to the remnant of the house of Judah; there they will find pasture. In the evening they will lie down in the houses of Ashkelon. The LORD their God will care for them; he will restore their fortunes.** Zeph 2:4-7

In these three different books in the Old Testament, we see the future of several cities foretold by God:

- Philistine will be destroyed and no Philistines will remain. In fact, there are no remnants of the Philistines alive today anywhere in the world.
- The original city of Gaza, the one described in these verses, is now covered by sand… looking sort of like a "bald man" – one with a shaved head, as noted in Jeremiah above.
- Ashkelon was left abandoned for centuries. Recently, however, Israel has restored this territory into a garden city. It was prophesied by Zephaniah that this land would belong to the remnant of Judah. This has now come true.

Nineveh: One of the most incredible cities in the ancient world was the city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. It was founded by Nimrod. In its heyday, it was a massive and beautiful city. It was located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River and during the mid-7th century B.C., it was the largest city in the world. It was protected like no other in those days. It had an amazing inner city wall that was wide enough for three chariots to race one another, side by side. It was 100 feet high and it had 1200 towers and 14 gates. In addition to this protection, it had an outer wall around the city, also very impressive. In other words, it was seemingly impregnable to foreign attacks. Sennacherib had markedly improved and expanded the city and its defenses during his reign. The Israeli prophet, Nahum, was sent by God to pronounce judgment on this wicked city less than 100 years after Jonah had evangelized them and they had turned to God. By the mid-7th century, however, this city had returned to its wicked ways. This city would fall in 612 B.C. There were many judgments pronounced on Nineveh by God through Nahum. All came true. Six of the more impressive were as follows:

- The city gates would be destroyed. The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; The river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses. Nahum 2:6; 3:11 *The Hatamti Gate was the main breach point of the enemy attack.*
- Many of the Assyrian soldiers would be drunk during the final portion of the attack. They will be entangled among thorns and drunk from their wine; you too will become drunk; you will go into hiding and seek refuge from the enemy. Nahum 1,10; 3:11 *The historian, Diodorus, reported this in his writings.*
- A flood would play a prominent role in their defeat. with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of [Nineveh]; Nahum 1:8 *Massive rains during the battle for the city resulted in the breaking of portions of the walls and flooding of the city.*
- Fire would also destroy portions of the city. "I will burn up your chariots in smoke, They look like flaming torches; the gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; fire has consumed their bars. Nahum 2:4,13-14 *Evidence of this has been found in excavations.*
- The people of Nineveh would be massacred. Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses-- Nahum 3:3 *Diodorus, an ancient historian, wrote that the slaughter was so great that the rivers were colored red (from blood) for a period of time.*

- The city would never be rebuilt. "Although they have allies and are numerous, they will be cut off and pass away. The LORD has given a command concerning you, [Nineveh]: "You will have no descendants to bear your name. Nahum 1:12,14 He will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, leaving Nineveh utterly desolate Zeph 2:13 *Even within a few hundred years, the destruction was so complete that when Alexander the Great passed through that area, he did not even know a city had ever existed at that site! In fact, it wasn't until 1840 that the covered ruins of the city were positively identified.*

Babylon: **I will stir up against them the Medes**, who do not care for silver and have no delight in gold. Their bows will strike down the young men; they will have no mercy on infants nor will they look with compassion on children. **Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah**. **She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there**. Isaiah 13:17-20

"**I will cut off from Babylon her name and survivors**, her offspring and descendants," declares the LORD. "**I will turn her into a place for owls and into swampland**; I will sweep her with the broom of destruction," Isaiah 14:22-23

I will send foreigners to Babylon to winnow her and to devastate her land; they will oppose her on every side in the day of her disaster. Jer 51:2

It is time for the LORD's vengeance; he will pay her what she deserves. Babylon was a gold cup in the LORD's hand; she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad. **Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken**. Wail over her! Jer 51:6-8

I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry. Babylon will be a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and scorn, a place where no one lives. Her people all roar like young lions, they growl like lion cubs. But while they are aroused, **I will set out a feast for them and make them drunk, so that they shout with laughter**-- then sleep forever and not awake," declares the LORD. "I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams and goats. Jer 51:36-40

The historical account of the downfall of Babylon is very intriguing. Many of the prophecies above have been fulfilled very impressively. On the other hand, there are a few that have yet to come true. Let us take a look at those that have already come to fruition. For example, in 539 B.C., Cyrus the Mede planned a very impressive sneak attack to gain victory over an unsuspecting Babylon. He used two Babylonian traitors on the inside of the city walls in addition to his own troops. His soldiers dug huge ditches to divert the flow of water from the Euphrates River. By doing this, he was able to gain entrance into that incredibly fortified city

via its temporarily dried river bed. That allowed the entrance of enemy soldiers who could now simply walk on into the city! All of this activity took place at night while Belteshazzar was giving a ribald, drunken party for his guests. Intriguingly, Daniel was called to interpret the "writing on the wall" while this siege was going on in the waterways outside and under the city. Daniel noted that the unsuspecting King of Babylon was about to meet his "Waterloo" before the morning sun came up. Cyrus had conquered Babylon without having to knock down any of its famous walls or fortifications. As one can easily see, many of the aforementioned prophecies were fulfilled during that Babylonian defeat. For example:

- God said in Isaiah… **I will stir up against them the Medes.**
- God spoke of the plan to dry up the river bed… **I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry.**
- All this would take place in one night while the Babylonians were involved in a drunken party… **I will set out a feast for them and make them drunk, so that they shout with laughter. Babylon will *suddenly* fall and be broken.**

For most of the twentieth century, the land that had once been home to an incredibly impressive city-state lay desolate. Lions, jackals and wolves roamed the region. The land was uninhabited, even by tent-dwellers. Much of the old city was swampland. This was what Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied that the city would one day become. Also note how this situation is so unlike present day Egypt. Both were great powers 2500 years ago. God pronounced different judgments on each nation; both judgments came true.

However, certain items of the prophets' prophecies must not be overlooked. In particular, Isaiah did say that this city would one day reach such desolation that it "will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations." This prophecy of total devastation and desolation for all time seemingly presents a problem. Why? Well, beginning in 1983, Saddam Hussein poured millions into the reconstruction of this once great city as he planned to build another one right on top of that old city's foundations! He actually got a pretty good start. However, that re-building project was left unfinished at the time of his execution in late 2006. Currently, the United Nations is contributing money for Babylon's restoration. In the past twenty years, close to one billion dollars has gone into the rebuilding of temples, palaces, theaters, and other structures in this impressive building project. Not only are many other countries helping out with the new Babylon, but the United States military is opening a base there. Of course, that means many more dollars and many more people will move into the area. There are actually plans to turn Babylon into a major tourist attraction very soon.

This rebuilding does make sense given that certain prophecies are yet to be fulfilled. In particular, as just noted, God said that there will come a time that the destruction of Babylon will be so complete that it will never again by inhabited. Well, it certainly is not like that today. However, as it turns out, in The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Jesus speaks of a time during the Great Tribulation when Babylon will once again be a very significant city on the world scene. Not surprisingly, the Babylon of that time will be completely destroyed and left uninhabited…

leaving it in the final condition written about by the prophets in the verses above. Hence, all of the prophecies concerning Babylon will come to pass!

The Empire of Alexander the Great: Alexander the Great was one of the more interesting characters ever to enter the world scene. Many historians consider him to be the greatest military commander in history. He was only 22 years old when, in 332 B.C., he began a campaign to conquer much of the civilized world of those days. This eventually led him as far east as India and south to Egypt including all points in between. The Bible prophets, Daniel and Zechariah, had much to say about this powerful young man.

After the prophet, Daniel, described the dual empires of the Medes and Persians in Daniel 6&7, the vision turned to describe the young Alexander:

suddenly **a male goat (Alexander the Great) came from the west**, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. [6] Then he came to the ram that had two horns (Medo-Persia), which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. [7] And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. **There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him**; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand. [8] Therefore **the male goat grew very great**; but **when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven**. Dan 8:5-8

Daniel's vision describes the meteoric rise of Alexander followed by his death and succession by his four top generals (Cassandra, Ptolemy, Seleucus, Lysimachus). The prophet Zechariah goes into more detail concerning the southern campaign of this young warrior that brought him to Jerusalem. He wrote about 20 years after the prophet Daniel had written his prophecy on this topic.

The word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach and will rest upon **Damascus**-- for the eyes of men and all the tribes of Israel are on the LORD-- [2] and upon Hamath too, which borders on it, and upon **Tyre and Sidon**, though they are very skillful. [3] Tyre has built herself a stronghold; she has heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the dirt of the streets. [4] But the Lord will take away her possessions and destroy her power on the sea, and she will be consumed by fire. [5] **Ashkelon** will see it and fear; **Gaza** will writhe in agony, and **Ekron** too, for her hope will wither. Gaza will lose her king and Ashkelon will be deserted. [6] Foreigners will occupy **Ashdod**, and I will cut off the pride of the **Philistines**. [7] I will take the blood from their mouths, the forbidden food from between their teeth. **Those who are left will belong to our God and become leaders in Judah,** Zech 9:1-7

Simply put, the verses above catalog the southern course of Alexander as he went along the Mediterranean coast adding one city after another to his empire. History confirms that this

was indeed the exact course that Alexander took during his incredible victory march. However, history also tells us of an intriguing thing that happened when the young general rode west on his famous stead, Bucephalus, and came to Jerusalem.

I will **camp around My house** because of the army, because of him who passes by and him who returns. Zech 9:8

The famous Jewish historian, Josephus, tell us the details of what happened when Alexander came to Jerusalem and set up camp outside the walled city. God gave a dream to Jaddua the high priest instructing him as to what to do. This included the people praying and offering sacrifices to God while the priest led a contingent of holy men dressed in white robes to meet and talk with Alexander. God also gave a dream to Alexander to expect this same type of meeting – i.e. holy men in white robes coming out to meet with him. Alexander properly interpreted the dream that God wanted him to spare this Holy City from his reign of conquests. Jerusalem was left untouched. Instead, he just "camped around My house."

It is almost assuredly no coincidence that the very next verse in Zechariah tells of the future time when Jesus will be the true "just" King that will not just camp around the city but will ride into Jerusalem on a donkey bringing salvation with Him. Then one day in the future, He will enter that same city as its true King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

No more shall an oppressor pass through them, for now I have seen with My eyes. [9] "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of **Jerusalem**! Behold, **your King is coming to you;** He is **just** and **having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey**, A colt, the foal of a donkey. Zech 9:8-9

Prophetic events relating to Israel and their relations with other nations:

Although there are dozens of prophecies that concern the relations between Israel and other nations, I want to just review one particular chapter in the Old Testament at this time. Chapter 11 of Daniel is a particularly amazing chapter of prophecy. As will be shown, this chapter goes into much specific detail concerning what would happen to Israel over the next 300-400 years following the vision given to Daniel by God. The chapter begins:

And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.
"Now then, I tell you the truth: **Three more kings will appear in Persia, and then a fourth, who will be far richer than all the others.** When he has gained power by his wealth, **he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. Then a mighty king will appear, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases.** Dan 11:1-3

Here we see that Daniel is being given a vision concerning the future kingdoms of the world… those that will arise after the fall of Babylon and after Darius the Mede. The four kings that followed in succession *after* this vision were Cambyses (529-522 B.C.), Psuedo-Smerdis

(522-521 B.C.), Darius I Hystaspes (521-486 B.C.), and Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.). Xerxes was the ruler who fought against the Greeks as the verses above suggest. He certainly did "stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece". (Ahasuerus, who is named in the book of Esther, is another name for Xerxes I). Daniel then says that another king will come on the scene at some point in time that will be mighty and rule with such power that he can do just as he pleases.

Alexander the Great is the "mighty king" that came along and ruled with "great power". However, he did not live a long life. Alexander died in 323 B.C. He had no sons at the time of his death that could inherit his power. His son, Hercules, was murdered by a man named Polysperchon. Therefore, his kingdom was divided among his four top generals: Ptolemy took possession of Egypt, Cassander took control over Macedonia, Seleucus ruled over Syria and Babylon, and Antigonus declared himself king over Asia Minor.

This is written about in the next several verses…

After he has appeared, **his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds** of heaven. **It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others**. Dan 11:4

"The king of the South will become strong, but one of his commanders will become even stronger than he and will rule his own kingdom with great power. **6** After some years, they will become allies. Dan 11:5-6

The king of the south (i.e. Egypt) was almost assuredly Ptolemy I Soter (323 -285 B.C.). The commander who became stronger than Soter was most likely the king of Syria, Seleucus I Nicator (312-281 B.C.). Secular history tells us that both of these kings were allies for a time… however, they eventually became rivals. Daniel 11:5-35 reads like a detailed history book. A careful study of this chapter in Daniel will reveal even the various political marriages of convenience between women such as Bernice, who married Antiochus II Theos in 252 B.C. and, later, Cleopatra to Ptolemy V Epiphenes in 192 B.C. Note the following passages:

The daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North to make an alliance, but she will not retain her power, and he and his power will not last. In those days she will be handed over, together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her.

Ptolemy II Philadelphus arranged the political marriage of his daughter, Bernice, to be the wife of Antiochus of Syria. Antiochus had to divorce his first wife, Laodiceia first. Ptolemy died only a few years after this marriage. Laodiceia promptly arranged for the murders of Antichus, Bernice and that couple's young son. Seleucus II Callinicus, the son of Laodiceia, then became the King of Syria. However, the brother of Bernice came to power to challenge Callinicus… successfully…

"One from her family line (i.e. Ptolemy III Euergetes) will arise to take her (Bernice) place. He will attack the forces of the king of the North and enter his fortress; he will fight against them and be victorious. **8** He will also seize their gods, their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt. Dan 11:7-8

Egyptian forces did attack and defeat the Syrian army as prophesied here in the Bible. Ptolemy returned with his bounty to Egypt awaiting the next move by his northern neighbor.

If the main purpose of this treatise was to study the book of Daniel, all of the remaining verses in this chapter would be studied and shown to "forecast" history in an amazing fashion. My purpose, however, was just to demonstrate how accurately detailed some portions of biblical prophecy can get at times. I believe that has been accomplished.

This chapter extends its prophecy all the way up to the infamous Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Antiochus erected a statue of Zeus inside the Temple and sacrificed a pig on the altar on December 16, 167 B. C. in honor of the birth of the sun god. This terrible incident in biblical history is known as the abomination of desolation. It was a foreshadowing of a similar event that will happen during the Tribulation at the hands of the Antichrist. This so incited the Jews that they began a revolt which ended in Jewish independence for the first time since 586 B.C. This end of foreign rule has been celebrated as the important Jewish festival of *Hanukkah*, meaning "dedication" (of the sanctuary) from December 25, 164 B. C. until today.

The verses in Daniel 11 have been dissected by Bible scholars for millennia. **All agree, both liberal and conservative, that these verses are perfectly and incredibly accurate in their description of the political intrigue that took place between Egypt and Syria (and their effects on the nation of Israel) from the late-fourth to the mid-second centuries B.C.** The *difference* comes with the *interpretation* of this fact. Generally speaking, there are three ways this chapter has been interpreted over the years:

- Those theologians who simply do not believe that God ever predicts the future simply believe that these verses were written after all of the historical events that they describe took place.
- Another group of Bible students believe that someone added this chapter to the book of Daniel at a late date (a short time after the events described in this chapter). These individuals do not necessarily discount that God has given prophetic statements elsewhere, but they do not believe that God tends to be as incredibly detailed and specific in His prophecies as seen here in Daniel 11.
- The conservative Bible believing scholar believes these verses to be the Word of God and to have been written by Daniel near the end of his life. Certainly, that is what I believe to be true, for a variety of reasons. Simply put, God is all-powerful and easily capable of providing these prophecies. Jesus could very well have told His disciples, and therefore the rest of the world, that this chapter of the Scriptures was not appropriate to be included in the Bible. Jesus instead quoted frequently from the Old Testament and gave His stamp

of approval to all of its words. Therefore, the conclusion simply is that this chapter of Daniel is just one more impressive reason to trust in the power of God!

There is one other important point to make concerning this interesting chapter in Daniel. As is so often the case with the prophecies of God, there is a short term fulfillment and an end-times fulfillment. We see here in Daniel 11, that verses 36-45 have a dual meaning, a short term and long-term fulfillment for these prophetic verses. Antiochus IV Epiphanes was the actual man of history that did those things just a few hundred years after they were prophesied by Daniel in these ten verses. However, virtually every prophecy scholar also views these verses as being prophetic of the future Anti-Christ who will come on the scene in the end-times and also desecrate the re-built Temple. Not only that, but the other verses apparently not only point to the political turmoil in that 2nd century B.C., but also to the tribulation period still to come. Note the reference to the end-times in the verses themselves…"***At the time of the end*** the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. Dan 11:40

The fact is that many of God's prophecies have these dual fulfillments. Jesus, Himself, gives many examples of this throughout the Gospels.

Messianic Prophecies: The Old Testament contains over 300 references to the Messiah. Jesus fulfills these prophecies. There are *none* that are contradicted in His life. There are still some that are awaiting fulfillment during His Second Advent.

1). "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2

Here we see that Micah, the Old Testament prophet, prophesied that the Ruler and future King over Israel would come out of the little town of Bethlehem. Of course, there were many cities and towns in Israel. Statistically, there would have been very little likelihood for the Messiah to be born in this little town. It would be akin to predicting that the greatest president that the United States will ever produce will be born in Hialeah, Florida sometime in the future… and have this prediction come true!

Micah goes on to say that this Ruler will have always existed… that is, this Ruler will be God, Himself. God is the only individual that has existed from eternity past.

"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem." Matt 2:1

2). "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14-15

Seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, Isaiah predicted that some day in the future a virgin would conceive and bear a son who would be named Immanuel… and who would actually be God.

"In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."' Luke 1:26-35

Immanuel is translated as "God with us" – that is, Jesus had come to earth and into existence as a human being… born as a baby. He did this in order to accomplish the tasks necessary for our salvation. He led a perfect life, allowed mankind to actually view God in the person of Jesus, taught us how to live, and then gave Himself as the one and only perfect sacrifice for our sins.

3). "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." Gen 22:18

God tells Abraham that all mankind will be blessed because of a future descendent from Abraham. God bestowed this blessing upon Abraham because he trusted and obeyed the Lord God. Quite obviously, Jesus fulfilled this prophecy.

4). "But God said to Abraham…it is through Isaac that your offspring (seed) will be reckoned." Gen 21:12

Since the first patriarch, Abraham, God repeatedly promised that the promised Messiah would come from His seed. Not just any of Abraham's offspring, but specifically through the line of Isaac. Several chapters later, God continued to define the lineage from which the Messiah would come…

5). "And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel. ¹¹ Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and *kings shall come from your body*." Gen 35:10-11

"I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult….. Out of Jacob One shall have dominion," Num 24:17-19

Here we see that God pointed out that the future King, the Star of the universe, who will destroy all evil at some point in the future, would come from the heirs of a particular son of Isaac, the son named Jacob. The fine tuning of the ancestry of the Messiah continued as the time passed during the Old Testament days…

6). "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him," Isaiah 11:1-2

"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth." Jer 23:5

Here we note that God told His prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah that the Messiah would come from the line of David (Jesse was David's father). So what was the actual lineage of Jesus?

"The book of the genealogy of **Jesus Christ, the Son of David**, the Son of Abraham: **Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot** Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and **Jesse begot David** the king. David the king begot Solomon……." Matt 1:1-7

"Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, …….. the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, **the son of David**, **the son of Jesse,** the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, ……. the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God." Luke 3:23-38

Two different genealogies are given above; one shows the lineage from Adam through David to Mary while the other shows the lineage from Abraham to David to Joseph, the earthly step-father to Jesus. The verses point out that the prophesied lineage of the Messiah was found in the person of Jesus Christ. So far then, the Old Testament has revealed to the Jews that their Messiah would be born of a virgin in Bethlehem and will also come from the "house of David". This certainly already narrowed the possibilities markedly.

7). "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert." Isaiah 40:3

This verse seen in Isaiah heralds the coming of the cousin of Jesus, John the Baptist. John was to prepare the way for the Lord and he did so very well. He was a Nazarite and lived a rugged type of existence as an adult. Indeed, he did live much of the time in the deserts of Judea where he preached a message of repentance as he exhorted the people to return to their God.

"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.' "*And John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey." Matt 3:1-4

8). "Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and *save* you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing."
Isaiah 35:4-6

Isaiah also prophesied that the Messiah would come some day to save His people. He would heal all manner of sickness. Of course, we know that is exactly what Jesus Christ came to do… and He did it exceedingly well.

"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."
Matt 9:35

And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for **He will save His people from their sins.**" Matt 1:21

9). The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; Isaiah 61:1-2

Isaiah wrote that a day would come when the Messiah would be sent from heaven, anointed by God, the Father, to preach, teach, and help mankind in innumerable ways. Jesus later referenced these exact words while preaching in His home town of Nazareth… ending with the bombshell announcement that He was the Messiah Himself!

And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears. Luke 4:17-21

While appearing in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth, Jesus directly stated that He was the individual that the prophet Isaiah was referring to in the Messianic prophecy above. Not only that but Jesus concluded His reading without mentioning the fact that the Messiah would one day proclaim the vengeance of the God. This was significant because Jesus was alluding to the fact that on His first visit to earth He would not be the conquering King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He would not bring judgment onto the people of the earth at that time. That judgment would have to wait for a later time… until the "Day of the Lord."

10). "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey." Zech 9:9

This Old Testament prophetic passage was fulfilled on Palm Sunday…

"So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!"
Matt 21:6-9

11). I will praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my salvation. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. Psalms 118:21-22

"See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. Isaiah 28:16

Jesus referred to the verse quoted from the Psalm above to identify Himself to the crowd of Jews who had rejected Him just days before His crucifixion in Jerusalem…

Haven't you read this scripture:
"The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone." Mark 12:10

Many people, both Jew and Gentile, accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior after His death and resurrection. However, there were more and more of His Jewish brothers and sisters who

began to reject Him and His message as the years went by. By the late A.D. 50s, most new converts were Gentiles. The majority of the Jews rejected Jesus and still do today. As Peter wrote in one of his epistles…

"*Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.*" (Isaiah 28:16) Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone*," and "*A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense*." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed." 1 Peter 2:6-8

Jesus quoted from Psalms to show the error that the people were making by rejecting Him. Of course, this was just one of the dozens of prophecies concerning the life of Jesus that would come to pass…

"Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner". Matt 21:42

As can be seen, Peter quoted from Isaiah to show that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the first two verses noted above. Jesus was and is the chief cornerstone of His Church. Anyone who puts their trust in Him will never be sorry. Unfortunately, Jesus became a stumbling block to the majority of the Jews as they could not seem to accept Him as the Messiah… and, even more importantly, most were unable to recognize Jesus as God. Of course, the great early evangelists were all Jews… the apostles. God has stated on more than one occasion that there will always be a remnant of Israel who will remain faithful to Him. This means believing on the Lord Jesus for salvation in these New Testament times… not the Law.

12). The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." Psalm 110:1

Here we see where David was writing an intriguing passage. He said that his Lord was spoken to by his Lord. The first person, God the Father, was speaking to David's Lord Jesus, God's only begotten Son. He told Jesus to sit at His right hand until that time when all of the enemies of Jesus would be vanquished.

"What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, the son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet? If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son? And no one was able to answer him a word"
Matt 22:42-46

In these verses in Matthew, Jesus is pointing out to the Pharisees, who had just told Jesus that the Messiah would be the son of David, that David had also referred to the Messiah as being his Lord. He asked them to explain that interesting point. They remained silent. The explanation, of course, is that Jesus was indeed from the line of David (He was David's son), but, of course, Jesus was the Lord over David as well.

13). It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Isaiah 49:6

As we all know, Jesus came to save *all* mankind. Isaiah had prophesied this fact several centuries before the birth of the Messiah, (i.e. Jesus). Luke wrote that Paul preached about how Jesus had fulfilled this prophesy…

I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles.
Acts 26:22-23

The 53rd Chapter of Isaiah is the greatest Old Testament chapter with respect to Messianic prophecy. Interestingly, this chapter was commonly used to teach about the coming of the Messiah by Jewish interpreters of the Old Testament scriptures *before* the coming of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus did not fit their idea of what the Messiah should be like, they have since stopped teaching that this chapter referenced the Messiah. Now, their interpretation typically suggests that the suffering refers to the Jewish nation… not the Messiah. Unfortunately for them, however, is the fact that the language used by Isaiah, when writing of the suffering servant in this chapter, is always in the third-person singular (ex. "he", "his", "him") instead of the way he always wrote concerning the *nation* of Israel (or the Jewish people). In these instances, Isaiah used the first person plural, "our" and "we". Not only that, just a careful reading of this incredible chapter makes it obvious that Isaiah is speaking of an individual not a nation.

Several more intriguing prophecies from the Psalms and from Zechariah speak to the last days in the life of Jesus. There are approximately thirty of these predictions in the Old Testament, many of these noted below:

14). "mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, **Who did eat of my bread**, hath lifted up his heel against me." Psalms 41:9

Obviously, this verse suggests that one day Jesus will have a trusted friend betray Him… even one who had shared bread with Him.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. He leaning back, as he was, on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus therefore answereth, He it is, for whom I

shall dip the sop, and give it him. So **when he had dipped the sop, he taketh and giveth it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.** John 13:21,24-26

15). If ye think good, give me my hire; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver. Zech 11:12

Here we see an uncanny prophesy relating to the thirty pieces of silver that was paid to Judas as payment for his betrayal of Jesus. Matthew records the exchange between Judas and the chief priests.

What are ye willing to give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they weighed unto him thirty pieces of silver. Matt 26:15

16). And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and **cast them unto the potter**, in the house of Jehovah. Zech 11:13

Of course, Judas soon realized the gravity of his actions and proceeded to discard his ill-gained bounty, prior to committing suicide…

And he cast down the pieces of silver into the sanctuary, and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the pieces of silver, and said, it is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and **bought with them the potter's field**, to bury strangers in. Matt 27:5-7

17). He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so **he opened not his mouth**. Isaiah 53:7

Jesus was the true, one and only, sacrificial Lamb of God. He refused to defend Himself at the multiple trials that He was dragged into the night before His crucifixion. The whole trial process was a sham. Regardless, Jesus was ready and willing to go to the cross in order to suffer and pay the penalty for all of mankind's sins.

Now Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. **And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.** Then saith Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? **And he gave him no answer, not even to one word:** insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. Matt 27:11-14

18). But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep

have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:5-6

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord Jehovah will help me; therefore have I not been confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. Isaiah 50:6-7

Jesus was beaten unmercilessly by the Roman soldiers. His body and back were scourged. They pushed a crown of sharp thorns upon his head causing the blood to run down His torn face. They beat Him as He dragged the cross up to Golgotha. Then they pounded nails into His feet and wrists. Jesus was certainly "bruised for our iniquities". Not only that, but Jesus took the wrath of God upon Himself as He paid the penalty for all the sins of mankind… past, present and future. God cannot let sin go unpunished.

"Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head" John 19:1-2

"Then did they spit in his face and buffet him: and some smote him with the palms of their hands" Matt 26:67

19). "They **pierced my hands and my feet**." Psalms 22:16

"they shall look unto me whom they have **pierced**; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem" Zech 12:10-11

Although the ancient Israelites did not crucify their criminals, the psalmist, David, and Zechariah both were told by God to write that the Messiah would one day die via this ignominious manner.

And when they came unto the place which is called the skull, there **they crucified him**. Luke 23:33

20). "He poured out his soul unto death, and **was numbered with the transgressors**: yet he bare the sin of many, and **made intercession for the transgressors**." Isaiah 53:12

The Holy Spirit directed Isaiah to write these details concerning the death of Jesus. Yes, Jesus was crucified between two thieves. The point of the whole crucifixion is made in the latter portion of the twelfth verse, Jesus through His suffering and death made intercession for the transgressors, for all mankind. That is His gift to us… we just have to accept it.

Then are there crucified with him two robbers, one on the right hand and one on the left. Matt 27:38

And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. Luke 23:34

21). He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and **acquainted with grief**: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not. Isaiah 53:3

It is obvious that Jesus fits this description very well. Although there was a remnant of the Jews that did accept Jesus as their Messiah, most did not. Certainly, the religious leaders not only did not look at Him as the Messiah, but they were out to destroy Him. Jesus brought a message that was so different than what they had been teaching to the masses of people. Jesus was not yet ready to assume His rightful position as the King of the Jews… at least in the manner that they expected. He was not the political and military leader that most wanted at that time. Of course, Jesus had a much more important task to perform on that first coming… He was going to save mankind from their sins through His sacrificial death on the cross. However, He certainly "was rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief… [they] esteemed Him not."

"He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not." John 1:11

He began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Matt 26:37-38

And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Luke 22:44

So His brother Jews, as a whole, would reject Him as their Messiah. In fact, they would push for His crucifixion and succeed in having the Romans put Him to death on the cross. As can be seen from the verses above, Jesus suffered unimaginable grief and pain in the hours before and during the actual crucifixion. It must be remembered that Jesus was not only God the Son, but also a man. As such, He was subject to the same feelings as other men. Of course, Jesus was able to control Himself and His actions so as to lead a perfect life.

22). And I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my food; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Psalms 69:20-21

Jesus hung from the cross with only His friend John and a few very dear women, including His mother, at its base to comfort Him through this very difficult and painful time. All of His other friends had scattered like frightened rabbits. When He became thirsty, He asked for something to drink…

"They gave him wine to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted it, he would not drink." Matt 27:34

23). "They part my garments among them, and upon my vesture do they cast lots." Psalms 22:18

True to the prediction in the Psalms, the soldiers decided to cast lots for the garments of Jesus.

The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be John 19:23-24

24). My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Psalms 22:1
Into your hands I commit my spirit; Psalms 31:5

Of course, we all know that these were some of the famous words that Jesus cried out to His Father just before He died. Here we see them written in two different Messianic Psalms a thousand years earlier!

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"*--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Matt 27:46

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. Luke 23:46

25). "He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken." Psalms 34:20

They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. Zech 12:10

Here we see the prophecy that none of the bones of Jesus will be broken. Instead, Jesus will be pierced with a sword, His body fluids (including blood) flowing out onto the ground.

But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. John 19:33-35

26). "In that day," declares the Sovereign LORD, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. Amos 8:9

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. Matt 27:45

This is an incredible prophecy. There is definite secular historical evidence of the fact that between the hours of noon and 3:00 P.M. on the day of Jesus' crucifixion, an "eclipse" of the sun occurred in Palestine. The Greek historian, Thallus, wrote in his historical account of that time, "On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness and the rocks were rent by the earthquake and in many places in Judea and other districts rocks were thrown down." Phlegon, another Greek historian, also reported concerning this "eclipse"; "This great extraordinary eclipse of the sun distinguished among all that had happened and it occurred in the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad (A.D. 32). Four other historians concurred: Eusebius, Origen, Tertullian, and Lucian of Antioch. Lucian suggested to his readers that they verify the fact by looking it up in the Roman "Annals and Archives". In summary, there is extensive secular evidence that there was a great earthquake and an "eclipse" of the sun that accompanied the death of the Lord Jesus.

One last point should be made clear. Italics were placed around the word "eclipse" in the paragraph above due to the fact that there was no possibility of an actual eclipse of the sun at the time of the crucifixion. Due to the method of determining the Passover day, the sun, and earth would have been unable to align in the manner required to result in an actual eclipse. Obviously, God intervened supernaturally with the signs of an earthquake and the darkening of the sun to clearly demonstrate the enormity of the occasion of His Son's sacrificial death.

27). You will not leave My soul in Sheol; nor will you allow Your Holy One to see corruption. Psalm 16:10

In this Messianic Psalm, we see the prophecy that God would not abandon His Son, Jesus, to the grave. Instead, Jesus would arise from the dead on Easter morning, His body never to see corruption.

"Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay." Acts 2:31

28). The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Psalms 110:1

This is a verse that was mentioned earlier in connection with teaching the Pharisees that Jesus was David's Lord as well as David's Son. Here it is used to show simply that the Holy Spirit had predicted that Jesus would someday be called up into heaven to take His appropriate seat at the right hand of His Father.

"After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God." Mark 16:19

Prophesies Made By The Lord, Jesus: Jesus spoke many prophecies while He was on this earth. Although many will not come to fruition until the latter days, as will be discussed in the third and fourth sections to come, He did make several important predictions that came true not very long after He made them. Let me just mention a few below.

1). "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Matt 12:39-40

Here we see Jesus telling His disciples that He will suffer a fate similar to that of Noah. Instead of being totally enclosed in the belly of a great fish for three days, Jesus would be enclosed in a tomb, His body having been crucified. Both would come up out of their grave (Noah's "grave" being the great fish) after three days, alive and well!

2). As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." Matt 17:9

3). When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." Matt 17:22-23

4). "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" Matt 20:18-19

5). "As you know, the Passover is two days away--and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." Matt 26:2

In all four verses above Jesus tries to prepare His disciples for His coming betrayal, beatings and death. He goes even further by also telling them clearly that He will not lose the battle to Satan and death. Instead, He will arise on the third day. He will be "clothed" in His new glorified body and will visit with them for several weeks. In these four verses, we see mention of His betrayal, condemnation by the chief priest, scribes and Pharisees, being turned over to the Romans, His beatings, being put to death, and then His resurrection. Those are six different prophecies!

6). Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." Matt 26:23-24

7). Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Matt 26:25

Jesus is specific about his betrayal. He even tells Judas that He knows that Judas is the traitor that will turn Jesus over to the Romans.

8). Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' Matt 26:31
"Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, Zech 13:7

Using the above Old Testament verse as His prophetic source, Jesus explains to His disciples that they will all scatter when He is arrested and put to death. They will fail Jesus at that time. Later, they will regain their faith and power and become great evangelists for the remainder of their lives.

9). "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." Matt 26:34

This prediction is the famous one concerning Peter, who was very sure that he would never do anything of the kind. He would be right there fighting and defending Jesus to the death. Jesus, of course, knew better.

10). "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Matt 21:43

Jesus tells the Jews that the kingdom of God would soon be given to the Gentiles since the vast majority of the Jews of that time in history would reject Jesus as the Messiah and God the Son. The Gentiles would go throughout the entire world… over time… and win hundreds of millions to Christ. It is also true, as will be shown later in this treatise, in the end-times there will be an awakening among the Jews as they finally recognize the true identity of Jesus. Then, they also will produce much fruit for the Kingdom.

11). Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, **not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down**." Matt 24:1-2

This prophecy by Jesus is also mentioned by Luke…

For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, **and level you**, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation." Luke 19:43-44

In this impressive prophecy, Jesus tells His disciples that the Temple would soon be destroyed. Not only that, but this destruction would be so complete that the structure would

actually be totally leveled to the ground. This happened exactly as Jesus said it would in A.D. 70, approximately 40 years after His prophecy.

12). "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you." Matt 11:21-24

Our Lord, Jesus Christ spent much of His ministry teaching and preaching in the towns surrounding the Sea of Galilee. Many of those same towns stand today. On the other hand, we see that in the verses quoted above, Jesus pronounced judgment on three cities in this region: Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. So what has happened to these cities since the time of Jesus? Let us take a look at them one at a time:

- **Korazin** – If one looks on the Internet for this location, there are one or two sites that suggest they are showing a few ancient stone buildings on what used to be the town of Korazin… not far from Capernaum. No one knows for sure where this old village was located… only that it has long since been destroyed.
- **Bethsaida** – There is virtually no evidence of the location of this ancient site. Different people have differing opinions concerning its previous location. It is, of course, on the northern shores of the Lake of Galilee near the towns of Korazin and Capernaum. However, it has been destroyed just as Jesus prophesied.
- **Capernaum** – Just as Jesus prophesied, this city has been destroyed even to the point where its original location is not absolutely certain. Most people now believe that it lay under the ground where archaeological digs now take place called Tel Hum. In any case, the city of Capernaum is no longer.

One Final Prophecy: Before moving on to the next topic of discussion in this first section, I will present another of the more famous prophecies in the Old Testament for consideration. This prophecy is often referred to as the "70 Weeks Prophecy."

Sometime in the year 538 B.C., Daniel had been studying the scrolls written by the prophet Jeremiah when he came across the portion Jeremiah had written about Israel being exiled for 70 years due to their turning away from God. They had failed to respect and honor the Sabbath years on 70 different occasions since the time that Moses had instructed them to do so many centuries earlier. (By the way, that does mean that they *did allow* the land to lay fallow for approximately 50 years as the there were about 120 sabbatical years from the time of the edict from Moses to the beginning of the Babylonian captivity). For that reason, they were defeated

by Babylon and placed into exile for 70 years – the number of Sabbath years that they had failed to observe. The chapter begins…

In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom-- **2** in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. **3** So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. Dan 9:1-3

Realizing that they had already been in captivity for just under 70 years, Daniel went to God in prayer to ask what events were on the horizon. He knew that certain important events were about to begin…

Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. **18** Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. **19** O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name." Dan 9:17-19

Daniel was pleading with God to remember that His Holy City was still lying desolate and that the Temple had yet to be rebuilt. While Daniel was in the middle of this prayer, God sent Gabriel to give him certain answers to his questions. Gabriel told Daniel that he had been sent from heaven by God to give him a message concerning Daniel's people (the Israelites) and the Holy City of Jerusalem. Gabriel then began to tell Daniel about the message he had from God. Before breaking down this prophecy, two things must be made clear:

- When the Bible uses the term 70 "7's" or 70 "weeks of years" it means 70 periods of 7 year increments. That is 70 x 7 = 490 years. This terminology is used in many different books of the Bible.
- When dealing with prophecy, the Bible uses 360 days for a prophetic year… not 365 ¼ days as is the actual number of days in a calendar year. Examples of this are also seen in several areas of the Bible. For example, when the Bible talks of one-half of the Tribulation which is 3 ½ years, it actually also notes that this is equal to 360 days x 3.5 years = 1260 days. Therefore, most biblical scholars use the figure of 360 days as equaling one prophetic year when calculating the time periods of prophetic messages. The reason I mention this will become clear below.

Now, let us take a look at the prophecy…

While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill-- **21** while I was still in prayer, **Gabriel,** the man

I had seen in the earlier vision, **came to me** in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. **22** He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. **23** As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision:

Ok, so now Gabriel is about to explain the vision to Daniel… and to us…

24 "**Seventy 'sevens' (70 x 7 = 490 years) are decreed for your people (Israel) and your holy city (Jerusalem) to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy (until the coming of the Messiah in the end-times… when the Messiah will assume His leadership role in the Millennial Kingdom).** **25** "Know and understand this: **From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One (the Messiah), the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens'(49 years), and sixty-two 'sevens' (434 years).**

Gabriel told Daniel that from the decree given to rebuild Jerusalem to its completion would be 49 years. The rebuilding of the city would begin in 445 B.C. and would be completed 49 years later, in approximately 396 B.C. The verses in Nehemiah below show where these dates can be found in the Old Testament…

In the month of Nisan in the **twentieth year of King Artaxerxes (his reign began in 465 B.C. therefore this would have been in 445 B.C.)**, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. Neh 2:1

The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, **5** and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him **send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it."** **6** Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" **It pleased the king to send me**; so I set a time. Neh 2:4-6

The decree to rebuild and restore the city came on March 14, 445 B.C. Historians say that it took about 49 years to clear the city streets and rebuild the walls and buildings of the city of Jerusalem to make it a thriving city once again. To continue in Daniel…
It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. **26 After the sixty-two 'sevens', the Anointed One will be cut off (the Messiah will be killed)** and will have nothing.

The next verse states that the Messiah will be killed after 483 years (49 years + 62 x 7 = 483 years) have passed from the order to rebuild Jerusalem. When doing the calculation using 360 days for one prophetic year, the year that is predicted as the year for the Messiah being cut off is approximately A.D. 32. (Actually, the exact date is April 6, A.D. 32, very likely the Sunday Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey). Certainly, this date is amazingly consistent with the date we know Jesus was crucified. No one knows exactly when Jesus died. Most

believe that it was somewhere between A.D. 30-32. What we can say for sure is that this predicted date is extremely close to the actual known date for Christ, the Messiah, being "cut off". Certainly, this shows that this prophecy is quite impressive to say the least!

The people of the prince (the Romans) who is to come will destroy the city (Jerusalem) and the sanctuary (the Temple). Daniel 9:26

After Jesus was crucified, this prophecy notes that the Romans will come and destroy Jerusalem and the Temple of God. This, of course, is a matter of history having taken place in A.D. 70. As with so many prophetic passages, the next several verses seem to relate to the future end-times. They tell us what will be happening during the last week of years (i.e. the last 7 years) of the 70 year prophecy…

The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. **27** He (the Anti-Christ) will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven' (this is the last "week" of years… the 7-year Tribulation). In the middle of the 'seven' (3 ½ years into the 7-year Tribulation) he (Anti-Christ) will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an **abomination that causes desolation**, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him" (the Anti-Christ will desecrate the Temple). Dan 9:20-27

Most prophecy scholars believe that there is a long pause, that is a "skip period", from the death of Jesus until the beginning of the last seven year period (the last "week' of years). This skip period of time would correspond to the Church Age or Age of Grace. This does make sense in that all of these "weeks of years" relate to the dealings of God with His "chosen people", Israel. Up until the death of Jesus, God was mainly dealing with the Jews. However, since the beginning of His Church, God has primarily turned His attention to the Church. After the Rapture, God will once again turn His full attention back to Israel and, most believe, the "time clock" of this prophecy will again begin for the final seven year period to run its course… the time of the Tribulation. The Rapture of the Church just precedes this period; the coming of Christ with His saints to defeat the Antichrist and Satan at Armageddon will conclude it.

For added confirmation of the fact that the Old Testament scriptures tell us that Jesus will be crucified prior to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, let us take a look at this prophecy from Genesis:

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come. Gen 49:10

First of all, Shiloh has always been taken as a reference to the Messiah by both Jewish and Christian commentators. Therefore, this verse is saying that the tribe of Judah would not lose its tribal identity until after the Messiah came. It is true that Judah and the other twelve tribes did lose their *sovereignty* when captured by Babylon in 606 B.C. However, all twelve

tribes did keep their tribal *identity* during the entire period of their captivity. While in Babylon, the Jews still had their own lawgivers and judges.

The scepter only began to depart from Judah during the days of Herod the Great. He succeeded the Maccabean princes, who were from the tribe of Levi. They were the last of the Jews to reign in Jerusalem. Herod came in to power and restricted the powers of the Jews. The Sanhedrin were no longer able to pass the death sentence. This was a big deal to them. When the Romans passed the laws limiting the powers of the Jewish courts, the Sanhedrin were extremely upset. They actually covered themselves with ashes and sackcloth and shouted, "**Woe unto us, for the scepter has departed from Judah, and the Messiah has not come**!" (*Jesus Before the Sanhedrin*, pp. 28-30, 1886) What the Sanhedrin had failed to realize is that the Messiah *had indeed come,* exactly as God had prophesied in Genesis. They, unfortunately, had just failed to recognize Him… He was, of course, Jesus of Nazareth.

Forty years after the resurrection of Jesus, the Temple was demolished completely and Jerusalem was demolished as well. All of the prophecies requiring the coming of the Messiah to the Temple while it is still standing (ex. Mal. 3:1, Psalm 118:26, Daniel 9:26 above, Haggai 2:7-9, Zech. 11:13) had to have been fulfilled before that date. It was very puzzling to the Sanhedrin who did not recognize that the Messiah had already come when the Temple was obliterated in A.D. 70. It made no biblical sense. Of course, if they only realized who Jesus was, they would have understood completely. Jesus is the only individual in history that fits the prophetic identity of the Messiah.

Paul spent most of his adult life teaching and preaching about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. Many accepted Him as Savior and Lord. Unfortunately, Jesus was a stumbling block for many Jews.

Old Testament "Types" of Jesus: One other very interesting evidence for the veracity of the Bible is God's use of "types" in His Scriptures. "Types" can be defined in the following manner: a "type" is a man, institution, or event in Old Testament scriptures that, due to God's providence, prefigure a future aspect of a corresponding man, institution, or event in the New Testament… typically in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, who would then be referred to as the "antitype."

There are an amazing array of Old Testament people and events that mimic certain important events in the life of Christ… so many and so closely that it is very hard to believe that they are just coincidences. There are literally hundreds of types that have been described in various books by a multitude of authors. It is my goal here to choose just a handful of good examples of types in order to demonstrate their use by God to show mankind, in an intriguing manner, that His Word is true. In a real sense, the typology that is seen in the Holy Scriptures is another form of prophecy… just presented in a very unique way. Now, let us take a look at several interesting types below beginning with a great Old Testament prophet of God…

Joseph: Probably the one individual in the Old Testament that prefigures Christ in more ways than any other person is Joseph. There are books that point out scores of similarities between Jesus and Joseph. I will certainly not point out that many common aspects in their life and person, but the list that follows will clearly show how God used this great patriarch as a type of His Son, Jesus.

1. Both Joseph and Jesus were their father's beloved son.
   Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons Gen 37:3
   "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matt 3:17
2. Both Joseph and Jesus were sent by their father to serve their Hebrew brothers.
   "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. Gen 37:14
   "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." Matt 15:24
3. Both Joseph and Jesus were shepherds.
   Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers Gen 37:2
   "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."
   John 10:11
4. Joseph and Jesus, both excellent young men, were handed over to be killed.
   they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.
   Gen 37:18
   all the chief priests and the elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death.
   Matt 27:1
5. Both Jesus and Joseph were betrayed for money as well as jealousy.
   Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.
   Gen 37:10-11

his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, Gen 37:28 Judah hatched this plan.
they counted out for him thirty silver coins. Matt 26:15 by Judas (Judah in Hebrew)
For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him. Matt 27:18

6. Joseph and Jesus were both stripped of their robes.
   So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe--the richly ornamented robe he was wearing-- Gen 37:23
   they took off the robe (a scarlet robe) and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. Matt 27:31
7. Both Joseph and Jesus were prophets.
   God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. Gen 41:28-30
   There are many other examples of prophetic utterances by Joseph and dozens by our Lord Jesus (e.g. Matthew 24).
8. Joseph and Jesus both had dealings with two fellow prisoners. In each case, one of these prisoners ended up dying, while the other was saved.
   Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position. (Cupbearer) Gen 40:13
   Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and hang you on a tree. (Chief Baker) Gen 40:19
   Two criminals were crucified on either side of Jesus. Only one asked for help.
   Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. " Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:42-43
   The other criminal mocked Jesus and did not ask, or receive, forgiveness. He now resides in Hades.
9. Both Joseph and Jesus resisted great temptation.
   And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. (Potiphar's wife) Gen 39:10
   Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. Matt 4:1-2
   Jesus was taken to various places by Satan himself and tempted three times. Jesus resisted by using God's Word as a weapon over Satan.
10. Both Joseph and Jesus were falsely accused as noted in the verses below.
    That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." Gen 39:17-18
    Actually, Joseph ran out of the house to avoid confrontation with Potiphar's wife.
    And they **began** to accuse Him, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar Luke 23:2

many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. [57] Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying… Mark 14:56-57

11. Both Joseph and Jesus were put in charge of the "kingdom".
    Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. Gen 39:4
    You shall be over my house and all my people will be ruled according to your word… So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." Gen 41:40,41
    The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands. John 3:35
    He [Jesus] will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, **the King of kings and Lord of lords,** [16] who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. 1 Tim 6:15-16
    Jesus Christ, …. has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. 1 Peter 3:21-22
12. Joseph and Jesus were sent by God to save their people.
    God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. Gen 45:7
    Joseph said these words to his brothers.
    Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners 1 Tim 1:15
13. Joseph and Jesus were about 30 years old when they began their service.
    Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Gen 41:46
    Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. Luke 3:23

As there were very many aspects of the life of Joseph that typified the life of the Messiah, there were certain facets of his life that are yet to be seen in the life of Jesus. These will be seen in the future.

14. For example, Joseph was not recognized by his brothers when they first came to Egypt. However, they finally did recognize him on a subsequent visit.
    On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was… Acts 7:13
    Jesus was not recognized as the true Messiah by the vast majority of people at His First Advent. There is no doubt that He will be recognized to be the Messiah on His return to earth, as well as God the Son.
15. The brothers of Joseph eventually bowed down to him many years after they first rejected him by selling him into slavery.
    When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground. Gen 43:26
    Jesus was rejected by His brothers as well; many were directly involved in the trial that led to His crucifixion. Yet, one day, every knee shall bow to Jesus.

'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me.' Romans 14:11

There are literally dozens of additional similarities that can be listed and discussed in regards to Jesus and Joseph. In fact, one author went so far as to list one hundred of them! I think that is stretching the typology somewhat, but there is little doubt that God presented his prophet Joseph as a *type* of His coming Son, Jesus. Certainly Joseph had many important things to accomplish during his lifetime… providentially, Joseph was an excellent *type* of the Messiah that was to come.

In the New Testament, Paul alludes to the concept of types that are seen in the **Feasts of Israel** when he writes in Colossians…

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a **religious festival**, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. **These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.** Col 2:16-17

These feasts constitute another excellent example of *types* of Jesus. Let us take a look at some of the specifics found in the first four of these feasts which are celebrated annually by the Jews…

The First Passover: The First Passover provides an excellent foreshadowing of the future sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross. In the days of Israeli captivity in Egypt, Moses had already placed nine different plagues on the Egyptians in an effort to make the Pharaoh release the Israelites from their bondage. Each time the Pharaoh refused. Finally, God told Moses to present an extremely powerful ultimatum to the Egyptian Pharaoh. He was to release the hostage Israelites or God would send the most devastating plague of all… the firstborn son of each household would die!

"This is what the LORD says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. Ex 11:4-5

After Moses delivered this ultimatum, he gave the Israelites specific instructions detailing how to avoid this deathly curse. He spoke of a lamb, without spot or blemish that must be sacrificed in a specific manner: It had to be chosen, killed, prepared and eaten. All of several specific details needed to be followed. The shed blood of the lamb had to be placed above the doorframe (the lintel) and on each side of the frame. The lamb must not have any bones broken. This all had to be done on specific days.

"This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.
Tell the whole community of Israel that on the **tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family**, one for each household.
The animals you choose must be **year-old males without defect**, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Ex 12:2-3,5

It is no coincidence that Jesus presented Himself, the Lamb of God, on Palm Sunday. Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the Temple, which was the house of God, and went on "public display" there for four days, from Nisan 10 to Nisan 14. This period of time that Jesus awaited His capture and eventual crucifixion - from Palm Sunday until the Passover - was equivalent to the time that the lamb was kept by families until it was eventually sacrificed in Old Testament times (as noted in the verses below). By keeping the lamb for four days until it was killed, the families would better understand the import of their sacrifice. Many would become somewhat attached to the lamb during those four days, especially the children. Therefore, the sacrifice took on greater significance. These sacrifices were to remind the people of the cost of their sin in their lives.

By the first century A.D., over 250,000 lambs were sacrificed every Passover day! The amount of blood that was spilled for the sins of the people every Passover day was incredible. Hopefully, the lessons of that day would be learned. Sin could not go unpunished. During one Passover week almost two thousand years ago, the sins of the people would cost God the life of His only Son – Jesus would shed His precious blood for us.

Then as Passover approached, all of the people were given further instructions…

Take care of them until the **fourteenth day of the month**, when all the people of the community of Israel **must slaughter them at twilight**. Then they are to take some of the **blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes** of the houses where they eat the lambs Ex 12:6-7

"It must be eaten inside one house; take none of the meat outside the house. **Do not break any of the bones.** Ex 12:46

This first Passover and subsequent Passovers were to occur on the 14th day of the Hebrew month, Nissan (sometime in March or April on our calendar). In fact, this was to be such an incredibly important event that the entire calendar of the Jews was to change at this time. The time of Passover was to be called the first month of the Jewish year.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Ex 12:1-2
The LORD's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. Lev 23:5

Twilight was equivalent to 3:00 P.M.

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"*--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. Matt 27:46-50

The ninth hour noted in the verses above was also 3:00 P.M. Again, not coincidentally, the time that Jesus gave up His spirit and died on the cross was the time that the lamb was sacrificed on that first Passover. Josephus wrote that the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed sometime between 3:00 and 5:00 P.M. Jesus, as is clearly seen again, is the *anti-type* of the lamb. The shed blood of that first Passover lamb was used by those Israelis with faith to save their firstborn sons. Jesus gave His life and shed His blood for all mankind. In an analogous manner, any and every man or woman may save themselves simply by trusting in His shed blood on the cross.

The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. Ex 12:13

Jesus is the fulfillment of this First Passover type as can easily be seen…

Jesus was called the Lamb of God as He began His ministry.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! John 1:29

Paul also pointed out that Jesus is our Passover Lamb. Jesus was sacrificed to save us from our sins. God would "pass over" all who placed themselves "under" the blood of Jesus. On one very special Passover, God would allow His only begotten Son to be crucified for the sins of mankind. The blood of Jesus would be shed to save those who would only accept this free gift.

Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 1 Cor 5:7

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with **the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.** 1 Peter 1:18-19

Interestingly, on that first Passover, only those people who were willing by faith to apply the blood of the lamb were saved. It took an act of faith and obedience for the Israeli people to apply the blood over their lintel and on their doorposts. Without this action, salvation would not have been obtained. That need for trust and faith is still required today. Salvation is potentially for everyone… yet only those who will "apply" the blood of Jesus, through faith, to their lives will gain entry into heaven. We must ask Jesus to save us and trust that He will.

As an intriguing point of interest, it may also be significant that the blood on that first Passover was applied above the doorframe and on each side doorpost. Note the picture that this "paints" – that of the cross!

Let us return for moment to the topic relating to the selection and the sacrifice of the lamb during Passover week. There are some scholars, such as John MacArthur, who believe that Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem on Monday instead of the traditional date of Palm Sunday. Since it is the consensus that Jesus died on the cross on a Friday (14th of Nissan), Monday would fall on the 10th of Nissan in A.D. 33. That would seem to be a perfect fit in regards to Jesus being the antitype for the Passover lamb. Monday was the day that people in Jerusalem would have selected their sacrificial lamb. As previously noted, they would keep the lamb for the next four days to become somewhat attached to it so that when it was sacrificed the loss would be more significant to them. Of course, not every event in the life of Jesus has to exactly duplicate every aspect of a particular Old Testament *type*… which is in this case, the Passover Week. Therefore, Jesus may very well have entered into Jerusalem on the traditional Palm Sunday.

There is one more intriguing aspect in the typology of the Passover Lamb. This relates to the actual celebration day of the Passover itself. Jesus and His disciples celebrated this supper on Thursday evening. On the other hand, many other Jews celebrated this important feast the next day, Friday. Why the difference? John MacArthur, noted that Galileans and Pharisees calculated the day of Passover to extend from Thursday morning to Friday morning. The Jews living in and around Jerusalem (the Judeans) as well as the Sadducees celebrated it from sundown Thursday to sundown Friday. In both cases, the people had to have consumed the lamb by midnight by Jewish law – midnight Thursday for Jesus and His disciples, midnight Friday for the Judeans. Taking this information into consideration, things really become very interesting. Because Jesus and His friends continued with their traditional date for the Passover Feast, Jesus was still alive and able to bring to His followers the important lessons gained that Thursday night during what is now known as the Lord's Supper. Yet, Jesus still fulfilled His role as the Passover Lamb on the actual Passover Day as well! Friday, as we have just noted, was considered to be Passover Day by all of the Judean Jews, the Sadducees and many others. So while tens of thousands of lambs were bleeding and dying in the Temple that Friday afternoon, the real Lamb of God was shedding His blood for the whole world up on the cross at Calvary. This situation is just one more example, albeit an outstanding one, of God using His providential care to accomplish His desired result on this earth. In this case, He was providing His Son to be the perfect, one and only, *anti-type* of the Passover lamb. Jesus was able to save those who would trust in Him because of "the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect". 1 Peter 1:19

.This difference in Passover time for Judeans vs. Galileans also allowed for Jesus to transform the Passover into the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Jesus was able to do this and still shed His blood on the cross the following day. This is a superb example of God's providential workings in His universe. Before moving on to the next example of *types* in the Old

Testament, a final comparison of the sacrificial lambs of God to the true Lamb of God is in order. Note the following chart:

The lamb	***Jesus***
Without spot or blemish	*Without Sin*
The lamb was "tested"	*Tested in all things*
The lamb was sacrificed	*Jesus died for our sins*
Blood was shed	*Jesus shed His blood*
Blood must be applied	*A person must believe*
Must be eaten	*The Lord's Supper*
Hove no bones broken	*Jesus - no broken bones*
One Year old	*Jesus - young and pure*

The Feasts of Israel:

There are seven major feasts of Israel. The first four of these feasts that are celebrated on the Jewish calendar year are known for certainty to be *types* of extremely important events in the life of Jesus. There is excellent evidence to conclude that each of these feasts has had their fulfillment in certain events in Jesus' life (or death). Let me just point out a couple of things. Recall what the **Passover** was all about. Those people who "covered" themselves with the blood of a lamb, would not perish, but live. Recall that Jesus was celebrating Passover the night before His death on the cross… where He shed His blood so that those who were "under His blood" would never perish. Secondly, Jesus was sinless. **Unleavened bread** was a symbol for the lack of sin. The sinless Jesus was in the grave like a kernel of wheat during the first days of this feast. He was waiting to burst forth on the **Feast of First Fruits**, i.e. Easter Sunday. Jesus was resurrected on this day as the "firstfruits" of the righteous… those that would put on the "Righteousness of Christ". This concept continued as the giving of the gift of the Holy Spirit coincided with **Pentecost**. Now let us take a closer look at these interesting Old Testament *types* that are seen so clearly in the many feasts of the Jewish people.

- **Passover**: (observed on the 14th day of Nissan)

  We have just discussed the Passover Feast. Passover celebrates the night when God "passed over" those homes where the "blood of a spotless lamb" had been applied to

the lintel and doorposts in the manner directed by God. Almost 1500 years after that first Passover, Jesus sat with His disciples to partake in another very important Passover Feast. Our Lord used this occasion to institute a poignant Christian ordinance, the Lord's Supper. Jesus became the ultimate fulfillment of this sacrificial event as He became the Lamb of God. He shed His blood on the cross to save any person who would only place their faith in Him.

It is definitely true that Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples on the night before His crucifixion. In fact, Jesus went into significant detail in that particular Passover to teach about the import of the next day's events. He spoke of how He would sacrifice His body and shed His blood as the only effective and final sacrifice to save every person from their sins… if only they would accept His free gift of salvation by faith.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Matt 26:26-28

It is also true that Jesus actually was nailed to a cross on Friday and died approximately six hours later at 3:00 P.M. – also on Passover. Jesus was our Passover Lamb. How could He celebrate the Passover (and institute the important ordinance of the Lord's Supper) with His disciples and still be the Passover Lamb as well?

As was pointed out above, it turns out, in the times of Jesus at least, there were two different time periods during which Passover was observed. Remember, one group of Jews, including the Pharisees and the Jews from Galilee, observed Passover day from sunup on the 14th of Nissan to sunup on the 15th of Nissan. The Judeans and the Sadducees observed that day from sundown on the 14th to sundown on the 15th. This is confirmed in the Jewish Mishna (codification of Jewish Law). This fact allowed for Jesus to observe Passover and be nailed to the cross as the Passover Lamb just twelve hours later! This is just one of an infinite number of examples of the providential care of God in this world He created and sustains.

- **Feast of Unleavened Bread:** (begins on the 15th day of Nissan and runs for seven days)

  During this time, Israel was to eat unleavened bread. This was done in remembrance of the time, during their exodus from Egypt, when they quickly baked bread without leaven in their haste to leave that sinful nation and their state of slavery. As we know, God often uses leaven is a symbol for sin. By eating only unleavened bread over the period of seven days, Israel would be given the opportunity to concentrate on their need to keep sin out of their lives.

Then Moses said to the people, "Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the LORD brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing yeast. Ex 13:3

Jesus often identified Himself as the Bread from heaven. In a sense, He was the Unleavened (Sinless) Bread from heaven.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:51

Get rid of the old yeast that **you may be a new batch without yeast**--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth. 1 Cor 5:7-8

So, the Bread from heaven was sacrificed for the world. Jesus, of course, was without sin. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Israel was asked to remember their exodus from sinful Egypt. They had gained their freedom from bondage. Egyptian bondage symbolized mankind's bondage to sin. On the first day of Unleavened Bread, Jesus was buried. He noted how this was necessary. Although He would be buried, He would soon have victory over sin and death. He had sacrificed Himself for the sins of mankind, paid the penalty required for these sins… and next He would rise from the dead to show His victory over sin and death.

It is interesting that the piece of unleavened bread used by Jewish families during the week of Unleavened Bread really is a symbol of Jesus. Matzoh is striped, as was Jesus when He went to the cross. It is also "pure" (without leaven) as Jesus is without sin. There is a ceremony wherein the middle of three Matzoh pieces (i.e. Father, *Son* and Holy Spirit) is broken in half and then hidden (buried) somewhere in the household. The children of the family are given the opportunity to find it. This piece is eventually found and "raised" from its "burial" place. Although this is a ceremony taking place typically in Jewish homes, it surely seems to represent what Jesus did for His children. In any case, Jesus noted how His death and burial is necessary to yield a great harvest of souls…

- **Feast of Firstfruits:** (observed on the 17th day of Nissan)

This festival is held on the Sunday following the beginning of Unleavened Bread. It celebrates the fertility of the land that God had given to the Israelites. The priest was to wave a sheaf of the first grain of the spring harvest…

'When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it **on the day after the Sabbath (i.e. Sunday).** Lev 23:10-11

Of course, this day was the day that Jesus rose from the dead… Easter Sunday. Jesus was the firstfruits of God's resurrection from the dead. Obviously, Jesus was the ultimate "firstfruit". Just as many other sheaves would follow that first sheaf that the priest waved before God, Jesus was only the first to be raised from the dead and enter heaven. Anyone who will put their trust in Him, will follow Jesus into heaven one day…

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 1 Cor 15:22-23

Jesus pointed out the reasons behind His death and subsequent resurrection when He stated…

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. **But if it dies, it produces many seeds.** **John 12:23-24**

- **Feast of Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Harvest (Shavuot):** (observed on the 50th day after the Feast of Firstfruits – the 6th day of Sivan)

  This feast marked the second harvest of the year… the summer harvest. Two very important gifts were given to mankind on the day of Pentecost. First, it should be noted that the *Law of Moses* was given on Pentecost. This Law was the basis for how the Jews were to live their lives all the way up until the sacrificial death of Jesus. Unfortunately, it became all too apparent that no one could keep the Law… therefore, no one could be justified by the Law.

  Then, God changed the method of how believers were to live. They were now expected to live through the power of the Holy Spirit. This great Law sent down to Moses on Mount Sinai had fulfilled its purpose. Everyone now should understand that only through the grace of God could anyone ever be saved. Paul spoke on this subject in much detail in his epistles to the Galatians and Romans. He made it abundantly clear that those who turn to Christ must live by faith (with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit), not by the Law…

  by dying to what once bound us, we have been **released from the law** so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. Romans 7:6

  through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life **set me free from the law** of sin and death. **3** For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. Romans 8:2-3

  Clearly **no one is justified before God by the law**, because, "**The righteous will live by faith.**" Gal 3:11

  the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. **25** **Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.** Gal 3:24-25

  if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. Gal 5:18

People have always been saved through faith. This is the clear teaching of the Holy Bible. However, since the time of Jesus, this faith must now be placed in the Lord's finished work on the cross. God gave man a New Covenant through Jesus. God sealed this New Covenant with a wonderful gift… the "Comforter". The coming of the *Holy Spirit* into the lives of believers came on the day of Pentecost, just 50 days after Jesus rose from His grave. Just before Jesus left to rejoin His Father in heaven, He told the apostles of the soon coming gift of His Spirit…

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. Acts 1:8-9

Almost immediately after the Holy Spirit came upon Peter, he began to preach to the people there in Jerusalem. The Bible says that on that very first day… the day of Pentecost, 3,000 people came to a saving relationship with Jesus. This very large harvest of souls was certainly a great beginning for the Church! The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, just sent by Jesus, was behind this extremely auspicious beginning.

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:2-4

In summary, it is not a coincidence that *both the Law of Moses and the Holy Spirit were given to mankind on the same day called Pentecost.* The first revealed God's plan for His people for those Old Testament times… they would live under the Old Covenant. God's greater gift, the gift of Himself (the Holy Spirit) living within His people, revealed the New Covenant relationship that would exist after His Son's wonderful gift to all men and women that He gave on the cross. In the earlier case, there was a mystical union of God – the Law – Israel. In the latter case, there was a mystical union of God – the Holy Spirit – the Church. Both came with great fanfare and power on the day of Pentecost! The Law was given to help guide, teach and lead God's people… to teach them the truth and to convict them of sin. The Holy Spirit is also now given as an even better Leader of Christian lives… if only the Christian will turn their lives over to the promptings of the Spirit of God. God had always had this intention, even in Old Testament times as noted by His words…

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. **"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts."** (Jer 31:33)

Since that first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus, Christians have had the Law written "on their hearts".

There are three other major feasts that are celebrated yearly by the Jews. So far, there are no apparent events that relate to Jesus that one could say serve as their *anti-type*. It is interesting to contemplate whether or not one day Jesus will fulfill any or all of the three. History certainly suggests that He will. These feasts are:

- The Feast of Trumpets
- The Day of Atonement
- The Feast of Tabernacles

There are many who enjoy this subject matter that like to contemplate just what event in the future may correspond to each of these festivals. I will not pursue that issue in this treatise.

The Relationship of Abraham and Isaac:

A third *type* of Jesus found in the Old Testament is seen in the relationship between the patriarchs Abraham and his only son by Sarah, Isaac. The Lord God promised Abraham that he would one day become the father of a nation of people too numerous to count. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing." Gen 12:2

Many years passed and Abraham remained childless. He became restless to the point that he thought that God might be planning on allowing a servant from his household to be the heir of promise. God said this was not His plan.

the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."
Gen 15:4-5

I will establish my covenant as an **everlasting covenant** between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. **The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you**; and I will be their God."
Gen 17:7-8

A child finally came to Abram via his wife's Egyptian maidservant, Hagar. His name was Ishmael. God again told Abram that this was not the child of promise either. A son would result from the union of Abraham with his wife Sarah, regardless of their old age. Finally, in God's time, Sarah bore Abraham a son… they named him Isaac.

Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.
Gen 17:19

It is important to understand just how long this elderly couple waited upon God to provide them with this very special son. **Isaac was the son of promise**. The great nation of Israel would come from his union with his future wife, Rebekah. However, an amazing test of Abraham's faith would come while Isaac was still a young man.

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, **your only son, Isaac, whom you love**, and go to the region of **Moriah**. **Sacrifice him** there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." Gen 22:1-2

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. Gen 22:6

Isaac asked his father where the sacrificial lamb was…

Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Gen 22:8

Abraham tied his son to the altar they had built. Just before Abraham was going to sacrifice his son, God intervened and provided a substitution for a sacrifice.

On the chart shown on the next page, many of the similarities between Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac and God's sacrifice of His Son Christ are listed…

Manna:

God first provided bread for the Israelites soon after they were led out of Egypt. They were hungry and needed sustenance. God provided. There was a lesson in this gift as well…

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Deut 8:3

Jesus frequently referred to Himself as the bread of life. He had very important lessons to teach on this subject as noted below. Manna from heaven was an Old Testament type that pointed to the day when mankind would get the required "bread" from heaven… Jesus. This would be the "bread" that would be able to give eternal life!

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, **it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven**. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:32-35

Isaac was the *only* son (of promise) of Abraham (i.e. his only son through Sarah) He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son. Heb 11:17	Jesus is the *only* begotten Son of God "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16
Isaac was the son of promise Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him Gen 17:19	Jesus is the Son of promise. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. Gal 3:16
For three days, Abraham assumed his son would die on an altar as he travelled to Mt. Moriah. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place (Mt. Moriah) in the distance. Gen 22:4	Jesus was crucified on Calvary… which is on Mt. Moriah and he rose on the 3rd day. Then Solomon began to build the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah 2 Chron 3:1 The Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Matt 12:40
Isaac was the willing sacrificial lamb awaiting death without fight or argument.	Jesus was willing sacrificial Lamb of God who went to the cross to die for the sins of man.
Isaac carried the wood on his back to his place of sacrifice. Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. Gen 22:6	Jesus carried the wooden cross on His back. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). John 19:17
God provided the sacrifice *for Abraham*. Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. Gen 22:13	God provided the sacrifice *for the world* – His Son, Jesus. In both cases we see that God provides the sacrifice. God's grace is the *only* method through which man can be saved.
Abraham did not withhold his son, the son that he loved. He was willing to sacrifice Isaac as God had requested.	God the Father did not withhold His Son. He was willing to sacrifice Jesus. He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all. Romans 8:32
Because Abraham was willing to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice to God, his descendents would be blessed. "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, **17** I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore…….. through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." Gen 22:16-18	Because God allowed for the sacrifice of His Son, the entire earth will be blessed. Because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. **10** You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Rev 5:9-10

Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. **This is the bread that came down from heaven**. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." John 6:57-58

Jesus asks His followers to celebrate and remember Him by observing the Lord's Supper:
And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19

Jonah:

The incident where Jonah is swallowed up by a great fish and spends three days in its belly, is a type of Christ that even Jesus, Himself, references.

Jonah is thrown into the Mediterranean Sea, on his own orders, in an attempt to pacify God. God had sent a great storm into the sea because Jonah was running away from his obligation to God. After it became obvious to Jonah that God would not calm the sea while he remained on the ship, he told the sailors to throw him overboard. They were very reticent, but finally did do it…

Then they cried to the LORD, "O LORD, please do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, O LORD, have done as you pleased." Jonah 1:14

Interestingly, they tried to "wash their hands" of this murderous deed. Many centuries later, Pontious Pilate attempted to "wash his hands" after sending Christ to His death.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," Matt 27:24

Jonah was promptly swallowed up by a great fish…

the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and **Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.** Jonah 1:17

You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; Jonah 2:3-4

Jonah spent three days inside this potential grave. At times, he felt completely abandoned by God. Jesus spent three days within the earth. His death was preceded by the terrible ordeal of actually having God "turn His back" on His only Son while Jesus hung on the cross.

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"*--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Matt 27:46

Then, just as Jonah was brought out of his "tomb", God raised His Son, Jesus, from His tomb.

But you brought my life up from the pit, O LORD my God. Jonah 2:6
And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. Jonah 2:10
For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Matt 12:40

Angels reminded the terrified woman, who did not find Jesus in the tomb on that third day, of the words Jesus had told them earlier…

'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Luke 24:7
Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day. 1 Cor 15:3

So, as can be seen, the story of Jonah in the fish is another of the many *types* that God used in the Old Testament to give evidence of His providential care in our universe. God knows the end from the beginning. Obviously, when God provided the fish to swallow up Jonah, He was well aware that He would use this three day stay within the fish to serve as a *type* of His Son's experience as He gave His life for all mankind's sins – over 700 years later.

The Mercy Seat:

The mercy seat was the cover that sat on top of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies portion of the Temple. It was the resting place for God's presence. The Ark of the Covenant with the mercy seat was considered to be the throne of God on Earth. It lay between two cherubim.

The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim. Psalms 99:1

In Old Testament times, on the Day of Atonement, the Holy of Holies was filled with a cloud of incense. The High Priest would then slaughter a bull and carry some of its blood onto the mercy seat. In a specified fashion, he would sprinkle the blood in order to atone for his own sins and the sins of the people of Israel. God was above the mercy seat. The Law which man had been unable to keep lay beneath. The sprinkled blood temporarily *covered* the sins of man. However, his sins were still not ultimately forgiven. Entrance into heaven would have to wait until the penalty for all of man's sins was paid.

The Greek word used for mercy seat is hilasterion. This word can be translated as *mercy seat* or *propitiation*. It is used often in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. This same word is used twice in the New Testament – it is used in Hebrews 9:5 (where it is used for the actual mercy seat) and Romans 3:25. In Romans, it is used to show that Jesus has become our Mercy Seat (i.e. *propitiation*)…

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his

grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth to be a **propitiation** through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; Romans 3:22-25

Hundreds of years after the original mercy seat was placed in the Temple, God sent His only begotten Son into the world to be the actual, total, and final sacrifice for the sins of humanity. Only Jesus was able to live a perfect life on this earth. Only Jesus could satisfy the demands of the Law. Only Jesus was qualified to be the total propitiation for the sins of mankind. The sacrificial death of Jesus, through His shedding of blood, obtained forgiveness for those sinners who would place their faith and trust in Him. God's divine justice had been satisfied. Jesus' atoning blood does not require repeat administration upon an altar each year to satisfy the demands of God's justice. He shed His blood *once and for all*. His sacrifice will be effective for all time and for all who put their faith in Him.

The mercy seat was a shadow (or *type*) of what was to follow… that is salvation through Jesus. The blood of a lamb that was sprinkled on the mercy seat which sat on top of the Ark was a forerunner of the final, perfect blood of the Lamb that would be sacrificed for all people on the cross. The sins of man had earned him death as penalty. Only Jesus could stand in mankind's place; only He could substitute for sinful man. Fortunately, he was willing to pay the enormous cost for our salvation. He suffered and died for our sins. He shed His precious blood for our sins. Jesus became our Mercy Seat… He now stands between us and God as our defense attorney. He is the propitiation for our sins. When God looks at the believer in Christ, His Son, He sees that person as if He were looking at Jesus, Himself. Through faith in Jesus, we have the righteousness of Jesus attributed to us by God.

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last. Romans 1:17

The Brazen Serpent:

At one point while Moses was leading the Israelites through their forty year desert sojourn, because of their sin God sent a plague of fiery serpents among the people.

And **the people spoke against God** and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." [6] So **the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people**, and they bit the people; and **many of the people of Israel died**. Num 21:5-6

These serpents, and the pain and death that they caused, were symbolic of how sin and Satan cause pain and death in the life of all mankind. It is common knowledge that God chose the serpent to symbolize Satan in the Garden of Eden. How could a person during those days there in the wilderness, surrounded by killer serpents, be saved? How can a person in the wilderness of life here on earth today save themselves from their sins. God used one of His many typological examples to show His people what they must do to be saved. First of all, the

people professed sorrow and repented of their sins. Then Moses prayed to God for forgiveness and for salvation from the death caused by the serpents.

The people came to Moses and said, "**We sinned when we spoke against the LORD** and against you. **Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people.** Num 21:7

God, in His grace, provided a way of salvation for the people of Israel. Please note that there was nothing that the people could do in the wilderness to save themselves. They were surrounded by the serpents, and they had no answer. The mechanism that God chose to offer them salvation seemed odd to many, if not all, of the people. God called for them to trust Him and look upon a bronze serpent that Moses had lifted up onto a pole. Bronze was a symbol of judgment. The serpent was a symbol for sin. Sin would have to be judged by a righteous God… at some point. The penalty for all the sins of the people would have to be paid… at some point.

Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that **every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.** So **Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole.** Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived. Num 21:8-9

The serpent on the bronze pole was lifted up by Moses and everyone in the camp was given the opportunity to gaze upon it. Certainly no one was coerced to do so. In fact, some did not look as they thought it a foolish idea. There were assuredly many reasons people chose not to look to the uplifted pole. However, many did choose to trust in God and by faith looked upon the fiery serpent upon the pole. Those that did this were immediately saved. After that gaze upon the uplifted pole, the snakes had no power over them.

Approximately fifteen hundred years later, Jesus provided the *anti-type* for this image of the brazen serpent upon the pole. Jesus explained it best…

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:14

` All those that will look to Jesus in faith will not perish, but will have everlasting life. They will have victory over the "serpents" in their lives… they will have victory over sin. This will come by faith in Jesus, not by works of any kind.

Those Israelites in the desert could not save themselves from the serpents. However, they were certainly not forced to look upon the brazen serpent. The choice was theirs. The same situation exists today. People cannot save themselves. Hopefully, they will use their free choice and look to Jesus for salvation. Whether in the desert or in the present day, looking up to the Savior on the pole (cross) is the only way to life.

Already, many examples of *types* have been given. Frankly, there are scores more that could be discussed, but I believe that the point has been made. That is, God has effectively used

another interesting method to demonstrate the veracity of His Word. For those who want to pursue this topic further, the following is a list of just a few other Old Testament types of Jesus and His works:

- The sacrificial lamb
- Moses
- Adam
- Melchizedek
- Egypt
- The Temple
- Kinsman Redeemer
- Water flowing from the *rock*

The Changed Lives of the Apostles: The response of the apostles *after* the death of Jesus is certainly one of main reasons, if not the major reason, why I believe that Jesus rose from the dead and that the Holy Bible is true. When a person takes the time to seriously consider the markedly changed lives of these eleven men (Judas had committed suicide) after the crucifixion, I believe that most people will realize an increased faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Therefore, let us now review what must have happened during those incredibly important years leading up to the trial of Christ, followed by His death, and then His glorious resurrection. As we see how the closest friends of Jesus reacted to His life and death, information can be gleaned (using simple human logic) that will lead to some obvious conclusions about Jesus and the events that must have surrounded His death.

In the first place, remember that all of His chosen twelve disciples (later referred to as apostles), lived with Jesus, closer than most family members, for three to four years. They did virtually everything together: slept, ate, travelled, worked, and preached the gospel. They were great friends and all had the utmost respect for their leader and Master, Jesus Christ. They loved Jesus. They also believed what He told them about Himself and His plans for the future. Of course, there were some things that He spoke about that were difficult to grasp… but they did their best to understand and follow His lead in everything. Jesus surely had proven to them that He had their best interests at heart and He certainly had demonstrated the power to give them whatever He had promised. These men were good men as well (with the obvious exception of Judas). They were just like most people; they had their strengths and weaknesses. All were hoping that Jesus would soon usher in His Kingdom on earth. He had spoken of this Kingdom often. They still held out hope that He would be the "conquering Messiah" that Israel had been waiting for and praying for since the time of the patriarchs. Of course, that was not going to happen in their lifetime as it turned out. Instead, as the time for Christ's sacrificial death came near, Jesus began to prepare them for His death.

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Matt 16:21

As the Bible tells us, Jesus attempted to prepare them for the day of His death. They certainly did not want to hear of this at all…

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Matt 16:22

However, just as Jesus had prophesied, His capture, "kangaroo court" trial, and terrible beating did soon come. This was quickly followed by His sacrificial death on the cross. Where were those eleven disciples when all of this was going on? *It is important to think about this point*. The answer is that they were all so afraid and confused that they scattered into the night. Peter, as we all know, even denied Jesus vehemently three times! The next morning, they still did not come to stand up for their Master. No, they were too afraid, and possibly even disappointed, to even make their presence known. The only one who came to be with Mary at the foot of the cross was John. Then Jesus was crucified and died. He was buried in a tomb. The disciples had seen their Master die a terrible death; and now He was gone.

As they gathered together to discuss the events of the previous couple of days, imagine if you will, what they must have thought. Remember, they were so frightened the night of Jesus' capture that they ran away from the scene. They were very worried that they would suffer the same fate as Jesus. Now, He had abandoned them. They must have thought that this man that they had come to put so much faith in, had no really significant power after all. He had not been able to stop the onslaught brought against Him. He had just stood there, seemingly powerless, while suffering terrible beatings and scourging! Then, He died up on a cross with two common criminals. Maybe there were a few who encouraged the others to hold on to their faith. Maybe John and Peter asked them to wait because Jesus had promised them to come back from the dead. At least, they could wait to see if He actually could fulfill that promise. Maybe He was really the Messiah, God the Son. So, they waited that Friday night… then the Sabbath day as well… then Sunday came. I would suggest that those people who believe that Jesus rose from the dead Easter morning and those who believe that He never rose from the grave believe essentially the same things up to this point. From this point on, though, obviously the story would be incredibly different.

Before looking at the two different scenarios, I would like to point out the certain *facts* concerning *what the apostles were like beginning fifty days after His crucifixion*. Every apostle of Jesus is known to have become a very powerful and effective evangelist for the remainder of his life. They travelled throughout the Roman Empire preaching and teaching the gospel… that Jesus was the Christ… that only through Him could eternal salvation be obtained. They all went to their death as Christian martyrs (with the exception of John, who also suffered greatly for His Savior, Jesus). Every one of them believed so strongly in Jesus and His gospel that they were

willing to die a tortuous death rather than deny their God… Jesus Christ. This is all historical fact. The critically important, potentially life changing, question, though, is "*What is the explanation for their actions*?" There are two possibilities, which vary, depending on whether Jesus rose from the dead… or not.

Let me see if I can explain these two possibilities and see which sounds more reasonable:

- On Easter morning, the disciples and the women friends of Jesus awoke and lived out the day as described in the Gospels. That is, they all soon came to the understanding that their Savior had risen from the dead… just as He said He would! Once they were all convinced (Thomas had to see for himself), they all were extremely happy and reassured. Jesus appeared to them several more times in the next six weeks until one incredible day, Jesus went up into heaven through the clouds as they stood watching, while two angels spoke to them as He ascended. Just a week or so later, while they were waiting for the "Comforter" Jesus had promised, they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This event totally changed their lives forever. This all happened on the day of Pentecost. They now had the power to go into the world and preach the gospel… and perform miracles and healings which would aid in confirming this brand new message/covenant to the world. **Because they all had seen the risen Christ, spoke to Him, ate with Him and had received the Holy Spirit into their lives, each apostle was now totally convinced of the veracity and eternal importance of His gospel message. That is why they were able to accomplish all of the things that they did during the remainder of their lives… even including the willing death by martyrdom at the conclusion of their lives on this earth.** This scenario makes good sense. Now, what is the other possibility?
- Take a look at the explanation that must follow if Jesus had not risen from the grave… After several days, all of the disciples would have eventually realized that Jesus was not coming back from the dead. They would have recognized that Jesus really did not have the power to do what He had asked them to believe. He was not really the Messiah after all. When He had told them that when they had seen Him, they had seen the Father, He was either lying or speaking as a megalomaniac. There was no other choice open. Obviously, if Jesus had really been the promised Messiah, and God the Son, He would have been able and willing to keep His promise to rise from the dead. "So now what?" they asked…

  Imagine for a moment that one of them suggested that they just continue the ruse. "*Why not? Why not just say that Jesus really did rise from the dead anyway. That would certainly create a stir, wouldn't it?!* Of course, another disciple would chime in and say… *"We just spent the last four years of our lives following this man, leaving our homes and families to help Him teach all around Galilee, Judea and Samaria. We kept telling everyone that He was so special… that He was the promised Messiah… that He was even God Himself! What a terrible waste! So, how can you even suggest such a ridiculous thing? Are you crazy? First of all, no one will believe us! He is still in the tomb! And don't expect me to go up against those Roman guards for such a charlatan!*

Second, we will only be getting ourselves into terrible trouble with the Romans and the Pharisees. You must be kidding or crazy to even suggest such a thing! I'll admit, Jesus was really a nice man… at least I thought He was… but to put ourselves in that kind of danger for what turned out to be such a blatant lie… why would anyone do that? How can you even suggest spending the rest of your life spreading this lie to the world? Actually, you must be nuts! Imagine how God would view preaching a lie like that! We would all end up in Hades and we would deserve it! Listen to me, we all know the truth now. Jesus was just deluded… or else, sad to say, he spent all those years lying to us. Either way, it is over now. It is time to go home to our families and try to forget the fact that we gave our allegiance and time all these years to a totally unworthy cause. I surely don't want to compound the problem!" We could reasonably assume that a conversation something like the one noted above would have taken place if Jesus had actually remained dead in His grave… and one of the disciples, for some inexplicable reason, wanted to initiate the most incredible hoax in history.

Of course, if the resurrection did not occur, all of the disciples and all of the women friends of Jesus and the many other people who claimed to have seen the risen Jesus would all have had to perpetuate this greatest ruse in human history. Paul would have had no logical reason whatsoever to change from being the man who led the persecution of the early Christians to the great evangelist he became after his encounter with the risen Christ… since Christ would not have risen! There is simply no logical reason at all for the actions of all of the apostles (including Paul) and the close women friends of Jesus if Jesus was not seen in His resurrection body that Easter morning and for several weeks thereafter. James, the half-brother of Jesus, did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah and Lord prior to His death on the cross. Yet, soon after the crucifixion, James became the leader of the Christian Church in Jerusalem. How can this be explained? The Bible has the only reasonable answer for this seemingly paradoxical behavior. Jesus met with James after His resurrection as the Bible tells us. Paul noted this in his letter to the church at Cornith…

"Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." 1 Cor 15:7-8

This obviously convinced James of the true identity of Jesus. James then went on to lead the important church at Jerusalem for decades, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. He then died a martyr for his unwavering belief in his half-brother's true identity… i.e. Christ, the Lord… truly the Son of God.

Simply put, there is no way that so many men and women would be willing to spend the rest of their lives telling the world about someone and something that they knew was a lie… and then, to top this absurd notion off, to continue on and die an inglorious martyr's death just to keep the charade going! The facts are, however, that all of the apostles did firmly believe that Jesus rose from the dead… because He actually

did… and they witnessed this incredible miracle! Then they willingly died painful, martyr's deaths because of their belief!

So what does the evidence lead us to believe? The *fact* of the resurrection is the only reasonable possibility that would explain the actions of the apostles and many other close followers of Jesus during the remaining portion of their lives. They suddenly went from whimpering cowards (some were even non-believers) to courageous and effective evangelists due to their witness of this incredible event, followed by their receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit from their Lord, Jesus Christ. No other explanation makes any sense.

Liar, Lunatic or God: C.S. Lewis was possibly the greatest Christian theologian of the twentieth century. In his seminal work, *Mere Christianity*, he wrote a very logical explanation concerning the divinity of Jesus Christ. As we will see, his cogent argument should lead most thoughtful and open-minded individuals to conclude the Jesus Christ is, in fact, the Son of the Living God. Let us consider the logic of Lewis' argument in the paragraphs below.

First of all, it is important to recognize that Jesus certainly claimed to be God! Take a look at some of His own words:

- The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." John 4:25-26
- I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that *I AM* [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins." John 8:24
- "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, *I AM*!" John 8:58 Only God refers to Himself as "I AM"… this combination of words has always been synonomous with the everlasting God of the universe.
- Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; John 11:25 Only God can promise this outcome.
- Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.** John 14:6-9
- Believe me when I say that **I am in the Father and the Father is in me**; John 14:11
- I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. For **the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.**" Matt 12:6,8 God is the Lord of the Sabbath. Therefore, Jesus is saying that He is God.

- When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:5 Only God can forgive sins.
- "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' Matt 7:21-23 Again, only God has the "keys to heaven"… and Jesus says that He will be making these decisions.

All of the verses above demonstrate that Jesus claimed that He was God the Son. Note how in these verses He either states directly or strongly implies that He has been in existence from eternity past, that God the Father and He are one and the same, and that He is the Messiah. He is the Lord of the Sabbath (i.e. God); He can forgive sins (only God can do that); and He is the one who decides who enters heaven. In other words, Jesus claims to be God!

That brings us to the next point that Lewis wanted everyone to think about. Lewis had often heard the argument that Jesus was such a great philosopher, such a wonderful man. This point of view typically came from liberal philosophers who did not believe that Jesus was God. On the other hand, they recognized that His philosophy of life was peerless and He lived His own life perfectly. Therefore, they concluded that Jesus was certainly a great person… although they would not agree that He was God the Son. This is a common belief concerning Jesus today. Lewis was quick to point out that in no way could Jesus be looked upon by any *logically* thinking person as a fine, upstanding man. No, Jesus did not leave that choice open to any reasonably thinking individual. One may ask why this is not a possibility. The answer to that question is as follows:

First, it must be remembered that Jesus made it clear during His ministry that He was to be followed and trusted for eternal salvation.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

In fact, Jesus stated that only through faith in Him and His finished work on the cross would a person be able to gain entrance into heaven…

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. John 3:18

He later added, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

Of course, many people have believed His powerful words over the millennia. Because of this fact, please keep in mind that possibly as many as 100,000 people died a gruesome martyr's death in the first few centuries after Christ's crucifixion. These people had so much faith and devotion to their Lord Jesus that they would not deny that He was God even though

that denial would have saved their lives! Not only was that true in those days, but in our times as well. Literally millions of people have died for this same faith and allegiance to Jesus over the past 100 years! Sadly, it is happening even as you read these words today. Millions of people over two thousand years have been willing to die painful deaths because they have trusted what Jesus has told them. Think about that.

If Jesus was not telling the truth, all of these deaths would have been for naught! If Jesus was, in fact, lying, no one could possibly call Him a good man, a fine man with high ideals. No, if Jesus allowed people to die for a *false* belief in His claim to be God the Son and Savior of the world, He would certainly not be considered a great man! Of course, this would only be a problem if Jesus were lying about His identity. He may well have been telling the truth. Maybe there was even another possibility…

Well, what are all of the possibilities to consider when evaluating the claim of Jesus that He is God and belief in Him and His sacrificial work on the cross is the only way to heaven? As we have just seen, there is no doubt Jesus claimed to be God. Of course, that claim may be true or it may be false. If it is false, there are two other possibilities. Jesus may have just been an amazing liar for all of those years He walked this earth, teaching and preaching. Or, He may have actually falsely believed that He was God because He had a severe mental illness.

Let me list the three reasonable possibilities concerning Jesus and His claim to be God:

- Jesus was a liar
- Jesus was a lunatic
- Jesus was God

I have not been able to think of a fourth possibility. Therefore, let us address each of the three in order to see which one is most likely to be true. Remember, **only one can be true.**

Was Jesus a liar? If Jesus was a liar, He was an amazingly effective liar! He certainly fooled His disciples and His brother, James! He even fooled His mother! Remember, after His death, the apostles spent the remainder of their lives vouching for the honesty and perfection of character of their Master and Teacher. They certainly did not believe that Jesus was a liar.

Given all of the wonderful things that He taught, and the faultless life that He reportedly lived (no sin was ever attributed to Him), if Jesus was living a lie, He also would have had to be the greatest hypocrite that ever lived. He told everyone who would listen that they must trust in Him, and Him alone, for their eternal salvation. As mentioned above, if Jesus were lying, He was the direct cause of millions of people, over the centuries, fruitlessly dying torturous deaths because of Him… and His lie. If He was telling the truth, however, these same people would have been instantly transported into heaven! I suggest that anyone who would lie knowing that people would die horrible deaths because of that lie, would be an evil person… certainly not a great prophet. Every thinking person would agree that Jesus was very intelligent. Therefore, He would have to have known that those devoting their lives to Him would be placing their lives in

mortal danger… yet, He allowed this to happen. If He did this to perpetuate a lie, Jesus would have been a very bad person, to say the least.

So, do we have any concrete evidence that He was a liar? We have already pointed out reasons NOT to believe this statement. Is there any actual evidence to lead a person to believe that Jesus was not who He claimed to be? Actually, I cannot think of any at all!

We do have evidence that this man preached on wonderfully holy and uplifting subject matter. He taught that all men should live lives of purity; even their thoughts should be pure. All the evidence is that Jesus took pity on the poor, homeless and sick. There is evidence that He healed the sick and the lame. He was extremely kind and unselfish. Does it make sense that a lying, evil man would live such an ostensibly perfect life and teach others how to lead this same type of life? John Stuart Mill wrote, "About the life and sayings of Jesus there is a stamp of personal originality combined with profundity of insight in the very first rank of men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast. When this pre-eminent genius is combined with the qualities of probably the greatest moral reformer and martyr to that mission who ever existed upon earth, religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching upon this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than to endeavor to live so that Christ would approve of our life." The life of Christ is the ultimate model for all humanity to attempt to emulate. Does it make any reasonable sense that the author of this life was Himself evil?

Certainly another excellent reason to suggest that Jesus was not attempting to fool anyone by His claims to be the Messiah and God can be seen when we look at the last week of His life on earth. What would He have to gain by this incredible lie? While alive, maybe one could argue that He gained a measure of respect and even adoration. On the other hand, He took a lot of risks with His claim as well. However, during that last week, while He was only in His early thirties, His life was on the line. He was quickly arrested, tried and convicted (albeit unjustly). He was sentenced to die on the cross, but only after being severely beaten to a virtual pulp. All that Jesus had to do was say a few words to get Himself off the hook, and He was given many opportunities. It really does not make any sense that a lying hypocrite would be willing to go to a terribly painful death just to show how tough He was. If Jesus had been lying all along, He would have simply died and been buried and then everybody would have known that He was a fake anyway. So why die to be proven a fake? Why not live to lie another day? Maybe He could have figured out a decent story that some would have bought into. My point is, it is very unlikely that an evil, hypocritical liar would have lived the life that Jesus lived, nor would one have died the death that Jesus did. Believing this to be true, takes a great deal of faith… much more faith than I have. So what else may Jesus have been?

Was Jesus a lunatic? Maybe Jesus simply *thought* that He was the Messiah and the Son of God. Maybe Jesus was a megalomaniac of the first order. Maybe He was a psychotic person – a person who, by definition, had experienced a break with reality at some point in His life and now

was convinced that He was God… just as some people today believe that they are Napoleon. C. S. Lewis points out that if Jesus were not actually God the Son, and He was not performing as the liar of the millennia, He would have been "a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg." (Mere Christianity, p. 56) This is not an absolute impossibility. However, is it at all likely?

First of all, we should take a better look at what a "lunatic" really acts like over time. Then, we can compare that "picture" to how Jesus carried Himself over His three to four years of ministry. Fortunately, in today's world, there are many good treatment regimens for people who have "broken from reality". Often, these people can lead reasonably normal lives… that is, in the world as we know it today. Unfortunately, these treatments have only been around for the past several decades. The lives of delusional people in the distant past took a much different course. Typically, a delusional person who would believe Himself to be God and carry this delusion over many years… even unto death, would be schizophrenic. So what does that mean?

"Eugen Bleuler defined schizophrenia with his four "A's", referring to the *blunted* **Affect** (diminished emotional response to stimuli); *loosening* of **Associations** (by which he meant a disordered pattern of thought, inferring a cognitive deficit), **Ambivalence** (an apparent inability to make decisions) and **Autism** (a loss of awareness of external events, and a preoccupation with the self and one's own thoughts)." (http://www.cellscience.com/shdss2.html)

Characteristics of a schizophrenic also include:

- *Psychotic episodes* (displacement from 'reality', inability to separate real from unreal experiences) including;
- *delusions* (false beliefs/judgment);
- *hallucinations* (strong subjective perceptions of an object or event which is non-existent that may affect any or all sensory perceptions);
- *disorganized speech* or *behavior*; *thought disorder* (cognitive dysfunction)
- *social and occupational dysfunction*
- *Lack of motivation*, loss of concentration, withdrawal
- *Blunted affect* (loss of emotional tone or reaction)
- *Inability to articulate*
- *Paranoia*
- *Catatonia*

(ibid)

In order to evaluate whether Jesus was likely a "lunatic", it is important to know what He said and did during His amazing ministry. After thoroughly reading the four Gospels and the epistles, a good impression of the kind life Jesus led is possible. Unfortunately, often people

who make comments about Jesus have never taken the time to really study His life and teachings. If they did, they would certainly know that He most definitely did NOT suffer from:

- *Disorganized thoughts and speech* (take a look at His incredible sermons, for example – no one is history had more valuable things to say, nor said them in a more effective manner)
- *Inability to articulate* (totally absurd with respect to Jesus)
- *Social and occupational dysfunction* (Jesus spent most of His time engulfed in social interaction and working with His disciples to spread the gospel throughout Judea, Samaria and Galilee)
- *Blunted affect* (take a look at how Jesus dealt with the Pharisees and the moneychangers in the Temple – certainly not with a blunted affect)
- *Jesus did not show any of the classic four "A's" of schizophrenia* either (autism, loose associations, ambivalence, flat affect)

The point is, when a person actually evaluates whether Jesus Christ manifested the characteristics seen in people who have suffered a prolonged psychotic break from reality, he/she will find that He certainly does not. Instead, Jesus manifested emotional and intellectual characteristics that demonstrated Him to be highly intelligent, very well motivated, extremely well prepared and organized in His thoughts, speech and actions, emotional very stable, extremely talented in oratory, and excellent in His social interactions with all classes of people. None of this is consistent with a psychotic individual.

To add a little more evidence on this point… it would be highly unlikely that His twelve disciples (reasonable men by all accounts), plus numerous other men and women friends that often were around Jesus would not have noticed the characteristic traits of a crazy person after all the years that Jesus lived with them or among them. Frankly, it typically takes less than a few hours for most people to recognize a psychotic person in their midst.

Here are a few other opinions on this matter:

- "The skill and depth of His teachings support the case only for His total mental soundness. If only we were as sane as He."
  (p. 62, Charles Pinnock, *Set Forth our Case*, NY, Craig Press, 1967)
- "The historical difficulty of giving for the life, sayings and influence of Jesus any explanation that is not harder than the Christian explanation is very great. The discrepancy between the depth and sanity… of His moral teaching and the rampant megalomania which must lie behind His theological teaching unless He is indeed God has never been satisfactorily explained. Hence the non-Christian hypotheses succeed one another with the restless fertility of bewilderment."
  (p. 113, C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, NY, MacMillan, 1947)

- "Is such an intellect – clear as the sky, bracing as the mountain air, sharp and penetrating as a sword, thoroughly healthy and vigorous, always ready and always self-possessed – liable to a radical and most serious delusion concerning His own character and mission? Preposterous imagination!"
  (p. 97, Philip Schaff, *The Person of Christ*, NY, American Tract Society, 1913)
- "If you were to take the sum total of all authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene – if you were to combine them and refine them and cleave out the excess verbiage – if you were to take the whole of the meat and none of the parsley, and if you were to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount. And it would suffer immeasurably by comparison. For two thousand years, the Christian world has been holding in its hands the complete answer to its restless and fruitless yearnings. Here rests the blueprint for successful human life with optimism, mental health, and contentment."
  (p. 273, Fisher, *A Few Buttons Missing,* Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1951)
- "Compare Jesus with liars or lunatics like the dying Nietzsche. Jesus has in abundance precisely those three qualities that liars and lunatics most conspicuously lack:
  1) His practical wisdom, His ability to read human hearts
  2) His deep and winning love, His passionate compassion, His ability to attract people and make them feel at home and forgiven, His authority, "not as the scribes"
  3) His ability to astonish, His unpredictability, His creativity. Liars and lunatics are so dull and predictable!
  No one who knows both the Gospels and human beings can seriously entertain the possibility that Jesus was a liar or a lunatic, a bad man."
  (p. 60-61, Kreeft, *Fundamentals of the Faith*, SF, Ignatius Press, 1988)

Historian Philip Schaff also wrote "The testimony, if not true, must be downright blasphemy or madness. The former hypothesis cannot stand a moment before the moral purity and dignity of Jesus, revealed in His every word and work, and acknowledged by universal consent. Self-deception in a matter so momentous, and with an intellect in all respects so clear and so sound, is equally out of the question. How could He be an enthusiast or a madman who never lost the even balance of His mind, who sailed serenely over all the troubles and persecutions, as the sun above the clouds, who always returned the wisest answer to tempting questions, who calmly and deliberately predicted His death on the cross, His resurrection on the third day, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the founding of His Church, the destruction of Jerusalem – predictions that have literally been fulfilled? A character so original, so complete, so uniformly consistent, so perfect, so human and yet so high above all human greatness, can neither be a fraud or a fiction." Schaffer also noted, "How, in the name of logic, common sense, and experience, could an impostor – that is a deceitful, selfish, and depraved man – have invented, and consistently maintained from the beginning to end, the purest and noblest character

known in history with the most perfect air of reality? How could He have conceived and successfully carried out a plan of unparalleled beneficence, moral magnitude, and sublimity, and sacrificed His own life for it, in the face of the strongest prejudices of His people and ages? This is actually a rhetorical question, of course. The answer is that Jesus could not have been either a liar of lunatic. Instead, **Jesus is the God incarnate. He is our Savior, God the Son.**
(p. 109, Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans,1910)

Conclusion: One of the many ways to evaluate the truthfulness of the gospel is to evaluate the identity of Jesus Christ Himself. As C.S. Lewis notes, there are only three possibilities; Jesus is either a bold-face liar, a raging lunatic on the "level of the man who says he is a poached egg", or Jesus is who He says He is. To continue with the comments of Lewis… "You can shut Him up for a fool; you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." (Mere Christianity, p. 56)

I suggest that the aforementioned discussion should lead most open-minded people to the conclusion that Jesus, in actuality, is the Son of the Living God. Is this avenue of proof iron-clad? Maybe not. However, by far the most likely choice is that Jesus is God, not a liar or lunatic. Always remember, God wants us to take that final step in belief as a step of faith. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God". (Hebrews 11:6) Of course, taken with the multitude of other evidences for the veracity of the Bible, no one need question the divinity of Jesus.

The Archeological and Historical Accuracy of the Bible:

There are many ways to demonstrate why it makes perfectly good sense to believe the Bible is the actual Word of the only true God. Several of those reasons are being presented in this first section of this treatise. We have just looked at four of them: fulfilled prophecy, the many types of Jesus that are found in the Old Testament scriptures, the incredibly changed lives of the apostles after witnessing the resurrection, and the perfectly reasonable and logical argument that Jesus had to be actually God the Son as no other conclusion makes any sense.

There are still many more reasons to believe in the veracity of the Bible. Let us take a look at the historicity of this Holy Bible of God. In other words, does what is written in the sixty-six chapters of this collection of books line up with what is known about the world and its history? If not… if there are errors made in the Bible as far as historical facts related to the actual events, nations, or people of history, then it cannot be the Word of God. God would not inspire a book that was not actually true and correct… theologically, historically and archaeologically.

Before showing the amazing accuracy of the Bible, it is relevant to point out that there are other religions that actually demonstrate (accidentally) that they are not inspired by God due to their lack of historical correctness. Probably the best example of this is found in the Mormon religion (although all other non-Judeo-Christian religions fall short on this issue as well).

The Book of Mormon tells of the supposed fact that a group of Jews came to the New World around 600 B.C. It goes on to recount how the community split into two groups after landing in the Americas. One group became the Nephites, the other, the Lamanites. The Laminites eventually killed off the Nephites as these two tribes tended to fight against one another for almost one thousand years. The only group remaining, the Laminites, were what we now call Native Americans.

This book also states that Jesus came to the New World very soon after His resurrection. Apparently, Jesus shared the gospel message at that time before returning to heaven. The people He visited were actually Jews who had come to the Americas in approximately 600 B.C. One really big problem with much of the content in the Book of Mormon is that it contains over 2,500 words that are exactly the same as seen in the King James Version of the Bible. For example, the book of Mosiah, Chapter 14, is a direct copy of Isaiah, Chapter 53. It surely is odd that the writers of the Book of Mormon would write using the King James English. Not only that, but its writers duplicated a few of the errors that were later discovered in the King James translation. It is also intriguing that the words that Peter spoke in his sermon on the very first Pentecost were attributed to Jesus as He was allegedly preaching to the Nephites very soon after His resurrection. The point is, of course, that Joseph Smith borrowed liberally from the King James Bible when he wrote *his* Book of Mormon.

Within this book, there are many references to historical sites that were supposedly settled and developed by the Jewish tribes mentioned above. References are also made to certain plants, animals, metals, and technology that were available to these people. Included were things such as elephants, steel, chariots, chains, brass, a compass and many others. Additional problems a serious student of the Mormons has with that religion can be stated by noting just three more things:

- After extensive research by Mormon archaeologists (even those from Brigham Young University), no evidence of even one archaeological site described in the Book of Mormon has been ever been found.
- There is no evidence of the previous existence of any Jewish descendents having lived in the Americas except for recent times. For example, although the Native Americans are supposed to be direct descendents of the Laminites, there is absolutely no DNA linkage between these American Natives and any Jewish person.
- Numerous references to various metals, animals, plants, and several fairly modern technologies and instruments must be untrue as none of them existed in North, Central or South America until recent centuries.

Therefore, the writings found in this book cannot come from God. God would not make all of these mistakes. Hence, the Mormon religion must be untrue. Now this is just one example of how the Scriptures of a particular religion can reveal whether it may be true… or not. Time will not be taken to analyze any other religions here, except to show that the Christian Bible aligns with the historical record of the world beautifully.

Historicity of the Old Testament:

There is a great deal of history written about in the Old Testament scriptures. The first five books of this Testament (aka the Torah) was purported to be written by Moses through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. If this is true, they had to be written around 1400 B.C. (they may have been written a little later as the exact date of the Exodus from Egypt is unknown). Is there evidence that the writings of the Torah came from a date so long ago? Yes, most certainly. Let me just mention a few pieces of evidence discovered in recent times that show how these Jewish writings are not only true, but evidence that they were written when the Bible says they were:

- Archaeology has established that the cradle of civilization is the lower Tigris-Euphrates valley – where the Garden of Eden was, according to Genesis.
- Farming and cattle raising have been shown to be the earliest form of mankind's livelihood – just as shown in Genesis (*Here we see how the Bible got its animal husbandry information correct whereas the Mormons, through the writings of Joseph Smith, were writing of animals that did not even exist in the New World until thousands of years after they were supposed to be there*).
- The story of a worldwide flood is noted in ancient Sumerian and Babylonian writings – even the mention of the sending out of birds at the tail end of the flood.
- Ur of the Chaldees, Abrahams birthplace, is a well known city in ancient Babylon – unearthed in recent archaeological digs (1920s – 1930s).
- Ancient names of cities noted in Genesis have been confirmed in data unearthed in 1975 (ex. Megiddo, Jerusalem, Gaza, Hazor, Sodom and Gomorrah, and others). Also, names of people are found that are similar to names in Genesis – these writings are consistent with the time frame of the Torah (circa 2000 B.C.).
- The remains of a burnt out Sodom and Gomorrah have been found – evidence shows that it came to an abrupt end in an earthquake and fire some 4,000 years ago. This is exactly as reported in the Bible.
- Evidence has been uncovered that corroborates the route taken by Abraham during his travels: Shechem, Canaan, Gerar, Dothan and Bethel all existed as noted in Genesis.
- Evidence has been found that corroborates the exile of Israel in Egypt at the time noted in the Torah. This includes the time period from 1900 B.C. to the time of Moses. Hebrew names and titles have been unearthed in Egypt from this time period.
- Importantly, Hebrew customs concerning marriage, adoption, rights of the firstborn and many other customs of the day have been uncovered in secular sources. These secular discoveries correspond to the time period of Abraham and were written about in Genesis. If this portion of the Bible had been written at a later date (say, 600-900 B.C.), the author would have had no way of knowing about these customs since they no longer existed. There are two ways that a person could have written this correct information found in the Torah… either to have lived at or near the time period… or been directed to write it down by God. Moses did not live that close in time to Abraham… but he did have God's direction when writing the Torah.

- There have been tablets discovered – the Ebla tablets – in northern Syria. The Kingdom of Ebla was destroyed in 2250 B.C. Their importance lies in the fact that they show very similar types of law, customs and names of the cities of that time. For years, many doubters had stated that the cities named in Genesis 14 were not actually in existence at the time of Abraham and therefore**,** had been added at a later date. Yet, the Ebla tablets mention every one of the cities (Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar).
- The Mari tablets (found in 1936) also demonstrates that the Genesis biblical account is perfectly consistent with the names, culture, and traditions of that day. For example, when Abraham haggled with Ephron concerning his purchase of the Cave of Machpelah, the reason for the argument is understood when one understands the customs of that time as described in the Mari tablets (these tablets are also from that time period).
- Pictures of visiting Semites can be seen on the walls of a tomb at Beni Hasan in Egypt from the time of Abraham.
- There is secular evidence that two other foreigners (one a Jew and the other a Canaanite) were given prominent official positions by the Pharaoh at the time the Bible says the Jews were in Egypt. Of course, the Bible says that the Pharaoh made Joseph the Prime Minister of Egypt.
- Joseph was given a gold chain and ring by the Pharaoh. Joseph was buried back in Palestine as per his request. His purported burial place in Shechem (actually Nablus) was opened several years ago. The body in the tomb was mummified and a sword worn by Egyptian officials was found. This is what one would expect to find if this burial place was not only the tomb of the most beloved son of one of the great Patriarchs (Jacob) but also the former Prime Minister of Egypt.
- Further archaeological evidence exists supporting Joshua's conquests and the time of the Judges, including the battles between the Philistines and Israel.
- King Solomon's vast empire has been confirmed in recent excavations.
- Many of the enemies of the divided kingdoms (and the false gods of these countries) have been confirmed.
- Details of Nebuchadnezzar's reign and conquest of Judah have been unearthed.
- There is definitive archaeological evidence that Cyrus did indeed give the decree for the Jews to return to Israel.
- Many of the smallest details noted in the Torah and books of the Prophets have been confirmed via archaeology. Many books have been written to cover the amazing accuracy of the Bible in its description of historical events, cities, customs, names of people, etc. The Bible always is shown to be accurate when evidence is unearthed in the search for information concerning ancient civilizations. Frankly, many dozens of more detailed examples could be listed supporting the accuracy of the Jewish Scriptures. Let me instead quote a few of the experts of archaeology:

- William Albright (famous archaeologist) said, "There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantive accuracy of the Old Testament". Also, "Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details."
- Merrill Unger writes, "Old Testament archaeology has rediscovered whole nations, resurrected important peoples, and in a most astonishing manner has filled in the gaps, adding immeasurably to the knowledge of biblical backgrounds."
- Yale professor, Millar Burrows, states, "Archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence of the scriptural record.'
- Sir Frederick Kenyon says, "The results (of archaeology) already achieved confirm what faith would suggest, that the Bible can do nothing but gain from an increase in knowledge."

The point is that many detailed studies of the Bible have shown it to have been amazingly accurate. This does not necessarily prove that they were divinely inspired, but it does point one in that direction. Especially when one compares these Scriptures to the other religious writings that have not proven historically accurate.

Historicity of the New Testament:

Since the Christian religion began *only* two thousand years ago, the secular history of the time of its inception is much more complete and available than that of the Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish religions. Therefore, we can draw on some of that history to either confirm or deny the truthfulness of the Christian claims.

The evidence for Christianity can be found on several different fronts. First of all, we will show that if the Christian Scriptures are true, their concept of God and eternity should indeed follow. Then, the evidence for the veracity of their Scriptures will be given. If that evidence is convincing, we will have found the one true religion of the world!

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem a little over 2,000 years ago. It is claimed that He was born of a virgin, Mary. His true Father is God in heaven. His earthly father was a man named Joseph. When Jesus reached about 30 years of age, He began to minister to His people, the Jews. For approximately three to four years, He preached a message of love and forgiveness; this message has always been open to anyone who would believe and follow Jesus. His message was and is, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

This was and is a totally unique message in the world's religions. There is nothing said about working one's way to salvation. There is, in fact, no way a person could possibly work to become good enough, or complete enough, to make it to heaven. Also, there is only one life per customer… no mention of reincarnation. Our soul, spirit and body come into existence and enter into this world at birth… not as the Mormons believe (i.e. mortals pre-existed as spirits in heaven). When we die, one of two things happen. We either go to heaven or we go to hell. We do not cease to exist. We do not return for another try at this world. We do not become part of God. We certainly do not become a god! Our spirit lives on and should we go to heaven, we

will someday have a glorified body that will never thirst, hunger, experience pain or want. These are some of the differences between Christian beliefs and all other religions.

No other religion believes that people will gain entrance into heaven via the sacrificial death of God (i.e. Jesus Christ). That is quite a unique concept! Christians believe that no one can enter into heaven unless that person is perfect (without sin) or has paid the penalty for their sin. No person will ever live without committing sin. Since God's penalty for sin is death and punishment for that sin, it would seem impossible for any human to gain entrance into heaven. Yet, God devised a plan for the redemption of His creation. God allows one other way to salvation. God, Himself, came into this world to live a perfect (sinless) life as a human, Jesus. Yet, Jesus also retained His deity. He lived a perfect life. Then, Jesus gave His life on the cross and suffered the penalty for all of mankind's sins. *He paid our penalty*. His gift to all people is eternal life with Him in heaven. It is God's beautiful gift to us. Only one thing is required by anyone who wants this gift. We do have to accept it. We do have to recognize by faith that Jesus did die for us, and that He was raised from the dead as the "firstfruits" of our salvation. This is the gospel… the good news of our salvation.

Since within the Holy Bible there are hundreds of predictions and scores of miracles described, it is quite obvious to a logical thinking reader that if it can be shown that these Scriptures can stand the test of careful scrutiny, the God, the heaven and the eternity described in the Bible must be true. If not, they must be false. Much of that evidence has already been reviewed. As has been shown, there is a wide variety of good evidence that the gospel, and the entire Bible is completely true! However, there is even more good evidence to present!

External Evidence for the reliability of the New Testament:

As we have shown, there were many historical references in the Old Testament scriptures. The writers of the New Testament were also not timid in their use of historical and geographical references. The four Gospel writers had much to say about various important people and sites in and around Galilee and Judea. Luke was replete with his references to people, topography, and other historical sites as well, not only in his Gospel, but even more so when he wrote *The Acts of the Apostles*. Paul's travels are outlined in detail in the book of *Acts*. Paul, himself, wrote volumes concerning the life and times of the people and cities that he encountered during his many missionary travels. Even in the apocalyptic book, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, John wrote concerning several different aspects of seven particular churches in Asia-Minor of the mid-late first century. From what is written by the various authors in the New Testament, can one say that their information is reliable? How does the historical record within the New Testament compare to that given in secular history books?

The outstanding apologist, Josh McDowell, has written the masterpiece, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. In it he points out the relatively recent archaeological findings that corroborate many of previously questioned facts outlined in the Gospels and Acts**.** For example, no longer is there any doubt on the existence and position of Pontius Pilate, the details pointed out relating to Nazareth, Capernaum, the Pool of Bethesda, and the Seat of Moses. Many other

cities, people, and items have also been confirmed. The continual confirmation of New Testament writings as more and more sites are being excavated have led many famous archaeologists to recognize it as an excellent source for study… because everything concerning its writings are being confirmed as being historically true! Let us see what some writers have had to say about this, from recent history and from much closer to the time of Jesus…

There may be no better place to begin than quoting one of the more famous archaeologists ever to have lived, **Sir William Ramsay**. After years of study on the topography of Asia-Minor, he came to the following conclusion, "I may fairly claim to have entered on this investigation without prejudice in favor of the conclusion which I shall now seek to justify to the reader. On the contrary, I began with a mind unfavorable to it, for the ingenuity and apparent completeness of the Tubingen theory [a nineteenth century liberal form of biblical interpretation] had at one time quite convinced me. It did not then lie in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely, but more recently I found myself brought into contact with the Book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth. In fact, beginning with a fixed idea that the work was essentially a second century composition, and never relying on its evidence as trustworthy for first century conditions, I gradually came to find it a useful ally in some obscure and difficult investigations." Ramsay went on later to say, that after thirty years of study, "Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, … this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.'

F.F. Bruce (University of Manchester): "A man whose accuracy can be demonstrated in matters where we are able to test it is likely to be accurate where the means for testing him are not available. Accuracy is a habit of mind, and we know from happy (or unhappy) experience that some people are habitually accurate just as others can be depended upon to be inaccurate. Luke's record entitles him to be regarded as a writer of habitual accuracy."

Historian **Eusebius** notes, "The elder apostle John used to say this also: 'Mark, having been the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that Peter mentioned, whether sayings or doings of Christ, not however, in order. For he was neither a hearer nor a companion of the Lord; but afterward, as I have said, he accompanied Peter, who adapted his teachings as necessity required, not as though he were making compilation of the sayings of the Lord. So then Mark made no mistake, writing down in this way some of the things as he (Peter) mentioned them." (A.D.130)

Iraneus, in 180 A.D., a student of Polycarp (who was a disciple of John), wrote, "Matthew published his Gospel among the Hebrews in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching their gospel in Rome and founding the church there. After their death, Mark, the disciple of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter's preaching. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who leaned on His breast, himself produced his Gospel, while he was living in Ephesus."

A.N Sherwin-White, historian: Archaeology has confirmed the historicity of the New Testament. "For *Acts* the confirmation is overwhelming. Any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted."

Dr. Clark Pinnock states, "There exists no document from the ancient world witnessed by so excellent a set of textual and historical testimonies and offering so superb an array of historical data on which an intelligent decision can be made. An honest person cannot dismiss a source of this kind. Skepticism regarding the historical credentials of Christianity is based on an irrational bias."

Josephus: This famous Jewish historian of the first century actually writes about Jesus, "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ [Messiah]. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named for him, are not extinct at this day."

Ignatius: (died 110 A.D.) Refers to Jesus as "our God, Jesus Christ." He also wrote to Polycarp "to await Him that is above every season, the Eternal, the Invisible, who became visible for our sake… who suffered for our sake." Ignatius mentions Christ as God in multiple other writings. All of the churches accepted the teachings of Ignatius, showing that the early Church certainly believed that Jesus was indeed the Christ as is written in the Gospels and the epistles.

Justin Martyr: (110-166 A.D.) He spoke of Jesus the Christ and Jesus who is also God. Many more quotes relating to his belief in Jesus as God are known.

Clement (died 101 A.D.) spoke also of Jesus as "Christ, the scepter and majesty of God"… and as the Lord who Malachi expected to come to the Temple.

Cornelius Tacitus: (born 52 A.D.) "Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius." He also talked of the torture of Christians as well.

Julius Africanus (221 A.D.) He wrote, "Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun – unreasonable, as it seems to me" as a solar eclipse could not take place at the time of a full moon, and it was the season of the Paschal full moon when Christ died."

Philopon and Phlegon: (first century historians) also mentioned that an eclipse of the sun occurred during a full moon at the time of Christ's death.

Many more secular writings exist to verify the life, death, miracles and the Christian claim of the resurrection of Christ. There is no doubt that Jesus lived and died as the Bible states that He did. The only question some might have is as to whether He was indeed the Messiah, the Christ, God the Son. In the first portion of this section we reviewed in some detail the evidence for the Bible being true and, therefore, Jesus being the Messiah and the Son of God. Let us continue to look at just a little more on the significant evidence for this truth…

The Thematic Consistency of the Bible:

When one studies the entire Bible, it becomes quite obvious that something about this book is very special. If a person takes the time to study the holy books of other religions, their scriptures either have many errors in them, or many inconsistencies, or both of these problems. Many of them have blatant contradictory statements… such as some of the writings on Buddhism, Hinduism, Scientology, Jehovah Witness, Islam and others. This is certainly not true of the Bible. Furthermore, there is a grand plan that becomes apparent that courses from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation. It is as if God wrote it… and, actually, He did! The Bible was written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, the third Person of the Holy Trinity. In other words, God made sure that what was recorded by these men was true, and it was the truth that He wanted revealed to His creation.

Although there were approximately 40 different authors over 1500 years, the message ties together beautifully. For example, God introduces **the idea of the need for a blood sacrifice of a spotless lamb** all the way back in the early chapters of Genesis. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, this theme is developed. Many sermons have been preached on this very important topic. Then, Jesus enters the picture and we begin to recognize the whole point of this concept. A sacrifice is needed for salvation. Yes, it would have to be the sacrifice of a perfect "Lamb". Yes, it would require the shedding of blood. God was showing us all the way back in the earliest times, that He knew what sinful people required to be reunited with Him in heaven. Yet, He kept the notion of the Messiah dying for us a mystery until the appropriate time. However, it is obvious that the concept a requisite perfect blood sacrifice runs throughout the entire Bible. It is often referred to as the "scarlet thread of blood." In fact, this theme unifies the entire Bible, and is excellent evidence for God's authorship.

There are other major themes that God develops from the earliest chapter in the Old Testament all the way through to the last book of the New Testament. There is amazing unity in the Bible. Let me mention just a few more of the consistent themes that are found in God's Word:

- **The coming Messiah** - The Old Testament books in the Bible contained hundreds of prophecies about an "anointed one" ("Messiah" in Hebrew; Christ in Greek) who would arrive in the future**.** The Messiah would "deliver" or "save" all the Jewish people, bringing them to paradise or heaven. These prophecies also stated that the Messiah would save all the other people in the world "through the Jews." There are scores of

prophecies concerning this coming Messiah and they appear in many different books. For instance, verses telling of the coming Savior begin in Genesis (Gen 3:15, 12:3, 18:18, 49:10) re-appear in Deuteronomy (Deut 18:15-19), are all through the Psalms (2,16,22,23,24,35,41,68,69,72,118,132), are a main feature of the prophet Isaiah's prophecies (7,9,35,52,53,55,59,61), and continue to be written about by the prophets Ezekiel, Daniel, Micah, Zechariah, and Malachi. Of course, this theme was also the main point of the New Testament. Obviously, therefore, the idea of a coming Savior is a centerpiece of the entire Bible.

- **The Kingdom of God** – All through the Old and New Testament there are references to the Kingdom of God. These references to the Kingdom are actually to three types of related Kingdoms: a heavenly, an earthly, and a spiritual kingdom of God. There are many references in the Old Testament related to how God has prepared a Kingdom for David and his seed.

  "Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?" 2 Chron 13:5

  "For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end." Dan 6:26

  "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God." Mark 14:25

  There are a multitude of other verses concerning the promised kingdom scattered throughout the Bible. The point again is to demonstrate this as one of the major themes that the multitude of authors all were well aware of as an important part of God's plan for humanity. It was no coincidence that the majority of them spoke of this aspect of His plan.

- **God's covenants with Israel –** The Old Testament is replete with references to God's covenants with Israel, typically those made with their patriarchs. These start with the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis and continue to be developed through the majority of the books of the Old Testament. Paul writes of the covenants in his epistles, especially in the letter to the Romans. The writer of Hebrews also writes concerning these covenants. They were a major theme running through the entire Bible. Although some of the aspects of these covenants are conditional; other aspects of them are not. One promise that God made with His "chosen people" that does not have any conditions is that He will one day gather a remnant of their people back into the land that He has promised them… Israel. As will be discussed in the next section of this treatise, this promise was made without any conditions and God has already brought the Jews back into their land! On the other hand, there were aspects to these covenants that did have conditions placed upon them… mainly, that those Jews who did not obey and follow God would not be protected by God. These people would one day be defeated by foreign invaders and be scattered to other lands. This, of course, happened on more than one occasion (e.g. the Assyrian invasion of the Northern Kingdom, the Babylonian invasion of Judah, the crushing defeat at the hands of the Romans in A.D. 70 and A.D. 135). The point here is that the various writers

of the Holy Bible were constantly aware of the covenants that God had made with Israel, and they often made reference to these covenants and the importance of their people keeping up their end of the bargain… which, unfortunately, they generally did not do.

- **The necessity of faith for salvation** – People are saved through faith alone, not by works. This concept has its beginning all the way back in Genesis where God saved Abraham because of his faith. This concept of the need for faith to be saved is further developed in the New Testament, where it is written about in over twenty-five different verses…

  Abram **believed the LORD**, and he credited it to him as **righteousness** Gen 15:6

  For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- **9** not by works, so that no one can boast. Eph 2:8-9

- **The Trinity:** The concept of the Trinity permeates through the entire Bible. *In every book of the Old and New Testament, God, the Father is referenced.* That is blatantly obvious to anyone who has ever read the Bible. Many think of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the New Testament… and He is mentioned there often…

  All of them were filled with the **Holy Spirit** Acts 2:4

  do not grieve the **Holy Spirit of God**, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Eph 4:30

  heaven was opened, and he saw the **Spirit of God** descending like a dove and lighting on him Matt 3:16

  However, He is also referenced quite frequently in the Old Testament…

  the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the waters Gen 1:2

  "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is **The Spirit of God**?" Gen. 41:38

  "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is The **Spirit**, and lay your hand on him." Num. 27:19

  "The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and The Lord blessed him, and The **Spirit of The Lord** began to stir him..." Judges 13:24-25

  "The **Spirit of The Lord** will come upon you [Saul] in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person." 1 Samuel 10:6

  "So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on The **Spirit of The Lord** came upon David in power." 1 Samuel 16:13

What about the second person of the Trinity? What about Jesus the Christ? Everyone is well aware that Jesus the Messiah (Christ) is featured all through the New Testament. What about the Old Testament? As it turns out, the second person of the Trinity is featured there as well. Many times, He is mentioned as the coming Messiah. Sometimes, He is referred to as the *angel of the Lord*. It is true that the Jewish people were unaware that their Messiah would be God… but, that is, indeed the case.

"If I have found favor in your eyes, **my lord,** do not pass your servant by. Gen 18:3

So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak……. Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because **I saw God face to face**, and yet my life was spared." Gen 32:24,30

Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does **my Lord** have for his servant?" Josh 5:14

The **angel of the LORD** appeared to her and said, "You are sterile and childless, but you are going to conceive and have a son (Sampson). Judges 13:3

The **angel of the LORD** found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count." Gen 16:7,10

"See, I will send **my messenger**, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly **the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple**. Mal 3:1

For to us a child is born, to us **a son is given**, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God**, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and **the fourth looks like a son of the gods**." Dan 3:25 (Jesus was in the fiery furnace protecting Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego)

All of the verses above, and many others, are considered by most Bible scholars to be pre-incarnate appearances of the Lord Jesus. There is no doubt that the Old Testament prophets believed that there would come a day when God would send some special Messiah to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and reign as King of Israel and the world. Jesus, who told His followers that He was that Messiah, cemented this belief when He came into the world at Bethlehem. So, as has been shown, all three persons of the Trinity are seen to appear all throughout the entirety of the Bible.

Another example of Old Testament themes that carry through the entire Bible relates to the many **Feasts of Israel**. God gave the Jews many special days to celebrate and remember important times in their relationship with Him. These include the Passover Feast, The Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits, Pentecost, The Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The first four have been described in some detail earlier. The point is that they found amazing fulfillment in certain aspects of the life and death of Jesus. That was not a coincidence. This is just one more area in the Bible that shows its unity… from the earliest portion of the Old Testament to the final chapters of the New Testament.

Let me give one last example. This is from a book by Dr. Harold Wilmington, *That Manuscript from Outer Space*. Look at the way that Genesis dovetails with Revelation:

Genesis: In the beginning, God created the heaven and the Earth.
Revelation: I saw a New Heaven and a New Earth.

Genesis: Adam and Eve are described in the Garden of Eden reigning over the Earth
Revelation: describes the new Adam, Jesus Christ with His Bride, the Church reigning over the entire Universe.

Genesis: and the gathering of the waters called the sea
Revelation: and there was no more sea

Genesis: God created the Sun, the Moon, the day and the night
Revelation: there shall be no night there. And the city had no need for the sun or the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it.

Genesis: the Tree of Life is denied to a sinful mankind
Revelation: the Tree of Life yielded her fruit every month

Genesis: cursed is the ground for your sake
Revelation: there shall be no more curse

Genesis: Satan appears to torment man
Revelation: Satan disappears in eternal torment himself

Genesis: punished by a flood
Revelation: purified via a fire

Genesis: man's early home was beside a river
Revelation: man's eternal home will be by a river out of the throne of God

Genesis: God destroys an earthly city, wicked Sodom
Revelation: God presents a heavenly city, new Jerusalem, from the skies

Genesis: ends with a believer lying in a coffin
Revelation: ends with all believers reigning forever in eternal bliss, in heaven

These examples are just a few of the many ways that one can see the hand of God in the writing of His Bible. No other religion has Holy Scriptures that show such excellent evidence of truth. Fulfilled prophecy, thematic consistency, historical and archaeological accuracy, and the lives of those that wrote these Scriptures (e.g. the apostles) all suggest strongly that the Christian Bible is actually the Word of God. Certainly, there has been plenty enough evidence to convince some of the most impressive people and minds in history of this fact… as will be shown next.

The Lives of Christian Believers and Their Testimonies:

The final topic that will be addressed in this section concerning the many reasons to trust in the Holy Bible will relate to the issue of whether it is even reasonable to believe in something that many modern day people look at as just a "crutch" or as Karl Marx put it… religion is merely the "opiate of the masses". Marx was saying that to believe in God, any God, was only a mechanism for people, especially poor and oppressed people, to make it through life. Those that suggest that Jesus is *only* a crutch are really saying the same thing. However, the fact of the matter is that Jesus is, indeed, an extremely important and necessary "crutch." Keep in mind that just because something is a called a crutch says nothing about its reality or its value. Jesus is an incredibly strong "crutch" that will help all His children through the difficulties of life. Most people would benefit greatly by someone to help them through the difficulties of life… especially if that Person is God and will use His love and power for their benefit… which He will. We have already seen a variety of very good reasons why many people have asked Jesus to come into their life.

Let us get back to the main reason for adding this last topic on this section on the reasons to believe that the Bible is actually the Word of God. Contrary to the opinion of atheists such as Marx and many others, plus some of the innuendos that one notes from watching movies and television shows, the ranks of Christians are not made up of a bunch of unthinking, sheep-like, imbeciles.

Although some people like to suggest that people who believe the Bible are somewhat weak minded or ill-informed, perhaps to be pitied for their gullibility… they should note those followers of Christ mentioned below:

Sir Isaac Newton (considered one of the two greatest physicists of all time): "We account the Scriptures of God to be the most sublime philosophy. I find more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history whatever." & "I have a fundamental belief in the Bible as the Word of God, written by men who were inspired. I study the Bible daily."

Louis Pasteur (famous scientist): "The more I study nature, the more I stand amazed at the work of the Creator." & "Science brings men nearer to God."

Michael Faraday: (famous scientist): "The Bible, and it alone, with nothing added to it nor taken away from it by man, is the sole and sufficient guide for each individual, at all times and in all circumstances… For faith in the divinity and work of Christ is the gift of God, and the evidence of this faith is obedience to the commandment of Christ."

Johannes Kepler (famous scientist): "I am a Christian...I believe... only and alone in the service of Jesus Christ... In Him is all refuge, all solace."
"Let my name perish if only the name of God the Father is thereby elevated."
"God is the kind Creator who brought forth nature out of nothing."

Sir Francis Bacon (famous philosopher and scientist): "The volume of Scriptures… reveal the will of God." & "There was never law, or sect, or opinion did so much magnify goodness, as the Christian religion doth."

George Washington: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without the Bible."

John Adams: "The Bible is the best book in the world."

Ronald Reagan: "Within the covers of the Bible are all the answers for all the problems men face."

John Wesley: "This book had to be written by one of three people: good men, bad men or God. It couldn't have been written by good men because they said it was inspired by the revelation of God. Good men don't lie and deceive. It couldn't have been written by bad men because bad men would not write something that would condemn themselves. It leaves only one conclusion. It was given by divine inspiration of God."

John Quincy Adams: "It has been my custom for many years to read the Bible in its entirety once a year."

Queen Elizabeth: "Tell your prince that this book (the Bible) is the secret of England's success."

Winston Churchill: "We rest with assurance on the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture."

Victor Hugo: "England has two books; the Bible and Shakespeare. England made Shakespeare, but the Bible made England."

Syngman Rhee (1st president of South Korea): "Fellow prisoners held the Bible and turned the pages for me because my hands were so crushed that I could not use them. I read the Bible, and have read it the rest of my life."

Robert E. Lee: "The Bible is a book in comparison with which all others in my eyes are of minor importance, and in which in all my perplexities and distresses has never failed to give me light and strength."

Oliver Cromwell (English military and political leader): "He that was Paul's Christ is my Christ too."

Woodrow Wilson: "The Bible is the one supreme source of revelation of the meaning of life." & "I am sorry for men who do not read the Bible every day. I wonder why they deprive themselves of the strength and pleasure."

Douglas MacArthur: "Believe me, sir, never a night goes by, be I ever so tired, but I read the Word of God before I go to bed."

Dwight D. Eisenhower: "In the highest sense, the Bible is the unique repository of eternal spiritual truths."

Benjamin Franklin: "Young men, my advice to you is that you cultivate an acquaintance with, and a firm belief in, the Holy Scriptures."

Daniel Webster (brilliant American statesman): "I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the will and the Word of God." & "Education is useless without the Bible."

Patrick Henry (founding father of the United States): "This is a Book worth more than all the others that were ever printed."

John Locke (English philosopher): "It has God for its Author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter: it is all pure, sincere, nothing too much, nothing wanting."

Charles Dickens: "It is the best book that ever was or will be in the world."

Helen Keller: "In the Bible, I find a confidence mightier than the utmost evil."

Leo Tolstoy: "Without the Bible, the education of a child in the present state of society is impossible."

I could list hundreds more quotes like these from very intelligent and sincere Christians. I hasten to add, however, that just because there are millions of bright men and women who have placed their faith in Jesus, does not necessarily mean that the Christian religion is true. This is certainly not the case. On the other hand, considering all of the other facts that have been presented, it is no wonder that all of these people have turned to Christ as their Lord and Savior.

I do feel badly, however, for those that do somehow think that it takes a dim-witted person to believe the Bible. It is not saying much for either the intellect of the people who have this belief, or more likely, their open-mindedness. Sadly, this lack of open-minded pursuit of the truth will have dire consequences if these people do not eventually see the light. Hopefully, there will come a time in the lives of the skeptics where they do pursue the truth. God will bless them if they seek Him… just as He did former atheists such as Josh McDowell, C. S. Lewis, and Lee Stroebel.

As has been just shown, there are great people in world history who have claimed the name of Jesus as their Lord. However, as Dr. Wilmington pointed out in his comments on this topic, it would be a challenge to find a murderous tyrant that had a great love of the Holy Bible. It would also be difficult to find a good and wise leader that was a real enemy of God's Word. Keep in mind, this is not saying that there are not those people who *claim* to be Christian but show in their actions that they are anything but a follower of Christ. As Jesus Himself pointed out…

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. **24** He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. John 14:23-24

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. **4** The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 John 2:3-4

However, those people who follow the Bible and do their best to obey the commands of Jesus, never turn out to be the miserable tyrants of the world… **never**! Take a minute to think about this.

http://www.eadshome.com/Sciencequotes.htm
http://www.talkjesus.com/lounge/22490-bible-quotes-famous-people.html
Harold Wilmington, *That Manuscript From Outer Space*, Old Time Gospel Hour, p. 33-37, 1974)

Conclusion:

Before moving on to the next portion of this treatise, a brief review is in order. The purpose of the preceding pages was to show that the Holy Bible is actually the Word of God. God wants us to know that He is the One True God. Recall just some of the evidence that has been presented in this section (and there is much more that could have been added):

- Hundreds of fulfilled prophecies from the Old and New Testaments
- The many intriguing types that the God of the Bible used in the Old Testament as further proof of His reality and omniscience
- The lives' of Jesus and His friends (apostles, James, first century missionaries, the women relatives and friends of Jesus, etc.) when carefully considered points conclusively to the obvious fact that Jesus must have been the actual Messiah and Son of God. No other explanation is plausible.
- There is much historical and archaeological evidence that strongly suggests that the only true and accurate holy book is the Holy Bible.
- There is an amazing consistency and unity of subject matter all throughout the Bible. All of the human authors were used by the Holy Spirit to write a cohesive book about God and His love for mankind.
- Dozens of brilliant men and women of excellent character were presented, along with their opinions on the Bible. This was done to show that intelligent, thoughtful people have given their stamp of approval, down through the ages, on the veracity and importance of the Holy Bible.

Given the excellent evidence that God has given mankind concerning the truthfulness of His Word, we can now proceed with the presentation of the major topic of this treatise…

eschatology (i.e. end-times prophecy). This next section will introduce the reader to the various ways theologians down through the ages have sought to understand these end-time prophecies. As it turns out, there is certainly more than one system of biblical interpretation… as will soon become evident. In fact, there are differing views concerning several aspects of future events, such as: the Millennial Kingdom, the Tribulation, the Rapture, and the Second Coming.

It will be important to understand the reasons why so many excellent Christians come to different understandings on these intriguing topics in eschatology. Fortunately, all of these varying interpretations come to the same general conclusion… all those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation will one day be united with Jesus for an eternal life in the New Heaven and New Earth. As the Bible makes clear, all of the saints will one day be co-heirs with Christ. What a glorious future awaits those who love the Lord.

Understanding the Basics of Biblical End-Times Prophecy

Overview:

Eschatology has become a very interesting field of study in recent decades. Eschatology can be defined as the *doctrine of last things*. Ever since Hal Lindsey published his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth,* forty years ago, millions of people have been very interested in what the Bible has to say about the end-times. Of course, there has always been some interest in this topic, all through the centuries. Events in history have had an effect on the interest shown as well as the way the prophetic word has been interpreted… as will be shown a little later. The holocaust, followed by Jewish people returning to their homeland of Israel to once again become a nation in May, 1948, were two major world events that were the catalyst for this increased interest people now seem to have in the future coming of Christ.

Although virtually all of the books and television shows that feature end-time prophecy (and there are many) have the same basic views of these biblical prophecies as Lindsey, there are actually quite a variety of views on this topic. These differing viewpoints result from the fact that different denominations within Christianity have developed different ways to interpret and understand the Word of God. Before getting deeply involved in the interpretation of the many end-times prophecies that are found all throughout the Bible, it is very important to recognize that very sincere and very intelligent Christian theologians differ on the best way understand the many verses on this topic. In fact, as will be shown in the pages that follow, there is quite a variety of views in many aspects of Biblical eschatology. For instance, there are those who believe that these end-time prophecies are often too nebulous to take literally and, therefore, should be looked at primarily as *allegorical*. Others insist that God meant for all of the Bible to be interpreted *literally* as much as possible… and this should include every type of prophecy. This is certainly not the only difference of opinion.

It is also important to point out that there are different *systems of theology.* Bible scholars down through the ages have attempted to develop orderly, coherent methods of looking at the entire Bible. Today, there are two particular systems that seem to be the most prevalent: *covenant theology* and *dispensational theology*. These two systems are intelligent attempts by theologians to try to better understand how God is working in His universe, especially as He relates to mankind and mankind relates to Him. As it turns out, depending on the system that one adopts as the basis of their theology, an entirely different view of eschatology will result. This may well be difficult to understand at first, but the reasons will become apparent later on in this section. Both covenant and dispensational theology will be discussed in detail to demonstrate how they each result in a different view of the end-times. For example, each has a different view on the following:

- The Millennial Kingdom
- Israel and the Church
- God's covenantal promises to Israel

- The Tribulation
- The Second Coming of Jesus and the Rapture

All of the above topics will be defined and discussed in this section. Since there are brilliant, sincere, and strong Christians who adhere to each of the viewpoints that will be covered, care will be taken not to engage in any ad hominem attacks on those with viewpoints that do not align with those that will be taken in the last two sections of this book.

It is important to note that the final result of all of the views presented in this book is that, eventually, all followers of Christ will live forever in beautiful harmony in a New Heaven and a New Earth. The only questions that remain are the details on how each Christian will arrive there. Also, it will be those "details" that will be the concern of the remainder of this treatise. Now, let us begin with an introduction into the typical methods of biblical interpretation.

Introduction:

Before proceeding with a detailed analysis of end-times prophecy, it is important to consider the varying methods of biblical interpretation that conscientious students of eschatology have employed over the centuries. Just how the individual views the content of the Bible, will make an enormous difference on how that person interprets its prophetic words. Most conservative theologians view the Bible as the inerrant Word of God. They believe that God knew exactly what He wanted to reveal to humanity and did so through His prophets via the written Word. They do not believe that there are any errors in the original manuscripts… and only a few insignificant errors in the translations that are available to read and study today. Obviously, God has the power to protect His Word and the belief is that He did so throughout the ages. Even given that most of conservative scholars take this same view, there still is a difference of opinion on just how to interpret the Scriptures.

There are two basic ways that the Bible has been interpreted down through the ages: literally and allegorically. Vastly different conceptions of end-time events result, depending on which of these two methods is used. The basic points of view concerning these two are as follows:

- **Literal Interpretation**: Those people who interpret the Bible *literally*, believe that the reader should approach it in the same manner that he/she would interpret any other work of non-fiction. This is also called the *grammatical-historical* method of interpretation. However, when it becomes obvious that a word or phrase is meant to be taken as a metaphor or a 'figure of speech', it should be interpreted in that way. This will not discount the passage as having been interpreted via the literal method. For example, if a man were to say that "I am so hungry, I could eat a horse" after missing a few meals, it really only means that he is very, very hungry. Along with understanding typical figures of speech, one must interpret the meaning of Scripture using normal historical and cultural data from the biblical times from which it originated. Also, and very importantly, the reader should take advantage of passages in one area of the Bible to help

in interpreting metaphorical verses that also appear in other areas**.** God uses numbers, colors, celestial bodies, metals, trees, animals, common objects, and even parts of the body to represent certain things in a metaphorical fashion. A careful study of the entire Bible allows a person to better understand the reasons why God may be using certain of these words to describe a particular situation. In almost every case when these words are used, it is quite obvious that they are to be understood metaphorically. In most of these cases, God even gives the interpretation of these metaphors just a little later in the same paragraph.

Simply put, the literal method of interpretation is the most straightforward method. It may be argued whether this is the best method to use for interpreting end-time prophecies, however, this method certainly is the best one to minimize speculation and subjective interpretation.

It is worthwhile, again, to point out that hundreds of Old and New Testament prophetic passages have already been fulfilled – and they have all been fulfilled in the literal manner just described. For example, none of the prophecies concerning Jesus were seen to come true in some mystical, allegorical way. No, they all came true literally. For these reasons, the *literal* method of interpretation is the one that will be used later in this treatise as we study the end-times prophetic Word of God. Grant Jeffrey, one of today's most ardent and prolific prophecy teachers, states, "the writers of the primitive Church during the first few centuries following the life of Christ also understood the prophecies about the pre-millennial return of Christ in the same literal manner." (Grant Jeffrey, *Triumphant Return*, Frontier Research Publications, Toronto, 2001, p. 31). It was not until a few hundred years after Pentecost that another approach gained popularity. That is now referred to as the *allegorical* approach.

- **Allegorical Interpretation:** This method is essentially the opposite of the literal approach. The history behind this technique of interpretation is interesting. Two very important "Church Fathers", Origen (AD 185-254) and Augustine (AD 354-430), championed this approach to prophecy. Both of these well-known theologians and philosophers were greatly influenced by their classical Greek education. The Greeks generally believed that material and physical things (i.e. matter of any sort, even to include the human body) was evil. Origen was considered the father of the allegorical approach to biblical interpretation. He had a great desire to find hidden meanings in God's Word… he simply assumed that these spiritual, mystical meanings were there and that they were much more important than the obvious and plain meaning of the words. Some of his interpretations were so far from the norm that he was accused of heresy by many of the main-line Christians of those early centuries.

  Augustine followed two hundred years later and continued this approach to the study of the Bible. He also was greatly influenced by Greek philosophy. On the other hand, he was more conservative in his views toward the Bible and his views were much more accepted by the Church. In fact, he is considered the individual who had the

greatest impact on the Roman Catholic Church and its theology. Augustine viewed the "organized Catholic Church as the Messianic Kingdom and that the millennium had begun with the first coming of Christ." (Showers, Renald, *There Really is a Difference*, Bellmar N.J., 1993, p. 133). He believed that there were several layers of mystical interpretations that could be gleaned from virtually every verse of the Bible. Soon after the life of Augustine, the entire world entered into the Dark Ages. It became virtually impossible for anyone to have access to the Word of God. The Bible was only available in Latin and was not, in fact, available to many. Therefore, Augustine's influence dominated the Church for most of the next 1000 years. The Book of Revelation was looked upon as a symbolic view of the spiritual warfare between good and evil. It was certainly not taken as a serious analysis of end-time events. It was not until the reformation that Catholic views on the Bible were even contested (e.g. by Martin Luther). Interest in the study of prophecy lagged behind. It took until the early part of the 19th century before scholars interested in prophecy began to re-think this allegorical approach and return to the literal method of interpretation.

There are many who still choose to view the Bible in this allegorical fashion today. The major difficulty with that approach is that objectivity may well be lost. One individual's conception of the symbolism behind a verse or series of verses may well be totally different than another person's… who is to say which one is correct? As will be shown, this method of interpretation leads to a far different view of many of the plain words of scripture than does the literal method.

Biblical Systems of Theology:

We have just discussed, briefly, the two main methods of interpreting *biblical passages*. Importantly, there are also differing methods that have been used to attempt to better understand the overall manner of just how God has dealt with His Creation since the beginning of time. These methods of interpretation are typically referred to as *systems of theology*. The two main systems that are prominent in Christianity today are ***covenant theology*** and ***dispensational theology*****.** These varying methods of looking at the inter-relationship between God and man have surprisingly influenced the study of eschatology. Depending on which system is used to interpret the major eschatological books in the Bible, very different views of the end-times will result. Obviously, it behooves anyone attempting to study these end-times events to understand the concepts behind both covenant and dispensational theology. Then, the system that they believe is most likely to lead to a correct understanding of this type of prophecy can be used. Therefore, now let us review each of these theological systems:

Covenant Theology:

Covenant Theology is a system that believes that God has formed essentially three different covenants with mankind (actually, there are some covenant theologians who only adhere to the last two *covenants* mentioned below). The concept behind it is that the entire Holy

Bible can be viewed as being the Word of God brought to humanity in the nature of these three covenants between God and man. In eternity past, God the Father and God the Son made a covenant whereupon God the Son (Jesus) agreed to, one day in the distant future, give His life as a ransom for all those who would turn to Him as Savior… the *elect* of God. This was the first covenant… this was not between God and man, but a covenant between the members of the Holy Trinity.

This **first covenant** is called the *covenant of redemption*. This involves the *harmony* and *unity* of purpose of the Trinity from eternity past. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are agreed about the bringing forth of the works of redemption. This involves all aspects of redemption (e.g. Jesus' sacrificial death, the Holy Spirit's work to help Christians in their pursuit of sanctification, etc.) This covenant has been in existence since eternity past.

The **second covenant** is the one that God initially made with Adam (often called the *covenant of works*). God promised life if Adam and his progeny were totally obedient to Him, but death would ensue if Adam disobeyed (i.e. sinned). Adam, of course, sinned. The destiny of Adam and Eve and their progeny would be determined by their behavior, by their works. Hence, this second covenant is called the *covenant of works*. If a person does good works they will gain eternal life, if not, then that person will die and face an eternity in hell. It's that simple. Initially, the terms of the relationship with God were set up with respect to the obedience or disobedience to God's Law. As everyone knows, Adam and Eve violated the covenant of works, bringing upon themselves and all their descendants the judgment of God because the covenant of works had been violated. Thus, death entered into the human race and under this covenant all mankind was doomed to die and be separated from God.

God, however, in His infinite mercy, then offered a wonderful **third covenant**, the *covenant of grace.* This was given to Abraham, Moses, and David, and continued to be passed all the way down the line. With this third covenant, God provided redemption for His people through an incredibly gracious and loving gift. God condescended to send His only Son to earth as the perfect ransom for the elect. Jesus Christ is the mediator of this covenant. He is the final and sufficient sacrifice required by God for the salvation of those who have placed their faith in Him. This last covenant is actually directly related to the first covenant… it is just its final fulfillment. As Paul said in his letter to the Romans, all people, regardless of the time in which they live, are saved by faith, and faith alone. In covenant theology, the belief is that the people in the Old Testament looked *forward* to the Messiah "of promise" to save them. In some way, God gave each saved Old Testament saint at least some measure of knowledge of the coming Savior. Their faith in the coming Messiah was what provided their eternal salvation.

The undergirding principal of covenant theology is that God's central purpose is to provide salvation to His elect. This has been the plan of the Holy Trinity from eternity past. As it turned out, there would be only one way that salvation could be obtained. People can only be saved by God's grace. There is no other way. Although it is true that no one is saved by virtue of any of their own merit or works, everyone truly is still saved by works… the perfect works of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The intriguing point of this way of looking at God's plan for the ages is that all of the various covenants that God has made with Israel and the Church (e.g. Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, Davidic, and the New Covenant) are looked at as being out-workings of either the covenant of *works* or *grace*. The *covenant of works* really only applied to Adam. Once he sinned, God instituted His *covenant of grace*. All of the promises that God made from Abraham to Moses, to David and all the way to the New Covenant are all aspects of this covenant of grace. Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of all of these intermediate covenants of grace. Basically, everything in the Old Testament that happened after the "fall" was one aspect of this merciful covenant of grace. Therefore, this system of theology effectively simplifies biblical interpretation into two covenants… *works* and *grace*.

Since covenant theologians view virtually the entire Bible as the working out of the covenant of God's grace (at least since the fall of Adam), this greatly effects the way they view certain aspects of the Bible and its prophecy. Most covenant theologians have adopted the following views:

- There were many distinct and varied promises that God made to Abraham, Moses, David, Israel and the Church in various biblical covenants. Covenant theology attempts to make all of these distinct covenants of God as simply a progressive covenant of grace… that is, just one covenant. Not only that, but the Church generally is looked upon as an extension of Israel in this system of theology. Therefore, when the nation and people of Israel reject God, the Church inherits their promises.
- Covenant Theology rightly ***stresses the centrality of Jesus Christ and God's grace in our salvation.*** Dispensationalists suggest that many other important doctrines of the Bible are not dealt with properly when this method of interpretation is used. The concern is that by melding Israel, the Church and the many different covenants of the Bible, it becomes much more difficult to understand the varying relationships that God has had and will have in the future with His people. It is the dispensationalist view that nowhere in the Scriptures does God *explicitly* state that He has seeded all of His promises to Israel (His "chosen people") to His Bride, the Church. Each of these entities has had different relationships with God in the past, and many believe that they will have different future relationships. Yet, this is not what is typically taught in Covenant Theology.
- Covenant Theology combines the historical-grammatical method of Scripture interpretation with the allegorical method when dealing with prophecy. These theologians generally use the literal approach with most of the Scripture, but must interpret many of the promises God made to Israel in a spiritual sense. For example, it applies these promises to the Church as the "spiritual Israel" of this age. The nation of Israel apparently forfeited these promises after their disobedience, especially their rejection of Jesus.

It is worthwhile to take at least a brief look at the history of this system of theology. As it turns out, covenant theology is of fairly recent origin. Most books on this topic say that this system came into being around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although St. Augustine taught the outlines of what would become central elements in classic Reformed theology (incl. the covenant of works and the covenant of grace), Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531) may have been the first to develop a *detailed covenant theology* concept including the doctrine of the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. In fact, the great Reformed theologian Amandus Polanus considered Oecolampadius the first Reformed covenant theologian. (http://clark.wscal.edu/briefhistorycovtheol.php) Probably the two most important early contributors to its development as a *system of theology* were Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) and Herman Witsius (1636-1708). Many others contributed their ideas over the succeeding centuries as covenant theology developed into the system that it has become today. Although it was not even mentioned by the early leaders of the Reformation, such as Luther and Calvin, it soon became the system most commonly used by Reformed Churches to understand the Bible. Today, many people equate Reformed Theology to Covenant Theology… although they are not really the same thing. Simply put, Reformed Theology is that belief system that grew out of the Reformation. Often this product of the Reformation is said to be synonymous to Calvinism, which itself is identified by the "five points of Calvinism" (total depravity of man, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints). The point here is that covenant theology is not the same thing as Reformed Theology, but certainly is the system of understanding the Bible that is most often identified with it. Now let us take a look at a completely different system of theology, one that has become very popular among the preachers and teachers of the vast majority of evangelical churches of the past fifty years – dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism:

Dispensationalism is a relatively new method of biblical interpretation. As will be seen, the implications of following this system of theology leads to significantly different interpretation of end-times biblical prophecies when compared to the eschatological views that result from using the system of covenant theology. Before getting into those differences, a little history concerning dispensationalism is in order.

John Darby (1800-1882) is considered the founder of the classic tenants of dispensational theology. Later, his views were expounded in the classic Scofield Reference Bible. Men such as Lewis Chafer (founder of the Dallas Theological Seminary), John Walvoord and Charles Ryrie have added definition and refinement to this method of looking at God's dealings with mankind. Although, as can be seen, the defined system of dispensationalism came along about two hundred years ago, there have been references to "dispensations" since the early Church. Justin Martyr, Irenaus, and Clement of Alexandria are just three of many examples of early Church Fathers who wrote concerning this concept that they found within the Bible (the exact quotes demonstrating this aspect of their theology can be found in Ryrie's book, *Dispensationalism*).

Even so, there are some individuals who suggest that since this system of theology was developed and codified a couple of centuries after the introduction of covenant theology it must be of less value. Simply put, there is no validity in that suggestion. Each point of view must stand on its merits… not when it was introduced. Should we reject the idea that the earth is round since that concept was introduced relatively recently?

The word dispensation comes from the Greek word oikonomia, which means "stewardship". The basic concept is that God has divided up the entire existence of mankind into several different dispensations or stewardships. That is, although God never changes, He does relate to mankind in different ways depending on the time-period in question. God's *economy* varies over time and it is altered as we, His creation, approach the end-times. Our understanding of how God dealt with His people in the past is very important to our understanding of what is to come in the future. Let us take a closer look at some of the aspects of this method of understanding the Bible:

- A dispensation is defined as a period of time in which God deals with mankind in a particular way, often guided by a covenant (i.e. a very special agreement between God and man) made by God. The use of the word covenant here should not be confused with its use in *covenant theology*. God administers His world in a particular way in each different dispensation. The original *Schofield Reference Bible* stated that it was "**a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.**"
- Each different dispensation has its own unique features that are revealed by God. Ryrie notes that there are three distinguishing characteristics of a dispensation: a change in God's governmental relationship with man, a resultant change in man's responsibility, and a corresponding revelation to effect this change. There may be some similarities that run between dispensations.
- Many people define seven different dispensations: Pre-Fall, Conscience, Government, Patriarchal, Mosaic, Church, Millennial. A detailed explanation of these dispensations can be found in many books on the subject, but will not be offered in this treatise. There is no set number of dispensations that must be adhered to in this system. There may be things that are instituted in one dispensation that carry-over or are modified in the next. Some promises given in one dispensation may not be fulfilled until another.
- Dispensationalists use a ***literal approach*** to biblical interpretation.
- The ***glory of God*** is the basic underlying principle to understanding the Bible. This is a distinction from covenant theology which sees the underlying principle as the salvation of His elect (although they certainly give much credence to His glory as well).
- Dispensationalists take the view that a better understanding of the glory of God can be seen if God is viewed in the variety of ways that can be noted when looking at His dealings with mankind and His creation in the various different dispensations from eternity past. One frequent charge that covenant theologians bring against dispensationalists is that their dividing up the Bible into several dispensations destroys

the unity of God's Word. That is, the Bible ceases to be viewed as a whole. Dispensationalists respond by noting that the exercise of expounding about certain interesting biblical distinctions does not automatically destroy the overall unity of its message. In fact, by showing the various ways that God has chosen to deal with humanity over the millennia, His glory and power have become even more manifest. It would appear even Calvin agreed when he wrote, "God ought not to be considered changeable merely because He accommodated diverse forms to different ages, as He knew would be expedient to each….. If a householder instructs, rules and guides his children one way in infancy, another way in youth, and still another in young manhood, we shall not on this account call him fickle and say that he abandons his purpose. Why, then, do we brand God with the mark of inconsistency because He has with apt and fitting marks distinguished a diversity of times?" Or, why would one do the same injustice to the dispensationalist?

- There was some confusion in the past concerning the belief of dispensationalists concerning the absolute requirement of faith for salvation in Old Testament times. This was most likely an outgrowth of an ill-advised comment by Schofield in the first edition of his Reference Bible. However, he later made clear that he recognized that a person is saved only through faith. Today, the teaching of dispensationalists and covenant theology concerning the necessity for faith for salvation is essentially the same… with one interesting caveat: covenant theology has adopted the view that everyone that is saved is saved through *faith in Jesus Christ*. In some mysterious manner, they suggest, God has allowed all Old Testament saints at least some knowledge of the gospel message as carried out by Jesus. Because of this, these Old Testament saints came to believe in this gospel and were therefore saved. Of course, this would somehow have to be the mechanism that those people around the world who otherwise have had no chance to hear the gospel message in the typical fashion would have to be saved as well (for example, the classic example of an African tribesman in the isolated jungles of Africa). Dispensationalists take a different view. They also believe that all people are saved by faith and faith alone. They also believe that it is the blood of Jesus sacrificed for the elect on the cross which results in the salvation of all the saints. However, they believe that God judges their faith based on the information that He has provided them. This concept can be seen in the writings of Paul…

  For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--**his eternal power and divine nature**--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Romans 1:20

  God mentions that no one will have an excuse for a lack of faith. However, no mention is made in the above verse that they will have been told of Jesus. God gave the Old Testament people a clear outline of what they were to believe in and trust in for their salvation. No mention was made of His Son Jesus coming to earth, living a perfect life, and then sacrificing Himself on the cross for His elect… at least as far as can be

gleaned from the Bible. That is the reason that dispensationalists take the view that everyone is saved by faith… but, faith that is placed into whatever God has made clear to each particular individual. That varies depending on time and place. No one but God knows who is correct concerning this issue of where or to whom one must place their faith in order to be saved. However, everyone can be sure that God will do what is perfectly just and proper!

- Dispensationalists certainly recognize ***Israel as separate from the Church***. Charles Ryrie says that this is probably the most discriminating test as to whether a person is a dispensationalist. Although God is now dealing primarily with the Church, He is certainly not finished dealing with and blessing Israel; they are, in fact, His "chosen people." God will honor His covenants with Israel and their leaders of old (e.g. Abraham, Moses, David). This is a very major difference between Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism.

Other Systems of Theology:

The two major systems of theology in the world today have just been outlined in some detail. As one could easily imagine, these are not the only two. In the past twenty years, there has been an effort by some men to fine-tune their interpretation of dispensationalism. Their resulting system has generally been referred to as Progressive Dispensationalism. Three men seem to stand out primarily because they authored the first books on this modified view in the early 1990s: Robert Saucy, who wrote, *The Case For Progressive Dispensationalism*, and Dr. Craig Blaising and Dr. Darrell Bock who co-authored *Progressive Dispensationalism*. This view is really seemingly an attempt at combining some of the aspects of covenant theology and dispensational theology. It really does not do much to help in determining the best way to interpret end-times prophecy. It adds nothing to the question of whether Israel remains distinct from the Church in God's end-times plan. Therefore, the details of this system will not be discussed. For those who are intrigued by this idea the books mentioned above would be a fine resource as is the web site, http://www.endtimes.org/progressive_dispensationalism.html.

There is one other valuable contribution to this area of eschatology… it is called Historic Premillennialism. This will be discussed in some detail in a later portion of this section. Suffice it to say here, it is an end-times belief that combines covenant theological concepts with an actual Millennial Kingdom. As will become apparent, this is not the usual covenant position on the topic of the Millennium.

Summation:

The basic concepts of covenant and dispensational theology have now been stated. Both are reasonable methods of looking at God's interaction with His creation. Both have much to recommend them in the eyes of their adherents. They both hold tenants that honor God and the saving work of His Son, Jesus. Interestingly, looking at only the tenants as outlined above, it is not that difficult to accept both as being perfectly good methods of viewing the Bible. Covenant

theology is simply a broader view of God's intentions and plans for His creation. The Holy Trinity has from eternity past had every intention of bringing His elect into a saving relationship with Him through His Son. The history of the world and the Bible bring that into focus. One would think that the majority of dispensational theologians would agree with that conception, but, of course, they would break the Bible down a little further.

God obviously dealt differently with Adam and Eve before the fall than He did with Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness. God gave the Law to Moses and expected the Israelites to live by it. By the time that Paul was teaching, he was telling his disciples to make sure that they did not trust in the Mosaic Law, but rather to trust in the Law written on their hearts. God also has given modern educated mankind much more information about His Son than He gave to Job and to those living in that ancient time. This is the simple concept behind dispensationalism. It is difficult to argue with those facts, it would seem. Again, in regards to the fact that these two forms of theology simply divide up the Bible in different ways, should not lead anyone to value one more than the other.

However, difficulty and dissension between these two major views does exist and it lies in how some of their views are interpreted. Recall that the dispensationalist *attempts* to interpret all of the Bible literally. The traditional (or revised) dispensationalist believes that Israel in the Old Testament is the same as Israel in the New Testament and Israel in the end-times. Although the covenant theologian uses a strong literal hermeneutic (method of interpretation) for the majority of scripture, they do often tend to use more of an allegorical interpretation when it comes to verses relating to eschatology. As we shall see a little later, to the covenant theologian Israel does not always mean the nation and people of Israel. In fact, the Church becomes the New Testament Israel. The people who believe this are bright, committed Christians and the reasons for their conclusion on this topic are accepted by millions. Therefore, these two views (on Israel and the Church) and the reasons behind them will be presented later and the reader can decide which makes more sense to them.

As a little aside, it is not *required* that the classic view concerning Israel be taken in order to divide the Bible into dispensations… it is just that the traditional form of dispensationalism has always done so. If an individual had all of the same ideas as a typical dispensationalist, with the exception being that they felt that the Church had assumed most of the promises and covenants God made to Old Testament Israel, they would still technically be a dispensationalist. This would be just another form of that general category. Actually, it is interesting and worthwhile exercise for any person to contemplate the system of theology that he/she believes is the best given their thoughtful interpretation of the Holy Bible.

Before getting to a discussion on Israel and the Church, another important topic will be broached that specifically addresses eschatology. That relates to the Millennial Kingdom. There are quite a variety of interpretations concerning this well known topic. In today's world, the majority of those asked would probably say that The Millennium will be a thousand year reign on earth by Jesus Christ after a seven year Tribulation. This is because so much has been written about this in recent decades and many popular movies have been made with this same viewpoint.

It is interesting to note, however, that this is not the most widely held view by the Church… even in our world today. It certainly will be of value to see just what the other ideas are on this Kingdom and why they are held.

Major Views of Prophetic Interpretation:

Now that the two most prominent systems of general interpretation of the Bible have been reviewed, the four main methods of prophetic interpretation will be presented. In particular, the following viewpoints concern methods of interpreting John's The Revelation of Jesus Christ and other end-time prophetic passages:

- **Futurist View:** The apostolic Church and most prophecy teachers today use this approach to interpreting Biblical prophecy. Simply put, the futurists believe that the prophetic books of Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation, etc., primarily reference events that will be fulfilled in the *future*. These events include the restoration of the nation of Israel, the Rapture of the Church, the Great Tribulation, and the return of Jesus Christ to set up His Millennial Kingdom on earth. This view of prophecy was generally taught until the allegorical method of Biblical interpretation gained pre-eminence in the Catholic Church during the 4th and 5th centuries. In other words, when the literal approach to interpretation waned, the futurist view of end-time events also was replaced. Certainly this was no coincidence as a literal interpretation of the Scriptures will lead directly to the futurist view. This futurist view will be the view that will be taken in this treatise when interpreting end-time prophecies.

  There also exists one additional futurist interpretive view that does not recognize a major distinction between Israel and the Church. This futurist view is held by historic premillennialists. More will be mentioned about this view a little later in this section.

- **The Idealist View:** In this approach, the visions and prophecies of The Revelation are interpreted as symbolic and allegorical. None of the detailed predictions given to John by Jesus are actually expected to come true in reality. They are interpreted symbolically to predict the coming war between good and evil where good will ultimately triumph.

- **The Historical View:** The people who have adopted this approach to prophecy believe that the events noted in The Revelation transpire over the entire Church Age. These prophetic Scriptures unfold history from the time of Christ's first coming until the end-times. Each chapter was viewed as a foretelling of an event or series of events that would take place in the centuries following John's writing of his vision. For example, many viewed the 6th and 7th Chapters as predicting accurately the sacking of the Roman Empire by the Barbarians. The fifth seal was seen as predictive of the rise of Islam… and the list goes on and on. It is quite amazing to read how essentially each verse or comment in The Revelation is equated with a particular historical person or event. The most controversial

interpretation was that of the 13th Chapter. Here the Beast was declared to be the Roman papacy. Yes, some future Pope was viewed by most Historists to be the coming Antichrist.

Most of the reformers used this approach to Biblical interpretation. These included John Wycliffe, John Knox, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Isaac Newton, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, and Matthew Henry. This is an amazing list of great theologians, not easily dismissed. However, this approach has largely been abandoned over the last 150 years.

This interpretive method has many inherent weaknesses. The major problem is that it is simply far too easy for different commentators to assign different meanings to the various symbols given in the book. If fifty different theologians with this viewpoint were each asked to independently write a commentary on The Revelation using the historical method of interpretation, there would be fifty different commentaries of the end-times. Let me list a few other problems:

i) If it were true that everything in this book should be looked at through the historical perspective, there would be virtually no value in this vision for the seven churches discussed in the Chapters 2 and 3… and this book was originally written to these churches.

ii) It is not surprising but true that down through history those using this method have always tended to see history culminating in their time! For example, Luther is said to have identified the "beast" with the Pope of his time. On the other hand, not to be outdone, the Catholic Church stated that Martin Luther was the "beast".

iii) Most of those in the early years that adopted this view believed that the 1260 days noted in Daniel and Revelation were to be looked at as 1260 *years*. They said that human history would come to a conclusion 1260 years after the rise of Papal Rome – which they stated occurred in approximately A.D. 666. Some of the early Reformation writers were adherents to this viewpoint. The whole idea really began to fade after the 1260 years came and went (666 + 1260= 1926) without the onset of the Great Tribulation.

In conclusion, the historical view is no longer a viable method to use in the interpretation of end-times prophecy, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, in particular.

- **The Preterist View:** Those that hold to this view of prophecy believe that most all of biblical prophecy has been fulfilled in the past. The word comes from the Latin term "praeteritus" which means "past". In particular, the preterists state that the apocalyptic visions of John in The Revelation of Jesus Christ virtually all came true in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was defeated and burned by the Roman army. R.C. Sproul, a very respected theologian based in Orlando, is a preterist himself. He points out that there are two major divisions within this belief system: **radical** and **moderate**. Those holding the radical view believe that *every* end-time prophecy mentioned in the Bible has already been

fulfilled. The moderate preterist, such as Sproul, believes that there are still some important prophecies to be fulfilled in the future. For example, he believes that Jesus will come again one day and that there will be a future bodily resurrection of the saints. The moderate preterist does still believe that most of the end-time prophecies in the Bible came to fruition in A.D. 70. Very few people espouse the radical belief so that will not be discussed here. However, there are a reasonable number of theologians who hold to the moderate preterist viewpoint. Therefore, some effort will be spent to gain a basic understanding of it. Let us take a look at some important issues:

- Those moderate preterists that look at the prophecies of Jesus in His Olivet Discourse and The Revelation admit that they mix their interpretation of these Scriptures between the literal and allegorical approach to suit their needs. Sproul states that "we can interpret the time-frame references literally and the events surrounding the parousia (coming of Christ) figuratively." For example, they do not think that Christ came bodily in A.D. 70 even though Jesus clearly stated that He would come and be clearly seen:

  "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. Matt 24:30

  Certainly it is convenient to be able to mix and match various portions of prophecy, but it may not be appropriate to do so. Even so, preterists still have quite a bit of difficulty matching all of the prophetic passages in The Revelation with the historical events that took place in Israel and the world in A.D. 70. For example, passages relating to the "abomination of desolation" are quite perplexing to them… as are the incredible signs in the heavens described in John's vision of the Apocalypse. Why? In A.D. 70, there really were no events or heavenly signs to match all those that were reported in the vision given to the apostle, John. Yet, that was when most of what was described in The Revelation supposedly took place.
- Virtually none of the signs that Jesus said would appear prior to His Second Coming came to pass during the time period of A.D. 70. (a reading of Matthew 24 will show this very clearly). Not only that, but other prophetic passages, such as Zechariah 12-14 cannot be explained by the preterist viewpoint. It is clear from many different biblical authors that there will be a time in the future when Israel repents and returns to a love of God and the Messiah. For example, Ezekiel goes into this in great detail. These things certainly did not occur in A.D. 70. In fact, Jesus said that He would not come again until Israel repented and turned back to Him… For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' " Matt 23:39 It was clear that Jesus was talking to Jews when He made that statement. The Jews had certainly not turned to recognize, accept, and worship Jesus by A.D. 70.
- Pretersists such as Sproul adhere to the covenant philosophy of biblical interpretation. Therefore, all of the promises given to Israel through the covenants of God in the Old

Testament are not expected to be fulfilled to the actual people and nation of Israel. In their view, there will be no coming of the Messiah to reign over Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

- Those holding this position either are postmillennialists are amillennialist – these two terms will be discussed in the next section.
- Their interpretation of Revelation 20 leads them to conclude that Satan is currently bound. That would seem to present a problem as one looks at many New Testament verses that point out just how dangerous Satan is today. Here are just three examples:
  1. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as **a roaring lion, wanders about seeking whom he may devour**" (1 Peter 5:8).
  2. Paul speaks of the "prince of the power of the air, the **spirit that now works in the children of disobedience**" (Ephesians 2:2).
  3. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the **rulers of the darkness of this age**, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph 6:12)
  4. These three verses certainly do not sound like the devil has been bound up by God. There are many similar verses as well.
- Preterists hold that the Tribulation took place as Jesus came to judge Israel for their unbelief and apostasy with a time of tribulation that led right up to the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. For preterists, the Jews are the true enemies of Christ and their overthrow by the Roman army, sent by Christ as judgment over Israel, is the triumph of Christ over Antichrist. In fact, Christ came (spiritually) to exact judgment, fulfilling His promise "to come quickly." Somehow this included the battle of Armageddon. Some preterists believe that Nero was the Antichrist, even though he committed *suicide* a few years prior to the destruction of the Temple (he died on 9 June A.D. 68). That Roman conquest supposedly concluded God's dealings with Israel, as He then turned His attention to His newly developed Church… the successor to Israel with respect to God's Old Testament covenant promises. Preterists David Chilton and Gary DeMar both agree that the restoration of Israel and its Temple are not in God's plans. After their rejection of Jesus, they have been judged and their time as God's "chosen people" has come to an inglorious end. It is just an odd coincidence that the nation of Israel came back into existence in 1948 after over 2500 years! Not only that, but as will be shown in the next section, detailed architectural plans for the third Temple are ready to be implemented in a moment's notice!
- The single biggest problem for preterists does seem to be an essentially insurmountable one. If The Revelation was written by John the Apostle after A.D. 70, this system of theology cannot be true. As it turns out, the evidence is powerful that John's apocalyptic vision of The Revelation was written in approximately A.D. 96! Preterists believe that John wrote this book sometime in the mid 60s A.D.

So why is it true that if this book was written at the later date, the preterist view falls flat? If John received his vision *after* the destruction of Jerusalem, it is ridiculous to assume that the book concerns itself with *prophecies* of the fall of that city. Yet, the preterists claim just that. Therefore, even the most ardent preterist will admit that if John wrote The Revelation in the A.D. 90s, their theory is wrong. So what is the evidence of this later date of writing?

a) Every Christian historical writer up until A.D. 550 reported that John wrote The Revelation in ~A.D. 96. Iranaeus (A.D. 120-202), a student of Polycarp, who was a close disciple of John, wrote that John received his vision during the reign of Domitian. Probably the greatest early church historian, Eusebius, in his *History of the Church,* also wrote that John was banished to Patmos during Domitian's reign where he wrote The Revelation. Clement of Alexandria also wrote that John received his vision while on Patmos "after the death of the tyrant". Some preterists suggest that this mention of a tyrant points to Nero. However, there is no doubt that Domitian was just as much a tyrant as Nero. Importantly, this same passage by Clement says that John was very old and infirmed while on Patmos. John was indeed very old by A.D. 96. During the time of Nero, John was probably only in his mid-50s. Several other Christian writers in the first three centuries of the Church also wrote that John received his famous vision during the A.D. 90s. On the other hand, it was not until A.D. 550 that even one line showed up, in a Syriac translation of the Bible, suggesting that The Revelation was written during the time of Nero.

b) An intriguing extra-biblical source that pin-points The Revelation to the time of Domitian is found in the writings of Daniel Whitby who commented on his studies of old Roman records of the martyrs. He mentioned a man named Antipas who is also mentioned as a martyred, faithful witness in John's Revelation (Rev 2:13). *Antipas suffered martyrdom during the reign of Domitian*. John simply had to have received his vision during that reign (or later) given that fact! This is extremely potent evidence for the later date.

c) Important internal evidence for a writing in A.D. 95/96 is found when one looks at the description of the seven churches in the early chapters of this book. The things Jesus stated about these churches makes little sense if they were written only ten to fifteen years after their origin. For example, Paul never wrote anything about the church at Smyrna in all of his epistles. It apparently came into existence *after* Paul's death in the late A.D. 60s. Yet, this was one of the churches mentioned in The Revelation. Paul had written two letters to his protégé, Timothy, in the early to mid A.D. 60s as well. Timothy had been assigned by Paul to be the pastor of that great early church in Ephesus. At the time of these epistles, there was no mention of the Ephesians "forsaking their first love" or having fallen from a previous great height of faithfulness in Christ.

In fact, these comments that are seen in The Revelation strongly suggest that this church had been in existence for decades, long since the time when Paul was writing to Timothy.

The church at Laodicea was reprimanded in The Revelation for being *lukewarm*. They were also noted to be a very wealthy church. Yet, the city of Laodicea was ***virtually totally destroyed*** by an earthquake in A.D. 60. There was no way that this city, and hence their church, was rebuilt into a wealthy city in just a few years. Yet, this would have had to have been the case for John to have written about it in the A.D. mid-60s (John wrote about it as being a wealthy church and already having had the time to grow in Christ and then, ultimately, turn lukewarm toward Jesus). All of that had to take more than 4-5 years! For all of these reasons, and more not discussed here, the evidence very strongly is for John's writing The Revelation in A.D. 95/96.

- There is one verse in Matthew 24 that preterists refer to more than others to back their position. This verse is… "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. . Matt 24:34 They say that Jesus was saying that He was going to come again before the generation of people that he was talking to at that time had passed away. They conclude that Jesus must have meant that He would return to earth in A.D. 70. Let us examine this verse in some detail. Importantly, as all should know, the Bible must not be taken out of context. So let us add some context to these verses… Let's see what Jesus said leading up to this statement. First of all, his disciples had come to Him and asked Jesus to tell them the signs of the end-times and His coming again. Jesus listed many of these signs. Here are but a few:

7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand-- If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. "Immediately after the distress of those days "'**the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.**' "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. **They will see the Son of Man**

coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. **And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.** "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. ***I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.*** Matt 24:7-34

So, here is the question to ponder. Please read the verses above carefully. How many of these things occurred at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70? The answer is "zero". Of course, allegorizing these words of Jesus apparently do allow some to suggest otherwise. For example, the preterist states that Jesus came back surreptitiously, in the clouds, for His saints in A.D. 70. Then he took them back up to heaven where they are presently… living in His heavenly kingdom since that time. That is why no one on earth noticed at that time. Where was the loud trumpet sound? How about the angels? How about the fact that the verse clearly states that the Son of Man will be seen coming in great glory and power? On the other hand, a literal approach to the interpretation of the words of Jesus in this Olivet Sermon cannot even come close to suggesting that this, or any, of the incredible events mentioned took place at that time in history. Therefore, most theologians believe that Jesus could not have meant that His amazing prophecy was going to be fulfilled back there in the first century. The obvious answer is that Jesus was referring to another particular generation of people… those who would actually see these amazing events unfold. Yes, *that generation* would not pass away until all of those things had come to pass… including His appearing in the clouds.

Let us not forget that R.C. Sproul is a very intelligent and sincere Christian man. Therefore, he must have some well thought our reasons for thinking the way he does on this topic. Here are a few of his thoughts that he mentions while lecturing on this topic of partial preterism:

1. The theologian, Clement, said that all prophetic scripture was written by the time of Nero. In other words, this is one written statement that may suggest that The Revelation was written in the time of Nero. Of course, there are many written statements that say otherwise… several noted just a little earlier.
2. Sproul noted that there are many allusions to Jewish Temple in The Revelation. Therefore, he believes that John would have mentioned the fact that the Temple had been razed twenty-five years earlier. Since he did not, John must have written the book before A.D. 70. There are plenty who disagree with that conclusion. Many simply respond that John was simply writing down what he was seeing in his vision. He was not concerned with what had happened twenty-five years earlier.

3. There are several verses in The Revelation that state that the events noted in the vision will come quickly onto the world scene. (e.g. Rev 1:1-3: 22:20) The fact is that much of the New Testament speaks to the fact that the Second Coming of Jesus is imminent… it has always been theoretically possible that Jesus could return at any time. Sproul suggests that Jesus said these things because He had every intention of returning within only forty years… i.e. "quickly." However, it makes good common sense that God would want every man and woman of every generation to be watching expectantly for His coming. We must also remember that when God uses the word "quickly" it may very well be related to His timing, not ours.
4. It is also important to remember that Sproul does leave room for many of the prophecies of Jesus and The Revelation to be fulfilled in the future. The details of these events are not made clear.

Conclusion:

The futurist method of biblical prophetic interpretation will be used throughout the last two sections of this book. Although it is true that each of the four methods of prophetic interpretation mentioned above have their proponents, it is my belief that the literal, futurist approach will prove to be the best. Before proceeding to the next section, various views of important end-time concepts will be presented. The topics to be discussed are: the Millennial Kingdom, the relationship of Israel to the Church, the Tribulation, the Rapture, and the Second Coming. The first to be presented will be the three conceptions of the Millennial Kingdom.

The Millennial Kingdom:

All throughout the Holy Bible, God gives people the hope of a future kingdom that will be ruled by the beneficent Messiah. This future hope is noted by virtually all of the Old Testament prophets, many of the apostles and even the Messiah, Himself… Jesus. The people of Israel were looking ahead to the day that their Messiah would come and usher in a wonderful new Messianic Kingdom on earth. Isaiah and Ezekiel wrote extensively on this topic as they described the wonders of this time and place. The Messiah did indeed come. Upon His First Advent, Jesus did bring in a new kingdom. However, it was not the type that the Old Testament saints had come to expect. He spoke to the Pharisees about a kingdom that would be within the believer. He also spoke frequently of another type of kingdom… one that would be material and in the future. That one sounded much more like the kingdom described to the prophets of old. The book of The Revelation also seemingly points to a future one thousand year Messianic Kingdom… if taken literally. However, there still is a mystery surrounding the exact nature and timing of this future kingdom. There is certainly a difference of opinion on just when this kingdom will appear and what it will be like. God has left room for a difference of opinion on the interpretation of many of the eschatological verses (as will become apparent below). Over the centuries, there have been three major theories concerning the timing and characteristics of

the "Millennial Kingdom". These three concepts shall be described below. Three aspects of each interpretation of the "kingdom" will be developed as follows:

- A listing of the basic concepts of each kingdom idea will be presented.
- The reasons why that view has been accepted by some will be given.
- A few of the main objections that others have to that particular conception of the kingdom will also be pointed out.

The first concept of the Millennial Kingdom that will be presented here is the most prevalent in Christendom today and has been since the time of St. Augustine. It is called amillennialism.

Amillennialism:

The viewpoint of the Millennial Kingdom that is shared by more people than any other is referred to as amillennialism. It became so prevalent primarily because it got its start almost two thousand years ago by the stalwarts of the early Church, Origen and Augustine. As you recall from the discussion earlier on covenant theology, these two theologians were greatly influenced by the Greek philosophers and, because of that philosophy, they thought of the physical world as something evil. That made the idea of an earthly Kingdom of God less tenable and led to their conception of a spiritual Kingdom. This idea gained a great foothold in the Roman Catholic Church as Augustine contributed greatly to their early theology. This amillennial conception of the Kingdom is also still held by many in the Greek Orthodox Church and even many in mainline Protestant Churches. Prior to Origen's and Augustine's influence, the premillennial view (to be discussed later) of the Kingdom was the view held by virtually all of Christendom. So what is this amillennial view?

Augustine believed that the millennial reign of Jesus began at His first coming. In his famous book, *The City of God*, he taught that the Church was, in fact, the Messianic Kingdom. He taught that the Millennial Age would end in A.D. 650 with the arrival of Jesus… of course, Jesus did not come back at that time. Since the Kingdom will not end until Jesus does return, one might assume that Augustine would say that we are still living in the Kingdom now.

This view has been passed down through the ages… the reformers basically just accepted the Roman Catholic view concerning prophecy as they were so much more concerned with spreading the message of sola fide (the doctrine of justification by faith and faith alone). Eschatology certainly was not as important to them… as was proper. Those who came to accept covenant theology as their best system to understand the Bible also found that the amillennial view of the Kingdom was very compatible to that belief system. As already noted, the system of covenant theology and the eschatological view of amillennialism are both held my more Christians than any other single system of theology. That does not mean that either are the best, but it does mean that they are worthy of consideration.

Remember that the whole idea behind amillennialism is that Christ's Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom. John Walvoord, a well respected prophecy scholar, defines amillennialism:

"Satan is conceived as being bound at the first coming of Christ. The present age between the first and second comings is the fulfillment of the millennium. There will be no more millennium than there is now,……the eternal state immediately follows the second coming of Christ." (*The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 6)

Among those with this viewpoint, there are two sub-groups. In the first group are those who think that Jesus is reigning over His saints in heaven at this time and ever since He became the first-fruits of salvation after His ascension. This is the view held by Kim Riddlebarger who wrote a fine book on this subject, *A Case for Amillennialism*. He refers to this as Reformed or Realized Amillennialism. There is no Kingdom here upon this earth. Those with this belief rely heavily upon the allegorization of the Scriptures as there are so many biblical passages where a literal interpretation suggests that the Kingdom will be here on earth. However, many people who hold to the amillennial view actually do believe that this *spiritual* kingdom is currently here on earth. Adherents of both of these concepts do not believe that there will be a future time when Christ actually comes back to earth to live and reign. The future reign with Christ described in Revelation 20 is considered to be ruling with Christ in heaven and not on earth.

There are certain basic components that further define amillennialism that will now be listed and briefly explained:

- **Jesus fulfilled the New Covenant during His first coming and now reigns on the *Throne of David* in heaven. He is also the fulfillment of all of God's other Old Testament promises.**
- There will be no Rapture as a unique event. Instead, this catching away of believers into the air will be one aspect of the resurrection of all of the saints at the end of the age. The living saints will join with those already dead to receive their glorified bodies. Christ will then usher His "Bride" into the New Heavens and New Earth where they shall live with Him for all eternity. Amillennialists believe that "Christ returns at the end of the tribulation period, which is understood to be the entire Church Age." (*A Case for Amillennialism*, Riddlebarger, p. 21) Given this view of the Millennium and the Tribulation, all those biblical verses that others believe refer to the seven year Tribulation (also known as the *seventieth week* of Daniel) and those that may suggest a literal thousand year earthly kingdom, must be interpreted in a markedly different manner by the amillennialist.
- The view taken of Daniel's *seventy weeks* prophecy is certainly unique. As will be explained later, the premillennialists have a very detailed exegesis of this intriguing prophesy that includes a "skip-period" between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. This "skip period", they say, is the Church Age. The amillennial view is quite different. Interestingly, Daniel 9: 27 (***He*** will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' ***he*** will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] ***he*** will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on ***him***". Dan 9:27) is looked at as referencing the Messiah in this view (the

premillennial interpretation says this verse refers to the Antichrist). Amillennialists say that *the seventieth week concludes near the onset of the Church Age*, not long after the death of Christ. They say that "the termination of the '70 sevens' of Daniel coincides ……. with His [Jesus'] first advent." (ibid p. 155) Finally, **the final 3 ½ years** (i.e. after the sacrifice and offering) that is spoken of by Daniel in verse 27, "as interpreted by John **is symbolic of the church on earth during the entire time of its existence.**" (ibid p. 156) I totally understand that this may well be confusing to the reader. It is confusing. The gist of it is that, according to Riddlebarger, Jesus is the individual being referenced in this 27th verse of Daniel. Riddlebarger states that Jesus is confirming a covenant with humanity… the "covenant of grace which God had previously made with Abraham and now was confirmed by the Messiah on behalf of many." (ibid p. 155) There is just so much symbolism and odd interpretation of the numbers that are mentioned in this section of Daniel. This whole interpretation of Daniel 9:27 is a very good example of the allegorization of the Scriptures by amillennialists. For example, why should one believe that the final 3 ½ years mentioned above "*is symbolic of the church on the earth during the entire time of its existence*?" That surely seems a stretch to many others reading this passage. It is really an interesting experience to read how Riddlebarger saw Jesus in one portion of the remaining verses of Daniel 9:27 And on a wing [of the temple] ***he*** **[Jesus]** will set up an abomination that causes desolation. Riddlebarger says, "Once Christ ratified God's covenant on Calvary, the sacrifices which continued in the temple were an abomination to God." (ibid, p. 156) That is a direct quote from this amillennialist. However, take a look at the actual verse. It is not easy to see why Jesus would set up an abomination that causes desolation on a wing of the Temple! However, if the verse refers to Jesus, that is what it is saying. Maybe this verse does refer to the Antichrist after-all. That idea makes much more sense to many prophecy scholars today.

- Whereas the pre and postmillennialist look to the Millennial Kingdom as a glorious time of peace and harmony with Christ reigning over His creation (for the postmillennialist, Christ will be living in the hearts of the saints), the amillennialist look at it as the current time in which we live. Riddlebarger notes, "this period is marked by conflict, martyrdom, and revolt against God." (ibid, p. 207)
- The Kingdom of God began upon Jesus' First Advent and will continue until His Second Coming. This is what is meant by the Millennial Age or Kingdom. This interpretation requires taking most of The Revelation as an allegory as the use of a literal interpretation will not lead to this conclusion. Chapter 20 of John's vision is viewed as taking place in the present age, not a future time. Take a look at a few of these verses and it becomes obvious why an allegorical interpretation is necessary to view the Millennium as anything other than one thousand years. The reasoning behind their beliefs on this chapter is briefly noted. A little commentary is offered as well.

  And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. **He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil,**

or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. Rev 20:1-3

Riddlebarger notes that amillenarians generally agree that "the thousand years [is] a symbolic number, spanning the entire "church age." (ibid p. 210) Regarding the binding of Satan, he notes that Satan "cannot deceive God's people *en masse nor* can he attack the covenant community with relative impunity as he did before the Messiah came." (ibid p. 211) Satan, they say, was bound by Christ at His First Advent. This binding "simply means that Satan cannot deceive the nations until he is released at the end of the millennial age." (ibid p. 210) He is still allowed to create some havoc on the earth, but he is not allowed to keep the Holy Spirit from convicting some people to come to Christ. So in that way, he is bound as well.

It is not difficult to see the problem that premillennialists have with this interpretation. Of course, anyone can say that one thousand years does not mean one thousand years, but, there is no reason to think that this is one of the rare instances in the Bible where God did not mean what He said when He spoke of a number. It is quite obvious that a millennium is 1,000 years in length. The only way of getting around this is to call upon more allegory in one's interpretation of the Bible. This is not a problem of consequence for those adhering to the amillennial viewpoint. The millennium is just a figure of speech, they say. It should be looked upon as just a very long period of time. The evidence for this position? None. However, it should be pointed out that when numbers are used elsewhere in the Bible (whether being used in prophecy or not), they are interpreted in the normal manner. Seven means seven, twelve means twelve, and so forth. In some cases, God may choose the number to have a secondary significance, but it still has its primary meaning as well. For example, when God uses the number forty as He did when describing the wandering in the wilderness, He has at least two reasons for doing so. Number one, the Israelites did indeed wander for forty years in the wilderness. Secondly, He probably chose this number of years (as opposed to 41 or 39, for example) partly because it has another meaning – it is often thought of as the number of *probation or trial*. Twelve is a number long associated with *governmental perfection.* We see that there were twelve disciples and twelve sons of Jacob. The important point here is that these numbers still related to the actual number of disciples and sons. If God had another reason to make the Millennial Kingdom 1,000 years, so be it… there is still no reason to believe that it was anything other than 1,000 years in length.

As for the binding of Satan, more evidence will be given a little later to show that to view Satan as being bound in the age in which we live is extremely difficult to square with the reality of everyday life and the Bible itself.

The interpretation of Rev. 20:4-7 is also quite interesting for the amillennialist. Let us take a look. Since the amillennialist believes that we are now all living in the

Millennial Kingdom (now it is of almost two thousand years duration), they must interpret these verses as saying that the *first resurrection* is strictly spiritual. This is because in their view it has already happened to those saints who are now reigning with Christ in heaven. Those Christians that die now will be raised to reign with Christ, *spiritually*, at this time. Only the second resurrection, in their opinion, when Jesus comes again, will be a physical resurrection.

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And **I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus** **[**These would have to be souls of martyred Christians living since the onset of Church Age as the amillennialist believe that this entire age in considered the millennium] and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. ["By 'those who had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark' John means all Christians who had remained true to Christ and had *resisted anti-Christian powers* — all Christians, in other words, who had remained faithful to the end"].
(Hoekema, http://www.the-highway.com/amila_Hoekema.html#Rev_20:1-6)
They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. **5** (**The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended**.) **This is the first resurrection**. **6** Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. **When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison.** Rev 20:4-7

So here the amillennial adherent states that this first resurrection "must be an event occurring prior to the return of Christ when the bodily resurrection takes place at the end of the age. (ibid, p. 217) Of course, they also note that the word used for resurrection (anastasis) "appears forty-one times in the New Testament in reference to **physical resurrection**." (ibid p. 217). It is difficult to understand why this does not bother them. Note also that they look at the beast as being representative of "anti-Christian powers."

There is little doubt that the premillennial view is a more literal and straightforward interpretation of this portion of Scripture. Let us take a brief look at how they interpret Rev 20:4-7. Note that in these verses the souls of the martyrs were seen before the Millennium. Of course, as they were Christian martyrs, their souls would have been alive and well since their death, living in heaven, awaiting the donning of their glorified bodies. There really does not seem to be any other way of looking at these verses… correctly. Then, John sees these souls given their glorified bodies… they are brought "to life" to reign with Christ. For how long? For the full one thousand years! However, verse 5 goes on to say that those who were not saved would remain in the

ground for another one thousand years. Then God would deal with them… and they would face the second death as noted in the very next verse. This second death would come after the second resurrection that will come at the conclusion of the one thousand years. Those that have not turned to Christ in faith will be raised to face the Great White Throne Judgment… and then face an eternity in hell.

One other very important point is that the Greek words "came to life" that are used for both resurrections are the same words and their meaning is always used in The Revelation to mean a physical resurrection (they are used frequently in this book). Even one more obvious point should be noted… take a close look at the first portion of Rev. 20:4. John says that he saw the *souls* of the Christian martyrs in heaven – before the thousand years began. Then, he saw these souls "come to life" and then commence to live, bodily, with Christ, and reign for the next thousand years. These Christians were already in heaven as souls when John first saw them… therefore, they must have received their glorified bodies at the time mentioned in Rev 20:4… just prior to the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. They certainly did not need to get an extra soul.

Therefore, both resurrections alluded to will be physical. One resurrection will be at the *onset* of the one thousand years and the other at the *conclusion*. Even the amillennial folks agree that the final resurrection will be physical.

Frankly, these verses lend themselves very nicely to a literal interpretation. It all comes together very well. In the amillennial view, all sorts of contortions have been undertaken when the 20th Chapter of The Revelation is addressed. It is still possible that those with this view are correct, but it really is difficult to understand in a neat, straightforward way. It really makes a lot of sense that when John wrote one thousand years here in the 20th Chapter, he meant one thousand years. That certainly is the most straightforward position.

Much more could be said about the amillennialists view of the fifteen verses of the twentieth chapter of Revelation. It is intriguing to note that Kim Riddlebarger spent twenty pages defending his position on this chapter. Wow! For those reading this book who would like to see an incredibly complex exegesis of this chapter, defending the amillennial position, Riddlebarger's book does just that.

- Those with this view believe that the chapters and events in The Revelation should not be looked at as taking place in a chronological order. A few of these visions run parallel to one another. For example, that is why the amillennialist believes that Chapter 20 is a recapitulation of Chapter 19. Specifically, as an example, Rev. 19:11-21 is a description of the same war as Rev. 20:7-10. In contrast, the premillennialists believe that the war of Chapter 19 is Armageddon and the war in Chapter 20 is the war that comes at the conclusion of the Millennial Kingdom… 1000 years later.
- When Jesus comes again, it will not be to set up His Kingdom (as it is already a reality now). His Second Coming (and this will be only one event, not two) will be to usher in the New Heavens and New Earth and to judge all of mankind.

- There is a spiritual resurrection that is now taking place for those believers who have already passed into heaven. At the end of the Millennium (in which we currently live), Jesus will come again and there will be a physical resurrection of all believers.
- The covenants and promises that were made by God to Israel, Abraham, David, and others in the Old Testament are fulfilled by Jesus Christ and His New Testament Church during this current "Millennial Age". As will be recalled, this is also the view taken by those who adhere to covenant theology. In fact, those who hold the amillennial view of the Kingdom virtually always accept the tenants of covenant theology. On the other hand, there are some who accept covenant theology yet believe that there will be an actual Millennial Kingdom on earth (Historic Premillennialists). More will be written about all of this and how it aligns with Scripture a little later on in this book.
- The world will continue its downward spiral, spiritually, and finally eventuate in the coming of the Lord. The world has been going through the Tribulation since Christ defeated Satan at the cross and will continue until Christ comes and defeats the Antichrist at His Second Coming. Good and evil will co-exist in the time between Pentecost and the Second Coming of Christ.
- Most with this view believe that Christians will go through a more significant time of tribulation just before the end of this age (i.e. this "allegorical millennium") which will come just before Jesus returns to earth. Satan will be released. There will be a great apostasy. This more difficult time may well not last for seven years… that number may be just symbolic. Then, Jesus will come back.
- The Second Coming will be one event. The Rapture of the saints will be at that time. They will go up to meet Christ in the air, turn around, and then continue on back to earth with Him. This will be when the judgments will take place for the saved and the damned. God will then usher in the final, eternal heaven and earth.

That pretty much sums up the position of the amillennial proponents. They have a well thought out and reasonably well defended set of beliefs. Of course, the important question is whether this method of interpretation is correct. Recall that it is the most commonly held view of the Millennium. That means that many excellent Bible scholars accept it. Of course, there were brilliant men and women that were convinced that the earth was flat and was the center of the universe! The most popular view is certainly not always the correct view. However, it does suggest that it is a reasonable viewpoint to hold.

As already noted, it is always somewhat more suspect when a biblical argument relies on a mixture of literal and allegorical interpretation, as this position does. When this is done, it is obviously easier to adjust one's interpretation of eschatological verses to support the outcome the individual wants to achieve. As a matter of fact, this tendency has resulted in many more than one way of looking at the various verses of The Revelation by those in the amillennial "camp" over the centuries. John Walvoord wrote that he had "personally examined some fifty historical interpretations of Revelation, all of which would be rejected by any intelligent person today."

(The Millennial Kingdom, p. 73) That is a clear example of the problem with this view of prophecy… God's prophetic word can mean many different things to different people at different times.

It should be pointed out that many amillennialists counter with the argument that even dispensationalists interpret some verses of end-time prophecy allegorically. This is certainly true. However, as alluded to in the early portion of this section, those using a literal (i.e. grammatical-historical) method of interpretation attempt to interpret ***every*** verse literally if reasonably possible. Only when it becomes quite obvious that a verse is not meant to be looked at literally, will a symbolic interpretation be used. Of course, there will be some room for argument regarding some Bible verses. However, in most cases, it is not that difficult to decide which verse should be taken literally and which is obviously meant to be taken metaphorically.

Before moving on to the next millennial view, let us take a closer look at the issue brought up a little earlier concerning the binding of Satan noted clearly in the twentieth chapter of The Revelation. It appears to be incorrect to most observers of the world to say that Satan has been bound for these last two thousand years – since the resurrection of Jesus and the beginning of the Church Age. Certainly, that concept would be a surprise to the apostles. One must not forget that Ananias was influenced by Satan to the point that it resulted in his death (Acts 5:3). Paul notes in his letter to the Romans that… The God of peace will *soon* crush Satan under your feet. Romans 16:20 Yet, this letter was written over twenty years after the victory of Christ over Satan at the cross and Paul was telling these Romans that Satan would be defeated at a future time. Paul also pointed out to the Ephesians that the ruler of the air in their day was still Satan…

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the **ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Eph 2:1-3

Paul also warned Timothy about the power of Satan even in future times…

The Spirit clearly says that **in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.** 1 Tim 4:1

Paul continued in his next letter to Timothy to teach his congregation about the traps of Satan so that they could escape from his influence and turn to Jesus…

And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that **they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.** 2 Tim 2:24-26

There are many other New Testament verses that show that Satan was free to roam this world and create havoc for mankind, even after Jesus defeated him at the cross. The final defeat

of Satan was not to be realized until a later date… even though his *ultimate fate* was sealed at Calvary and Easter morning.

Returning to the fist three verses of The Revelation, Chapter 20, it should be noted that Satan will be thrown into the *abyss* and bound for a thousand years at some point. This is the time period of the Millennium (regardless of whether it is actually 1,000 years in the future or a *long period of time* in which we currently are living). During that time, Satan will be totally chained, tossed into the *abyss*, locked up and in prison (one can't get much more restricted than that) and kept from interfering with the nations and people of the world. This is clearly stated. Certainly, this does not seem consistent with those New Testament verses quoted above relating to the significant activity of Satan in this current Church Age. In any case, it is not an easy sell for those who state that Satan has been bound since the first half of the first century to explain all of the biblical verses that suggest otherwise and the course of human history since that time.

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a **great chain**. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and **bound him** for a thousand years. He threw him into the **Abyss,** and **locked and sealed** it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. Rev 20:1-3

Conclusion:

As has been seen, the amillennial view of theology uses an allegorical approach to Bible prophecy. They see the world we live in now as the Millennial Kingdom of God. It is just that the reign of the saints is in heaven (or in the *hearts* of the saints on earth). They do not believe that there will be a final fulfillment of God's covenants with the nation of Israel as the Church has become the spiritual Israel since the time of Christ. Apparently, those promises meant for Israel are being fulfilled in a mysterious, allegorical fashion even now. This is the view of covenant theology which is shared by almost all amillenniasts. As has been pointed out above, there are those that have raised significant questions with this method of interpretation. Many of these were mentioned in the above paragraphs. Of course, as one would expect, the intelligent Christian adherents to this belief system have thoughtful answers to the objections raised.

There are many promises of blessing to come in the Millennium noted throughout the Bible, both in the Old and New Testament. These do not seem to be coming to fruition on the earth today. It is difficult for many, especially in modern times, to believe that we are currently living in the beautiful thousand year reign of Jesus as portrayed in the Bible, especially as described in Ezekiel, Isaiah and The Revelation. For most Christians this sure does not feel like the promised Millennial Kingdom read about in the Scriptures. Of course, those accepting this amillennial view generally believe that the biblical chapters that many take to be a description of the Millennial Kingdom on earth are actually a description of the eternal New Heaven and New Earth… the eternal residence of all those who love God. Premillennialists believe that the eternal Heaven and Earth will be fashioned by God only *after* the completion of the thousand

year Millennium. This whole topic is another highly debatable issue. One last point should be mentioned concerning this particular controversy. If it can be shown that there are distinct differences between the Millennial Kingdom and the New Heaven and New Earth, the evidence shifts strongly to those holding a premillennial view of the Kingdom. Later in this treatise, evidence of exactly this nature will be presented.

There are other ways to look at the Millennial Kingdom. Two more deserve attention in this treatise. After these are presented, it will up to the reader to decide which one, if any, seems most likely to be true.

Postmillennialism:

The second view of the Millennial Kingdom to be discussed here was not really developed until a minister from England named Daniel Whitby (1638-1726) came on the scene. He was very liberal in his views, even to the point of being called a heretic by many. However, his view of the Millennium was one of his views that was not just totally dismissed. The belief among historians is that some became receptive to this view mainly because of the many advancements that began with the Reformation. There had been many great achievements in the fields of art, science, and philosophy. Humanism was growing greatly. Many intellectuals in the world at that time were beginning to believe that man himself was on the path to some glorious future. The idea was that there would be an inexorable advancement upward for mankind in every respect, including morally. This would end with the ushering in of the golden age of the Kingdom. Unfortunately, many horrible events (WWI, WWII, massive famines and pestilence, and the wholesale slaughter of so many cultures (e.g. the Jewish Holocaust, ethnic cleansings of Somalia, Darfur, Bosnia, etc.) in the twentieth century have put a marked damper on this idea. Oddly enough, there are still some who keep this concept alive as we head into the 21st century. Certainly, there is a similarity with the beliefs of Secular Humanism and New Age Religion in that they also teach that people will be able to progressively advance to a point where mankind will issue in a special Age of Enlightenment. Once that time comes, the postmillennial adherent believes that Jesus Christ will return to earth.

Kenneth Gentry defines this idea as follows:

- "Postmillennialism expects the proclaiming of the Spirit-blessed gospel of Jesus Christ to win the vast majority of human beings to salvation in the present age. Increasing gospel success will gradually produce a time in history [which they identify with the 'millennium'] prior to Christ's return in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail in the affairs of people and of nations. After an extensive era of such conditions the Lord will return visibly, bodily, and in great glory, ending history with the general resurrection and the great judgment of all humankind. Hence, our system is postmillennial in that the Lord's return occurs after an era of 'millennial' conditions" (Gentry, Kenneth, "Postmillennialism", *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, p. 13-14) (http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/the-postmillennial-view-of-the-kingdom-of-god)

Types of Postmillennialism:

There are two basic types of this belief system, Biblical and Liberal. Simply put, the former suggest that the Holy Spirit will work in *individuals* to such an effective degree that some day there will be enough excellent Christians to bring in a Utopian Society. This will be done by the great power of the Holy Spirit as it works its wonders through humanity. The Liberal idea focuses on *society*. They believe that it is the ultimate goal of the Church to preach the "social gospel" and bring society into a New Age of peace, beauty, health, love, etc. In other words, society will eventually progress until it brings Jesus to earth to claim His already "perfected" earthly Kingdom. This liberal conception of Postmillennialism is totally unbiblical. The basic tenants of Biblical Postmillennialism are as follows:

- The Millennium will end with the return of Jesus Christ.
- The thousand years noted in Rev. 20 is not to be taken literally – instead, it is a long period of time between the First and Second Advents of Jesus when the Church will be progressing gloriously towards its ultimate state reached just prior to the return of Jesus.
- The Millennial Kingdom is not a literal, earthly kingdom. It is spiritual… i.e. Christ living within the hearts and souls of each Christian.
- With an ever increasing percentage of Christians in the world, and their ever increasing move towards sanctification, eventually the world will reach a time of spiritual and moral excellence. It will not be perfect as there will still be some unbelievers. However, it will be so close that it will be a glorious world and will be prepared for Jesus to come again to this world filled and dominated by Christianity.
- Israel is not distinct from the Church at this time in history.
- Since this view believes that we are currently living in the Millennium, Satan is bound. Therefore, Satan cannot keep Christians from marching on to the excellent, Christianized world that awaits.
- They take many prophetic passages as allegory – as required to suit their needs in interpretation.
- Interestingly, although they see the world increasingly improving until it reaches the point where Jesus will come again, it does believe in a final revolt by Satan yielding a sudden increase in evil just before Jesus comes back.
- Jesus will judge all mankind upon His return. There will be a general resurrection that will include everyone at that particular time. Believers and angels will enter eternal bliss in heaven; demons and unbelievers will enter hell where they will experience everlasting punishment.
- Interestingly, this view has many similarities to that of amillennialism. The main difference is that this view sees the world getting more and more Christianized due to the workings of the Holy Spirit within the hearts of believers as we approach the Second Coming. In fact, it is this Christianization of the world that eventually will bring Jesus back to earth to claim His Kingdom, so to speak. As noted above, the amillennial view, sees the world getting much worse just before Christ comes back. Yet, He comes back

for the same reason… that is, to usher in His eternal Heavenly Kingdom (i.e to set up the New Heavens and the New Earth)..

Recent Variations on the Postmillennial Theme:

1. **Theonomy:** This relatively new school of thought believes that the Law of Moses should rule the earth. Through its enforcement, society will eventually evolve to subdue sin, effect the Christianization of the world and ultimately lead to the return of Jesus.
2. **Reconstructionism:** The goal of this movement is to achieve the *"Kingdom of God"* in which much of the world is converted to Christianity. Those with this view feel that the power of God's Word and the Laws of Moses will bring about this conversion peacefully. The ultimate goal is dominion under Christ.
3. **Dominion Theology:** All of the belief systems under consideration in this treatise do believe that there will come a time when the world is ruled by Jesus Christ. Those adhering to Dominion Theology have their own way of looking at this, however. They believe that since Christ lives within each Christian, the believer does have *dominion* over all areas of life on this earth and should exert this authority even now. The concepts of theonomy and reconstructionism are an integral part of this theology. Biblical principles, such as the Laws of Moses, will reconstruct society until the Church achieves an adequate dominion over the world. Most of the ills of society will be eliminated. Jesus will then return. The overall idea is that we are in the "Kingdom Age" but when Christ comes we enter into an even more glorious time with Him. One of their mottos is "the kingdom is now, but not yet."

.

So what is the likelihood that this postmillennial theology is correct? I would suggest that it is nil! Take a look at just the following four points:

1. Does anyone in their right mind think that our world is progressing to a utopian society? How many really think that there will ever be enough dedicated, sanctified Christians to dominate the world and its actions?
2. Postmillennialism does not follow the Scriptures closely at all. There are many verses that describe the future difficulties and misery that the world and the people therein will experience. There is nowhere in the Bible that speaks of Christianity ushering in a Utopian Society.
3. Israel and their covenants with God are completely ignored
4. The New Testament definitely teaches that we are no longer under the Law of Moses. This wonderful Law was given to Israel for a purpose. It was not designed to save anyone, but to show people their need for a Savior. Jesus came and now we have the Law written on our hearts. We have the Holy Spirit living within each Christian. Paul wrote several letters warning specifically about the Judaizers. He was very concerned that Christians would revert back to the rule of the Law of Moses.

> For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for *"the just shall live by faith."* Gal 3:10-11

So far the interpretive methods of amillennianism and postmillennianism have been presented. The latter has been rejected by almost all Christians at this time in history. The former view is the prevalent view of Christendom worldwide. Interestingly, there is a third view which is the most accepted view by Evangelical Christianity today… by far. I believe that the premillennial viewpoint of end-time prophecy to be correct (of course, only God knows for sure). Let us take a look at this viewpoint next.

Premillennialism:

Interestingly, the view of the early Church concerning the Millennial Kingdom parallels that of most modern day prophecy teachers and writers. In the first century after the ascension of Christ, the Holy Spirit was actively working within many of the apostles (e.g. Paul, Peter, John) in the writings that would eventually become the New Testament. Most of the early Church Fathers had intimate contact with either these men or men who were taught by these men. One would expect their ideas concerning the interpretation of the Scriptures to be correct. At least these views would be much more likely to be correct than the interpretations that would follow hundreds of years later, especially given that those later views were unfortunately influenced by Greek philosophy. Author Charles Feinberg once wrote, "Every book that we have read and studied on the question of the millennium, whether it was favorable or unfavorable to the doctrine, or whether it gave full force and value to the testimony or tried to dissipate its implications, admitted freely that the entire Church of the first three centuries was premillennial, almost to a man. (Charles Feinberg, *Premillennialism or Amillennialism, 1961)*

Take a look at this *partial* listing of early Church Fathers who believed in a premillennial view of the end-times: Ignatius (bishop of Antioch), Papias (bishop of Hierapolis), Justin Martyr, Irenaeus (bishop of Lyons), and Tertullian. For example, Papias wrote, "There will be a Millennium after the resurrection from the dead, when the personal reign of Jesus will be established on this earth." (http://www.christianchallenge.org/hebraic-foundations/HF045-2.html) Take a look at what Justin Martyr wrote, "But I and whatsoever Christians are orthodox in all things do know that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years in the city of Jerusalem, built adorned, and enlarged, according as Ezekiel, Isaiah, and other prophets have promised," (*The Millennial Kingdom*, Walvoord, p. 120) All these men and many more lived and wrote prior to A.D. 200 and all believed in the basic tenants of premillennialism that will be noted in some detail below.

With some of the events of the last sixty years, especially the amazing fact that Israel once again has become a nation – seemingly in a miraculous fashion - Bible believing theologians have once again been brought back to realizing the total veracity of the Scriptures.

No matter how unlikely something seems (such as Israel becoming a nation again), if the Bible says it will happen, it will happen.

This premillennial view of prophecy in this current age is held by teachers such as Hal Lindsey, Grant Jeffrey, John Walvoord, Perry Stone, Tim LaHaye, John MacArthur, and Thomas Ice. They all have this view of the end of times. It is also the approach that will be taken in this treatise as we get into a detailed discussion of eschatology in the second half of this book. So what exactly is this view?

Premillennialism is the viewpoint that teaches that Jesus Christ will return to earth *before* the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom of God. Virtually all *dispensationalists* take this point of view on the end-times. Certainly, this is also considered the *futurist* view and the *literal* view of eschatology… to use a few of our previously defined terms. There is another group of people that hold another view of premillennialism, those adhering to a covenant theological view of the Bible. Both of these viewpoints will be discussed next, beginning with the most popular view of these two… the dispensational understanding of premillennialism.

Let us take a look at just some of the evidence that may well suggest that this is the correct view concerning the Millennial Kingdom.

Dispensational Premillennialism:

- A literal, grammatical-historical and futuristic approach to interpretation of biblical eschatology is used. Whenever possible, Bible verses are taken to mean just what they appear to say. If phrases are obvious metaphors, they are interpreted as such. When verses are questionable, the context is considered carefully in association with other related biblical passages, and the best interpretation possible is made. Using this approach, the main prophetic portion of The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Chapters 4-22) is considered to be a description of future events… not those of the Church Age in which we live today.
- Premillennialism is founded primarily on a literal interpretation of the Old Testament. In this way, the Old Testament does give a picture of a future Kingdom for Israel. This was the type of Kingdom that the Jews were looking for at the time of the First Advent of Christ.
- One of the main differences between the amillennial and premillennial way of looking at end-time events is that those with the latter view believe that God will one day honor all of the promises and covenants that He made with Israel and the patriarchs in Old Testament times. God will honor these commitments to the actual blood descendents of the patriarchs and the nation of Israel… not to the Church. God did say that His covenant was with Abraham and his "seed" (i.e. his genetic heirs).

  And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. Gen 17:7

This would require the re-constitution of Israel (it became a nation once again in May 1948) and the acquiring of all of the land that they were promised in the Palestinian Covenant. This acquisition of land is still an event of the future… presumably it will not happen until God grants them the land at the onset of the Millennial Kingdom. Covenant and amillennial theologians equate the Church with Israel at this time in history. Therefore, they believe that God will honor His covenants through His Church. The Church has become the "spiritual" Israel in their way of thinking. Much more will be discussed on this topic (i.e. Israel and the Church) immediately following this discussion on premillennialism.

- One other aspect in this belief system is that the manner in which future prophecy will be fulfilled will follow the same pattern as that of the fulfillment of past prophecy. For example, if the prophecies concerning Israel and the Messiah were fulfilled literally in the past (and they were), one would expect that future prophecies would be fulfilled in the same manner. Certainly, this idea makes common sense.
- A major distinguishing point in this conception of the Millennium is that the literal return of Jesus Christ to earth one day in the future will be to begin the thousand year reign of Christ and His saints on earth.
- There will be no allegorical or symbolical return or reign of Jesus on this earth or in heaven that will be considered as the Millennial Kingdom.
- This return of Jesus will be blatant, for all to see. When He returns, He will bring His saints to live and reign with Him on earth for a thousand years (although there is some difference of opinion concerning the time that the saints will spend on earth vs. the time spent in heaven during this Kingdom period).
- This earthly Kingdom will be characterized by peace and justice. The land will be very productive. Jesus will rule as a perfect, benevolent King. However, *it will not be the same as the eternal heaven and earth. Everything will not be perfect in this Kingdom*.
- In general, the events appear to happen in a chronological manner in the last nineteen chapters of The Revelation. Given that fact, premillenialists are very comfortable with the following interpretation of the final four chapters: Chapter 19 shows Jesus coming to defeat Satan and his evil forces at Armageddon to conclude the Great Tribulation, *followed by* Chapter 20 being the time of the binding of Satan in the *abyss* while Jesus reigns with His saints over His earthly Millennial Kingdom, *followed by* the preparation of the New Heaven and the New Earth beautifully described in Chapters 21 and 22. Although amillennialists believe that Christ's Second Coming will bring in the New Heaven and Earth immediately, that fact does not seem to follow from these chapters in The Revelation. Also, when discussing Israel and the Church a little later in this section, evidence concerning the biblical differences between the Millennial Kingdom and the New Earth will be shown. In other words, they are not synonymous.
- There will be a Rapture of the saints (Christians) just before the Tribulation or at the conclusion of the seven year Tribulation, or sometime in between. There is a difference

of opinion on exactly when the Rapture will take place among premillennialists as will be discussed later in great detail. However, all premillennialists place the Second Coming at the conclusion of the Tribulation. This Second Advent of Christ will usher in the Millennial Kingdom.

- There will be two distinct resurrections: a premillennial resurrection only of Christians and a postmillennial resurrection of those who become Christians during the thousand year Millennium plus all of those people who have rejected Christ from Adam's time until the end of the Millennium. All those who reject Christ will be resurrected at the conclusion of the Millennium and then face the judgment of God. More detail on this view of the judgments will be given later in this treatise.

1. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then **I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands.** And **they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years**. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but **they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years**. Rev 20:4-6

   Prior to the onset of Millennial Kingdom, believers will be judged (not for their salvation, but for their rewards) and soon thereafter will be allowed to live and reign with Jesus during the thousand years to come.

2. Then I saw a **great white throne** and Him who 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, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And **the dead were judged according to their work**s, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And **they were judged, each one according to his works.** Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. Rev 20:11-15

   After the thousand years concludes, the remaining people will be judged…in the second judgment and resurrection. This will include all those who have never accepted Jesus as Savior plus those who have accepted Him during the Millennial Kingdom. Christians will enter into the eternal heavenly realm. Every lost soul will enter into hell for the eternity to come.

- The book of Daniel is very important to the premillennialist view of the end-times. Let us take one more look at Daniel Chapter 9:

"Know and understand this: **From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One [Jesus], the ruler, comes, there will be seven**

'sevens,' [this means 7x7 years] and sixty-two 'sevens.' [this means 62x7 years] It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. **[26] After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One [Jesus] will be cut off** and will have nothing. **The people [Romans] of the ruler who will come [Antichrist]** will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. **[27]** He **[Antichrist]** will confirm a covenant with many **for one 'seven.' [this will be the last 7 years of the total of 70 years prophesied]** In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him". Dan 9:25-27

To the premillennialist, these verses show that there will be sixty-nine prophetic "weeks" of years (69x7 years of 360 days duration) from the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until Christ is crucified. Details of this can be found elsewhere in this treatise, but it is true that Jesus did apparently die at the time that this prophecy foretold. Of course, this should come as no surprise. The portion that relates to the end-times is what follows these verses. This is also the portion of this chapter in Daniel where the opinions differ between amillennial and premillennial adherents. Premillennialists believe that since Israel rejected Christ at His first coming, Jesus has stopped dealing specifically with Israel as a nation. During these last two thousand years, Christ has been primarily concerned with building His Church. It is not that He has rejected the people of the nation of Israel in any way. Any one on this earth is free to join the family of God at any time… including any and all Jews. However, as a nation, Jesus has *postponed* dealing with them during this Church Age. At some point in time, Jesus will once again deal specifically and finally with His "chosen people", the nation of Israel. That is when the last seven years of the prophecy will be completed. This intervening time is usually referred to as a "skip period". Since Jesus has delayed His dealings with Israel, the time allotted by God for this purpose has just been moved off a while into the future. When God decides the timing is right, He will remove the Church from the world (as was noted, the exact timing of this event is debatable and will be discussed later) and resume His dealings with Israel. At that time, the prophetic clock will begin running again and the final seven years of the *seventy weeks* of years (490 years total) will run their course. They will be the years known as the Tribulation. The last verse of Daniel above mentions one of the events that will take place at the half-way point of the Tribulation, when "the ruler who will come" will come onto the scene and desecrate the Temple. Much more will be mentioned on the Tribulation in a later section of this book.

Some people object to the premillennialist injecting this "skip period" into their prophetic plan for the end-times. It is something that does require some explanation. For one thing, there are several examples of biblical events that have a similar "skip period". Frankly, the life of the Messiah was foretold in the Old Testament in a fashion that was generally accepted by the prophets of old as being a one-time visit to earth. Obviously,

Jesus always had plans for two advents. He came as the "suffering servant" and "Lamb of God" two thousand years ago. He will come as the Lord of Lords and King of Kings on His next visit to earth. It is valuable to recall that Jesus even pointed out the fact that *a single prophecy may well foretell future events that will be fulfilled at two different times*. When Jesus spoke to the crowd in His hometown of Nazareth, He read from Isaiah…

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, **2** to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD's favor *[and the day of vengeance of our God]* Isaiah 61:1-2

The italicized phrase immediately above was not spoken by the Lord that day in Nazareth. This apparently was because that portion of the prophecy was not ready to be fulfilled. The *day of vengeance of our God* will not be coming until Jesus is set to come the second time. There is obviously a break in time (a "skip period") between His bodily visits here to earth. This corresponds to the Church Age, the *parenthesis* noted above in the *seventy weeks* of Daniel.

One other pertinent example can be found earlier in the book of Daniel, in Chapters 2 & 7 which are concerned with the Roman Empire. These chapters tell of two famous biblical dreams given to the prophet Daniel. Both are concerned with the four kingdoms that will exercise dominion over the world during a particular time in world history. Virtually all biblical scholars agree that the fourth kingdom refers to the Roman Empire. In both of these chapters, this fourth kingdom is noted to be divided in time as well. There, of course, was the original Roman Empire. However, these dreams are widely interpreted as the Roman Empire being revived as the time of the Messiah's return approaches. Once again, there is another prophecy that has a *partial fulfillment* in the relative near term, and a *final fulfillment* at the end of the age.

'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. **24** The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. *After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones*; he will subdue three kings. **25** He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.
Dan 7:23-25

Before moving on, one additional example to show that the concept of a "skip period" is common in biblical prophecy of the end-times, will be noted. If one reads the first of the famous "Shepherd's Psalms" (Psalm 22), the juxtaposition of the Messiah's first visit with His second is impressively shown. That is, the first half and the last half of this Psalm speak about two totally different times in the life of the Messiah. The first half concerns His life during His First Advent… as the "suffering servant". The second half is concerned with the Messiah's glorious reign as the King of Kings. Hopefully, these

three examples will suffice to show where premillennialists find support for their idea of a "skip period" in God's dealings with Israel.

For those who still have difficulty accepting this concept of a "skip period" between the cutting off the Messiah and the *seventieth week,* the obvious question would have to be, "What happened to the 70th week?" In other words, any alternative answer is not particularly attractive. Daniel said that the Messiah (the "Anointed One") would be cut off at the end of sixty-nine weeks of years (483 prophetic years). From the day of Pentecost until the Tribulation begins, God will be building His Church… i.e. **not** primarily dealing with the nation of Israel during that time. He then described what surely looked like a time of Tribulation lasting for that last seven years (the 70th week of years). It has been just shown how this all makes sense to the premillennialist – after a "skip period" of an indefinite amount of time, Jesus will Rapture His saints, and God's time clock will begin as He once again begins to deal primarily with Israel (during that last seven years).

However, when in history would these seven years have occurred if is not going to be in the future??? What do the amillennialists say? There is certainly a dearth of information on this last seven year period in the amillennial literature. They probably have a reasonable answer, but do not seem to mention one while defending their position… or at least their position on this is nebulous.

So now it has been shown why the premillennial view separates out the Church Age as a "skip period" (or *parenthesis*) between Israel in the Old Testament and the Israel to come – during the end-times. This is nicely summarized by Paul in the book of Romans as he demonstrates the apparent veracity of this position.

Chapter 11 of Romans is a very important chapter in the Bible as it clearly shows the sequence of events relating to Israel and the Church.

If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. [The root of Abraham is certainly holy. The father of the Jewish nation] If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root. [because of the unbelief at the First Advent of Jesus, Israel was *broken off* while the Gentiles were grafted in] if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. **26** And so all Israel will be saved, [when Israel returns in faith to the Messiah in the end-times, they will be grafted in once again] Romans 11:16,17,23,25-26

- It may be worthwhile to outline in chronological order just how premillenialists picture the end-time events unfolding:

1. Many world-wide events will begin to happen with increasing frequency and number as predicted in the Bible as the "Day of the Lord" is approached. Jesus even told His Church to watch for these signs…
   You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. **7** Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. **8** All these are the beginning of birth pains. Matt 24:6-8
2. The next big event may well be the Rapture of the Church. If this is true, the Church will go to be with the Lord in heaven just before the Tribulation begins. As will be seen, there are some premillennialists that think that the Rapture will come sometime *during* or at the *conclusion* of the seven year Tribulation. Reasons for these varying ideas will be given later.
3. The Tribulation will begin with the Antichrist coming openly onto the world scene as a very charismatic leader who will captivate the world. He will broker a peace treaty between Israel and their surrounding enemies for seven years. He will initially come across as a great "savior". In the middle of these seven years, however, he will show his true character… that of a man dominated by evil.
   He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the ***middle of the 'seven'*** he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him". Dan 9:27
4. The last 3 ½ years are referred to as the Great Tribulation. This will be a time of terrible persecution and judgment on earth. God will continue to send His judgment that began at the beginning of this seven year period. Now, however, His judgment will become even more severe. This will also be a time when the Antichrist will bring terror into the lives of all those who do not worship and obey him.
5. This seven year Tribulation will climax with the Battle of Armageddon. Jesus will come with His saints to save the world from destruction at the hands of Satan, the Antichrist, and their armies.
6. The Millennium will be ushered in by Jesus and continue for one thousand years.
7. At some point near the onset of the Millennium, all those who have placed their faith in Christ will be given their glorified bodies. The exact timing of this may well vary depending on the timing of a person's salvation (e.g. Old Testament saints, Tribulation saints, and Church Age Christians may differ). However, the important thing to understand is that it is the premillennial belief that all believers will be given their resurrection bodies *prior* to the Millennium.
8. At the conclusion of the Millennium, after a brief rebellion by an unleashed Satan is crushed, Jesus will condemn Satan and all people from all ages who have rejected Him to an everlasting hell.

9. A New Heaven and a New Earth will be formed and the Holy Trinity will reign forever in a perfect universe. Christians will be co-heirs with Christ!

- Certainly one very important reason why this view is held by so many today is that it seems to mirror so many of the events that the world and humanity are experiencing in recent decades. In other words, it is not at all difficult to see the similarities in current world events and how they seemingly fit nicely into the premillennial interpretation of The Revelation. Of course, this may be just an amazing coincidence. Also, many of these events are still consistent with an amillennial view… but only to a degree. Very importantly, only the premillennial view can easily account for what has recently happened and what is currently happening to Israel and the Jews! Although the dispensational view of premillennialism is the prevalent view in evangelical churches at this time, there is another reasonable view to mention as well. This combines elements of covenant theology and premillennialism.

Covenant or Historic Premillennialism:

- Old Testament prophecies related to the nation of Israel and the Millennium are not given any credence as the Church has replaced Israel… after that nation and their people rejected Jesus (i.e. as a whole). Now, therefore, the Old Testament prophecies concerning the promises and covenants between God and Israel are transferred to the "New Israel"… the Church.
- In general, proponents of this view have similarities to amillennialists and they believe the Church will remain on earth during the Tribulation.
- The Church will be protected from *God's wrath* during the Tribulation; however, they will be subject to the *wrath of the Antichrist*. Details on this concept will be presented a little later when the Rapture is discussed.
- The Rapture will occur just a very short time before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to the earth at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation. The resurrected saints will be raptured up to meet the Lord in the air, then return almost immediately to earth with Christ. He will then defeat Satan and the forces of evil at the battle of Armageddon.
- Christ will reign with His saints during an actual Millennial Kingdom on earth.
- A New Heaven and a New Earth will follow, at the conclusion of the Millennial Kingdom.

The main distinguishing characteristics between the dispensational premillennial view and historic premillennialism can be summarized as follows:

- In historic premillennialism, the Rapture and the Second Coming will not be separated by the Tribulation; instead they will both occur at the conclusion of this seven year period of time.
- The Church will go through the Tribulation, but will be spared the wrath of God… but, not the evil that will come from the Antichrist.

- God will not single out Israel during the Tribulation or the Millennium to deal exclusively with them as a nation to which He owes the fulfillment of certain promises.

Israel and the Church:

As has been already clearly demonstrated in the preceding pages, there is a major difference in opinion concerning end-times events between those that accept the principles of covenant theology and those that believe in ideas espoused by dispensationalists. Possibly this difference is seen most clearly in their varying views concerning Israel and the Church. Remember that dispensation theology believes that God still has a distinct plan for Israel in the future. Covenant theologians believe that the Church has supplanted Israel with respect to the promises given to Israel in the Old Testament. They suggest that the Church has become the New Israel and therefore will inherit these promises and covenants previously made by God to Abraham and his "seed". Obviously, this affects how each view end-time prophecy since much of this prophecy concerns Israel. In other words, in order to understand eschatology, one should attempt to determine whether the Israel referred to in these prophecies actually is the real nation and people of Israel. If not, maybe these promises to Israel have become promises to the Church… the "spiritual Israel" of today? I believe that the evidence is in support of the former as will be shown in the paragraphs below. However, those people who take the opposing view have biblical reasons to back their position as well. The answer is not made perfectly clear… if it had been, there would be no controversy. The reasons given by both sides on this issue will be presented so the reader can be his/her own judge.

Both methods of interpretation do agree that God entered into several agreements, typically called covenants, with Israel in the Old Testament days. God made promises to the patriarchs to bless them and their heirs. Abraham was the father of the nation of Israel and, not surprisingly, God made His first covenant with this famous man. The important question that needs to be asked is whether this and subsequent covenants with Abraham's descendents were binding *and* everlasting (the viewpoint of dispensationalism) or whether they were conditional and/or transferrable to the Church (the point of view of covenant theologians).

When reviewing the positions taken on these issues, it turns out that there are basically three different reasons why amillennialists believe that they have the stronger position. *First*, there are a few who believe that God has already honored all of His promises to Israel. *Second*, a larger group of these theologians stress the fact that the covenants that God made with Israel are conditional and therefore not necessarily binding. The *third* reason given by some amillennial adherents is that these same promises are now being fulfilled by the Church. That is, some may be binding but they will be fulfilled through the Church, not through the nation of Israel. In any case, the actual nation and people of Israel no longer have a role to play. Before giving the reasons for these three positions, it will obviously be very worthwhile to state the details of each covenant. Read them very carefully to see if they have conditions and to see if there is a suggestion that they are meant solely for the nation and people of Israel. They are as follows:

- **Abrahamic Covenant**: The LORD had said to Abram, "**Leave your country**, your people and your father's household and **go to the land I will show you**. "**I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great,** and you will be a blessing. 3 I **will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse**; and **all peoples on earth will be blessed through you**." Gen 12:1-3

  This was expanded by God a little later as He added… The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. 15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. 16 **I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. 17 Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you."** Gen 13:14-17

  After Abraham remained childless for a long time, God once again came to him in a vision. Abraham suggested to God that maybe a servant in his household could serve as his heir. God rejected this idea and said… **a son coming from your own body will be your heir."** 5 He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Gen 15:4-5

  The final confirmation of this covenant came when Abraham was ninety-nine years old. In this confirmation, God said that He would make "**Abraham a father of many nations**." God was going to "make nations of you, and **kings will come from you**." God said… "I will establish my covenant as an **everlasting covenant** between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 **The whole land of Canaan**, where you are now an alien, **I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you**; and I will be their God." Gen 17:5-8

  Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, **you must keep my covenant**, **you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. 10 This is my covenant with you** and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be **circumcised** Gen 17:9-10

  God went on at that same time to tell Abraham that He would make Sarah the mother of this covenant. Isaac would be the son of Abraham that would be the heir of the covenant. So, as can be seen, this was a promise that God repeated and expanded upon on several different occasions. ***The covenant was to be everlasting***! God promised Abraham many things as a careful reading of the verses above reveal. Several hundred years later, God appeared to Moses and made another covenant with him

- **Mosaic Covenant**: The Mosaic Covenant was given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. The various aspects of this covenant can be seen through a reading of Exodus and Deuteronomy. One verse will be noted to show the conditional nature of this covenant:

Now therefore, **if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure** to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. Ex 19:5

In Deuteronomy 28, all of the details of this Mosaic Covenant can be found.

This covenant is a conditional covenant given to the nation Israel. God had His part to keep and the nation and people of Israel had theirs - to keep the Law that God had just given to Moses. If these Laws were kept, then God would bless the people of Israel, if not, He would curse the people (noted in Deut. 28). The covenant was somewhat more complex than that, but that was its essence. Israel did choose to accept God's offer. However, over the centuries, they were unable to keep up their end of the agreement. It is important to understand that this **conditional covenant** did not replace or annul the other covenants that God had made: such as the Abrahamic, Palestinian, and Davidic Covenants. In fact, if, at some time in the future the people of Israel do keep up their side of the agreement, God will once again bless them… just as called for in the Mosaic Covenant.

- **Davidic Covenant**: I **will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom.** 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and **I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever**. 14 **I will be his father, and he will be my son**. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. 15 But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 **Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever**.'" 2 Sam 7:12-16

  Jeremiah also noted concerning God's covenant with David… '**If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed laws of heaven and earth,** 26 **then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant** and will not choose one of his sons to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and have compassion on them.'" Jer 33:25-26

- **Palestinian Covenant**: When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, 2 and **when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today**, 3 **then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you**. 4 Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. 5 **He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it.** He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. 6 The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with

all your heart and with all your soul, and live. 7 The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you. 8 You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am giving you today. 9 Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. **The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers,** 10 ***if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands*** and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.
Deut 30:1-10

In Ezekiel, the everlasting aspect of this covenant is confirmed. God tells Israel that He will not ever forget what He promised them in "the days of [their] youth." "Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an **everlasting covenant** with you. Ezek 16:60

This covenant reaffirms to Israel their title deed to the land of promise. In spite of unfaithfulness and unbelief, as manifested so frequently in Israel's history from the time of the promise to Abraham until the time that Moses wrote those words above, the covenant was not abrogated. The land was still theirs by promise. The introduction of the *conditional* Mosaic Covenant, under which Israel was then living, did not set aside the previous *unconditional* covenants. Hence, Paul's argument: "The covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect" (Gal. 3:17).

This Palestinian Covenant was an enlargement of the original Abrahamic covenant. It detailed the land features of the Abrahamic covenant. This was given by God *after* centuries of unbelief and disobedience by the nation of Israel. Therefore, this supports the contention that the original promise was given to be fulfilled in spite of disobedience.

- **New Covenant**: "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. 33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "**I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts**. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 **No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."** Jer 31:31-34

So now that these covenants have been noted, let us see how the two varying schools of thought believe it is best to interpret them eschatologically. First, the amillennial position will be stated.

Amillennial position on Israel and the Church:

As previously mentioned, amillennial eschatology believes that the promises and covenants the God made to Israel and their patriarchs will be realized through Jesus and the Church. In other words, God will certainly grant these Old Testament promises, but He will grant them to His Son and to the people of the Church. There will be no future Millennial Kingdom as the Church is currently in the millennium. Jesus is in heaven reigning from the Throne of David.

Before getting into the reasons for their position, it may be worth mentioning that there are a few amillennialists who believe that the covenants have already been fulfilled by God… God did this in Old Testament times. Oswald Allis, a very well known amillennialist has claimed that in the time of Solomon, Israel possessed the land that God had promised. In addition to that fulfilled promise, God had already provided Abraham with a vast multitude of heirs… therefore, that portion of the covenant had come true as well. Often, those with this view will point to the verse…

Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon's subjects all his life.
1 Kings 4:21

However, a closer study will reveal that this region does not comprise the entire land of promise. Not only that, Solomon did not occupy all of that land nor have sole ownership over it; he just collected tribute on some of that land as noted in the passage itself. More importantly, for hundreds of years after the time of Solomon, Old and New Testament prophets spoke of a future time when God would one day honor His promises to Israel as relating to the land. It would be nonsensical to do this if those promises had already been fulfilled. The fact is that the entire tract of land that God has promised Israel has yet to be in their possession. The land that they controlled at one time, certainly was not an everlasting possession. For this reason and other similar reasons, very few amillennialists argue from this perspective… i.e. that God has already honored all of His covenants to Israel.

The two main arguments that amillennialists do use in defense of their position are as follows:

- God's promises to the patriarchs were ***conditional***. Since these conditions were not met by the people of Israel, God was under no obligation to honor His commitments seen in these covenants.

- Secondly, and more importantly, covenant and amillennial theology see the entire history of mankind as the working out of God's unique plan of salvation. The Old Testament just leads in to a newer aspect of this single plan that is found in the New Testament, and even up to this day. In the days of the patriarchs, God's covenants were made to His "chosen people" of that day, Israel. However, after their rejection of the Messiah, these covenants will still be honored by God, but now ***their fulfillment will be to the New Israel, the Church.*** Now, of course, the Church make up the people of God. In other words, God never made any promises meant only for those that make up the physical seed of Abraham. Instead, anyone who walks by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will be considered a family member of the "Israel of God."

So, why do those who follow the amillennial view, believe that the covenants are conditional? Actually, the reasons for taking this view are somewhat unusual. Basically, the thought is that they must be conditional because that is the only reasonable viewpoint. Note Allis' quote on this subject, "It is true that, in the express terms of the covenant with Abraham, obedience is not stated as a condition. But that obedience was presupposed is clearly indicated by two facts. The one is that *obedience is the precondition of blessing under all circumstances*…. The second fact is that *in the case of Abraham the duty of obedience is particularly stressed.*" (The Millennial Kingdom, p. 152) Well, that is obviously the position of Allis; however, not many others take this dogmatic position, even those who are amillennialists. Most people realize that all of Christian theology is based on God's grace. The fact is that God does wonderful things for His children purely out of love… not because of their good works or other *conditions*.

It is true that God does make certain promises or covenants that do have conditions. The Mosaic Covenant, as we have seen does have conditions placed on it by God. The essence of this promise is that He will bless His people if they obey His Word and place their trust and allegiance in Him, but curse them if they do not. There are aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant that are conditional in the opinion of most people as well. For example, Abraham did have to leave Ur of the Chaldees and head west toward the "Promised Land". If he had not, none of the promises would have been fulfilled… most believe. Also, this covenant was expanded later when God told Abraham to have the males of Israel circumcised.

This right of circumcision is also cited to prove that these covenants are conditional in nature. It is true that any male who did not follow God's command and be circumcised would not share in the blessings to come. However, those individuals who did not obey God did not cause the abrogation of His covenant to the remaining *nation* of Israel. That is fairly obvious after a straightforward reading of the verses where the right of circumcision is introduced…

You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign **of the covenant between me and you**. **12** For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner--those who are not your offspring. **13** Whether born in your household or bought with your money,

they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. **14** ***Any uncircumcised male,*** **who has not been circumcised in the flesh,** ***will be cut off*** **from his people [the whole nation will not be cut off]; he has broken my covenant."** Gen 17:11-14

So, as can be seen, it really is not the fact that these Old Testament covenants between God and the patriarchs have already been fulfilled, nor is it that they are conditional, ***the real crux of the difference between the amillennial view and the premillennial view of these covenants is whether God will fulfill these promises to the nation and people of Israel or whether the Church will inherit these promises.*** As has already been written, the proponents of amillennialism are convinced that Jesus and the Church will be the total fulfillment of God's Old Testament covenants. Although their interpretation of the Bible is quite different in this area of eschatology, amillennial theologians can present many reasons for their perspective. A summary of their position will follow.

Anthony Hoekema stated the position neatly when he noted that for the Old Testament Israelites, "the term Israel was simply a way of saying 'the people of God.' For them the land of Canaan was the land that God had given to his people as their dwelling place and their possession. But the Old Testament is a book of shadows and "types." In the New Testament times the people of God no longer consist of only Israelites with a few other non-Israelite additions, but is expanded to a fellowship inclusive of both Gentiles and Jews. In New Testament times, the land which is to be inherited by the people of God is expanded to include the entire earth." (The Bible and the Future, Hoekema, p. 211) In fact, Hoekema continues and says, "we see that the glorious future is not limited to the millennium but as involving all of eternity, and we see that future as being good news not just for Israelites but for all of God's redeemed people." (ibid, p. 212) In fact, those verses that the dispensationalist take as referring to the literal Millennial Kingdom of one thousand years on earth are interpreted as an eternity of time living in the New Heaven and New Earth. "The promise of a land, as we have seen, will be fulfilled in a new heaven and a new earth in the consummation." (Riddlebarger, p. 77) Classic verses of this type can be found in the latter chapters of Ezekiel and Isaiah (65)... and in many other books in the Bible. Kim Riddlebarger put it similarly, "the houses of Israel and Judah are typological of the church. This is another clear-cut case of an Old Testament prophecy which is fulfilled in the church, the members of which are the spiritual seed of Abraham through faith in Jesus Christ." (A Case for Amillennialism, Riddlebarger, p. 54) "The prophets predicted a glorious and redeemed Israel which the New Testament writers contended was fulfilled in the church, the mystical body of Jesus Christ." (ibid p.55)

So it is quite obvious that this view equated Israel of the Old Testament with the Church of Jesus Christ. This statement follows nicely with the concept of Covenant Theology, where every age since the fall of man is really all the working out of the same Covenant of Grace. There are several verses that are advanced to lend credence to this belief. For example:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed**, and heirs according to the promise. Gal 3:28-29

Hoekema notes correctly that Paul says to the Galatians that all who are Christians, be they Jew or Gentile, "are Abraham's seed, not in the physical sense, to be sure, but in a spiritual sense." (ibid p. 199) He and others who are amillenialists go on to say that this entitles the Church to ***all*** of God's promises from the Old Testament.

One other text that is commonly associated with identifying the Church with Israel is found in the sixth chapter of Galatians. The amillennialist typically state that the "Israel of God" noted in the verse below shows that those that believe in Jesus (i.e. the Church) are equivalent to Israel. As will be shown in the section dealing with the premillennial interpretation of this verse, there certainly is another way of looking at this.

God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. [15] For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. [16] And **as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, even to [and upon] the Israel of God**. Gal 6:14-16

Jesus Christ currently is fulfilling the Davidic Covenant as He is ruling the nations from the Davidic Throne in heaven. As Riddlebarger put it, "It was in Christ's resurrection and ascension, therefore, that God fulfilled His promise that David's greater Son would rule the nations with an everlasting kingdom." (ibid, p.77) Peter spoke to this in his first sermon on Pentecost…

"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that **the patriarch David** died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. [30] But he was a prophet and knew that **God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.** [31] Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. [32] God has raised this **Jesus** to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. [33] **Exalted to the right hand of God,** he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. [34] For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand [35] until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."'
Acts 2:29-35

In summary, the amillennial view is that the since the coming of Christ and the creation of His Church, the nation and people of Israel no longer are singled out by God to receive the promises that they were given in the Old Testament covenants. Instead, Jesus now is the true Israel and His Church will now receive the promises once given to the patriarchs of Israel. The land promises of the Old Testament Palestinian Covenant now will be fulfilled in the eternal New Heaven and the New Earth, not a Millennial Kingdom on earth. Jesus Christ already sits and rules on the throne of David. Three thousand years ago, God promised King David that one day one from his house would rule over the Kingdom. That time came with the coming and

sacrificial death of Jesus. He was resurrected into heaven where He now reigns at the right hand of the Father. Any and all of the other promises to the patriarchs will find their fulfillment in the Church.

Although the amillennialists do not believe that there will be a future Millennial Kingdom, many do believe that ethnic Israel will have a notable future. They base this on Romans 11. A straightforward reading of this chapter reveals that as the return of the Messiah draws nigh, a large remnant of Israel will be saved. Soon thereafter the Messiah will come to usher in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in [this is also known as the Church Age]. **26** **And so all Israel will be saved**, as it is written:
"The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. **27** And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." **28** As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, **they are loved on account of the patriarchs**, **29** for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. **30** Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, **31** so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. Romans 11:25-31

Premillennial Position on Israel and the Church:

Now we come to the position on Israel, the covenants, and the Church taken by those who adhere to premillennialism. This position can be summarized as follows:

- God has separate plans for Israel and the Church, although, in both cases, individuals within each of these entities are saved by faith as prescribed by God.
- The covenants that God has made with Israel and its patriarchs are binding on God to fulfill at some time just as promised. Most of these covenants are unconditional. The one notable exception is the Mosaic Covenant. However, ultimately, the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and the New Covenant are unconditional and everlasting. The nation and people of Israel will be on the receiving end of all of these fulfilled covenants.
- There are still many aspects of these covenants to be fulfilled in the future.
- The Church was a "mystery" until it came into existence after the ascension of Jesus. It began at Pentecost and still is in existence today. All those who accept Jesus as Savior are part of His Church. The Church will be raptured sometime just before, during, or at the conclusion of the seven year Tribulation.

There have been a multitude of books written over the centuries on the topics covered in this section. There are books on Covenant Theology, Dispensationanlism, Progressive Dispensationalism, Historic Premillennialism, each of the four major views on the timing of the Rapture, the Second Coming, Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Premillennialism. Each of these books can range from 175 to 350 pages in length. Given that each of these topics is being discussed in this section, one can imagine the difficulty with summarizing these positions

succinctly. Therefore, if the reader wants to learn more on any one of these topics, there are many excellent books noted in the bibliography that will allow for that possibility. What follows will be an attempt to briefly point out why dispensationalists believe very strongly that God still has every intention of fulfilling His covenants with the actual people and nation of Israel at some time in the future. Jesus is the ultimate spiritual fulfillment of many of the covenants. Every Christian, Jew and Gentile alike, are considered to be part of the "spiritual seed of Abraham." However, the promises that God made concerning such things as Abraham's 'blood descendants', including the promises concerning the possession of the land of Palestine, will still be fulfilled to the actual nation and people of Israel. There is absolutely no place in the Bible where these godly promises and covenants to national Israel are abrogated.

The LORD had said to **Abram,** "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. "**I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse**; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Gen 12:1-3

I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. Gen 17:7

A straightforward reading of this verse and so many like it in the Old Testament make it clear that God was providing Abraham and his descendents with a covenant. This covenant was meant for the Jew, not any other nation or people. Later, God allowed for the grafting in of Gentiles to share in the *salvation* that the cross provided through the sacrifice of Jesus. However, as already noted above, the promises made to the *nation* and *people* of *Israel* will also someday be honored.

God later added to His covenant to Israel as He spoke to **Isaac**… "For to you and your descendants **I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham.** I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and **through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed**, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws." Gen 26:3-5

God continued to add to this covenant when He spoke these words to **Jacob**… "**I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying**. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. **All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.** I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and **I will bring you back to this land**. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Gen 28:13-15

He is the LORD our God; His judgments are in all the earth. [15] Remember His covenant forever, The word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, [16] **The covenant which He made** with **Abraham**, And His oath to **Isaac**, [17] And confirmed it to **Jacob** for a statute, **to Israel for an everlasting covenant.** 1 Chron 16:14-17

The *Abrahamic* Covenant is expressly declared to be **eternal** and therefore **unconditional** in numerous passages (Gen. 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chron. 16:17; Ps. 105:10). The *Palestinian* Covenant is likewise declared to be **everlasting** (Ezek. 16:60). The *Davidic* Covenant is described in the same terms (2 Sam. 7:13, 16, 19; 1 Chron. 17:12; 22:10; Isa. 55:3; Ezek. 37:25). The *New Covenant* with Israel is also **eternal** (IS. 61:8; Jer. 32:40; 50:5; Heb. 13:20).

So we see how the covenant that God had with Israel was confirmed and enhanced over these three generations. So how are these verses taken by the two differing schools of theology? Covenant theologians believe that God meant these promises to Israel only if the people of that nation were faithful and continued to follow and obey Him. Because Israel eventually rejected God's Son Jesus, the covenant theologian believes that these promises no longer apply to the Jews. Now these covenants are transferred over to the Church. However, is this proper? Dispensationalists say absolutely not. Many reasons are noted below:

- Those that say that the Church has supplanted Israel since the time of Christ also say that the term Church and Israel are used interchangeably in the Bible. The problem is that the word "Israel" is used thousands of times in the Old Testament and scores of times in the New Testament. Never is it used to mean the Church! The terms Israel and Gentile were used frequently in the New Testament after the day of Pentecost (the beginning of the Church). Israel, as a nation, is discussed many times throughout the book of Acts (e.g. Acts 3:12, 4:8,10, 5:21,31,35; 21:28 and many others) as a separate entity from the Church. In other words, those people who espouse this idea have very little evidence to support their contention that the Bible suggests that the Church has taken the place of Israel. Just look at the following two verses to see that Israel and the Gentile aspect of the Church are separate:
  Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. Romans 10:1 (There were already many Gentiles in the church at Rome)
  This mystery is that through the gospel the **Gentiles** are heirs **together with Israel**, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. Eph 3:6

  A straightforward, literal reading of these verses, and many others, demonstrates that Israel remained separate from the Church throughout the New Testament.
- If one takes a close look logically at verses such as those noted from Genesis above, it will be noticed that God is telling Jacob that He will one day bring his descendents back into the land that He had promised him. Isaac was told that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. God told Abraham that He would bless nations that

blessed Abraham (or his heirs) and curse those that cursed him (or his heirs). Verses like these, and there are many, only make sense if the nation and people of Israel are in view. God often spoke of the blessings that would come upon the nation of Israel in the end-times. Literally, dozens of prophecies concerning the future of the nation of Israel are made in the Old Testament. Many of these will be given and discussed in the next section. It makes markedly less sense if one assumes that God is going to grant fulfillment of these promises/prophecies to the Church. For example, is God really going to bless those nations that bless the Church and curse those that curse the Church? Did the Church get scattered around the world because of their unbelief? Is God going to bring back the entire Church into Palestine sometime in the future? This does not make very much sense. However, if the Church inherits the promises that God made to Israel, things like this would supposedly take place.

- It is worthwhile to know that the concept of the Church somehow inheriting the promises God made to Israel did not come into being until well over a hundred years after Pentecost (the beginning of the Church). It did not gain traction until several hundred years had passed. At that time, there were a few different reasons that got this idea going. First of all was the dominance of Greek educated and influenced theologians such as Augustine. These philosophers loved to allegorize and spiritualize the Scriptures. In fact, they actually did not want to take the Word at its obvious meaning. That presented a deep problem as it is clear to most reasonable people that God would want to make His message to the world as plain as possible… not as complicated as possible. A straightforward reading of the Scriptures is easily possible and wonderfully profitable. Another reason that Israel was replaced by the Church in the covenant promises was that the Jews were certainly viewed as the enemies of Christ. Certainly, they had the primary role in His crucifixion. Not only that, but they were very antagonistic to the early Church as well. Once the allegorical method of biblical interpretation gained acceptance, it was an easy step to eliminate Israel and the Jews from their rightful place as the "chosen people"… as the recipient of God's promises… including those promises that would not be fulfilled until the future.
- Israel is promised many material blessings on the earth, including peace on earth, long lives, a paucity of sickness, perfect and swift justice, and many other wonderful blessings that will come to the earth when the Messiah comes again. *Although the Kingdom that is promised to Israel is truly wonderful, it is not heaven. That is, it is an earthly kingdom… the Millennial Kingdom.* The Church is never promised an earthly inheritance of this type. The New Covenant promised salvation to the Jews, and this was certainly promised to the Church as well. However, the new life awaiting Israel in the Millennial Kingdom - described so much in the Old Testament - was never mentioned in regards to the Church. If the Church were going to be the agent that realized all of these national promises given by God to Israel, one would think that some mention of this would be made in the Bible.

These Millennial promises will not be realized until after the seven year Tribulation and the Second Coming of the Messiah… these topics will be discussed in great detail later in this treatise. While the Church has had periods of persecution and tribulation it never has passed through the Great Tribulation of prophecy. Certainly, many people find it very difficult to believe that the Church is now in the Millennial Age described in the Bible (the belief of the amillennialist). Romans 11:25-27 clearly indicates that this covenant can only be realized after the Second Advent of the Messiah.

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: **Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.** [26] **And so all Israel will be saved,** as it is written:
"**The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.**
[27] **And this is my covenant with them** when I take away their sins." Romans 11:25-27

Since the Tribulation, Second Advent, and Millennial Age are yet future, the fulfillment of this promise must be yet future, and therefore the Church cannot now be fulfilling this covenant. Once again, this leads to the fact that the national promises made by God to Israel will be realized by the nation of Israel, sometime in the future.

- The Mosaic Covenant was the one covenant that was conditional. God would bless Israel if they followed Him. He would curse them if they did not. As it turns out, Israel received much more of the curses than the blessings as they were so unfaithful. In fact, God brought the Northern Kingdom down by using the Assyrians. The Babylonians, at the bidding of God, destroyed the Temple and scattered the Southern Kingdom as well. After their rejection of Jesus, they were defeated and scattered once again, this time by the Romans. If the Church really inherited all of the covenants of God, it certainly should have been cursed mightily over these last two thousand years. Just take a look at the crusades for just one example of its sinful activities. Actually, it is quite obvious that the Church has not suffered the discipline that the nation and people of Israel have endured over the last few millennia. This fact is simply just one more piece of evidence that the Church has not inherited the physical promises (and curses) that God made to Israel.
- The nation of Israel began with the calling by God of Abraham. The Church began at Pentecost. Every member in the Church has the Holy Spirit living within them. The Church and Israel are obviously two separate entities and never tied together in the Scriptures. The Bible never suggests that the Church shall supplant Israel, nor receive the "physical" promises meant for Israel. Israel is made up of all those people from the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob… those who follow God and those who do not (saved and unsaved). The Church is made up of only those people who trust in Jesus for their salvation… all in the Church are saved.
- A close look at the covenants mentioned above, and in many other Old Testament passages, will result in the observation that God promised certain land and blessings to Abraham and His descendents through Isaac and Jacob *without any conditions placed on their performance or the performance of their heirs*. (as mentioned earlier, there are

some that suggest that a condition was actually placed on the Abrahamic Covenant… that of requiring Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldees and set out for the promised land… certainly that condition was met by Abram). It is true that nothing was promised with respect to any one particular Jewish individual going to heaven upon death, but **the promises of certain blessings did apply to *the nation of Israel as a whole*.** If an Israeli individual chose not to follow God (or later, Jesus), this person would not be granted the promises of God. However, the nation of Israel, as a whole, was and still is guaranteed to one day in the future inherit the promises given to the patriarchs so very long ago. One fact should never be forgotten. No matter how many times the nation of Israel sinned against their God, He always did forgive her when they finally repented. That is what the Bible says will happen again one day in the future. They will repent and turn in faith to the Messiah. God will fulfill His covenants and promises previously made to Israel.

- Genesis 15:4-17 is an interesting series of verses in which ***God confirmed His covenant with Abram***. God, Himself, even *ratified this covenant* using an imposing ceremony involving a blood sacrifice! God put Abram into a deep sleep so that this ratification ceremony would be dependent only on God Himself. Abraham was given no pre-conditions that he must follow. God was demonstrating to Abram, and His progeny that would follow, that His promises were good (i.e. sealed) for all time… and unconditional. It would be difficult for God to make it any clearer that what was promised to Abraham was given to him without any conditions, to be fulfilled because of the integrity of God alone.
- Not only that, but the writer of Hebrews did his best to make it clear that in no way would God's covenants ever change. In other words, if God said that His covenant was for the blood line of Abraham… and He sure seemed to make this clear… then, He would not alter this covenant in any way at all!

  When **God made his promise to Abraham**, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, **14** saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." **15** And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. **16** Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. **17** Because **God wanted to make the *unchanging nature* of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.** **18** God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie. Heb 6:13-18
- There are many Old Testament and New Testament verses that show that God's covenant was meant for the *actual* heirs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob… not for a symbolic heir, such as the Church. Note just a couple of the many verses found in the Old Testament:
  1. "And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on an oath to **Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob**." Genesis 50:24

2. **a son coming from your own body will be your heir.**" [5] He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Gen. 15:4
3. "So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."** Exodus 2:24
4. "For the Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you or destroy you nor forget **the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.** Deuteronomy 4:31
5. And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" [19] Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name **Isaac**; **I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him**. Gen 17:18-19 Note here that God made this covenant with a specific heir of Abraham. The promises were passed down through the line of Isaac… not Ishmael. God makes it plain right here that *blood lines* were important.

Now, here are a few verses from the New Testament:

1. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the **house of Jacob** forever; his kingdom will never end." Luke 1:32-33
   The premillennialists interpret these verses as Jesus sitting on an earthly throne and reigning over "the house of Jacob" (i.e Israel). Of course, He would be the King of all of the earth, including the Gentiles, as well.
2. The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Theologians with a premillennial theology say that a literal reading of this great book, with the chapters taken in chronological order except for a couple of descriptive chapters, can lead to no result other than a premillennial view of the end-times. In this apocalyptic book, the twelve tribes of Israel (144,000 Jews total) are specifically mentioned as very important end-time instruments for evangelization. Certainly, the last book of the Bible is still noting the separate nature of Israel and the Church.
3. Paul spoke concerning the future of Israel in his epistle to the Romans…
   I say then, has God cast away His people (Israel)? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. [2] **God has not cast away His people** whom He foreknew. Romans 11:1-2
   ***God's gifts* and his call are irrevocable**. [30] Just as you (Gentiles) who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, [31] so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too (the nation of Israel) may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. Romans 11:29-31

I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, [4] who are **Israelites**, **to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants**, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the **promises**; [5] of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Romans 9:3-5

These verses in Romans are interpreted by premillennialists as showing that one day in the future God will grant ***His gifts and covenantal promises*** to Israel as previously promised. It is stated right here in these verses. Paul appears to make it very clear in his epistle to the Romans that God's promises to Israel will not be transferred over to the Church. He says that they will return with faith (in the Messiah) and receive mercy in the end-times as God will never "cast away His people." It is true as we have earlier noted, the spiritual gift of salvation is open to everyone, both Jew and Gentile. However, Paul here is also alluding to the promises that relate to end-time non-spiritual (i.e. physical) gifts.

4. The teachings of Christ also lend support to the view of a literal Kingdom. When the mother of James and John requested that her sons be granted a special seat in the Kingdom, Jesus did not say anything to suggest that there would be no such kingdom. He only noted that God, the Father, would be making that decision. More significantly, when Jesus was specifically asked by His disciples when He was going to restore the kingdom to Israel, He told them that only the Father would be setting that date. The implication was clearly that one day there would be a kingdom *for Israel*. One would think that Jesus would have corrected His friends' misconception if there had been one.

   Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. [21] "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" Matt 20:20-22

   So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" [7] He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. Acts 1:6-7

- Even after Israel had rejected Jesus Christ and He had been crucified, Peter continued to preach that Israel would someday still receive the promises God made to Abraham. In fact, he did this in the first weeks of the new Church after Pentecost. While speaking to his Jewish brothers, Peter said, "And **you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers.** He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' Acts 3:25 Of course, here Peter is reminding all of the people of the **nation of Israel, the "chosen people"**, that **they were still heirs of the promises of God** and the Old Testament covenants that God had long ago made with their father, Abraham. Although the Church existed at this time, there is certainly no mention of it

replacing Israel in God's plans. This is a very important example that points out that **the Church *did not* take the place of Israel** or the Jews in God's plans.

- Jeremiah was given a message from God concerning the coming Kingdom of God. That great prophet wrote concerning what it would be like in the latter days… the fact that God would gather up all of the scattered people of Israel and bring them back to their homeland. Even though the people of Israel would be scattered among the nations, God would one day bring them back to make a nation of Israel once again. Important to this discussion, Jeremiah said that the Lord told him, in beautifully descriptive words, that there never would be a time that the "*descendents of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me* (i.e. the Lord)." Clearly, this promise makes sense only if Israel does not become synonymous with the Church.

This is what the LORD says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar-- the LORD Almighty is his name: "**Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the LORD, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me**." This is what the LORD says: "**Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done**," declares the LORD. "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when this city will be rebuilt for me from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. Jer 31:35-38

"At that time," declares the LORD, "**I will be the God of all the *clans* of Israel, and they will be my people.**" Jer 31:1 (*clans* cannot indicate the Church)

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. **4 I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel.** Jer 31:3-4

"Hear the word of the LORD, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: '**He who scattered Israel will gather them** and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.' **11** For **the LORD will ransom Jacob** and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they. **12 They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion**; Jer 31:10-12

So there is hope for your future," declares the LORD. "**Your children will return to their own land. 18** "I have surely heard Ephraim's moaning: 'You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. **Restore me, and I will return**, because you are the LORD my God. **19 After I strayed, I repented**; Jer 31:17-19

Once again, God demonstrated that He has absolutely no intention of abrogating His covenants to Israel. These covenants will not be transferred to the Church. God says, through the prophet Jeremiah above, that only if certain impossible events happen (and they will not), would the physical heirs of Israel cease to be recognized as a nation before Him. Therefore, there would come a day when Jerusalem would be rebuilt. God would one day bring them back and restore them in their land. That day came on May 15, 1948! Just one more verse on the same topic below…

"I myself will gather **the remnant of my flock out of all the countries** where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. Jer 23:3

Before going on to the next point, it is important to note that there are dozens of verses in the Old Testament on the subject of God's re-gathering His "chosen people" "in that day". Space will not be used to write all of the places where this is mentioned, but for those who would like to see a few of these references, the following is an abbreviated listing: Isaiah 11:1-11, 12:1-3, 27:12-13, 43:1-8, 49:8-16, 66:20-22, Jer. 16:14-16, 30:10-11, 31:31-37, Ezek.11:17-21, 20:33-38, 34:11-16, 39:25-29 and this same re-gathering is written about by many of the Minor Prophets. What would be the point of God spending all that time, through all those years, via all those prophets, telling Israel that He had every intention to bring them back into their promised land one day in the future, if He had no intention of doing so? That does not make much sense. Therefore, God must still have every intention of fulfilling those promises to the nation and people of Israel… not the Church.

- The Apostle Paul had much to add to this discussion. Note Chapters 9-11 in the book of Romans. In the early portion of Romans 9, Paul noted that God made a covenant with a particular lineage of people, i.e. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and then the heirs of Jacob. Paul showed his deep frustration concerning how most of the Jews had rejected Jesus at that time (in the mid-A.D. 50s).

"For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of **my brothers**, those of my own race, **the people of Israel**. **Theirs is the** adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the ***covenants***, the receiving of the law, the temple worship **and the *promises***. **Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ**, who is God over all, forever praised!" Romans 9:3-5

The interpretation here is that the people of Israel were still going to get everything that God had promised and covenanted to them. In this letter to the Romans, written over twenty years after the Church began, Paul was still noting that the people of Israel (his brothers) were the people of the covenants and promises. Paul said nowhere that they had relinquished those promises because of their current state of unbelief and unrepentant sin.

In fact, one day in the future, God will grant the fulfillment of His covenants to those in Israel who are the children of promise. Recall that the promised line went from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and on down.

It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. **7** Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, ***"In Isaac your seed shall be called."*** **8** In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. Romans 9:6-8

There are three ways that the word "seed" is interpreted:

- the natural seed; the heritage of Abraham *through* Isaac and Jacob
- the spiritual heritage within the natural (those same Israelites who are saved by Jesus)
- the spiritual seed of Abraham and Isaac who are Gentiles (yet, also believe in Jesus)

Note that *all* Christians are considered to be the "spiritual seed" of Abraham. Therefore, all Christians are certainly heirs of the wonderful gift of salvation. However, the New Testament does not say that Gentile Christians are the heirs of the national promises God made to the physical descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In fact, the spiritual seed of Abraham is never called "Israel" or used as a synonym for "Israel". And the spiritual seed of Abraham is never said to fulfill the promises given by God in the covenants to the physical seed of Abraham."(Understanding End-times Prophecy, p. 114)

Therefore, while premillennial adherents believe that the Gentile *spiritual seed of Abraham* will inherit the promises of heaven via their belief in Jesus, they will not inherit the Old Testament covenants meant for the *nation* and *people* of Israel. Walvoord states, "While blessing is promised those outside the seed of Abraham if they believe as godly Abraham believed, the particular promises of a great posterity, of possession of the land, and being the channel of blessing to Gentiles is never given to any except the physical seed." (The Millennial Kingdom, p. 161)

Paul then explained in the next chapter that all too many of his countrymen and women have not believed the message of the gospel. Instead, Gentiles had primarily been the individuals who had come to accept Jesus as their Savior.

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" And Isaiah boldly says, "**I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me**." But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." Romans 10:10,20-21

Paul then concluded his discussion on God's future plans for Israel in Romans 11. He asked…

"**Did God reject His people? By no means**! I am an Israelite myself, a descendent of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject His people, whom He foreknew." Romans 11:1-2

In the next several verses in Romans 11, Paul pointed out that God had always had a certain number of elect people, both Gentiles and Israelites, who would place their faith in Him. In the Church Age, salvation was by grace, and grace alone…

"at the present time **there is a remnant chosen by grace**. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace." Romans 11:5-6

Paul continued on and taught that the Gentiles had been grafted in to the olive tree, while some of the original branches (the Jews) had been broken off. But, Paul quickly added… "if they [the Jews] do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for **God is able to graft them in again**." Romans 11:23

Paul had to be speaking of the Jews in this verse. No other group of people fit this description. Then, the bottom line is given by Paul. Israel will once again be brought back into the family, once God has finished dealing with the Gentiles, during this Church Age…

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: **Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so *all Israel will be saved*, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion [Jesus will come back from heaven to Zion]; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.** And **this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins**." As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for **God's gifts and his call are irrevocable**. Romans 11:25-29

There are surprisingly many different interpretations for the phrase "all Israel will be saved". It seems fairly clear that Paul is simply saying that during the Tribulation (which will be when God will once again be dealing particularly with the nation of Israel and the Jews) the vast majority of the people of Israel will turn to Jesus as Savior. This is analogous to what is meant when God says that:

"this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matt 24:14

It is doubtful that God meant every square foot of the globe by this statement just as He did not likely mean that every Jew will be saved during the seven year Tribulation. Romans 11:27 says that "this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." Premillennialists believe that this verse is saying that when Jesus returns, God will then honor His New Covenant with Israel. At that time, Israel will finally have found Jesus and have God's Law written in their hearts. By the way, all of this fits in beautifully with the vision John received on the Isle of Patmos, known as The Revelation of Jesus Christ. This will be reviewed in detail in the last section.

- Paul pointed out in his epistle to the Galatians that God's covenant is irrevocable and non-transferrable…

  He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.
  Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. ***Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case.*** The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. What I mean is this: **The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant**

previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. Gal 3:14-18

The point to understand here is that God has given the nation of Israel, through their patriarchs, irrevocable covenants and promises. Once a covenant is ratified, neither the parties nor the provisions of the covenant may be changed. These covenants are made with national Israel and cannot be transferred to another nation or group.

Certainly, one aspect of the promise to Abraham is that His progeny would one day be a blessing to all mankind. Jesus was the manifestation of that blessing. All nations are blessed through Him. However, there are still many of the covenant promises that have not yet been fulfilled. Because these covenants are everlasting, unconditional and non-transferrable, God will one day grant the fulfillment of them to the nation and people of Israel! One day, the nation of Israel will turn to God as they recognize the Messiah that they so sadly rejected two thousand years ago. This will happen to the actual nation of Israel… not a spiritual equivalent, the Church, as some believe. As Paul said, "no one can set aside a covenant that has duly been established."

- Paul wrote in his epistle to the Galatians concerning the fact that works will not save anyone (including becoming circumcised). Instead, salvation was via the cross of Jesus. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. **15** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. **16** And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, ***and*** **upon the Israel of God**. Gal 6:14-16

  Earlier, when giving the defense of the amillennial position on this same topic, this 16th verse was translated as "*even* to the Israel of God". The amillennial position, therefore, is that Paul is equating the Church (i.e. believers) to the Israel of God. However, the verses can just as easily be translated as "*and upon* the Israel of God." In fact, according to theologian S. Lewis Johnson, the far more common translation of the word used in this verse, *kai*, is "and" not "even". That translation leads to the more likely conclusion that Paul is wishing peace and mercy to Gentile believers (who he had been speaking to about the rite of circumcision) in Christ **and**, to those Jewish brethren of his who have turned to Christ as Savior. When one considers the fact that there is no verse in the entire New Testament where Israel is used as synonymous with the Church, this is, by far, the more likely meaning.
- All of the promises given in the covenants that God made with the Jews have not yet been fulfilled. Given that these promises are irrevocable and given by God, it is obvious that at some time in the future all of God's promises will be kept. Following the Abrahamic Covenant, other covenants were made by God to the Israelites, including the Palestinian, Davidic and New Covenants.

1. **The Palestinian Covenant**: God added this covenant to His original covenant with Abraham as He promised a certain amount of land for His "chosen people" as an everlasting possession. There is no evidence in the Old Testament that the nation of Israel ever possessed all of the land given to them by God, as outlined in Numbers 34:1-12 and Deut. 30:1-10. Certainly it is clear today that Israel never has had the land as an everlasting possession, as the current land of Israel is only a fraction of the land mass promised by God. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah, Hosea and Zechariah all prophesied a future time when Israel would gain possession of the land of promise. *These prophecies came long after the time of Solomon, the time when Israel had gained possession of more of the promised land than at any other time – yet still not all of the land of promise.* Since God cannot lie, Israel will certainly possess all of the promised land one day in the future.
2. **Davidic Covenant**: This is also an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant. It is also everlasting and unconditional.

   "When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. **He is the one who will build a house** for my Name, and **I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.'"**

   2 Sam 7:12-13,16

   God made it even more obviously an everlasting covenant to the actual genetic heirs of Abraham and David when He said…

   "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: **'Your seed I will establish forever, And build up your throne to all generations**.' "

   Psalms 89:3-4

   I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail. **29** I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure. **30** "If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes, **31** if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands, **32** I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging; **33** but **I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. 34 I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. 35 Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness-- and I will not lie to David-- 36 that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun;** 37 it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky."

   Psalms 89:28-37

So, in Samuel, we see God promising David an everlasting throne for one of His offspring. That would be Jesus, of course. It is important to note that God never did wrest the throne away from the heirs of David… even though most of them engaged in much apostasy and sin. God did take the throne away from King Saul for his sin.

Yet, although King David was guilty of murder and adultery, and his son Solomon was guilty of idolatry, God still kept His promise to David and used His lineage (Joseph and Mary) to usher the Messiah into this world. These covenant promises of God are unbreakable and are meant for those to whom He made them… the actual nation and people of Israel. Even Gabriel told Mary that her Son, Jesus, would someday reign over the **descendents of Jacob**… that is, **the nation of Israel**, forever. "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. **The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."** Luke 1:30-33

Simply put, God had made a covenant with David that the nation of Israel would be preserved, eventually return to the land of promise and be ruled gloriously by Jesus Christ, the greatest Son of David. Certainly, there is never any explicit statement of a "spiritual Israel" being the Church in any verse in the Bible! It is true that Jesus now sits at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. However, one day, probably in the not too distant future, Jesus will come to earth once again and reign over the Millennial Kingdom of God while seated on the earthly throne of David. The Heavenly Throne of God and the earthly throne of David are not the same. God's throne is from everlasting. David's throne began just a little over 3,000 years ago. God's throne is over the entire universe. David's throne is over the promised land of Israel. Jesus noted the difference when He stated in the Revelation…

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on *my throne*, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on *his throne*." Rev 3:20-21

Here, Jesus draws a distinction between His throne on earth (His Father gave Him this throne, as noted in Luke 1:33 above) and His Father's throne in heaven. A few days before His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them how He would soon be going to heaven, but would return one day to set up His Kingdom on earth.

He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and **then to return**. Luke 19:12

As will be shown in detail later in this treatise, Jesus will return in the future to rule on this earth *after* the earthly kingdoms have all fallen. Just after describing the destruction of the world's kingdoms to the Apostle John in His vision, a picture of the future reign of Christ on earth is shown…

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. Rev 11:15-18

This is but another of the many examples of the two separate thrones of Jesus… one on earth, the other in heaven.

3. **The New Covenant**: After many centuries of apostasy in Old Testament times, God finally allowed Israel to receive the punishment for their continual sin. Assyria captured the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. and Babylonia captured Judah in 606 B.C., eventually burning the Temple to the ground in 586 B.C. The Jews were scattered to the four corners of the world. Before these defeats happened, however, God once again entered into a New Covenant with His beloved Israel.

"'I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of wild beasts so that they may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety. I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season; **there will be showers of blessing. The trees of the field will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people will be secure in their land**. **They will know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them. They will no longer be plundered by the nations, nor will wild animals devour them.** They will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid. I will provide for them a land renowned for its crops, and they will no longer be victims of famine in the land or bear the scorn of the nations. **Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Sovereign LORD.** You my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are people, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign LORD.'" Ezek 34:25-31

"'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. **25** I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. **26** I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And **I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. 28 You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.** Ezek 36:24-28

"'**My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd**. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the

land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. **I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever.** My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.'" Ezek 37:24-28

"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.** **32** It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "**I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people**. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For **I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."** Jer 31:31-34

I will make an **everlasting covenant** with them: **I will never stop doing good to them**, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that **they will never turn away from me.** I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul. "This is what the LORD says: **As I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will give them all the prosperity I have promised them**. Jer 32:40-42

There are many, many other examples in the Bible that show that no matter how much Israel will turn away from their God, ultimately, He will never abandon them. Certainly, one of the most beautiful and amazing examples of how God will stay true to His people is given in the book of Hosea. In this book, God actually tells that prophet to marry a prostitute in order to demonstrate the undying love that God would always have for His "chosen people". No matter how much they strayed from His Laws and edicts (as Gomer strayed from her husband, Hosea), God would always stay true to them… and one day bring them back to Him… when they were ready to follow Him.

In the second verse of Hosea, God told that prophet what he was to do…

When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife (Gomer) and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD." Hosea 1:2

After his wife, now an adulterous, was later being sold as a slave, God told Hosea to once again show his love for Gomer. During the Tribulation, Israel will finally turn to the one, true Messiah,. He will be the one that they had rejected when He came to die for mankind's sins…

and, as a nation, they continue to reject Him to this very day. However, God will not abandon Israel. As the story of Hosea illustrates, God will love Israel, forgive her, and *take her back*. Not only that, but He will shower Israel with *His blessings in the last days* as well. Note the verses below…

The LORD said to me, "**Go, show your love to your wife again**, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. **Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods** and love the sacred raisin cakes." **2** So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. **3** Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you." **4** For **the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. 5 Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. *They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days*.** Hosea 3:1-5

When Israel finally repents and turns to God, He will forgive them…

"I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Hosea 14:4-5

"The days are coming," declares the LORD,
"when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes.
New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills. **14 I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. 15 I will plant Israel in their own land, *never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them*," says the LORD your God.** Amos 9:13-15

In these verses, and others that could be quoted, God plainly promises to eventually save "all Israel" plus give them many material blessings. God promises to forgive them of their sins and dwell with them forever in an eternal sanctuary. Although there are some who believe that these promises are now meant only for the Church (as the so-called "spiritual" Israel), nowhere is this stated in the Scriptures. Instead, all of the verses concerning this New Covenant appear quite plainly to teach that Israel will someday be brought back into the fold and receive all of their promises of old. Paul confirms this in his epistle to the Romans as shown earlier. The final fulfillment of this covenant will be realized in the future Millennial Kingdom of God.

Although the Church is not mentioned in these covenants, it should be understood that the believers in Christ will also be partakers of many of the blessings of God in the future. Because of the coming of Jesus through the house of David, the Church now exists and those in it will inherit eternal life. God worked through His "chosen people", Israel, to provide salvation for everyone. Keep in mind what the Bible says…

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and **all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**" Gen 12:3

Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. **All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.** Gen 28:14

As we shall see, those in the Church will also enter into the Millennial Kingdom with the saved remnant of Israel. However, there are many promises to Israel that are not meant for the Church. For example, the land given to Israel along with the blessings derived from the land are only meant for Israel. Much more will be learned on the topic of the Millennial Kingdom later in this book as we study The Revelation.

Conclusion:

The covenants made with Israel are meant for the nation and people of Israel alone. These covenants were not made with the Gentiles or the Church. These covenants are eternal and non-transferrable. All of the promises of God will come true someday… most will be fulfilled during the Millennial Kingdom. Sin and apostasy has caused God to delay the fulfillment of some of these promises. It is also true that individual Jews who deny God will not be a part of the fulfillment of the promises. However, at some point in the future, God will honor His covenant to the faithful remnant of His "chosen people", the nation of Israel.

There is no clear evidence in the entire Bible that God planned to transfer His promises to certain Jewish patriarchs and other Jewish men (e.g. Moses, David) over to a different group of people… the Gentiles. In order to arrive at this conclusion, covenant theologians and amillennialists put great credence in one or two verses from Galatians and Romans. However, even these verses, as has been shown, are really only clear about the fact that all Christians are the "spiritual seed" of Abraham. Although, one certainly may argue that these verses also state that the Church has inherited the physical promises of God to Israel… this would seem to be an enormous stretch. Simply put, if a person is promised a gift that will pass on to his children and children's children, he should not expect that gift to be meant for anyone other than his true genetic seed. Paul took pains to point this concept out in his epistle to the Romans (Chapters 9-11). One final and interesting point… it says in the Bible that these promises to Abraham were only meant to pass down through the line of Isaac, then through Jacob. Ishmael and Esau did not share in these promises. Apparently, if a Palestinian (from the lines of Ishmael and/or Esau) becomes a Christian, he would not inherit the covenants or promises given to Isaac. Of course, **all Christians** inherit the **spiritual gift of salvation**.

The Tribulation:

The next topic to consider is often referred to as the Tribulation. However, it is also known by many other names such as: the time of *Jacob's trouble*, the time of the *Day of the Lord, wrath of God* and the *seventieth week of Daniel* (for reasons which will be understood later). This tribulation period is looked at differently depending on the view one takes on the Millennium. The events of this period in history are introduced by the Old Testament prophets and then given detailed explanation through a vision given to the Apostle John in The Revelation

of Jesus Christ. Let us briefly take a look at the three major millennial positions to see how they view the Tribulation:

- **Amillennial viewpoint**: the Tribulation is considered to be those trials and difficulties that the believers in the Church encounter daily. Some (but not all) adopting this view suggest that there will be a time of much greater tribulation just prior to Christ's return.
- **Postmillennial viewpoint**: Most people with this view believe that there will not be a literal tribulation period. Some, on the other hand, suggest that although the end of the Millennium will be characterized by the Christianization of the world via Christ's supernatural influence through His children (i.e. the Church), there still will be a period of more intensive tribulation than has been normally seen throughout history as one approaches the coming of Christ. Of course, this is quite paradoxical considering their core belief that the world will be moving toward a period of increasing peace and harmony as it approaches the end-times. No particular importance seems to be given to this tribulation period. Certainly, it is not meant to accomplish anything specifically with respect to the nation of Israel.
- **The Premillenial view**: A futurist and literal interpretation of the Bible will lead one to a premillennial view of eschatology. In this view of future events, the Tribulation is seen to be a seven year period during which God dispenses His wrath on the earth. Satan and his minions are very active during this time as well. In this case, however, there is a particular and significant reason why God will be pouring out His tribulation onto the earth. This is also called the "time of Jacob's trouble" because it is when God finally re-focuses His interest on Israel (Jacob was renamed Israel by God). God will bring judgment at that time but will also use this time to providentially bring His "chosen people" back to a saving relationship with Him. A large remnant of Israel will finally accept the true Messiah during this time.

  The time prior to this Tribulation is known as the Church Age. God is dealing primarily with the Church during this time… which began at Pentecost. The timing of the end of this Age is very controversial as will be seen shortly. There are many who believe that the Church will be taken out of this world by Jesus just before the Tribulation begins; others are convinced that the Church will go through the seven year Tribulation; still others believe that it will be raptured into heaven sometime *within* the tribulation period. Dispensational premillennialists believe that God will rapture His Church just prior to the Tribulation and then turn His primary attention back to His "chosen people" during the seven years which follows. Much more will be written about this later.

  As mentioned above, due to all of the many and varied events of the Tribulation, the nation of Israel will finally turn and recognize Jesus as their Lord God, Messiah. Details of this time in the future will be seen in the last section when we discuss portions of Daniel and Ezekiel, and provide commentaries on Zechariah, and The Revelation. Suffice it to say now, this Tribulation will last for a literal seven years and end with Jesus

coming back to earth with His saints to defeat the armies of Satan at Armageddon and to set up His earthly Millennial Kingdom.

According to this premillennial viewpoint, there is one other very interesting, exciting, and important event that will happen at some point just before, during or at the conclusion of the Tribulation… i.e. the Rapture of the Church. This topic deserves our attention as it is quite a controversial topic among those holding the premillennial view of the Tribulation.

The Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Jesus:

The last topic to be discussed in this section will be the Second Coming of the Lord. As has been shown in the pages above, there are varying opinions on many different topics concerning the end-times. The significant differences of interpretation between the covenant theologians and the dispensationalists have been noted. The many differing views of the Millennial Kingdom have been described: those of the amillennialists, postmillennialists and premillennialists. The somewhat atypical view of the preterists has also been duly noted. The significant difference of opinion concerning the respective role of Israel and the Church in the latter days has also been presented. Given all of the varying views seen on these topics and others, it probably will be no surprise that there are also many different schools of thought on the Second Coming of Jesus. In fact, there four that are worthy of our consideration.

Before going into the details of each of these unique viewpoints, however, it should be pointed out that there does appear to be fairly universal agreement that there will be two aspects of the Lord's return that bear analysis: the Rapture of the saints in addition to His actual Second Coming back to the earth. The controversy only comes with the *timing* of each of these two events as will be seen. Before going any further, let us introduce both of these events using representative biblical verses:

The Rapture:

According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first**. After that, **we who are still alive and are left will be *caught up*** ***(rapare)*** together with them in the clouds to **meet the Lord in the air**. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. 1 Thess 4:15-18

Behold, **I tell you a mystery**: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and **the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed**. 1 Cor 15:51-52

When Jerome translated the words from Paul's epistle to the church at Thessalonica, noted above, he used the Latin word *rapare* for his translation of the words *caught up*. This is where the expression The Rapture of the Church originated. There is really no notable disagreement concerning what the Rapture is, only a difference of opinion as to when it will happen. The Rapture is the time when Jesus Christ will return from heaven as noted in the verses above, call the saints (those already dead in addition to those still alive) up from the earth to meet Him in the air, forever to be with the Lord. All of these saints will be immediately adorned at that time with their glorified bodies. However, as there are many different opinions given about the timing and nature of the Millennium, there are also many ideas concerning the timing of the Rapture. The four most noteworthy will be stated here: *pretribulation, midtribulation, pre-wrath and posttribulation*. We shall take a closer look at each of them. First, however, it is appropriate to point out the difference between the *Rapture* and the *Second Coming* of Christ:

The Second Coming:

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, [11] who also said, "**Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.**" Acts 1:10-11

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

Then **the LORD will go forth** and fight against those nations, As **He fights in the day of battle**. [4] And **in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives**, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, Zech 14:3-4

While there is quite a difference of opinion on the timing of the *Rapture,* all of the views that will be considered suggest that the *Second Coming* of the Lord will be as the tribulation period draws to a close. Jesus will be coming back to defeat the Antichrist and Satan and to begin His reign as the King of Kings in His Millennial Kingdom on Earth.

Interestingly enough, as was previously noted, God did not make it crystal clear as to the timing of the Rapture. In His Word, there is no specific reference to when this event will take place. People are left to infer when the Rapture will take place… they can do nothing else. It turns out that there is a fairly wide variety of opinion as to its exact timing. One could speculate why God left this issue unclear, but obviously, no one can be sure of God's reasons.

Each of the four viewpoints on the Rapture that will be discussed is defended splendidly be their proponents in books or papers that have been written on that particular position. One interesting thing is that the same biblical verses are used to defend each *different* position. How is that possible? Each of these theologians simply has a different way of interpreting the various

eschatological verses in the Bible. Not only that but, as will soon become clear, the same word or phrase can mean different things to different people. Bible scholars with these disparate views look at these same verses from different perspectives. This results in these four different views on the timing of the Rapture.

Each position is defended with excellence by their major proponents. John Walvoord, Paul Benware, Charles Ryrie, Hal Lindsey and others point out many good reasons to accept as fact the idea of a pretribulation Rapture. Yet, they may be wrong. Marvin Rosenthal is also extremely convincing that the timing of the coming of Christ will be a one-time event that will come near the end of the Tribulation… just before what he states will be the out-pouring of God's wrath upon the earth. He may be wrong. George Eldon Ladd writes beautifully concerning a posttribulation Rapture, giving many seemingly foolproof reasons for his beliefs. Still, he may have it wrong as well. Norman Harrison, Harold Ockenga, Gleason Archer, and others also have strong reasons to support their view of a midtribulation Rapture. They may be right… but they may be wrong. One thing is for sure… all of these men are fine Christians, very intelligent and very knowledgeable. Their views should not be taken lightly. So what are we to do?

The following paragraphs will outline each of these Rapture/Second Coming views in order. The major reasons behind each will be presented. Certainly not all of the reasons that these views are held will be presented because doing so would literally fill several large books. (Those wanting to research these views in more depth will find excellent references in the bibliography). Where deemed appropriate, dissenting viewpoints will be stated as well. It should be understood that essentially every argument that is made as a positive reason for believing in a particular Rapture position can be countered by those who hold a dissenting viewpoint. These positions are clearly debatable… literally. It will be the job of the reader to decide what position makes the most sense to him/her. The fact is, however, none of us will know for sure until Jesus actually does rapture us up to meet Him in the air one glorious day in the future. In the meantime, let us try to understand all four of the possibilities.

Introduction:

Before beginning with a discussion on the pre-wrath view, let me reiterate that it will become evident in the pages that follow, that all of the prophecy scholars holding these varying views on the Rapture are sincere, intelligent, Christian men. They all do carefully reference the Bible to show why they believe that they are correct in their conclusions. However, at most, only one the viewpoints can actually be correct. It is very conceivable that none describe exactly what will actually occur on that glorious day of the Rapture. Therefore, obviously, most of what shall be presented as "fact" in the pages that follow is simply a sincere, yet incorrect, interpretation of various end-time biblical verses. The goal of the reader should be to attempt to determine what makes the most biblical sense after reading the explanations behind each of these four different positions. Please keep this in mind while reading the pages that follow.

Pre-wrath Rapture:

The first viewpoint of the Rapture and Second Coming to be presented in this treatise is most associated with Marvin Rosenthal. At one time, he accepted and taught that the Rapture would occur prior to the Tribulation – the pretribulation view. However, over a period of years during the 1980s, he came to believe that this glorious event would not take place until the latter half of the *seventieth week* of Daniel. To be more specific, he now states that the Rapture will happen at the opening of the seventh seal. This event will come just prior to the time when God pours out His wrath onto the earth and rebellious mankind. Hence, he refers to this view as the *pre-wrath* Rapture of the Church. As will be shown in the paragraphs that follow, Jesus will return to rapture His Church away from this godly wrath, defeat the Antichrist and Satan, and then set up His earthly Kingdom. The Rapture of the Church and the coming of the Lord to the Mount of Olives will both be part of *one extended event*… the Second Coming of Jesus. Of course, the first aspect of this Second Coming will be the Rapture. It will take some time for Jesus to accomplish the remainder of His plan to defeat the forces of evil and to set up His Kingdom.

Many of those who hold to the idea of a premillennial return of Jesus Christ to set up His earthly kingdom believe that the tribulation period is synonymous with the *seventieth week* mentioned in the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel. This is not the view of those who hold to the pre-wrath Rapture of the Church. Instead, they point to the fact that the word tribulation is seen only five times in the entire New Testament, four times in the Gospels and once in The Revelation. In each instance where the Great Tribulation is referenced, it always is used to describe a persecution of God's elect by evil mankind, not by the wrath of God. Marvin Rosenthal concludes, "the Great Tribulation speaks of man's wrath against man, not God's wrath against man." (*The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*, Rosenthal, p. 105) He also notes that in all of these verses in the New Testament, including the words of Jesus in His Olivet Discourse, the tribulation period is always used to describe the period of time that begins in the middle of the 70th week, not the beginning of that week. Admittedly, the first half of this week is noted to be a period of much trouble, but not to the degree that would warrant the designation of the Tribulation. Instead, those with this concept of the Second Coming prefer to call this first half of the "seventieth week" *the beginning of sorrows*. Only after the Temple is desecrated (at the half-way point), will the Great Tribulation begin. Much attention is paid to the Lord's words in Matthew:

For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. [22] And **unless those days were shortened**, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. Matt 24:21-22

In the verses above, Jesus is saying that the Great Tribulation would result in the destruction of the entire earth and the loss of all human life, if it were allowed to continue to its ultimate conclusion. For that reason, He will intervene and shorten this time period… it will not last a full 3 ½ years.

Next will come massive cosmic abnormalities that Jesus speaks of a little later on in His discourse. Note, that He says that this begins immediately *after the Tribulation* and right before His coming. In other words, **Jesus pinpoints the Second Coming** in these verses. It will be *just after the Great Tribulation* is cut short and *just after the cosmic disturbances begin*. His angels will gather up His elect from all over the earth…

"***Immediately after the tribulation of those days*** the **sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken**. [30] **Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven**, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and ***they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven*** **with power and great glory.** [31] And **He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet**, and they will **gather together His elect from the four winds**, from one end of heaven to the other.
Matt 24:29-31

Up until this point, God will not have poured out His wrath upon mankind. According to this view of the end-times, the *beginning of sorrows* and the *Great Tribulation* will bring great distress to all mankind, but will be the result of Satan, the Antichrist and the evil of mankind… it *will not be due to the wrath of God*. God will not be dealing with His creation in judgment until the coming of Day of the Lord. So when will this time come?

The time of the cosmic disturbances corresponds with the opening of the sixth seal and will herald the soon coming Day of the Lord. Rosenthal goes on to say that **the Day of the Lord begins with the opening of the seventh seal.** This is in marked contrast to those prophecy scholars who identify the Day of the Lord as another way of referring to the seven year Tribulation. In fact, in the pre-wrath view, it does not begin until fairly deep into the seven year period. This is important because "if expositors get the starting point of the Day of the Lord right, the timing of the Rapture becomes clear. **The Rapture occurs on the very day the Day of the Lord begins**." (ibid, p. 117) This is a very recent and well thought out position concerning the timing of the Rapture and Second Coming. It certainly is unique in its approach and interpretation of the phrase "the Day of the Lord." So much rests on this fairly unique interpretation. However, is this interpretation correct? As certainly is appropriate, Rosenthal gives a fairly detailed defense of his position in his book on the pre-wrath Rapture.

In this book, Rosenthal explained his reasons for placing the Day of the Lord at the latter portion of the *seventieth week* of Daniel… immediately after the Great Tribulation. The Day of the Lord is a phrase used many times in both the Old and New Testaments. It is used nineteen times in the Old Testament by a variety of prophets. It is used by Paul, Luke, and Peter in the New Testament. Many examples are given to show that this time will be a time of divine judgment upon Israel and the Gentile nations for their rebellious actions against a Holy God. Much of the judgment of God toward the nations will be because of their persecution of Israel. This pre-wrath view is in agreement with the fact that the Rapture will come suddenly and with great fanfare…

But the **day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night**, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both **the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.** 2 Peter 3:10

Verses like that in 2 Peter above also lead to the conclusion that there will be no blessing associated with this "Day". Instead, it will be a time of terrible judgment rained down upon mankind by God, Himself. This time of judgment will occur "in connection with the Lord's Second Coming during the latter part of the *seventieth week* of Daniel." (ibid, p. 129)

As the *seventieth week* comes to a close, so also will this Day of the Lord. Then, there will be a renovation of the heavens and earth before the one thousand year Millennial Kingdom begins. The important evidence to consider is that which points to the timing of the *beginning* of this time of God's judgment. Since there are many verses that do suggest that the Church will not have to suffer through the time of the wrath of God, this is a critical question to answer. That is, when does the Day of the Lord begin? "The Word of God teaches that the Day of the Lord wrath will commence immediately after the Church is raptured." (ibid, p. 139) Rosenthal points to Noah and Lot as two Old Testament examples of how God took His people out of His coming wrath immediately before that judgment began. "Deliverance of the righteous immediately precedes judgment of the wicked. To postulate a period of time between rapture (deliverance) and wrath (judgment) is to contradict the Scriptures." (ibid, p. 140) It is believed by those holding to this theory of the Rapture and Second Coming that the first five seals are *not* part of God's judgment upon mankind. The first four seals are typically referred to as "the four horsemen of the apocalypse." The fifth seal speaks about the martyrs for Christ. The thought among those accepting this pre-wrath idea of the Rapture is that a Holy God would not be responsible for the death of His faithful followers (i.e. the martyrs).

One additional reason is given why this *Day* will not begin until sometime in the second half of the seven years. The thought is that since this is a time of unprecedented judgment from God, it does not make sense that the Antichrist "will emerge, expand his power, erect an image of himself in Israel, ask men to bow to his authority, kill multitudes who refuse, and eventually become a world ruler." (ibid p. 147) Instead, this will be a time where the Lord will be exalted alone and the proud will be brought low. Those aforementioned activities of the Antichrist will have taken place *earlier* during the seven year period.

There is good evidence that the Day of the Lord begins with the opening of the seventh seal. For instance, there is clear teaching in the Bible that there must be significant cosmic disturbances before this Day begins…

Behold, **the day of the LORD comes**, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. [10] **For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine.** Isaiah 13:9-10

For **the day of the LORD** is near in the valley of decision. [15] **The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness.** [16] The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter

His voice from Jerusalem; **The heavens and earth will shake**; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel. Joel 3:14-16
For the **day of the LORD is great and very terrible**; Who can endure it? "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. [31] The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, ***Before*** **the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.** Joel 2:11, 30-31

Those who hold to the pretribulation Rapture position believe that no prophesied events must occur prior to the coming of Christ in the clouds for His Church. This is called the *doctrine of imminence*. However, those who hold the pre-wrath position counter that if the Day of the Lord begins at the onset of Daniel's *seventieth week*, and significant cosmic events must occur prior to this time, then this would certainly make the Rapture a non-imminent event. Without first experiencing incredible cosmic signs in the heavens, the Rapture could not be expected. Therefore, the pretribulation Rapture is not a tenable position.

Instead, the events leading up to the Rapture can be summarized as follows:

- The beginning of sorrows – first 3 ½ years
- The Great Tribulation begins with the opening of the fifth seal – at the onset of the second half of the seven year period noted in Daniel. It begins in the middle of the *seventieth week* of Daniel with the "abomination of desolation". The Antichrist will begin to show His true evil nature at this time. This Great Tribulation is cut short so that all flesh is not lost.
- Cosmic disturbances occur with the opening of the sixth seal.
- The sign of the Son of Man appearing in heaven will be manifested.
- This is related to the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ – an essentially single event; the Church is raptured, followed almost immediately thereafter by Christ's return to earth.
- The Day of the Lord begins. This is the period of time during which God's wrath will be poured out onto the unrepentant sinners on the earth. This Day must be at least five months long as the fifth trumpet judgment alone is said to last that long.

Additional evidence that the wrath of God will involve only the last portion of the second half of the *seventieth week* of Daniel comes from the fact that even the word "wrath" is not seen in The Revelation prior to Revelation 6:17. It is only with the opening of the seventh seal that frequent mention of God's wrath being poured out on mankind begins. Since the opening of the seventh seal leads directly to the seven trumpet and seven bowl judgments, these are the judgments that constitute God's wrath. The first six seals are therefore exempt from being considered as part of the wrath of God. Since virtually all prophecy scholars accept the fact that God will protect His followers from the judgment that *He* will loose upon the world, the Rapture must precede the opening of the seventh seal. Hence, the belief is that the Rapture and the concurrent Second Coming of Christ occurs in the latter portion of the *seventieth week* of Daniel.

Marvin Rosenthal provides evidence from the Scriptures that suggest that many important events must **precede the Day of the Lord**. Included among these are: the cosmic disturbances already mentioned, the coming of Elijah, the sealing of 144,000 Jews, the Rapture of the Church yielding a great multitude in heaven, the apostasy, the revealing of the man of sin, and the blowing of the last trump which will herald the outpouring of God's wrath. The fact that all of these things must occur before the Day of the Lord begins makes it impossible for the Rapture to occur prior to a time within the last 3 ½ years of the *seventieth week* of Daniel. In fact, it must occur just prior to the onset of this *Day*. The fact that cosmic disturbances must precede this *Day* has already been shown. Just a few of the verses supporting the fact that the Day of the Lord must follow some of the other events listed above follow…

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet **before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.** Mal 4:5

Elijah will probably be one of the two witnesses and they will appear on the scene prior to the Day of the Lord.

One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed. Rev 7:4

Rosenthal believes that these faithful Jews were sealed for protection from the wrath of God that was about to be poured out on an unrepentant world – the 7th seal is opened in the very next chapter.

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that **Day (of the Lord) will not come unless the falling away (apostasy) comes first, and the man of sin (Antichrist) is revealed,** the son of perdition, 2 Thess 2:3

Paul was saying that the apostasy must occur and the Antichrist must be revealed (i.e. his true purpose and identity as an agent of Satan) prior to the Rapture of the Church. Rosenthal believes that this places that time after the abomination of desolation since he believes that the Antichrist will not be recognized for who he truly is until his image is erected in the Temple in the middle of the *seventieth week*. This, he believes, is certainly in line with the verses noted above.

For **God did not appoint us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ 1 Thess 5:9

Therefore, the Church must be raptured prior to the Day of the Lord.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet.** For the trumpet will sound, and **the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.** [53] For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 1 Cor 15:51-53

The Rapture will be at the last trumpet.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the **day of the LORD is coming**, For it is at hand: Joel 2:1

The last trumpet comes just before the Day of the Lord.

Rosenthal and others who support this pre-wrath view of the Rapture take the time to show how the Day of the Lord has to follow all of the events noted above. He believes that he has given good reasons to believe that the wrath of God is only meted out during that *Day*. Therefore, since many of these events take place well into the second half of the last 3 ½ years of Daniel's *seventieth week,* the Day of the Lord must be near the latter portion of this time as well. Since God will not allow His Church to experience His wrath, Jesus will come just before that time.

The last point to make clear is that those with the pre-wrath view are convinced that there will be only one stage to the Second Coming of Christ. Christ will rapture His Church and come back to earth to initiate the Day of the Lord judgment. Referring back once again to the example of Noah, the Lord will begin His judgment upon the earth immediately after He takes His people out of harm's way (i.e. in this case, raptures the Church). Rosenthal teaches that the coming of the Lord is "a comprehensive whole. There is only one Second Coming. It includes the Rapture of the Church, the outpouring of God's wrath during the Day of the Lord, and Christ's physical return in glory. The meaning of the word coming (parousia) demonstrates that fact. It means a coming and continuing presence. That would be contradicted by the concept of a coming at the beginning of the *seventieth week* and another at its end, as pretribulationism has often taught. The Lord's coming is consistently portrayed as a singular event." (ibid, p. 221-222) Rosenthal goes on to give numerous examples that he says show that the only reasonable way to view the Second Coming of Jesus is as a singular return… the Rapture of the Church by the Lord, followed almost immediately by the earthly return of Jesus with His saints. He states that there is never a hint that this Second Coming will be made up of two separate events.

Objections to this view:

As will be seen in the pages to come, there are at least four different positions on the timing of the Rapture. We have just considered one of these four. For each of these positions there are also four dissenting opinions; that is, there are people who have written rebuttals attempting to show just why a particular position is incorrect. The fact is that since God chose not to make it perfectly clear concerning the timing of the Rapture and the Second Coming, there will always be several different interpretations. It is my hope that each reader will evaluate all four positions and the objections to each, and arrive at his/her own conclusion. In any case, I believe that it is not a good idea to be dogmatic on this issue. A person should be prepared to face whatever God has planned for the future. Regardless of the actual final answer on the Rapture and Second Coming of Jesus, God will be there to take care of His own. Now let us consider some of the objections to the pre-wrath view.

- The pre-wrath view states that there will many signs that will come before the Rapture of the Church. Many people believe that this eliminates the possibility of an imminent return of Christ for His Church. If the Antichrist must appear on the scene, if there is to be the famous treaty between Israel and her current enemies and other events that would occur prior to the Day of the Lord, it will be impossible for anyone to look forward to suddenly being raptured by the Lord. On the other hand, there are many verses that suggest that those who are part of the Church of Jesus Christ should be alert and always prepared for this glorious event. Note that Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica that the Christian should not be concerned about facing the coming wrath, instead he/she was to… wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who **delivers us from the wrath to come**. 1 Thess 1:1

  One more example follows from Paul's words to Titus. He said that… we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, [13] **looking for the blessed hope** and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Titus 2:12-13

  The point is that we as Christians should be living expectantly that Jesus could return at any time. That is why those in the Church have "the blessed hope"… not a hope of attempting to avoid martyrdom through the Tribulation, but the very real hope of escaping all of the wrath to come. This can only occur if Jesus comes to rapture our glorified bodies into heaven *prior to the onset of the seventieth week of Daniel.*
- Those holding the pre-wrath view do not recognize that God has separate plans for dealing with the Church and Israel. However, Daniel 9:24-27 seems to clearly point to a time in the future, the *seventieth week of Daniel,* in which God will once again concentrate on His "chosen people". God will chastise them, teach them, and eventually lead them into a mass repentance. It is true that not all Jews will choose to follow the true Messiah, Jesus, at that time. However, there will be a very significant remnant that will come to a saving relationship with Him. This seven year period is alluded to in Daniel 9. After writing about the first sixty-nine weeks of years, the prophet says… Then **he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week**; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate." Dan 9:27

  This covenant has yet to be made. Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross to conclude the 69th week. Almost all prophecy scholars agree on this point. The *seventieth week* has yet to come. There is certainly no time in past history that is representative of what is to happen during this seven year period. Daniel wrote that this "week of years" would see the completion of God's plans for Israel prior to the bringing in of the Kingdom. Note in the verse below, introducing the plans for the *seventy weeks*, God says that this time concerns Daniel's people. Daniel's people are the Jews, the Israelites. This time is for God to deal with Israel, not the Church.

"Seventy weeks are determined for **your people** and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to **make reconciliation for iniquity**, to **bring in everlasting righteousness**, to seal up vision and prophecy, and **to anoint the Most Holy**. Dan 9:24

As we have already seen, there are many and varied verses in the Bible that tell of God's plan to bring Israel back into their land in the end-times. At that time, He will bring them back into a saving relationship with Jesus, the Messiah. For example, God told Ezekiel…

"Son of man, **these bones are the whole house of Israel**. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' [12] Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O **My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel… I will put My Spirit in you**, and you shall live, and **I will place you in your own land.** Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD.' " Ezek 37:11-12,14

God is speaking to His prophet Ezekiel about His "chosen people", Israel. There is no doubt about it. At the conclusion of the *seventieth week*, God will **anoint the Most Holy**. Jesus will then begin His reign over the Millennial Kingdom.

Whereas the pre-wrath proponents believe that the Church will be on the earth for most of this seven year period, many believe that God will rapture His Church out of the earth just before this time begins. Just as there was a beautiful and sudden beginning to the Church at Pentecost right after God set aside His direct dealings with Israel, there may well be a sudden and beautiful Rapture of the Church just before God goes back to dealing with that same Israel. That is certainly is a reasonable conclusion in any case.

- One of the more significant reasons for dissent between those with the pre-wrath view and others relates to the distinction made by the former between the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. In fact, this may actually be the main point of contention. As noted earlier, the pre-wrath contingent believes that the Great Tribulation begins at the mid-point of the *seventieth week* of Daniel, but is followed 1-2½ years later by the Day of the Lord. The Rapture, in their opinion, happens just before this *Day*. The Great Tribulation is noted to be a time of terrible trouble by all prophecy scholars, whether they hold the pre-trib, post-trib, mid-trib, or pre-wrath position. In fact, Rosenthal noted that Jesus described this time in the following manner…

  For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as **has not been since the beginning of the world** until this time, **no, nor ever shall be**." Matt 24:21

  Daniel says basically the same thing… there shall be **a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.** Dan 12:1

  And Joel adds… For that day is great, So that none is like it; and it is the **time of Jacob's trouble**, But he shall be saved out of it. Jer 30:7

Jesus says that there will never be a time worse than the Great Tribulation. These are His own words. Interestingly, the pre-wrath view says that the time that *follows* this Great Tribulation is the Day of the Lord. This is supposedly ***not the same time as the Great Tribulation.*** Therefore, it should not be a time of as much tribulation as the Great Tribulation. This is odd in that this is the time that God's wrath is finally raining down on the earth and mankind… in addition to that supplied by Satan. One would normally think that this should be the absolute worst time in history. In fact, Rosenthal says that it will be. That presents a problem for those holding this view. The only way that the Day of the Lord can be the most terrible time of judgment upon the earth is to *equate it* with the Great Tribulation. At least, that is what those who object to the pre-wrath view believe.

One other point related to this discussion. According to the outline of Rosenthal, the only aspect of the *seventieth week* of Daniel that is attached to the time of the Great Tribulation is the 5th seal judgment. The first four seals are said to occur during the "beginning of sorrows". Rosenthal states that "the cosmic disturbances which the Lord taught (Matt 24:29) and which parallel the 6th seal signal the coming of the Son of Man in heaven." (ibid 110) Yet, these occur *after* the Great Tribulation according to the words of Jesus…

"**Immediately *after* the tribulation** of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Matt 24:29

Therefore, the only aspect of all of the seals, trumpets and bowl judgment that is included in the Great Tribulation, according to Rosenthal, is the 5th seal judgment. That is a viewpoint that is simply not accepted by many prophecy scholars. It is much too limiting a conception of this time of terrible tribulation.

- This pre-wrath view states that the only judgments that should be attributed to God are those coming from the trumpets and bowls. All of the judgments that arise from the opening of the seal judgments are from man and/or Satan. This position is rejected by many prophecy scholars because it is their belief that *all* of the judgments handed down in this seven year period are the direct result of God's judgment on all mankind. That is, the entire seven year period of time is a time of the pouring out of God's wrath onto the earth. There are at least two reasons to back this point of view. For one thing, only Jesus (God the Son) is found capable and worthy to open the seal judgments. *These seals will remain closed if it they are not opened and initiated by God the Son.* However, God will decide to open them one day. That will be the day that He decides mankind is ready to receive His wrathful judgment as He leads Israel and all men toward the Millennial Kingdom. Just as is true today, even during those terrible days of tribulation, some will repent but many will reject God's call. In any case, all will be given the chance to repent and turn to Jesus during that seven year period.

Secondly, it is important to realize that *God can intervene and direct the actions of mankind in a variety of ways.* For example, God was directly responsible for judging Judah (Southern Kingdom) and Israel (Northern Kingdom) because they would not follow Him and keep His commandments. They rejected God and followed false gods. Although it was God whose wrath came down on these two Kingdoms, He used Babylon and Assyria to carry out His plan. They were His instruments. *God will one day use the Antichrist and even Satan and his demons to carry out His plan to judge the world during the Tribulation… over the entire seven period.*

- One unique aspect of Rosenthal's concept of the second half of the seventieth "week of years" of Daniel is that although the Great Tribulation will begin at the mid-point, it will be cut short and last less than the final 3 ½ years. Note what Jesus said…

  For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. [22] And **unless those days were shortened**, **no flesh would be saved;** but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.
  Matt 24:21-22

  A careful examination of the words of Jesus leads one to the proper conclusion that God will shorten the length of the Great Tribulation from its originally planned length to its final pre-determined length. The pre-wrath proponents say that the Great Tribulation must now last less than 3 ½ years. There is nothing at all in the words of Jesus or anywhere else in the Bible that suggests that conclusion. It is far more likely, say those who reject the pre-wrath view, that God in His omniscience was quite aware of any and all situations that might eventuate - from eternity past - and He shortened the Great Tribulation from whatever He originally may have considered to the 3½ years that it now will be. That is, the Great Tribulation will last 3 ½ years… not less.

  There is one other rather odd aspect to Rosenthal's idea of shortening the Great Tribulation in order to add a distinct Day of the Lord where the terrible wrath of God will come pouring down on man. Almost everyone would agree after reading the sequence of events that constitute the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments that these judgments get more and more severe as they proceed. In fact, there really is little doubt about this. That being the case, how is there any logic in God shortening the Great Tribulation in order for mankind to make it through alive (because if it were to continue "no flesh would be saved"), then going ahead and making everything even worse for those years that constitute the Day of the Lord? How would that work??? It is true that Rosenthal says that the Church would be raptured just prior to the Day of the Lord, but the rest of mankind does still have to make it through the remaining years. However, Jesus said that no flesh would be saved even if things did not get any worse than they had been during the Great Tribulation. Now keep in mind that, according to this viewpoint, there will be nothing worse than the time when God's wrath reigns down in that *Day*. Therefore, logic would require that no person would be alive at the conclusion of the seven year period. [If a person could not live through the Great Tribulation, they certainly would not survive

the Day of the Lord]. Yet, some people must survive. This constitutes a real problem for those adhering to this pre-wrath position.

- Another problem that arises for those with this pre-wrath view relates to Paul's quote noted in his letter to the Thessalonians, "For you yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night**. [3] For **when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them**, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. [4] But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this ***Day*** should overtake you as a thief. 1 Thess 5:2-4

  Please note that Paul was telling those in Thessalonica that everybody will be living in a state of peace and security right up to the time when sudden destruction strikes. According to Rosenthal, the Great Tribulation will be ongoing right up to the beginning of this Day of the Lord. It is quite difficult for many to understand how so many people, especially those in Israel, could be feeling so safe and secure during those days of Great Tribulation. As noted above, those days will be "such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be". (Matt. 24:22)

  In other words, many believe that Rosenthal is **incorrect** to place the onset of the Day of the Lord near the end of the *seventieth week*. In doing so, he makes the idea that there will be a feeling of peace and safety leading up to that Day quite untenable.
- There is a marked difference of opinion on the following comments by Peter when he wrote on the New Heavens and New Earth…

  the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which **the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.** [11] Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, [12] looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? [13] Nevertheless we, **according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in** which righteousness dwells. 2 Peter 3:10-13

  Once again, in a required effort to keep the "Day of the Lord" confined to a period of one to two years at the end of the *seventieth week* of Daniel, Rosenthal must interpret this portion of Peter's second letter to the Church as referring to the time just before the onset of the Millennial Kingdom. So, sometime very near the end of Daniel's *seventieth week*, the entire world will literally melt due to intense, fiery heat; everything will be burned up and dissolve. Then, the earth and heaven will be re-fashioned in order to begin the Millennium. The problem is that it is extremely difficult to understand just how the humans that come out of this *seventieth week* could possibly live through this re-fashioning process. It is the belief of most prophecy scholars that these verses are written about the time at the conclusion of the Millennium… not at the beginning. At that time, all people who will go forth into eternity with God will have been given their glorified bodies. God, at that time, will re-make the New Heavens and New Earth.

No additional examples of problems and dissenting views to this pre-wrath view will be given. However, there are literally more than a dozen more that could be stated. Hopefully, the point has been made. This view, as well as the three that follow, certainly have their detractors.

Conclusion:

The pre-wrath view of the Rapture and Second Coming was taught by Robert Van Kampen in the 1970s. He wrote the book, *The Rapture Question Answered*. Marvin Rosenthal followed that book in 1990 with his own on the same topic, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*. Both men and their books have been very important in placing this viewpoint into the debate with the three others that will follow. The essence of their argument probably comes down to their definition and understanding of the Day of the Lord and the Wrath of God. Both are said to take place fairly late in the *seventieth week* of Daniel. If they are correct on this point, they may well be correct in their timing of the Rapture. If they are not, their entire argument crumbles.

It will be up to the reader after reading and evaluating the remaining three positions on the subject of Christ's return, to decide which, if any, is the most likely to be true. It probably would be appropriate for those really interested in this topic to read the books noted in the biography at the end before coming to any conclusion. As alluded to earlier, it is not really that easy for an open-minded person to decide which position is the most likely to be correct. None seem to fit perfectly; yet all four are reasonable in many ways. It is a tough choice. Now, let us look at the midtribulation viewpoint.

MidTribulation Rapture:

The next idea to present on the timing of the Rapture was popularized in the 1940s by Norman B. Harrison. He believed that the Rapture of the Church would occur at the mid-point of the seven year Tribulation. Harold Ockenga and Gleason Archer are two other respected theologians who have adopted this view.

This conception of the Rapture has some similarities to that of the pre-wrath view presented just above. However, it is moved to an earlier time within the Tribulation. In fact, the idea here is that the Church will be raptured from this earth just before God's wrath is meted out onto a sinful, unrepentant world. This is just as in the pre-wrath view. It differs in that those with this view see this time beginning at the mid-point of the seven year Tribulation. God will take His Church to heaven just before the time known as the Great Tribulation. That time will be, in fact, the mid-point of the *seventieth week* of Daniel. This Great Tribulation will last three and one-half years.

"Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but **in the middle of the week** he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate." Dan 9:27

"Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" [5] And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to **continue for forty-two months.** Rev 13:4-5

Although the Church will be spared the wrath of God, it will be subject to significant tribulation at the hands of mankind and the Antichrist during the first half of the seven year tribulation period outlined by Daniel. Many midtribulationists believe that people will not be able to tell when the seven year Tribulation has begun. There will not be a single event that will be a marker for the beginning. Instead, because there will be a general increase in famine, wars, persecution, disease and other difficulties as the end-times draws near, no one will know exactly when the mid-point of the Tribulation has arrived. For this reason, the Rapture will be imminent (it can happen without any specific event preceding it just as those holding the pretribulation Rapture viewpoint believe).

As is true in the case of those who hold the pre-wrath view for the Rapture, it is important to understand how those with the midtribulation position interpret the 24th Chapter of Matthew. Harrison attempted to harmonize the prophecies given to John in The Revelation with those given by Jesus sixty-five years earlier on the Mount of Olives. If Harrison was correct in that attempt, the Rapture will occur at the mid-point of the *seventieth week* of Daniel. Let us take a close look at key sections of **Matthew 24** and see how Harrison believes they align with The Revelation given to the Apostle John.

"Take heed that no one deceives you. [5] For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. [6] And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. [7] For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. [8] **All these are the beginning of sorrows**. [9]

The verses above, labeled *the beginning of sorrows* by Jesus, are said by Harrison to refer to the **first four seals**… the four horsemen of the apocalypse of Revelation Chapter 6. The **fifth seal** speaks of the martyrdom of the saints. That topic, the midtribulationist says, is referenced in the next section of Jesus' Olivet speech…

Then **they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake**. [10] And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. [11] Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. [12] And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. [13] But he who endures to the end shall be saved. [14] And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

In the next portion of His famous sermon, Jesus speaks concerning the time of the "abomination of desolation". This will take place at the mid-point of the seventieth "week of years" spoken of by the prophet Daniel. In other words, this is the time generally believed to be at the mid-point of the Tribulation. The beginning of the **Great Tribulation** is first mentioned by the Lord. A reading of Revelation 6:12-17 will reveal many similarities to the words of Jesus. The mention of the *wrath of God* that is about to be unleashed is now seen.

For the **great day of His wrath** has come, and who is able to stand?" Rev 6:17

"Therefore **when you see the *'abomination of desolation,'* spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),** [16] **then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.** [17] Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. [18] And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. [19] But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! [20] And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. [21] **For then there will be *great tribulation*, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.** [22] And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. [23] Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. [24] For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. [25] See, I have told you beforehand. [26] Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. [27] For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. [28] For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

Signs very similar to those of the **sixth seal** in The Revelation are next noted by Jesus…

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days **the sun will be darkened**, and the moon will not give its light; **the stars will fall from heaven**, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Matt. 24:29

I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and **the sun became black** as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. [13] And the **stars of heaven fell to the earth** Rev 6:12-13

Harrison notes the words that then come from Jesus and concludes that the Church is raptured up into the air to be with Him…

[30] **Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.** [31] **And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.** Matt 24:4-31

Chapter 8 of The Revelation begins with the **opening of the seventh seal**. After a poignant silence in heaven, the trumpet judgments begin, one after another. These are described as they are sounded consecutively over the next few chapters until the eleventh chapter is reached. Everything that is described up to that chapter is believed to occur *prior* to the Great Tribulation – the time when the wrath of God is poured out upon mankind. Harrison put it this way, "Wrath is a word reserved for the Great Tribulation." (N. Harrison, *The End*, p. 91) Harrison states in his seminal book on this topic, *The End*, that this wrath is only seen *after* the mid-point of the seven year Tribulation. He points to its use in Chapters 14:10,19; 15:7; 16:1; and beyond. He further defines the nature of the entire Tribulation as being related only to the wrath of God… not any problems that man may suffer prior to that time. "Let us get clearly in mind the nature of the Tribulation, that it is divine wrath and divine judgment." (ibid, p. 120)

It is intriguing to note that Harrison taught that the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation will not be that difficult for the world… including Israel. It may be true that Israel will not endure a great deal of suffering during these early years. However, the scenes that are described in Rev. 6-11 are certainly not consistent with this picture. Many horrible things are described in those chapters, including the loss of billions of people! Yet, Harrison believes that these chapters are describing this exact time period. He says that it is only with the coming of **the wrath of God** that the Great Tribulation will come. This is said to **begin with** the eleventh chapter of The Revelation and **the blowing of the seventh trumpet judgment**.

This chapter is concerned primarily with two witnesses that are given great power to be evangelists for God during a period of 3 ½ years during the seven year period of Daniel. However, at one point they are martyred, then subsequently raised from the dead by God. More will be said about them at a later time in this treatise. The important point here is that Harrison allegorizes these two witnesses to represent a large group of saints. "If the two witnesses are symbolic of a larger group of witnesses, then their resurrection and ascension must be symbolic of the resurrection and Rapture of that larger company." (ibid, p. 122) He then goes on to say that **God is revealing that the Rapture of the Church must occur at this time**… allegorically, of course. He also suggests that God also added a verse that further showed that this must be the time of the Rapture as it mentioned that these witnesses heard a voice from heaven and they ascended into a cloud on their way to heaven. This, he believes, is just too similar to the language Paul used in 1st Thessalonians to be coincidental. Those two verses appear below…

And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And **they ascended to heaven in a cloud**, and their enemies saw them. Rev 11:12

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together with them in the clouds** to meet the Lord in the air.
1 Thess 4:16-17

Harrison finishes his exegesis of this chapter with the statement that ***the seventh trumpet will result initially in the Rapture,*** then it will bring down God's wrath upon unrepentant

mankind, due to the commencement of the Great Tribulation. Very importantly, this seventh trumpet is said to be the same as the last trumpet of 1 Cor. 15:52.

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" Rev 11:15

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the **last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. [53] For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 1 Cor 15:51-53

Harrison also points to the 18th verse for confirmation of this trumpet judgment bringing in the time of God's wrath. The 19th verse shows that the Temple in heaven is open to welcome in the raptured saints.

The nations were angry, and **your wrath has come**, Rev 11:18

Then **the temple of God was opened in heaven** Rev 11:19

So, as can be seen, the argument for a midtribulation Rapture depends a great deal on whether the eleventh chapter of The Revelation should be interpreted as Harrison suggests. He was convinced that when Paul wrote about the last trumpet, he was referring to the same trumpet that was written about by the Apostle John in Rev. 11:15.

Gleason Archer has more recently contributed one additional argument in support of this midtribulation position. He believes that it only makes sense that God would make mention of the two distinct halves of the seven year tribulation period *if something very significant was going to take place at the mid-point*. He said, "It is reasonable to suppose that this event will be nothing less than the fulfillment of 1 Thess. 4:15-17, the sudden removal of the Church from the world scene." (*The Rapture Question*, Walvoord, p. 127) Others who have adopted this point of view also point to the fact that Daniel wrote of this seven year period as having two distinct halves and that there are even distinct differences in the manner of tribulation meted out before and after the opening of the two scrolls of Revelation… the *scroll* (Rev. 5:1) and the *little scroll* (Rev. 10:1,8) of the seven year period. These all suggest that the Rapture takes place during this mid-point of the Tribulation.

The Second Coming of Christ does come at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation in the opinion of those with this conception of the end-times. This, of course, is also the belief of both pre and posttribulation proponents. However, this is one significant difference from those holding the pre-wrath view. As noted earlier, those holding the pre-wrath view believe that both the Rapture and Second Coming are both considered two aspects of the same event.

Objections to this view:

There are many who disagree with this viewpoint of the Rapture. Several of their objections are listed below:

- The proponents of this viewpoint say that there is no mention of the wrath of God prior to the seventh seal and first six trumpet judgments. However, just after the sixth seal is opened, it is written, "For the great day of **His wrath** has come, and who is able to stand?" Rev 6:17
  The wrath of God begins at least at this point of the *seventieth week* of Daniel. This is long before the time referenced in Rev. 11 (the midtribulationalists proposed time for the onset of God's wrath).
- The midtribulation folks say that the Rapture is described in Rev. 11…… *after* the 7th trumpet… everything before is not in the Great Tribulation, that is, the outpouring of the wrath of God… but… the seventh angel sounds his trumpet *after* the supposed Rapture! This surely would seem to be a big problem for those with this viewpoint. Why? These verses suggest that the Rapture (as proposed by those with this view) *precedes* the blowing of the 7th trumpet… it is not a result of the sounding of this trumpet. Note the verses below…
  "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.
  13 In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. 14 The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.
  15 ***Then*** **the seventh angel sounded."** Rev 11:12-15
- The seventh trumpet actually is much closer to the end of the Great Tribulation than its beginning. In fact, those who believe in a posttribulation Rapture, state that the seventh trumpet is blown at the *end* of this period. Also, recall that those with the pre-wrath view are convinced that the seventh seal is opened over two-thirds of the way through the seven year period… and the seventh angel would sound his trumpet *after* the seventh seal is opened. In other words, the timing of the seventh angel sounding his trumpet simply does not seem to correspond to the middle point of the Tribulation.
- In Chapter 7 of The Revelation, long before the trumpet judgments are mentioned, the Great Tribulation has already been introduced. It is spoken of as already being in effect.
  "These are the ones who come out of the **great tribulation**, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Rev. 7:14
  This is long before the proposed time of onset of this period by those holding the midtribulation Rapture view (recall this is not supposed to occur until Chapter 11). Here is seen even more evidence that the Great Tribulation begins with the early seals, not with the seventh trumpet.
- Harrison is wrong to state that the first half of the *seventieth week* of Daniel is without significant misery, tribulation, and wrath. As will be seen in the commentary on The Revelation in the last section of this treatise, this will be a terrible time to be on earth. Note the following…
  I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 And the

stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. [14] Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. [15] And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, [16] and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! [17] For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" Rev 6:12-17

- It makes no sense to allegorize the two witnesses to be the "larger company of witnesses" and thereby equate their resurrection and ascension from the dead as being the Rapture of the Church.
- The further allegorizing of Chapter 11 concerning the *opening of the Temple* and giving this the meaning of another Rapture reference is also a major and inappropriate interpretative "stretch".
- Another very significant problem with this position is that their entire argument rests on their statement that the wrath of God begins after the seventh trumpet… the, so called, "last trumpet". In fact, all of the events that they say occur after this seventh trumpet actually happen after the sixth trumpet! Rev. 11:1-14 describes in some reasonable detail the entire story of the two witnesses, including their death, resurrection and translation into heaven. Recall that Harrison allegorizes this to be symbolic of the Rapture of the Church. Unfortunately, all of this happens before the seventh trumpet judgment. This trumpet sounds in verse fifteen, *after* the rapture of the two witnesses.
- It is very difficult to understand how there could be 3 ½ years of Great Tribulation *after* the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Most theologians believe that this trumpet judgment results in the immediate opening of the vial judgments. These vial judgments are almost universally considered to be handed down by God in rapid-fire fashion… not over a 3 ½ year period.
- The people with this view expend a great deal of effort to show that the seventh trumpet of Revelation is the same trumpet as Paul describes in 1 Cor. 15:51-53. There is absolutely no reason to believe that to be true. One of these trumpets completes a set of seven that God presents in His revelation to John. The other is the last trumpet that is going to be blown one day to complete the Church Age on planet earth. They certainly do not have to be the same trumpet blast. The seventh trumpet of Revelation 11 is not the last trumpet anyway! Remember, this would be at the mid-point of the Tribulation. However, Christ will call His elect to Him with a loud trumpet at His Second Coming at the end of the Great Tribulation. This is 3½ years later than the proposed last trumpet of Rev. 11. Therefore, this seventh trumpet, which is supposed to blow at the mid-point of the Tribulation, cannot be the last trumpet. This voids the whole argument.
- Israel and the Church: Some people object to the fact that this position seems to confuse God's program for the Church and Israel. Whereas the pretribulationist states that God

will rapture His Church out of the world in order to concentrate His efforts once again on Israel during these last seven years of the *seventy* "*weeks of years*" noted by Daniel the prophet, the midtribulation position would keep the Church on earth for 3 ½ years of the seven supposedly set aside for Israel. Of course, the midtribulation proponents do not consider this to be a problem.

- Imminent Return: Pretribulationists believe that the onset of the *seventieth week* of Daniel will be obvious. The Antichrist will broker a treaty with Israel and their enemies that will guarantee Israel peace for seven years. That will begin the seven year period that is commonly known as the Tribulation (although as we have already seen, its beginning is also called *the beginning of sorrows* by some). That being the case, those with the midtrib view seemingly do away with the imminency aspect of our Lord's return. Instead, since they say He will rapture the Church at the mid-point of the seven year period, the Rapture should take place 3 ½ years after the signing of the treaty. Of course, as we have seen, the midtrib position is that the onset of these first years will not be known. How the signing of this much sought after peace treaty can be a secret is very difficult to understand.

Conclusion:

The essence of the midtribulation view of the Rapture is the belief that only the Tribulation during the last 3 ½ years of the *seventieth week* of Daniel should be considered to be the result of the wrath of God being poured out on unrepentant mankind. The first 3 ½ years should be looked at as *the beginning of sorrows*. Of course, this has many similarities to the pre-wrath position. The second key premise is that the seventh trumpet judgment initiates the Rapture of the Church and the Great Tribulation that follows. They view this trumpet judgment as occurring at the mid-point of the seven years. The Second Coming to earth to set up the Millennial Kingdom will come at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation. Several objections concerning this viewpoint have been given above. As with all three other views that will be presented, this view has its supporters and its detractors. Of course, no one can know for sure which, if any, of these views is the correct one.

Posttribulation Rapture:

Probably the second most popular opinion concerning the timing of the Rapture, among those folks who believe in a premillennial Rapture of the Church, is that Christ will rapture His saints *after* the Tribulation… i.e. the posttribulation view. They believe that the Rapture and the Second Coming of Jesus happen at approximately the same time. First the Rapture occurs, resulting in a quick meeting in the sky. Then, the saints will complete a u-turn and accompany Jesus down to the Mount of Olives. There are varying positions even within those holding this general view. Note these four variations:

- **Classic Posttribulation**: The Church has always been going through the Tribulation as they experience the trials and difficulties of daily life on this earth. All of the prophecies concerning the Tribulation have already been fulfilled over the past two thousand years. That being the case, the Rapture can come at any time (just as those with the pretribulation view believe, but for different reasons). This view has few modern day adherents.
- **Semiclassic Posttribulation**: Those holding this concept of the end-times believe similarly to the Classic adherents except for a few basic differences:
    1. The Church still has a few unfulfilled prophecies relating to the Tribulation to go through before the Rapture.
    2. That being the case, the Rapture cannot be imminent.
    3. Some (but certainly not all) holding this view believe that there will be a future seven year period of more significant tribulation where these last several prophecies will come true.
- **Futuristic Posttribulation**: The Church will go *through* a future seven year Tribulation after which it will be raptured out of the earth and promptly return with Christ at His Second Coming. George Eldon Ladd is considered the man who has advanced this position more than any other in recent decades.
- **Dispensational Posttribulationism:** Folks taking this view want to hold onto their dispensational approach to the Bible. Therefore, they distinguish the Church from Israel, as it is a key component of dispensationalism. Yet, they still believe that the Church will go through the Tribulation *alongside* of Israel. God will exempt the Church from the effects of His wrath although they will face the wrath of Satan. Dr. Robert Gundry is the most well known of those with this viewpoint.

The Evidence for the Posttribulation Rapture view:

In the paragraphs that follow, many of the reasons for this posttribulation position will be noted. However, the differences *between* the varying positions of those holding this view of the Rapture and Second Coming will not be discussed. Specifically, the reasons that are *common* to all posttribulationists will be presented concerning why they believe that the next appearance of Christ will come at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation and will be, in essence, a single event. Frankly, all that need be shown is that the Second Coming of Christ will be one event and that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation. If sufficient evidence can be given for those two things, the position of the posttribulation Rapture would be very strong indeed. Several of those reasons follow:

- George Eldon Ladd begins his defense of his posttribulation position in his book, *The Blessed Hope*, with a forty page discussion of the history of the posttribulation and pretribulation positions going all the way back to the early Church. Much effort is spent

to show that the vast majority of the Church Fathers (incl. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus) believed in the posttribulation Rapture and Second Coming of Christ. Ladd suggests that the other major view, that of the pretribulation Rapture, is a compilation of relatively recent ideas (being "only" about two hundred years old), and he rejects it. His conclusion is that "while tradition does not provide authority, it would nevertheless be difficult to suppose that God had left His people in ignorance of an essential truth for nineteen centuries." (*The Blessed Hope*, p. 20)

- With the exception of Robert Gundry and others who call themselves dispensational posttribulationists, most holding this view are covenant theologians. As such, they believe that the Church has become the Israel for today. For that reason, the Church will receive the promises and assume the covenants that God made with Israel in Old Testament times. Ladd explains this idea by pointing out that although God made a covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah through the prophet Jeremiah, the writer of the book of Hebrews applied this covenant to the Church.

  For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Heb 8:10 (Jer 31:33)

  Ladd goes on to say that the new covenant "was made by our Lord with the Church and is now in effect; and at the end of the age, Israel as a people will be saved and brought within the blessings of the new covenant." (ibid, p. 133) He then concludes that "the prophecies about the Great Tribulation which have to do in their prophetic form with Israel will find their fulfillment both in the Church and in Israel." (ibd p. 133) Finally, this line of reasoning leads to understanding that both the Church and Israel are in view in chapters such as Matthew 24 and the entire book of The Revelation.

  For example, in the book of The Revelation, they point out that the "elect" are noted to pass through the Tribulation. These are the elect of all ages and are equated to the Church. In fact, the Bible says that those in the Church will face persecution and testing. The adherents of this posttribulation view state that this also adds credence to the fact that **the Church must go through the Tribulation**.

- As just noted, God does tell His Church that it will pass through times of persecution and trouble. Jesus even says this to His disciples. Therefore, those with the posttribulation view, say that it is impossible to say that the Church will be raptured out of the coming *seventieth week* of Daniel. Those who believe that God will allow the Church to go through an unprecedented time of trouble ahead (i.e. the Great Tribulation), do believe that God will preserve His Church from its effects… even as the rest of the world suffers through it. Ladd admits that "it is clear teaching of the Scripture that **the Church will never suffer the wrath of God.**" (ibid p. 120) Ladd's solution is "that the Church will be on the earth throughout the entire period of the Tribulation but will be divinely sheltered from the wrath of God." (ibid, p. 121)

Much more then, **having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.** Romans 5:9

You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, [10] and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even **Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.** 1 Thess 1:9-10

However, according to Ladd, the wrath of God is not the only wrath that will be experienced by mankind during the Tribulation. He says that there is also the wrath that will be handed down by man and Satan (this is the same idea as those who hold the pre-wrath view). God has not promised to protect His Church from that persecution. Ladd points out that God allowed Israel to suffer at the hands of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and others. He allowed Paul to suffer through much persecution as well. There are many examples of God allowing His followers to suffer at the hands of Satan and evil mankind. Why should it be any different during the Tribulation? Posttribulation adherents say that it should not. "God will not deliver His people from such tribulation, but He will preserve them in it…… Even though they are put to death, not a hair of their head would perish." (ibid p. 129) Now that is an odd statement to really comprehend.

- So far it has been postulated that the majority of the early Church Fathers would have been considered to be posttribulational in their beliefs about the Second Coming. It is reasonable to assert that the closer an individual lived to the time of the actual apostles, the more likely their understanding of biblical theology would be correct. That, of course, would include their knowledge of end-time prophecy. Also, it has been suggested that the Church, functioning as the New Israel, will go through the Great Tribulation but will not suffer the wrath of God.

  However, the critical question relates to the timing of the Rapture. It is the contention of the posttribulation adherents that **the Rapture and Second Coming are basically one and the same event and it takes place at the conclusion of the *seventieth week* of Daniel.** It is true that everyone believing in a premillennial return of Christ agrees that Jesus will appear in glory at the *conclusion* of the Great Tribulation (or Day of the Lord). The point of contention revolves around the Rapture. Will this occur much earlier (e.g. seven years earlier) or will it also occur at the same time as His glorious Second Coming to earth to set up His Kingdom?

  There are multiple verses that describe the coming of the Lord. It is important to recognize that they appear to be two different events. Most all prophecy scholars agree on this point. The *time between* these two events is the topic of debate. Pretribulation proponents say this time will be approximately seven years. Those holding the midtribulation view believe the time between these two events will be 3 ½ years. However, it is the posttribulation viewpoint that the time between the Rapture and the actual Second Coming *may only be minutes or hours*.

  As Ladd notes in his book, the Bible uses three different Greek words when writing about the return of Christ. The words used are typically translated 'coming'

(parousia), 'revelation' (apokalypsis), and 'manifestation' (epiphaneia). The fact is that both those holding the posttribulation view and those holding the pretribulation view spend a great deal of time dissecting the meaning of each of these words in an attempt to prove their point on the timing of the Rapture. The reality of the situation is that there is probably not enough evidence on either side to decide the issue conclusively. If there were, there would not still be this age-old argument.

One point on this topic concerning the vocabulary used for the Second Coming may be worth mentioning. The word *apocalypse* means *revelation*. Since the *revelation* is synonymous with the Second Coming, and if the pretribulation view is correct, it should *not* be looked upon as the blessed hope of the Christian. They should already be in heaven since the Rapture took place seven years earlier. However, Ladd says that in all of the verses to follow, the Christian is noted to be waiting (hopefully and expectantly) for this revelation… or Second Coming…

the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, [7] so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the ***revelation*** of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor 1:6-7

the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the ***revelation*** of Jesus Christ 1 Peter 1:7

rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is ***revealed***, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 1 Peter 4:13

it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, [7] and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is ***revealed*** from heaven with His mighty angels, 2 Thess 1:6-7

As just noted, if the pretribulation view is correct, the Church saints should already have been in heaven for the previous seven years enjoying life with Jesus and their loved ones and now be coming back with Jesus to help set up His Millennial Kingdom at the time referred to as His *revelation* in the verses above. However, those verses seem to suggest that the saints of the Church should be anxiously waiting for this Second Coming. As Ladd puts it, "The Revelation is continually made the object of our hope; the Rapture must therefore occur at the Revelation of Christ." (ibid, p. 67)

The same issue is noted when examining the term *epiphaneia*, which means *manifestation*. This word for the appearance of Christ is used by Paul when he wrote to Timothy. As this clearly stands for the manifestation of Jesus (i.e. not a secret coming) at the conclusion of the *seventieth week* of Daniel, this cannot mean the same thing as the Rapture. However, it certainly seems that Paul is suggesting that the people of the Church be conscious of being good Christians until that day arrives and also that will be the day that those in the Church will receive their rewards… not seven years earlier.

keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's *appearing*, 1 Tim 6:14

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His *appearing*. 2 Tim 4:8

The conclusion to this discussion of terminology is that "the Revelation of Christ is, like the Rapture, the day of the believer's salvation when he enters into consummated fellowship with the Lord and receives his reward from the hand of the Lord. The parousia, the apocalypse, and the epiphany appear to be a single event. Any division of Christ's coming into two parts is an unproven inference." (ibid, p. 69)

- Just as those who accept the midtribulation and the pre-wrath view, those with the posttribulation view also believe that Matthew 24:30-31 is referring to the Rapture of the Church. However, they also have their own specific way to interpret the *timing* suggested by these verses. They believe that Jesus is speaking of the time period at the *close* of the Great Tribulation. Therefore, since two other verses noted below (from Paul's epistles) also speak to the gathering of the elect (these two are clearly Rapture verses) and the blowing of a trumpet, the conclusion is drawn that the Rapture will take place at the close of the Tribulation.

  Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. [31] And He will send His angels with a **great sound of a trumpet**, and they will **gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Matt 24:30-31

  We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the **trumpet will sound**, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 1 Cor 15:51-52

  For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with **the trumpet** of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. 1 Thess 4:16-17

- Given that it is the position of the posttribulationists that the Rapture and the Second Coming are, in essence, one event, the logic behind this should also be given. The coming of the Lord will first be to rapture His saints (i.e. the Church), almost immediately followed by His return with them to earth. Ladd points to the parable of the virgins as an appropriate analogy. The virgins were told to go out and meet the approaching bridegroom. They were to return right after that meeting to attend the wedding. Another example can be seen in Acts 28 where Paul was first met outside the city by friends and then they all returned together. One additional example often mentioned to show the reasonableness of this idea is that of a typical Roman commander who comes home from a successful campaign. People from the city would go out to meet the returning hero. After a rousing welcome given the soldiers by the people, the entire group would almost immediately return into the city of Rome. In other words, the

Second Coming of Christ will be the same kind of event. Christ will first be coming ***for*** His saints… then He will be coming ***with*** His saints. The saints will don their glorified bodies and quickly return in glory with the Lord. It will be an unbelievably glorious day!

- There are certainly some challenges to this position as we shall see. For example, those who hold a pretribulation view believe that the marriage of the Lamb will have taken place prior to the Second Coming. This, of course, would require the Church to be in heaven during the Tribulation. They point to Rev. 19…

  Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for **the marriage of the Lamb has come**, and His wife has made herself ready." [8] And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. [9] Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' "

  ……. **Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.** [12] His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. [13] He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. [14] **And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.** [15] **Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations** Rev 19:7-9, 11-15

  These verses are interpreted by those holding the pretribulation view in a *chronological order*. That is, the wedding will take place in heaven, followed by Jesus returning with His saints to defeat Satan at His Second Coming. This leads right into Chapter 20 and its discussion of the coming Millennium and the subsequent eternal punishment of Satan.

  However, as one might expect, Ladd has an answer to this apparent problem for the posttribulation adherents. "The wedding, the reunion with Christ, occurs at the Revelation of Christ in glory. The feast does not actually occur in Chapter 19. The "prophetic hymn" is not a description of the marriage; it is a hymn of anticipation. John beholds in a vision in Chapter 19 what actually takes place in Chapter 20." (ibid p. 100)

- The doctrine of imminence: The last position that will be mentioned here with respect to how the posttribulationists view the Rapture is concerned with the topic of "imminence". Since the Rapture will not occur until the conclusion of a long (seven years) period of Tribulation, it certainly cannot be imminent. People who know the Bible will have plenty of information to determine the timing of Christ's return. For example, they will only have to add 3 ½ years from the time that the Antichrist desecrates the Temple to know the time of Jesus' return. Yet, there are verses that may suggest to many that the Rapture can happen at any time… even today. For example…

  But **the end of all things is at hand**; therefore be serious and **watchful** in your prayers. 1 Peter 4:7

  Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted **worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass**, and to stand before the Son of Man." Luke 21:36

  Take heed, **watch** and pray; for **you do not know when the time is**. Mark 13:33

The point that Ladd spends an entire chapter developing in his book is that Christians are not asked by the Lord and the apostles to be watching for the imminent return of the Lord. Instead, Ladd believes that "we are exhorted, rather, in view of the uncertainty of the time of the end, to **watch**. "Watching" does not mean "looking for" the event; it means **spiritual and moral 'wakefulness'**. Nowhere are we told to watch for a secret, any-moment coming of Christ to Rapture the Church. The commands to watch mean to be spiritually awake." (ibid, p. 115,118)

Objections to the view:

- Historical - Since those holding this view suggest that the other major view, that of the pretribulation Rapture, is a recent idea (only about two hundred years old), it is more likely worthy of rejection. Simply put, this is a poor reason to reject any view about virtually anything. Also, as will be shown later, the pretribulation view actually has been around for many hundreds of years… of course, this fact also is not particularly important.
- Many people object to this view because of the fact that it does not allow for an imminent return of Jesus Christ to rapture the Church from the earth. Reasons have already been given why those taking this posttribulation view do not believe that our Savior's return is imminent. Basically, Ladd, and others with this view, interpret the verses that pretribulationists believe refer to an 'imminent' return of our Lord in an entirely different manner. As noted above, they suggest that these verses exhort Christians to always be in a constant state of spiritual alertness… it is simply the right thing to do. This is not to be done because Jesus might return at any moment… because in their view, He cannot. Remember, seven years of the Tribulation must precede this event. Instead, people should live this way simply because Jesus wants all of His followers to be prepared for His return, whenever that time finally does arrive. However, many of the reasons why so many others do believe that His return can be at any moment will be given when defending the pretribulation view a little later in this section.
- Many people find it very difficult to accept the posttribulation conception of how God will protect the saints of the Church as they *attempt* to live *through* the Great Tribulation. As was noted above, Ladd believes that the Church will always face tribulation. The Bible tells us this is true. However, there is a great difference between going through the difficulties and worries and even human tragedies faced by every person during their lifetime and the catastrophic events that are so blatantly described in the book of The Revelation. The Great Tribulation that is forecast in the vision of John's will be totally unique to any previous human experience. The fact is that the folks with this view generally do believe that God will protect His children so they do not have to suffer through His wrath. However, it is difficult to see how this will actually eventuate if the Church is raptured *after* God's wrath has been poured out. For many, it is just not easy to understand how God is protecting His family as millions will apparently give up their

lives as martyrs during that time. It is true that God has strengthened those brave and faithful martyrs of the past and He will do the same for others in the future as each Christian places his/her trust in Him. However, it just makes a lot more common sense, to many, that God would more likely rapture His saints *before* the Tribulation began. The tribulation period is to be a time of divine judgment on a sinful, unrepentant world and a time to bring back a significant faithful remnant of Israel to a saving relationship with the Messiah. None of this is necessary for the Church.

- Certainly those who are dispensationalists believe that God has clearly noted in Daniel that this *seventieth week* is primarily set aside for Him to deal once again with His "chosen people", Israel. ("Seventy weeks are determined **for your people and for your holy city**. Dan 9:24) With the crucifixion of Jesus, the "clock" stopped on the *seventy weeks* "determined for [Daniel's] people" after sixty-nine weeks. Soon thereafter, the Church began on the day of Pentecost. That means, of course, **that the Church was not present during the first sixty-nine weeks of the *seventy weeks***. God said in Paul's letter to the Romans that there would come a day in the future when Israel would be re-grafted into the vine. That time, pretribulation proponents believe, will be during the Tribulation. If the Church was not on the earth while God dealt with Israel during the first sixty-nine weeks, it is reasonable to believe that the Church will have just been raptured into heaven prior to God dealing with Israel once again during the Tribulation.

  An individual's opinion concerning this issue relates, of course, to whether they believe that the Church has assumed the covenantal promises God gave to Israel… or not. As will be recalled, the covenantal theologian says they do, the dispensational theologian says they do not (i.e. they believe that God will one day honor His promises and covenants to the actual nation and people of Israel).

  God always honors His promises. He has some still to keep with His "chosen people", Israel. It is not likely just a coincidence that the Church is never mentioned when the Tribulation is described (Rev. 6-19) in John's vision. God will deal with Israel during this time, not the Church… that is why it is known as the "time of Jacob's trouble." (Jer. 30:7)
- Ladd equates the "elect" to the Church. Those who object to this view believe that Ladd simply has this wrong. If, as was explained earlier, God plans to specifically honor His covenant promises to Israel during the tribulation period of seven years, all those coming to Christ during that time (including more than 144,000 Jews as noted in John's vision in The Revelation), would be considered as part of the "elect" of God. These are the saints, not the already raptured Christians from the Church Age, that will be seen going through the Tribulation… some will survive to enter into the Millennial Kingdom, many will be martyred during this terrible time of testing.
- Those who take a pretribulation view see many differences between Rapture passages and Second Coming passages in the Scriptures. In order to limit duplication, these differences will be given and explained when defending the pretribulation position

(coming up shortly). Suffice it to say here, if the Rapture passages suggest a time period that is significantly earlier than the Second Coming passages, the strength of the posttribulation view is weakened.

- There is quite a difference of opinion concerning the time period and subject matter of which Jesus speaks during His Olivet Discourse (see Matthew 24). It is the pretribulation view that Jesus is talking to His disciples about the tribulation period and, primarily, how it will affect Israel. For example, Jesus speaks about the Temple, the Sabbath, Judea, the Jews being hated by the nations of the world…

  Then they will deliver **you** up to tribulation and kill you, and **you will be hated by all nations** for My name's sake. Matt 24:9

  Matthew 24:30-31, as noted earlier, is looked upon by Ladd as Jesus speaking about *the Rapture of the Church just **prior** to His Second Coming*. However, the pretribulation interpretation is quite different. No reference is made to the Rapture of the Church into the air by Jesus in these verses. No mention is made of the "glorifying" of the bodies of the saints. In these verses, angels round up the saints; in the actual Rapture, the Lord Himself (1 Thess. 4:16), calls the saints of the Church up to meet Him in the air. In other words, these verses in Matthew do not relate to the Rapture, according to pretribulation adherents. Instead, *they are concerned with His Second Coming at the **conclusion** of the Tribulation and the gathering together of the elect who will enter into the Millennial Kingdom in their mortal bodies*. These *elect* may refer to the living saints at the time of Christ's coming or the saints of all ages, both living and dead.

  Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. [31] And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His ***elect*** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Matt 24:30-31

- An apparent *serious flaw in the logic of this posttribulation view* concerns the issue of just who will populate the Millennial Kingdom from its inception. This is really a significant issue. Keep in mind that when Jesus comes to rapture the saints, all those who follow Him will immediately receive their glorified bodies and rise from the earth to be with Him. That will leave only unrepentant sinners behind. According to the posttribulation viewpoint of the Second Coming, Jesus will then almost immediately return to set up His Kingdom on earth. Just prior to doing this, the Bible tells us that He will separate the sheep from the goats. Jesus told us that Himself…

  "**When the Son of Man comes in His glory**, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. [32] All the nations will be gathered before Him, and **He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.** [33] And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Matt 25:31-33

  Of course, that presents two problems. Why would Jesus find any sheep if they had all just been raptured to be with Him moments earlier? Secondly, since Jesus will

send all of the goats "into everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46), where will any mortals come from to enter into the Kingdom?

There needs to be at least a reasonable amount of time to bring more people to a saving relationship with Jesus during the Tribulation. Why? Well, there needs to be at least a reasonable number of normal bodied people to enter into the Millennial Kingdom. The twentieth chapter of The Revelation confirms that no one other than the followers of Christ will enter into the Millennial Kingdom. However, in the view of the posttribulationists, all of Christ's "sheep" will have already been translated off the face of the earth to be with the Lord. The "goats" will have been banished to everlasting punishment. Therefore, there would be no mortals to enter into the Kingdom! That cannot be the case. Something seems to be amiss with this viewpoint.

I saw the souls of **those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus** and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And **they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** [5] But **the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.** Rev 20:4-5 Only those who have already received their glorified bodies plus those Tribulation saints that were somehow able to survive through the Great Tribulation will enter into the Millennial Kingdom.

- Early on in Rev. 19, the Bride is in heaven for the wedding. In fact, as the verse below shows, the marriage had already "come" by that time. However, according to the posttribulation view, the Rapture, and the virtually concurrent Second Coming, will not occur until the conclusion of the *seventieth week* of Daniel. That would seem to be quite a problem. How could the Church be up in heaven, already involved in the marriage supper of the Lamb, if the Rapture/Second Coming has yet to happen? Although the individuals with the posttribulation view say that this description of the marriage of the Lamb and His wife (the Church) is actually just a "hymn" that anticipates the wedding to come, there is no particular reason to believe that. There is nothing to suggest that Chapter 19 is anything but a description of actual heavenly events that have taken place in the recent past… not a song about a future wedding. If taken literally, the simple fact is that the Church has already been raptured.

  Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, **for the marriage of the Lamb *has come***, and His wife has made herself ready." [8] And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. [9] Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' "
  Rev 19:7-9

Conclusion:

The posttribulation view of the Rapture and Second Coming envision these events as essentially one continuous event, happening over a very short period of time. Jesus will come at the conclusion of a seven year Tribulation to rapture His Church. He will then continue on to earth (with His Church) where He will promptly defeat Satan and the Antichrist after landing on

the Mount of Olives. Those with this viewpoint, see no particular distinction between Israel and the Church in the end-times. They believe that God will allow His Church to go through the Great Tribulation, but will protect them from its consequences somehow, even those that become martyrs. They reason that if God allowed Stephen, Paul and Peter, and many more in the first century to suffer martyrdom, it is not difficult to believe that He will allow those in the Church to go through the seven year Tribulation. The Rapture is not seen as imminent. Instead, those with this view believe that the Church has been told to be looking forward to the actual Second Coming of Jesus back to this earth… not the actual Rapture. In short, the Second Coming will take place at the conclusion of the *seventieth week* of Daniel; the Rapture and Second Coming will be one big event.

Pretribulation Rapture:

The last of the four Rapture views to be discussed has become the most popular viewpoint in the Evangelical Church over the last fifty years. Many books have been written and movies produced that have as their opening premise a pretribulation Rapture of the Church. Hal Lindsey, who wrote the best-selling non-fiction book (excluding the *Holy Bible*) of the 1970s, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, certainly holds to this view. A little more recently, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins have come out with an amazingly popular series, the *Left Behind* series of books. Interestingly, even the title comes from the fact that the pretribulation Rapture conception of the end-times is that all non-Christian Jews and Gentiles will be *left behind* on earth to face the soon coming Tribulation… after the Church is raptured.

The underlying concept of this view is that God still requires one additional "week of years" to finish His program with Israel. Since there has as yet been no fulfillment of Daniel 9:27 (i.e. Daniel's vision of the Tribulation), this seven year period, called the Tribulation, will be sometime in the future. Just prior to the onset of this *seventieth week* of Daniel, Christ will come to meet His Church in the air, and rapture them to be with Him in His heavenly home… to be in the home that He has previously prepared for them. Seven years later, Jesus will return to earth with His saints to defeat Satan and his evil forces. This will be quickly followed by Jesus setting up His Millennial Kingdom on earth. That is the essence of the entire concept.

There are some prophecy teachers who say that this pretribulation viewpoint of the Rapture has only been in existence since approximately 1830. They suggest that since they believe that the idea is fairly new to theology, it is likely not correct. Apparently, a man named J. Darby popularized this teaching in those days. That appears to be true. There are others who suggest it may have been a man named Emmanuel Lacunza or a fifteen year old Scottish girl named Margaret McDonald who, in 1830, claimed to receive a vision from God telling her that there would be a pretribulation Rapture. However, Grant Jeffrey, in his book *Triumphant Return*, gives excellent references for a much earlier origin of the pretribulation viewpoint. Jeffrey tells of a theologian named Ephraem the Syrian (A.D. 306-373) who wrote of the imminent and pretribulational return of Christ. Although Grant spends a few pages on this topic, let me mention just one quote from Ephraem, "Because all saints and the elect of the Lord are

gathered together **before the tribulation** which is to come and **are taken to the Lord**, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins." (*Triumphant Return*, p. 176) This is obviously a pretribulational viewpoint of the Rapture.

Frankly, it makes absolutely no difference when this notion came into the Church as to whether it is correct or not. Instead, let us take a close look at the Bible and see what it has to say about the timing of the Rapture.

The following paragraphs will be just a partial list of the reasons why so many prophecy scholars today do accept the pretribulation Rapture view. Only a cursory explanation of each of these reasons will be given in this treatise. For a detailed explanation of why this view is so popular today, the following books are recommended: *The Rapture Question* by John Walvoord, *Understanding End-Times Prophecy* by Paul Benware, and *The Rapture* by Hal Lindsey.

- **There are many differences in the Rapture verses and the Second Coming verses in the Bible.**

  Of course, the Mount of Olives will be the final destination of Jesus when He comes back with His saints. In other words, prophecy verses of the Second Coming of Jesus show Him coming to defeat Satan and the Antichrist, followed by the setting up of His Millennial Kingdom on this earth, headquartered in Jerusalem. This is certainly not the same thing as saying that He will come in the clouds to gather His saints. In fact, there are many differences in the verses that tell of the Rapture when compared to those that speak of the actual Second Coming of Jesus. These differences suggest strongly that these events are separated by far more than a few hours! In fact, the most likely scenario is that they are separated by the seven year Tribulation. Suffice it to say here that while in heaven for seven years after the Rapture, the saints will be readied for a return trip with Jesus… i.e. the Second Coming. Note the following descriptions of each event…

  Second Coming:

  - "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then **they will look on Me whom they pierced**. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. Zech 12:10
  - Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and **His name is called The Word of God**. **And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, *followed* Him on white horses**. Rev 19:11-14
  - Then **the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations**, As He fights in the day of battle. [4] And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives…..

And **the LORD shall be King over all the earth**. In that day it shall be-- Zech 14:3,4,9

- **The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend**, and those who practice lawlessness, [42] and **will cast them into the furnace of fire**. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Matt 13:41-42
- Behold, He is coming with clouds, and **every eye will see Him**, even they who pierced Him. Rev 1:7

The Rapture:

- "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.** John 14:1-3
- Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 1 Cor 15:50-53
- to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even **Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come**. 1 Thess 1:10
- O Lord, come! (Maranatha) 1 Cor 16:22
- For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. [16] For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And **the dead in Christ will rise first.** [17] **Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 1 Thess 4:15-17

As one reads these verses (and these are only a handful of the verses available to quote) it becomes apparent that Jesus has a much different purpose in mind for these two different events. The Rapture is purely a wonderful occasion where Jesus meets His saints (those dead and alive) in the air and escorts them back to heaven. The Second Coming is much more somber as He must engage in a World War, defeat Satan and the Antichrist, separate the just from the unjust, and set up the Millennial Kingdom on earth. This is quite a different agenda! It is unrealistic to those holding the pretribulation Rapture view that Jesus would decide to accomplish all of these disparate things at

basically the same time. The following are just a sampling of these differences in these two occasions:

1. The Second Coming is a time of war, followed by judgment of the sheep and goats.
2. At the Rapture, the saints will receive their glorified bodies and return with Jesus to their new heavenly home.
3. After the Second Coming, and Satan's defeat at Armageddon, the Millennial Kingdom will begin on earth… a time of peace and beauty.
4. The armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, accompany Jesus out of heaven as He comes to the Mount of Olives at His Second Coming. These are the saints of the Church. In order to come out of heaven with Jesus at this time, they obviously had to be raptured into heaven prior to this Second Coming.
5. The Millennial Kingdom is never mentioned in Rapture passages, but is noted to begin soon after the Second Coming and the defeat of Satan.
6. The Rapture precedes the time of God's wrath being poured out on the earth… the Second Coming concludes this series of events.
7. At the Rapture, all believers will be removed from the earth; at the Second Coming, all unbelievers will be removed from the earth… believers will enter into the Millennial Kingdom of God.
8. The Rapture concerns only the Church. The Second Coming deals with the saved and the unsaved.
9. The translation of the saints at the Rapture is described only in the New Testament
10. The Second Coming is mentioned throughout the Old and New Testaments.
11. It is somewhat illogical to many that Jesus would rapture His Church up into the air to meet Him just minutes or hours prior to descending with them onto the Mount of Olives. Would it not make more sense to gather His Church to that location just after He landed there?

- **There are certain important things that will take place in Heaven and on earth after the Rapture but before the Second Coming. Some of them will require a reasonable amount of time.**

It certainly makes sense, given the verses such as those above, that the Rapture had to come significantly before the Second Coming. Time is needed (and more than just a few minutes to hours) to accomplish some of the things that must take place after the Rapture but before the Second Coming.

Every one that holds any of the four views that are being discussed here does believe that the Rapture will precede the Second Coming. However, only the pretribulation and the midtribulation Rapture views state that the time between these two events will be more than minutes or hours. It is still important to know that all views do believe that these two events are separated by *some time*. Those with the pretribulation view note that the Bible points to several events that are supposed to take place between

the Rapture and the Second Coming and it is their contention that these events will take a reasonable amount of time… not just a matter of minutes or hours. For example…

1. The *Bema Judgment seat of Christ* – The saints will be judged according to their righteous works after the Rapture and before the return of the Lord with these same saints to set up the Millennial Kingdom on earth. Christians (Saints) will not lose their salvation during this judgment. This judgment results in the bestowing of rewards to certain deserving Christians for their righteous living and good works. Also, one might conjecture that Jesus will comment on how each individual has carried out his/her life's work while here on earth.
2. *The Marriage of the Lamb* – Jesus and His Church will be involved in a glorious wedding during the time of the Tribulation. This will take place in heaven and be followed by the Bride's (i.e. the Church) preparations for the marriage supper. Exactly what this will entail is certainly open for debate. On the other hand, it would seem to go without saying that this cannot take place within the few minutes or hours that those with the pre-wrath view or the posttribulation view allow between the Rapture and the Second Coming.
3. If the Rapture occurs near the *beginning* of the Tribulation, the salvation of a suitable number of people who will later enter into the Millennial Kingdom in their earthly bodies will be necessary. The Revelation shows that there will be 144,000 Jews who will become great evangelists during this seven year period, and they will win many additional people to Christ. Although many people will be martyred for coming to faith in Jesus during these years, there will be others who survive this time and enter into the Millennial Kingdom in typical mortal (non-glorified) bodies. Of course, it will take a reasonable amount of time for this to happen. On the other hand, as was previously noted, if the Rapture took place at the *end* of the Tribulation, there would be no one to enter into and populate the Millennial Kingdom. Those that were followers of Christ would have just been translated into heaven. Recall that only the followers of Christ will be allowed into this Kingdom… and there would not be any left on earth if they had all just been raptured. This situation obviously cannot happen.

- **The Holy Spirit, as the Restrainer, will leave the earth in order to allow for the introduction of the Antichrist.**

The Church began with the coming of God's Holy Spirit to indwell the apostles and, subsequently, all others who choose to accept Jesus as Savior. The Holy Spirit has remained on earth and within the people in the Church ever since. Jesus sent His Spirit to bring His children comfort and power… to help a Christian live a life that reaches continuously towards greater and greater sanctification.

I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- John 14:16

The words of Jesus noted above tell the Christian that as long as they live, the Holy Spirit will indwell them. This powerful godly presence will be a wonderful protector against Satan and his minions.

And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. [7] For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only **He who now restrains** will do so **until He is taken out of the way**. [8] And **then the lawless one will be revealed**, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 2 Thess 2:6-8

Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica to explain the fact that the Antichrist (the lawless one) would be revealed only after the Restrainer was "taken out of the way". In his book, *The Rapture*, Hal Lindsey goes to great lengths to show that this "Restrainer' has the following characteristics: He is of singular, masculine gender, is an individual with worldwide influence, has supernatural capabilities, and has great power. The obvious identity of this Restrainer, to those who hold to the pretribulation view of the Rapture, is that He is the Holy Spirit. In the first place, only God (i.e. the Holy Spirit) has the ability to hold back Satan and the Antichrist. There are those who believe that this Restrainer is human government or even Satan himself. Lindsey's detailed analysis of these two possibilities, and even common sense, suggest strongly that these two ideas are not tenable.

The conclusion, therefore, is that just before the Antichrist is revealed and allowed to proceed with his plans for the Tribulation, the Holy Spirit will be removed from His role as the restrainer of this man of sin. For this to happen, the Church must no longer require the presence of the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus has promised that the Spirit will never leave a Christian (i.e. those in the Church). This leads to the obvious fact that the Church must no longer be in need of the indwelling Spirit of God. Why? Simply because it has just been raptured by Jesus into heaven! Of course, when the Christian gains the wonderful gift of his glorified body, the Holy Spirit's internal presence will no longer be necessary.

One other important point to consider relates to the very unlikely possibility that the Antichrist would be able to gain full control over the world if the two or more billion Christians armed with the indwelt Holy Spirit still resided on earth. In fact, God has given His disciples power over Satan and his evil followers. Therefore, the Church and the Holy Spirit must have been removed from the earth prior to the onset of the Tribulation. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit cannot work on the earth in the same fashion that He did during the *Old Testament* times. In fact, He certainly will do this.

- **God still has promises to keep with His "chosen people", Israel.**

These promises cannot and will not be abrogated by God. God always keeps His covenants. During the Old Testament times, God's dealings with mankind were *primarily* through His "chosen people", the Jews. Since Pentecost, God has *primarily* been working through the Church. Although there are some Jewish Christians, most are Gentile. It is very intriguing to note that the Temple of God in Jerusalem was demolished and burned to the ground within one generation of the establishment of the Church. Israel lost over a million Jews at that time and, not long thereafter, most of the remaining Jews were scattered throughout the world. This situation (called the *Diaspora*) was very consistent with the fact that God had set aside that final *seventieth week* of Daniel until He completed His work with the Church. That is, until the "*fullness of the Gentiles*" comes, God has temporarily set aside his dealing with Israel. Not surprisingly, the nation of Israel ceased to exist for almost two thousand years. Since May 1948, Israel has once again become a nation back in their own homeland… that amazing fact, most prophecy scholars agree, has great significance.

As we shall see when we study Daniel later in this treatise, the seven year period of the Tribulation is when God will resume, with earnest, His active relationship with Israel. In fact, it is during this seven year Tribulation, that Israel will once again turn back in to God. Finally, primarily via events that take place early in the Tribulation, the Jews will gain saving faith in the Lord Jesus, the true Messiah, whom they had once rejected. The period of the Tribulation is a necessary time when God will providentially prepare Israel to finally repent and accept Jesus.

When one looks at **the prophecies that relate to that seven year Tribulation**, **they always reference Israel, Jerusalem or the Jews… never is the Church mentioned.** Prophecies such as the Jews fleeing into the wilderness, the rebuilt Temple, the Antichrist brokering a treaty with Israel, the 144,000 Jews from the twelve tribes of Israel, the two witnesses, and many other similar Jewish references are mentioned, but none are mentioned concerning the Church. The prophet Daniel's end-time prophecy primarily concerns Israel and their Messiah. God even points out that the *seventy weeks* are specifically "determined for your people" and Daniel's people were the Israelites…

"Seventy weeks are determined **for your people and for your holy city**, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. Dan 9:24

And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the LORD, "That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it: **I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined,** And test them as gold is tested. They will call

on My name, And I will answer them. **I will say, 'This is My people'; And each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.'** " Zech 13:8-9

"Therefore when you see the *'abomination of desolation,'* spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), then **let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.** Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house…….. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. Matt 24:15-17,21

For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.** Ezek 36:24-28

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that **blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in**. And so all **Israel will be saved**, as it is written: *"The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins* (Isaiah 59:20-21)." Romans 11:25-27

Although it is certainly possible that God could combine His working out of the salvation of Israel while still leaving the Church on the earth, that is not how God has done it in the past. This has been clearly pointed out above. Not only that but Paul notes in his letter to the Romans that this will be done ***after*** the "*fullness of the Gentiles has come in"*. This will be after the Rapture, during the Tribulation.

- **Certainly one of the more important reasons that the Rapture is believed to occur prior to the Tribulation is because of the multitude of verses that tell the Christian that he shall escape the coming wrath. For example…**
  For **God did not appoint us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thess 5:9
  And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even **Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.** 1 Thess 1:10

Because you have kept My command to persevere, **I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world**, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Rev 3:10-11

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we shall be saved from wrath through Him.** Romans 5:9

As has been noted earlier, even those prophecy scholars with the midtribulation view or the pre-wrath view are convinced that the Church will not be subject to the wrath of God. Their disagreement is simply regarding *when* that wrath begins and/or *what* is meant by God saving His saints from this wrath. Simply put, the pretribulation view is that *all* of the judgments that are handed down during the seven years of Tribulation are the result of the wrath of God. Their reasoning is that **only Jesus was able to open the seals… only God the Son**. He was the only one found worthy to open these seal judgments. If He had decided to leave them closed, there would have been no need to write about the Tribulation… it would not have occurred.

Jesus begins to break the seals in Chapter 6 of The Revelation. That is when God's wrath begins to fall upon the earth and its inhabitants. All of this pouring out of wrath begins at the onset of the seven year Tribulation and continues throughout the entire period. This fact again suggests very strongly that the Rapture must have taken place before the Tribulation if the Church is to avoid facing God's wrath. Therefore, since Jesus did open these seals, which led inexorably to the opening of the trumpets and then the bowl judgments, Jesus is certainly the individual responsible for all of them being loosed. Hence, in order for those in the Church to avoid the wrath of God, they must be raptured prior to the onset of the Tribulation.

As has been noted earlier, many who hold to the posttribulation viewpoint somehow believe God will take care of His Church as He *allows them to pass through* this terrible time of judgment. That idea seems unreasonable to the pretribulation adherent. The terrible judgment that will be delivered to anyone who is on the earth during that seven year period will simply be horrific. It is the belief of those holding this pretribulation Rapture view that God is far more likely to remove His Church from His impending wrath than to see the Church through all those most difficult years. Take a look at the verses above once again… they surely suggest that God plans on removing His Church "from the wrath to come." Remember, this will be a time of terrible trouble…

there shall be **a time of trouble, Such as never was** since there was a nation Dan 12: 1

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the LORD is coming, For it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess. Joel 2:1-2

- **Jesus spoke of the Rapture to the Apostle John as it concerned the Church at Philadelphia. It was to occur before the Tribulation.**

In Chapters 2 and 3 of The Revelation, Jesus spoke concerning seven churches that were in Asia-Minor in the latter years of the 1st century A.D. A fairly detailed commentary on this great apocalyptic book will be given in the last section of this treatise. It turns out that most prophecy scholars do believe that Jesus not only was speaking to each individual church that existed at that time, but He was also speaking to succeeding *Church Ages* down through history. According to this theory, the Philadelphia Church represents the Missionary Church that has been very active for Christ in the last couple of centuries. In fact, this *Church Age* is considered to be still in existence today. Jesus was pleased with this church and made this obvious with words such as…

Because you have kept My command to persevere, **I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth**. 11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. Rev 3:10-11

There is no doubt that Jesus was telling the Christians of this faithful church that He would not allow them to face the trial that would someday come upon the entire world. Of course, this must refer to the Tribulation. The most obvious interpretation of these words would be that Jesus would rapture the "faithful Church" prior to the onset of this time of judgment. That is also the conclusion of those who hold the pretribulation view of the end-times. Putting this all together, the Church will be raptured prior to "the hour of trial which shall come." As an aside, since this "Philadelphia Church" is active in the world *today*, the Rapture should not be that far away.

- **The Rapture can take place at any time… even as you read these words. In other words, it is imminent.**

Although the **Second Coming** of Jesus Christ is often described in the Bible as being ***preceded by many incredible events*** (a few very good, but most very bad… such as the Great Tribulation), the **Rapture** is always taught as being ***imminent***. In other words, every Christian from the time of Jesus to the present was taught to be on their guard, on their best behavior (i.e. looking up), as their redemption could come in the "blink of an eye". Of course, if Jesus and the apostles taught that this Rapture could come upon the Church at any moment, it had to precede the Tribulation. Let us take a look at some of the verses that suggest an imminent event for the Rapture...

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which **we** also ***eagerly wait*** **for the Savior**, the Lord Jesus Christ, **who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,** Phil 3:20-21

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. [8] You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for **the coming of the Lord *is at hand***.
James 5:7-8

In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. [3] **And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am (in heaven), there you may be also**.
John 14:2-3

In the words directly above, Jesus is telling His disciples that He is going to heaven to prepare a place for them. He will one day come again and take them back to that very place. The location of this "place" must be in heaven. Therefore, when Jesus comes again it will be to rapture the Church in order to fulfill this promise. Later, He will bring these saints back with Him as He returns to earth in triumph to defeat Satan and the Antichrist and then sets up His Kingdom.

Some holding the posttribulation view believe that Jesus was telling His followers that when He came again they would be with Him on *earth* during the Millennial Kingdom. In other words, they believe that Jesus is not telling His followers that they will be with Him in heaven after the Rapture (i.e. John 14:3 is not referencing heaven). Of course, all agree that these Christians will be with Jesus somewhere during that time period. If the pretribulation view is correct, these saints will be with Jesus in heaven for seven years. After that time, Jesus will return once again to earth with His saints to bring to an end the battle of Armageddon and set up His earthly kingdom. If the posttribulation view is correct, Jesus will simply rapture His saints up to meet Him in the air, then continue on down to earth, while His followers do a u-turn and accompany Him back to the Mount of Olives. Which view makes the most sense?

Keep in mind that Jesus says in John 14:2-3 above that He is now preparing a place for His followers. That must be in heaven. That is where logic highly suggests that He will take His Church when He comes to rapture them. Why else would He now be preparing them such a wonderful home in heaven? Take a look at the verse again… **if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am (in heaven), there you may be also**.

John Walvoord points out that if the Rapture was going to be preceded by any or all of the Tribulation, "it is difficult to see how this message would have been a source of solace to their troubled hearts." (*The Rapture Question*, p. 73) Instead, as Jesus thought of the coming time of the Great Tribulation, He warned His Jewish brothers and sisters that might be alive during those days to be ready to literally run for the hills to escape the Antichrist and certain death… After the Rapture, the earth will face a period of severe godly judgment… but only those who had not trusted in Him would ever have to face that judgment. That is why Jesus comforted His followers with words of His imminent return

to **Rapture them into heaven and out of the coming wrath**. However, for those who reject Jesus…

"Therefore when you see the *'abomination of desolation,'* spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), [16] then **let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.** [17] Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. [18] And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. [19] But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! [20] And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. [21] For **then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be** Matt 24:15-21

There are many additional verses in the New Testament that suggest strongly that the coming of Jesus to rapture His saints is indeed imminent. For example…

The Lord is at hand. Phil 4:5

Maranatha ("Our Lord come") 1 Cor. 16:22 This was apparently a common salutation among Christians in the first century as they expected an imminent appearing of Jesus.

you come short in no gift, **eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ**, 1 Cor 1:7

For this ***we*** say to you by the word of the Lord, that ***we*** who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. Therefore comfort one another with these words. 1 Thess 4:15,18

Here Paul uses the pronoun "we" as he apparently still was hopeful that he might be raptured at any moment. His words also were meant to be words of comfort. If his listeners had the understanding that they were going to have to endure the Great Tribulation prior to the possibility of being raptured, this would not have had the desired effect.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, [12] teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, [13] looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Titus 2:11-13

In conclusion, there are multiple verses in the New Testament that are given to comfort the saints concerning the initial aspect of the coming of the Lord… the Rapture. These verses in no way suggest that the Christian must suffer through a terrible period of God's wrath before the Rapture occurs. Instead, they suggest that the follower of Christ be alert and ready to be translated off into heaven by their Lord at any moment. This certainly strongly suggests that the Rapture will precede the Tribulation.

- **When the Bible speaks of the Tribulation, the Church is not mentioned**.

Everywhere that the Tribulation is mentioned in the Bible, there is no indication given that the Church will be present on the earth. All of the prophecies concerning the

end-time Tribulation that are found in Daniel, Matthew, Ezekiel, Romans, and The Revelation deal with the nation and people of Israel. None speak of the Church. The best example of this is in the vision that the Apostle John is given in The Revelation of Jesus Christ. It is very doubtful that it is just purely coincidental the Church is discussed in great detail in the first three chapters (i.e. it is mentioned nineteen times) but never mentioned in Chapters 4-18. Chapter 4 & 5 show what is going on in Heaven as the Tribulation nears. Then, from Chapter 6 through 18, a detailed description of the Tribulation is laid out by the Holy Spirit through a vision to John. Never is the Church mentioned… not once. It is true that the *elect* are going to be gathered at the end of this Tribulation. However, these saints will be those Christians who will be won to Christ despite having to go through the Tribulation. Although the Tribulation will start with little if any Christians on the earth, as the Rapture will have just recently taken place, certainly there will be multiple thousands who will be led to Jesus during the following seven year tribulation period (as will be shown in a later section).

Late in John's vision (i.e. Rev. 19), the Church is mentioned again. This time, they are noted to be already married to Christ and arrayed in "fine linen". The fine linen covering the individuals of the Church represents the fact that they had already undergone the Bema Judgment of Christ (the judgment of the saints). These people had received their "crowns" for the righteous acts that they had performed while on earth.

Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for **the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints**.
Rev 19:7-8

The next few verses tell of Jesus returning on His white horse to judge the world and make war. The saints of the Church, now in heaven, accompany Him…and the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.
Rev 19:14

In summary, for the reasons given above, the book of The Revelation certainly seems to suggest that the Church is raptured right before the beginning of the Tribulation. It is true that this book does not come right out and say this. On the other hand, it certainly never says that the Rapture takes place in the middle or end of the Tribulation either. A person must make an inference from all of the facts in order to come to a reasonable conclusion as to when this event takes place. Even then, no one can be certain about the timing of the Rapture.

- **Paul points out some important facts concerning events which must precede the Tribulation to the Church at Thessalonica.**

The Apostle Paul wrote to comfort the people in the church at Thessalonica because there were many that had come under the impression that they had missed the Rapture. First, Paul acknowledged that they had unfortunately come under some false

teaching that had convinced many that they were already living in the times of the Tribulation. That, of course, concerned them very much. Paul wrote to tell them that they had nothing to fear as there had not yet been the apostasy nor had the Antichrist been revealed. Therefore, they could relax.

for that Day will not come unless the *falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed,* the son of perdition. 2 Thess 2:3

The important question to consider is why they were so very upset in the first place if they thought that they were in the tribulation period. There were only two possibilities as to what they may have been thinking:

1. They may have been previously taught by Paul that all of the Church would be raptured ***prior*** to the Tribulation. If that was what they believed to be true, it would make perfect sense that they would be very troubled indeed. They would have thought that God had judged them unworthy of heaven!
2. Gundry, the posttribulationist, believed that Paul would not have taught that there would be a pretribulation Rapture. Therefore, he thought that these people were convinced that they had entered into the seven year tribulation period. However, if that were true, they should not have been so very upset… as if their eternal destiny was in question. If Gundry were correct, these people should have been preparing for the soon coming of the Lord to bring in the Millennial Kingdom… after the seven year Tribulation. Instead, they were very concerned for their very salvation! Therefore, they had to have been convinced by the false teachers that they were in the Day of the Lord… and, therefore, had already missed out on the Rapture. That truly would have been a disaster!

- **There is an interesting analogy between the Messiah's two advents and the two aspects of His Second Coming.**

The Old Testament tells of the coming Messiah. The New Testament tells of the Second Coming of the Messiah. It was not made obvious to the Old Testament prophets that the Messiah would have two advents. First, He would come as the suffering servant (especially noted in Isaiah 53, Psalms 22). His Second Coming would be as the King of Kings (e.g. Psalms 2, Zech. 14). Only in retrospect do these two different aspects to His coming to earth make perfectly good sense. A study of the Scriptures shows that two different advents were needed for the Messiah to accomplish His mission.

In the New Testament, there is a "complicated" picture of His Second Advent. As has been noted a little earlier, there are two pictures painted which don't look the same. These two different descriptions of Jesus' coming point to two separate events as well. The first fits perfectly with what is referred to as the Rapture. The second, of course, is the Second Coming.

There will be at least *two thousand years* between the Messiah's two advents. There are over *thirty years* between the beginning and the conclusion of His First Advent.

It is certainly understandable that there would be *seven years* between the Rapture and the Second Coming (the beginning and the conclusion of His Second Advent).

Of course, there is a major difference of opinion on just this topic. Most of those people who adhere to the posttribulation view say that they do agree that there are two aspects of our Lord's Second Advent (the Rapture and the Second Coming), but they are essentially the same event… separated only by a matter of hours or so. They feel that this small separation allows them to reference the return of Christ as a single event. Ladd, the posttribulationist, also notes that the Greek words parousia (coming), apokalupsis (appearing, revelation), and epiphaneia (appearing or revealing) all can certainly be used to refer to the actual Second Coming of Jesus at the *end* of the Tribulation. Pretribulation scholars such as John Walvoord have no problem with this statement. It is true that each of these words may be used to describe the actual Second Coming. However, they also may be used to describe the coming at the onset of the Tribulation as well. As it turns out, other contextual clues are needed to determine whether they are referencing the Rapture or the Second Coming.

Ladd also states that there are several verses that apparently exhort the believer to make the Second Coming of Jesus "the object of their hope." (*Blessed Hope*, p. 67) He suggests that this makes little sense because the object of the believer's hope - if Jesus were coming to rapture His saints seven years earlier - should be the Rapture, not the Second Coming. There is some logic in that idea… but, Ladd, I think, misses the main point.

Remember that the Old Testament saints looked forward to the coming of Jesus as being one "event"… even though it, obviously, will turn out to be two. Even the First Advent of Jesus had a beginning event (His birth) and a concluding event (His crucifixion and ascension). In the same way, it is very reasonable that New Testament writers would write of the Second Advent of Jesus as a glorious future event… not being bogged down in dissecting out the beginning (i.e. the Rapture) from the end (i.e. the Second Coming). When we read the account of the birth of Jesus, we know that it came over thirty years before the account of His death. The context makes this obvious. In the same manner, those believing in a pretribulation Rapture suggest that the context of the descriptions on the Rapture and the Second Coming to earth make it clear that these events are separated by much more than a few hours. Yet, we all can and should look forward to *all aspects* of Christ's return expectantly and with great hope and joy!

- **The Marriage of the Lamb to His Bride the Church:**
  - Although it is possible to take an analogy too far, it is worth noting that Christ and the apostles referenced the relationship between Jesus and the Church as analogous to that between a Jewish bride and her Jewish groom. Given that, it is worth noting that in a Jewish wedding, when the time came for the wedding to take place, the groom would go to his bride's house unannounced. She would come out to meet him, and

then the groom would take her to his father's house. Given the fact that Revelation 19 reveals that the Church is already "married" to Jesus, it had to have been raptured at an earlier time… just prior to the Tribulation. Of course, to continue with this analogy, immediately after the Rapture, Jesus will take His Bride back to His heavenly home… to His Father's house. He is there now preparing a place for His Bride.

- Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. Rev 19:7
- Of course, the Church will return seven years later with their omnipotent Groom…
- And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Rev 19:14

Objections to this view:

Most of the objections to this viewpoint on the Rapture and the Second Coming can be seen by simply re-reading the reasons given *for* belief in the first three Rapture views: pre-wrath, midtribulation, and posttribulation. The majority of the reasons given for these positions are reasons that could be used against the pretribulation position. A few specific examples follow:

- As we have seen earlier, those people with the midtribulation and pre-wrath view are convinced that the wrath that God will not begin at the onset of the Tribulation. At the earliest, it will begin at the mid-point. Since that is the only tribulation from which God has promised to protect His saints, the Rapture will not occur until just before this time. Hence, there will be no pretribulation Rapture.
- The folks who take the posttribulation position state that the Scriptures teach the Church has inherited the promises that God made to Israel. It is not that Israel and the Jew have totally lost their promises, but just that they will realize them now as they come to faith in Jesus (i.e. as a part of the Church). It will not be an issue of whether a person is Jew or Gentile, but only whether they are a member of the family of God. Therefore, The Revelation does not describe a time set aside only for Israel. It is a time when God will judge the entire earth and the Church will not be exempt from it. The Church will go through at least half of this seven year period of Tribulation, albeit with some form of supernatural protection from God. Even though some in the Church will suffer martyrdom, this will no different than what happened to Stephen and the apostles in their time.
- Although there are differences of opinion as to who the *Restrainer* may be, the Bible certainly never states that it is the Holy Spirit. The pretribulational adherent comes to this conclusion only by inference.
- As has been mentioned earlier, certain scholars, such as George Eldon Ladd believe that the allusion to the Church and the wedding of the Lamb in Revelation 19 is only suggestive of a coming event, not something that had already occurred in heaven at an

earlier time. Ladd says that these verses should be looked at a "prophetic hymn" of the marriage supper, not the actual event. The actual event happens at the Second Coming. "John beholds in vision what actually happens in Chapter 20." (*The Blessed Hope*, Ladd, p. 101)

- Ladd objects to the notion that there must be a significant amount of time to accomplish the many things that pretribulation adherents say must be accomplished between the Rapture and the Second Coming. God can accomplish all that is necessary in the time between the Rapture and the Second Coming – even if this time period is measured in minutes! One must remember that God's timing is not like man's timing.
- Those who object to this pretribulation view do not believe in an imminent return of Jesus to rapture His Church. Instead, they believe that those in the Church have been told by Jesus and the apostles to be always on alert. "It is because of the uncertainty of the time, not its imminence, that we are to watch; and the idea again is of wakefulness rather than concentration of attention." (ibid, p. 117)
- The main difference of opinion, of course, between the pretribulation position and the posttribulation (and the pre-wrath) position is that the latter is convinced that all of the words describing the return of Jesus are really describing, in essence, the same event. Yes, there may be two aspects of this event, first a meeting in the air, followed by the coming back to the Mount of Olives with the Church, but these two will all be within the same trip from heaven by Jesus. Reasonable men and women over the centuries have come to different conclusions concerning this issue. The fact is, both of these positions are *inferences.* No one can honestly say that the Bible makes either position crystal clear.

Conclusion:

The pretribulation view of the Rapture has really captured the imagination of the Church over the last half century… especially, the evangelical Church. It is the most popular view today in the United States. Although many reasons have already been presented above to explain why so many believe this to be the most likely manner in which Jesus will return, the following is a listing of several of the main points:

- God will not allow His Church to go through the Tribulation. **All seven years of the Tribulation are due to God's wrath** being poured out on an unrepentant world.
- The description of **the Rapture, the Second Coming**, and the events that will take place during the intervening time, suggest very strongly that they be **separated by a number of years.**
- The Rapture is portrayed as an event that will precede the Tribulation; the Second Coming is portrayed as an event in which Jesus will come to end the Tribulation.
- There is **no evidence that the Church will be found in the Tribulation**… therefore, it must be raptured out before it begins.

- God told Daniel that He still had seven years to deal with His "chosen people", Israel. **God has dealt with them separately from the Church in the past; He likely will do the same in the future.**
- **The next appearance of Jesus is imminent**… the Second Coming is not. Therefore, the Rapture (i.e. Jesus' next appearance) must precede the Tribulation. No one can or will know the exact day or time of this glorious event.

I believe it may be worthwhile to conclude with a little anecdotal story that I was told by Dr. Harold Wilmington just a few months ago. I asked him about his views on the Rapture and the Second Coming. He noted that while he was 100% positive as to the veracity of the gospel message, he admitted that he was only 99% sure that the pretribulation view was correct. Then he went on to tell me a story that would explain why he was still very sure (as 99% suggests).

Dr. Wilmington said that very soon after the United States was attacked by Japan at Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt made phone calls to his ambassadors in Germany. He was fully aware of the pending declaration of war about to be made on that country by the United States. This would come on December 11th, just four days after the Pearl Harbor attack. Roosevelt's call had but one over-riding purpose. He was eager to get the Americans back home, ASAP! He did not want them in harm's way… the complete wrath of the United States military was about to be poured out on Germany. His fellow Americans, those who were in the governmental "family" of the United States, needed to be taken out of the wrath to come. Wilmington then made the obvious comparison to the Rapture. In the days just preceding the Tribulation, Jesus will take His people, those who have given their lives and hearts to follow Him, out of the wrath that He will soon bring down upon Satan, the Antichrist and unrepentant mankind. It makes very little sense that Jesus would allow His Bride, the Church, to suffer through this period of terrible trouble. It is possible, of course, but not likely.

One Other Rapture View of the Church:

- **Partial Rapture View:** This view is very weak as it suggests that only certain Christians will be good enough to make it into heaven at the Rapture. Simply put, there is absolutely no evidence that would suggest that this idea has any merit. Each and every person is saved purely through the grace of Jesus. His grace and power are great enough to not only save everyone who comes to Him, but to never let them out of His hand once He has saved them. Works are a wonderful thing and are expected of all Christians as we work toward sanctification. However, they have nothing to do with our salvation, or with whether a Christian will be raptured. Those events were settled in the affirmative when the Christian turned his/her life over to the Lord Jesus!

Summation of Section 2:

Many may have been surprised to see the large variety of ways that the prophetic Word in the Bible has been interpreted over the centuries. As this section of this book has made quite clear, there is certainly no consensus of opinion as to the best way to interpret the Bible… especially when it comes to end-time prophecy. There are differing opinions on the best system of theology: covenant theology vs. dispensational theology. There is also a wide range of opinions on such topics as the Millennial Kingdom, the Tribulation, the Rapture and the Second Coming. This makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to accurately understand all aspects of eschatology. Because of the varying opinions on these topics, time was spent to explain the reasons behind each viewpoint presented… each view is accepted by many well-respected, intelligent, Christian scholars. Of course, they cannot all be right. The goal of the reader should be to attempt to understand the reasons behind each method of interpretation and choose that system that aligns best with their understanding of the Bible and their underlying beliefs.

The first topic discussed related to the system of theology that would lead to the best understanding of God's purposes in the world. The two most important today are that of covenant theology and dispensational theology. Although they have several distinguishing characteristics, one that particularly stands out relates to their view on Israel and the Church. The covenant theologian views the Church as the "Israel of God", inheriting the promises and covenants that God made with the nation and people of Israel in Old Testament times. It is the viewpoint of the dispensationalist that God has separate plans for Israel and the Church, at least concerning how God regards these previously made covenants and promises. It is the dispensational view that God will still honor His promises and covenants with the actual people and nation of Israel sometime in the future. On the other hand, there is certainly agreement on the more important issues relating to such things as salvation by faith alone, etc.

Before explaining the varying concepts on the Millennial Kingdom, the preterist view of eschatology was examined. These folks have a fairly unique conception of the prophecies of Jesus in His Olivet Discourse as well as the book of The Revelation. In short, the full preterist believes that all of these prophecies were fulfilled on or around A.D. 70 when the Romans defeated the Jews in Jerusalem and destroyed their Temple. Partial preterists also believe that many of these prophecies were fulfilled at that same time. However, they also believe that there are some prophecies that will not be fulfilled until just before the Second Coming.

The discussion on the Millennial Kingdom reviewed the three major views: amillennialism, postmillennialism, and premillennialism. A brief synopsis of each follows:

Amillennialism: "Amillennialists do not believe in a [literal] Millennial Kingdom. Followers of this view hold that Christ currently reigns in the hearts of Christians and that there is no need for a physical reign. The future reign with Christ described in Revelation 20 is considered to be ruling with Christ in heaven and not on earth."
http://www.spreadinglight.com/theology/dictionary/amillennialism.html

Postmillennialism: "This view holds that Christ will return at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. Through the spread of the gospel, the world will continue to get better and better until the Church "conquers the world" so to speak. At the culmination of this, Jesus will return to judge the world, sending the wicked to hell and the righteous to their reward. During this time, sin will not cease, but it will be minimized because of the influence of the Church. Christ will not physically reign but rather he will spiritually reign through the Church because of its vast influence over all facets of life. (Christ would not need to reign if the Church ruled by following His principles.)" http://www.spreadinglight.com/theology/dictionary/postmillennialism.html The Millennial Kingdom may not literally encompass one thousand years… in fact, it will be longer than that. Like the amillennial viewpoint, the promises to Israel are seen as "being fulfilled spiritually with the Church. God is finished with Israel because of their rejection." (ibid)

Premillennialism: "This view holds that Christ will return to begin a period of time known as the Millennial Kingdom as described in Revelation 20. While other views are still considered orthodox and biblically based, this view is regarded as the most literal interpretation. (Opponents argue that apocalyptic literature can't and shouldn't be taken literally.) This view holds to a literal reign of Christ on David's throne. Resurrected saints will reign with Christ during this time. The world will witness unprecedented peace as Isaiah 65:20 is realized." http://www.spreadinglight.com/theology/dictionary/premillennialism.html

Dispensational Premillenialism believes that God will one day honor His covenants and promises to the actual nation and people of Israel. He will deal with them and bring them back to a saving relationship with Jesus during the Tribulation. The Church will have been raptured out just prior to the wrath of God being poured out onto the earth.

Historic Premillennialism also believes that there will be a seven year Tribulation followed by an actual thousand year Millennial Kingdom on earth. However, they do not separate Israel from the Church and they believe that the Church will *not* be raptured until the conclusion of the Tribulation.

Following this discussion on the Millennial Kingdom, a fairly lengthy presentation was made to explain the two basic differences of opinion concerning the relationship between Israel and the Church. Many reasons were given why some theologians are convinced that due to the rejection of their Messiah and God's commandments, the nation and people of Israel no longer will be the recipients of the covenantal Old Testament promises previously granted them by God. Instead, the Church will now inherit these promises as they are fulfilled in the future. Of course, there are many others who believe that God has every intention of fulfilling these promises and His covenants to Israel and the Jews… God certainly did discipline the unrepentant Jew of the past (as He said He would), but He still has every intention of rewarding the repentant Jew of the future.

The Tribulation: The Bible speaks of a time of tribulation that will come upon the earth. The Old Testament frequently spoke of a time when God would pour out His wrath on unrepentant mankind. The varying views concerning this time were presented: the amillennial view that sees the world living through this tribulation even now, the postmillennial view is fairly non-committal in its view of this time period (although some with this view believe that there will be a future time when the world will go through a period of significant tribulation just before Christ returns), and the premillennial viewpoint, which is the most popular view in the world today. Although all those with this latter view of the Tribulation see the time of the future Millennial Kingdom coming after a seven year period of intense Tribulation, there are four different ideas concerning the coming of the Lord with respect to this time. These views were reviewed in some detail.

The final portion of this section revolved around these four major viewpoints of the Rapture and the Second Coming. These four views relate to the timing of these two glorious events with respect to the coming seven year Tribulation. These can quite easily be summarized as follows:

Mid-Tribulation Rapture: God will rapture His Church at the mid-point of the seven year Tribulation. Jesus will return to defeat Satan at the conclusion of this time period, followed by setting up His Millennial Kingdom

Pre-wrath Rapture and Second Coming: This view holds that Jesus will return to rapture His Church just prior to the wrath of God being poured out on unrepentant humanity after approximately five years of the seven year Tribulation has been completed. The Rapture and the Second Coming will be two aspects of a continuing single event.

Post-Tribulation Rapture and Second Coming: Jesus will come at the conclusion of the Tribulation. He will rapture His saints to meet Him in the air, then return almost immediately to defeat Satan at Armageddon. Then, Jesus will set up His Millennial Kingdom on earth.

Pre-Tribulation Rapture: The next big event in human history will be the Rapture of the Church. This is an imminent event… it could happen today. This will be followed by the revelation of the Antichrist, the seven year Tribulation, the Second Coming of Jesus with His saints to defeat Satan and his minions. The literal Millennial Kingdom will follow the victory of Christ at Armageddon.

Of course, as has already been stated, Christians need to be ready no matter when the Rapture comes! Hopefully, Christians will be raptured out of the wrath to come… if not, all Christians must stay strong as God "delivers us through" that very difficult time prior to the onset of the glorious Millennial Kingdom.

As we have seen, there are certainly many different ways to look at end-time prophecy. No doubt, this makes the whole topic more complicated. Reasons have been given in some detail to explain how and why many modern day prophecy teachers (such as, Lindsey, Jeffrey, Walvoord, LaHaye) interpret the Bible in the same manner that will done here. The remainder of this treatise will present and interpret the books of The Revelation, the Gospels, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah and others using the following methodology:

- **Dispensational view** of how God deals with His creation
- **Futuristic view** of the prophetic Word – we have no reason to believe that we have entered into the Tribulation or Millennium, therefore most prophecy related to that time on earth is to be looked upon as a time in the future.
- **Literal interpretation** of the Bible – the Bible should be interpreted as one would interpret any other typical, non-fiction book… i.e. not symbolically or allegorically. It is true that everyone interprets some portions of the Bible allegorically. It seems quite obvious that is the way portions were written. However, whenever there is any doubt on the issue, the literal approach will be used.
- A **Premillennial** interpretation of the Millennial Kingdom will be made.
- There will be a **pretribulation Rapture** of the Church.
- A **seven year Tribulation** period will follow the Rapture.
- The **Second Coming will be at the end of this Tribulation.**
- The **Millennial Kingdom** begins soon after the Battle of Armageddon, just after Christ returns with His saints to defeat Satan and the Antichrist.
- The Millennial Kingdom will last **a literal 1,000 years**. It will be a wonderful time on earth.
- There will be **a final rebellion by Satan**, followed almost immediately by the defeat of Satan, his demons, and unrepentant mankind. The judgment of Satan and his demons will follow.
- The **Great White Throne judgment** will conclude all judgments by God. This will result in the eternal punishment of all lost souls.
- **Newly refurbished heavens and earth** begin after the Millennium

So this will be the outline of the remainder of this lecture series and treatise. The next section, Section 3, will be concerned with showing why there are very excellent reasons to believe that this world is in the latter days… that Jesus may very well rapture His saints at any moment. The last section will be a comprehensive commentary on the end-time prophetic Word with emphasis on Zechariah and The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Are We Living in the Last Days?

Since Hal Lindsey's Late Great Planet Earth book hit the bookshelves in the early 1980s there has been an increased fascination with the topic of end-times prophecy. Several others have come out with similarly popular books since that time. Unfortunately, there have been some who have set actual dates as to when the Rapture and/or the Second Coming was to occur. For example, 1988 was a year that many date-setters claimed was to be the year of the Rapture. This was primarily because this was forty years after Israel was re-created as a nation. On October 20, 1991, a full-page advertisement was featured in USA Today claiming that Jesus would return sometime in October 28, 1992. Many may remember that there were those who thought that the year A.D. 2000 would be the end of the world. Now, Dec. 22, 2012 is the most popular date for those who like to set dates for the end of the world. There are plenty of other suggested dates, however. Harold Camping, a well known preacher from California recently looked forward to judgment day; he was convinced that it would come on May 21, 2011 – he was wrong! What does the Bible state about the time of the Second Coming of the Messiah? "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." Matt 24:36 That quote from Jesus is quite clear… no one knows when Jesus will return in the air to rapture His Church… no one but God Himself! So, why this treatise then?

There is a great difference between setting an actual date for the return of Jesus and a quest to gain an understanding of the likely "time or season" that He may very likely return. In fact, the Bible tells us that we should actually be looking for the signs of His return… and be prepared for His coming when it does happen. For example, Jesus spoke of His return in the Gospels. He expects us to be on alert for the many signs of His imminent coming that He outlines in His Olivet Discourse.

As it turns out, most of the signs given in the Bible concerning the end-times relate to the time of the Tribulation. Given that it is the belief espoused here that the Rapture will occur just before the Tribulation begins, how can we use these events during the Tribulation to determine the times in which we *now* live? We certainly are not in the terrible time of God's great wrath at this time. The answer relates to the manner in which God has always worked his providential care of this world since the time of Adam. All throughout history, **God has rarely intervened to change the course of history** in a **blatantly supernatural** way. I must define what I mean by these terms as I certainly believe that God has influenced and *changed the course of history* through His direct involvement many times (e.g. consider the plagues that He visited upon Egypt, Jesus dying on the cross to save those who would trust in Him, God using King Cyrus to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem, etc.). God has also acted, at times, in a *clearly supernatural* manner (He protected Shadrach, Meschak and Abednego from the fire, Jesus turned water into wine and walked on water, Moses parted the Red Sea, etc.). However, never do I recall God using His supernatural powers to *totally usurp the natural physical laws of His universe to transform a significant portion of land, sea or humanity*. Although He certainly does use His infinite power and knowledge to direct the events of this earth and mankind, He does it

by using short episodes of blatant miracles (a few already mentioned above) and by influencing man to act according to His will in other cases. What *God does not* seem to ever do is to **override Natural Laws** to **effect grand and long-lasting changes** of earth's topography or other aspects of nature. For example, it is doubtful that we will ever see thousands of people walking across the ocean on foot, a city having all of its buildings disappear overnight, or an entire lake turning into orange juice. God does not currently work that way on the large scale, nor has He in the past.

Because of this, people can understand that if certain events are going to occur during the seven years of the Tribulation, and this time begins very soon after the Rapture, one would expect the ground work for some of these Tribulation events to *begin before the Rapture*. For just one example, if the Temple is spoken of as being used during the Tribulation, it is quite likely that the Jews would be at least planning on building it in the years leading up to the Rapture. This is not absolutely necessary as God is sovereign and can accomplish any non-contradictory task that He desires, but as we have just seen, it is highly unlikely that He would act in that manner – for example, have a Temple just pop into existence on the Temple Mount soon after the Rapture. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that there will be many signs leading up to the Rapture that relate directly to those events that are seen just after it occurs (since the Tribulation will quickly follow the Rapture of the Church). Interestingly, many of these signs have now come upon the world and will be discussed in some detail below.

In this next section the many signs of the end-times, including both those noted in the Old and the New Testaments, will be given. Then, the evidence for these events having come to fruition in recent history will be discussed. I believe that it will become clearly evident that there has never been a time in all world history where so many signs of the end-times have coalesced together as the times in which we currently live. I suggest that it is reasonably likely Jesus will rapture His saints within the next twenty-five years. Of course, it is possible that He could come for His Church within the next five seconds… i.e. His return is imminent… as has already been explained in the last section. Now, let us take a look at what the Bible says concerning the signs of the end.

The following discussion of the "signs of the end-times" will be divided into three subject areas:

- Those prophecies related directly to the nation and people of Israel, God's "chosen people"
- End-time prophetic verses that relate to other nations, events, and people of the world – coming from both the Old and New Testaments
- The Olivet Discourse, where the Lord Jesus detailed the events that the world would experience just prior to His Second Coming

One additional point should be made before beginning to list and discuss fifty signs of the end-times. Some of these signs are incredibly impressive and highly suggest that we are living

in the times just before the coming of the Lord. There are some that are clearly consistent with the end-times but, standing alone, would not be enough to strongly convince most people that the Rapture is just around the corner. The point is that there are fifty of these signs all coming together at this time in history. Taken together, I believe, they lend great credence to the notion that Jesus is soon to come!

Israel in the end-times:

There is no more important and impressive series of fulfilled prophecy in all of eschatology than the amazing events that have befallen the nation of Israel in the last sixty-five years. In fact, the following events constitute the major reason that most Bible prophecy teachers are so convinced that the Rapture cannot be too far away. Let us now take a close look at many of the prophecies relating to Israel in the end-times and see just how those prophecies have already been fulfilled:

1. **Israel will become a nation once again:**

   The nation of Israel ceased to exist after the Assyrian defeat of its northern kingdom in 722 B.C. followed by the defeat of its southern kingdom by Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B.C. Since that time, the Jews have had no land to call their own. Over the centuries, in fact, the vast majority of their people had become dispersed (that was also predicted in the Old Testament) throughout the entire world. After the resounding defeat by the Romans in A.D. 70, they no longer had the Temple in which to worship and were effectively evacuated from Jerusalem by the victors. In A.D. 135, Emperor Hadrian of the Romans even abolished the names of Judea and Samaria, creating the new name of Palestine for the region in an attempt to blot out any memory of the Jewish race. Jerusalem was renamed Aelia Capitolina for the same reason. However, that plan did not work as God had future plans for the Jews. On the other hand, it has caused many problems over the centuries, even today, as there are now a group of non-Jewish people who have adopted the name "Palestinians" to help them in their cause – which is, once again, to rid the world of the Jews. Let us see what the Bible says is the ultimate fate of the "promised land"…

   The hand of the LORD was upon me, and **he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones**. And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; **and indeed they were very dry**. [3] And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." [4] Again He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, **'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD**! [5] Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely **I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live**. [6] I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD." "So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. [8] Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. [9] Also He said to me, "Prophesy to the

breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "**Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live**." "So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and **they lived**, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. 11 Then **He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.** They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' 12 Therefore prophesy and say to them, **'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.** 13 Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. 14 **I will put My Spirit in you**, and you shall live, and **I will place you in your own land.** Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD. Ezek 37:2-14

For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will **I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered** on a cloudy and dark day. 13 And **I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land**; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. Ezek 34:11-14

'the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the LORD. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.' Jer 30:3

'O LORD, save Your people, **The remnant of Israel!'** 8 **Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth**, among them the blind and the lame, The woman with child and the one who labors with child, together; A great throng shall return there. Jer 31:7-8

"At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the LORD. Zeph 3:20

These five verses detail God's final re-gathering of the Jews from the four corners of the earth. There are many similar verses concerning God's plan for Israel in the end-times. As the time of the end approaches, the Bible states that God will once again reunite His "chosen people" in the land of their fathers. After many centuries lying dormant, Israel will once again rise from the ashes. Actually, as Ezekiel suggests in his parable of the "dry bones", Israel was "dead" for all that time – physically there was no nation at all and spiritually the people, as a whole, were out of harmony with God – they had rejected Him.

Then, on May 15, 1948, Israel became a nation once again! This was quite a remarkable occurrence… in fact, it was totally unique in human history. Never before had a nation of people with its own specific identity been defeated and scattered throughout the world for such a long period of time (in this case it was for over two thousand years) only to come together as a nation again –as the rightful heirs to that nation. Yet, God said that it would happen, near the time of the return of His Son, and it has happened!

During the last century, millions of Jews have migrated back to their rightful homeland from all over the earth. As Ezekiel has written, they came from the north (e.g. Russia), south (e.g. Africa), east (e.g. many different Muslim countries) and west (e.g. United States).

"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near." Matt 24:32

This quote of Jesus comes from His Olivet Discourse immediately after telling His disciples about the signs of His coming. Some see this statement by the Lord Jesus as a general affirmation that His return will be quite imminent when certain events begin to happen on the earth. Many prophecy scholars interpret this verse in a more specific manner. People such as Grant Jeffrey believe that Jesus is using the fig tree as a symbol for Israel in this parable. It is typically used in just that way throughout the Scriptures. If that is the case here, Jesus is saying that soon after Israel once again becomes a nation and begins to grow and develop (i.e. the tender branch is putting out leaves), it is to be understood that Jesus will soon thereafter return to rapture His Church into heaven.

Mark Hitchcock, in his recent book, *The Amazing Claims of Bible Prophecy*, pointed out that noted preacher J.C. Ryle wrote in the mid-19th century how he was amazed how only the Jew was able to retain their national identity, even two thousand years after they were scattered throughout the entire world. None of the other dispersed peoples were able to claim this… only the Jew. Hitchcock went on to quote Dr. Randall Price, "The modern return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel has been called the "Miracle of the Mediterranean." Such a return by a people group that had been scattered is unprecedented in history."…. The mighty empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome all ravaged their land, took their people captive, and scattered them throughout the earth. Even after this, they suffered persecution, pogrom [i.e. organized massacre], and Holocaust in the lands to which they were exiled. Yet, all of these ancient kingdoms have returned to dust…. But the Jewish people whom they enslaved and tried to eradicate live free and have again become a strong nation."

Let me make one final point on this topic. Ezekiel noted in his vision of the "dry bones" that first these bones would come to life… this has happened. Next, this living body would soon receive the Spirit of God. That has not yet happened to any significant degree. However, during the Tribulation, God will indeed pour out His Spirit into this newly alive entity. The Jewish people, who have recently returned to Israel in droves, will

then turn back to God through their newfound belief in Jesus. They will finally recognize Jesus as their true Messiah!

2. **Judah and Israel reunite:**

After Solomon died, the United Kingdom of Israel was divided. This resulted in a Northern Kingdom and a Southern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom, which included Jerusalem, was called Judah and was composed primarily of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Most of the tribe of Levi also lived in the Southern Kingdom as their duties involved the Temple in Jerusalem. The Northern Kingdom, named Israel, was composed of the remaining ten tribes. The Lord has promised to reunite all of the nation of Israel in the end-times…

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [16] "As for you, son of man, **take a stick for yourself** and write on it: 'For **Judah** and for the children of Israel, his companions.' Then take another stick and write on it, 'For **Joseph**, the **stick of Ephraim**, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.' [17] Then **join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.** Ezek 37:15-17

'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely **I will take the stick of Joseph**, which is in the **hand of Ephraim**, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and **I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick,** and they will be one in My hand." '
Ezek 37:19

Ezekiel prophesied concerning these two kingdoms that resulted after the death of King Solomon… Israel (*represented by the stick of Ephraim or Joseph*) and Judah. This prophecy came immediately after his prophecy concerning the restoring of the nation of Israel in the latter days.

The Northern Kingdom (Israel) lasted only two hundred years before God allowed Assyria to conquer it and its people as punishment for their sins. Judah lasted somewhat longer, but eventually God brought the Babylonians in to teach them about the consequences of rejecting Him and His edicts. King Nebuchadnezzar defeated Judah and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. He also brought many Jewish slaves back with him into captivity. Although there were many thousands of Jews who did return to their homeland many years later, most did not.

However, God had no intention of letting His "chosen people" languish forever in foreign lands. He had made promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. God never breaks a promise. Therefore, not only have we seen God arrange human events to bring the Jews from all over the world back to their homeland, He has once again united the Divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah! There certainly is no separation between the tribes in Israel at this time. All of the Jews live in relative harmony in Israel today.

3. **Jerusalem becomes part of Israel again:**
In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but **Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place**--Jerusalem.
Zech 12:6

And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And **Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled**.
Luke 21:24

In the first quote, Zechariah stated that in the end-times Jerusalem would be inhabited by the Jews once again. Therefore, it was certainly of prophetic interest that a major result of the famous "Six-Day War" in 1967 was the fact that Israel once again regained control of the city of Jerusalem. It is now that nation's capital city.

Luke noted that the Jews would not regain permanent control of Jerusalem until the time of the Gentiles was fulfilled. Given the situation today, the time of the Gentiles being "fulfilled" certainly would appear to be just over the horizon. Unfortunately, it is certainly still the case that today many nations continue to bicker about the rightful ownership of this city. This issue will not be totally resolved until the return of Jesus when He will defeat Satan and his forces in the Battle of Armageddon. Be that as it may, there is still no doubt that almost one million Jews live in their capital city, just as the prophet Zechariah said would occur at the end of days.

4. **Jerusalem will be fought over by many nations:**
"Behold, **I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples**, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. ³ And it shall happen **in that day** that **I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples**; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.
Zech 12:2-3

As the preceding verses show, the possession of Jerusalem would be at the center of international turmoil as the time for Christ's return draws near ("in that day"). Zechariah was writing concerning the end-times when he wrote the words above. It is worth noting that, until these last sixty years, Jerusalem has certainly not been a "very heavy stone for all peoples". When Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70, and then again was crushed in A.D. 135, it would not have been considered to be a "stone for all peoples". There have been times in history that this city of God has been fought over, but only at this time in history can it truthfully be stated that Jerusalem has become a "cup of drunkenness" for much of the world. It is quite obvious that Jerusalem is the most fought over city in the world at this time. The world news reports on the conflict over Jerusalem almost daily.

The fate of Jerusalem, therefore, has gained the attention of the world. When Israel became a nation once again in May 1948 until 1967, the city of Jerusalem still remained

divided. This great city has seen the use of barbed-wire fences, walls, etc. to divide it up between Jewish and Palestinian regions. During the twenty years from 1948-1967, the Jewish Quarter, with its synagogues, was destroyed. Graves and monuments were desecrated. It was not until the 1967 Six-Day War that Jerusalem and the Temple Mount were liberated. On June 7th, Israeli troops stood at the Western Wall and declared. "We have taken the city of God. We are entering the Messianic era for the Jewish people, and I promise to the Christian world that what we are responsible for we will take care of." (Rabbi Shlomo Goren)

Unfortunately, on June 17, 1967 (just ten days later), Israeli Defense Minister, Moshe Dayan, a secular Jew, gave back control of the Temple Mount to the Supreme Muslim Council. Amazingly, this Israeli was quoted as saying, "We must view the Temple Mount as a historic site relating to past memory." How could he forget the vast history of the Temple Mount that related to David, Solomon, and even God Himself! The top of the Temple Mount was given over to the Muslims to administer. Today no non-Muslim worship or archaeological activity is allowed on the Temple Mount.

As never before in history, Jerusalem is at the center of today's headlines. The city which grew up around the small walled-village captured by King David from the Jebusites three thousand years ago is the focal point of never-ending debate among the great superpowers. It is a fact that no other city in the world is fought over and discussed more than the "City of David"… Jerusalem. This has truly been the case throughout all history. Jerusalem has been fought over by armies of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Ptolemies, Seleucids, Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Arabs, Crusaders, Mongols, the Turks, the British, and Jordan. Today the United States, the United Nations, Israel, and the Palestinian leadership are almost constantly working to figure out a peaceful way to divide up Jerusalem between Israel and the Muslim Palestinians. This is not going to happen, ultimately.

God states that this city is actually meant for Him! Jerusalem will be where His Son, Jesus, will reign during the Millennial Kingdom. It also becomes obvious, after reading the prophecies of the latter days, that Israel will retain possession once they have regained it… as they did in 1967. Of course, this is not to say that they will not have to fend off many aggressors over the years.

Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu has boldly stated that he has no intention of giving control of any additional portion of Jerusalem to any other people or nation. There are strong rumors that the Pope wants to set up a Catholic World Headquarters there. The Muslim nations have no intention of allowing Jews to have any lasting control over what they perceive as one of their holiest cities. In other words, the Jews, Christians, and Muslims all consider Jerusalem as very important to their religious heritage. A stalemate has been in existence for decades now. Eventually, the Scriptures tell us, enemy nations will come against Israel in war once again to decide the fate of Israel and its capital city. Given the course of political events and the many signs of the soon coming of Jesus, it

would appear that this great time of Tribulation is not far off in the future.

As we shall see, during the time of the Tribulation, this prophecy will become even more evident as nation after nation will turn their attention to Jerusalem with every intention of bringing it down. However, God will intervene and Israel will win this war. God will not let that great city fall the next time it faces destruction… assuming that we are in the end-times.

It is very interesting, that seemingly miraculously, Israel was triumphant in the battles against their warring neighbors in 1948, 1967 and 1973. Logic would have strongly suggested that they should have lost every one of those wars… and easily! It really is a worthwhile experience to read about these wars to see the "hand" of God upon Israel as He providentially worked His wonders to direct the final outcome. Something like this will happen during the first war of the Tribulation (to be discussed in the last section). In another "sign of the end-times" to be discussed a little later, some amazing examples concerning a few of the supernatural miracles that God blessed Israel with during these previous wars will be described. God is going to protect Israel and Jerusalem in the coming years!

In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and **the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them.** [9] It shall be **in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.** Zech 12:8-9

5. **The ancient language of Hebrew returns:**

The ancient Jews spoke the Hebrew language. However, even by the time of Christ, this language had ceased to exist in everyday usage. After the Assyrians defeated the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C., the ten tribes of those Jews were scattered throughout the surrounding territories and beyond. Later, the Babylonians defeated Judah in 606 B.C., and took tens of thousands of their defeated foes as slaves and workers back to their own country. The remainder migrated off to places such as Egypt. In any event, virtually all of these "chosen people" had to adopt the language of their new homelands. Aramaic, and later, Greek, became the language of the masses. Only the Levite priests continued to use Hebrew (e.g. they felt this was important to use in their Temple ceremonies) by the time the second Temple was built. Five hundred years later, the language of the Jews, even those living in Israel, was either Aramaic, Greek, or Latin.

Yet, God had plans for His "chosen people" to not only return to their allotted land, but also to once again speak in their old Hebrew language. Note what God stated through His prophet Zephaniah during the days of the building of the second Temple…

"For then I will restore to the peoples a **pure language**, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord. Zeph 3:9

Some prophecy scholars do not interpret this verse to mean a pure language in the sense that Jews would once again speak Hebrew. However, many modern prophecy teachers do believe that this is what was meant by the Holy Spirit who spoke through the prophet Zephaniah over 2,500 years ago. In any case, it is quite an incredible fact that after totally dying out of common usage for thousands of years, the original Hebrew language of Israel has returned as a spoken language for God's "chosen people", the Jews!

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda is the man responsible for bringing back Hebrew as the language of the masses in Israel today. He stated in the late 19th century, "The Hebrew language can live only if we revive the nation and return it to the fatherland." His life is a very interesting story.

At the age of twelve, Ben-Yehuda said that he had a vision where he saw light flash across the sky and a voice spoke three times saying, "The land and the language." He took this as a sign from God that he was to restore Hebrew as the common language in the land of the Jews… Israel. Of course, there was no Israel at that time. Many years would pass. As a young adult, he contracted tuberculosis while studying medicine in Paris. One day, while recovering from this dreaded disease, he once again heard the call, "The land and the language." This second visitation from God, as Ben-Yehuda interpreted it, resulted in his dedication of the remaining years of his life to the task of developing the Hebrew language for common usage in Jewish Palestine… and later, Israel. His crowning work was a seventeen volume lexicon/dictionary of the Hebrew language. Despite a life of severe persecution, even to members of his family, he lived to see Hebrew recognized as the official language of the Palestinian Jews beginning in 1922… just one month before his death. Eliezer always understood that a return to the use of their original language would be one stimulus to help bring Jews back from around the world to their common homeland. He was correct in this assumption.

6. **The Ethiopian Jews will return prior to the return of Christ:**

During the time of Solomon, a significant number of Jews migrated to Ethiopia with Prince Menelik, the son of Solomon born to the Queen of Sheba. Members of each of the twelve tribes of Israel accompanied him upon his return. Zephaniah, approximately 400 years later, prophesied that in the latter days, these Jews would return to Israel once again:

From beyond the rivers of **Ethiopia** My worshipers, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering. Zeph 3:10

The prophet Isaiah had something to say about the Ethiopian contingent of the Diaspora as well. Of course, Ethiopia is south of Israel…

I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west; [6] I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' **And to the *south*, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, And My daughters from the ends of the earth--** Isaiah 43:5-6

In a two day period of time, from May 24-May 25, 1991, approximately 15,000 Ethiopian "Falasha" Jews were air-lifted to Israel in a wonderful example of the coordinated efforts of several Jewish organizations and the Israeli government. This was extremely important as their fellow Jewish brothers and sisters were facing a possible holocaust (the government in Ethiopia was very unstable at that time). Instead, these Jews were able to relocate to Israel, the home of their *forefathers*. Incredibly, this "Operation Solomon" was accomplished in only 36 hours using 34 planes! Operation Moses and Operation Joshua returned over 8,000 Ethiopian Jews in 1984/85 from Sudan over a period of several months. The point is that thousands of Jews from Ethiopia have recently been brought back to Israel as prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures. God is bringing His "chosen people" back to the home of their forefathers from all parts of the globe in these latter days.

7. **God will bless the land of Israel with rain and other sources of water in the latter days:**

I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. [19] I will plant in the wilderness the **cedar and the acacia tree**, The **myrtle** and the **oil** tree; I will set in the desert the **cypress tree** and the **pine** and the **box tree** together, [20] That they may see and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it. Isaiah 41:18-20

Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains in righteousness. **He sends you abundant showers**, both autumn and spring rains, as before. Joel 2:23

In the verses above, the prophets Isaiah and Joel are writing of the latter days. God reveals that He will bless the land of Israel with rain that will change the topography of Israel in these end-times. The desert plains and the wilderness will no longer be arid. Instead, in some fashion, God states that water will appear once again as in Old Testament days. Not only that, but with water now available on the once arid land of Israel, trees will come back onto the land, and, as we shall see below, fruit, vegetables and grapes will now grow in abundance. It is interesting to note from the verses in Isaiah above, God is doing all of this, in part, so that the world will know what "the hand of the Lord has done". In fact, the vast majority of the signs that will be presented in this section are given by God, in part, so that those who are watching expectantly will understand that the coming of the Lord is near.

When the displaced Jews began their return in earnest in the last half of the 20th century, many brilliant agricultural engineers worked hard to develop the most sophisticated irrigation systems in the entire world. Drip-irrigation techniques have

enabled them to use virtually every drop of water available. The outstanding fertilizer products from the Dead Sea have also allowed the Israeli farmer to once again turn that land into lush gardens.

Over 240 million trees were planted in Israel during the 20th century. Israel is the only nation on earth that ended that century with more trees than it began. An active effort by the people in Israel, and many people around the world who support them, have teamed up to re-forest much of that land. Now there are scores of forested acres around that country. Dozens of types of trees now grow, including, the olive, almond, fig, date palm, pistachio, acacia, oak, pine, and many, many more.

Although it is still true that Israel could use more rainfall, this past century has noted a significant increase compared to the previous several centuries. Grant Jeffrey states in his book *Armageddon: Appointment With Destiny* that the average yearly rainfall has increased by over ten percent every decade over the last century. Due to the increased forestation, the outstanding irrigation advancements, and the increased rainfall, Israel is fast becoming the beautiful nation promised by God so many centuries ago. One might well assume from this that the end-time promised appearance of Jesus is just over the horizon.

8. **Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit:** Isaiah 27:6

In chapter twenty-seven of Isaiah as well as the twenty-ninth chapter of Deuteronomy, the prophets Isaiah and Moses tell of the centuries that God's judgment will turn the land of Israel into a virtual desert… no water to speak of and no agriculture. After the Romans brutally defeated the Jews in the war of 70 A.D., the army of Rome stripped the land of much of its trees and orchards. The "promised land" would be abandoned and it would become primarily a desert wasteland. It would continue in this pitiable condition for multiple centuries. Mark Twain wrote of his trip to Israel in the late 19th century… "There is no timber of any consequence." "There was hardly a tree or shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soul, had almost deserted the country." "A desolation is here that not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life and action." "Jerusalem is mournful and dreary and lifeless. I would not desire to live here." "It is a hopeless, dreary, heartless land."

However, all of that has changed miraculously! As was just discussed, Israel has in this last century been blessed with more rainfall and has developed state-of-the-art irrigation techniques that are the envy of the world. Not only has it added a quarter million trees, but God has intervened to turn this land into a place of beauty in many other areas as noted below.

In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations. Ezek 38:8

I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; They shall **plant vineyards and drink wine from them**; **They shall also**

make gardens and eat fruit from them. [15] I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," Says the LORD your God.
Amos 9:14-15
"But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and **yield your fruit** to My people Israel, for they are about to come. [9] For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. Ezek 36:8-9
'Thus says the Lord GOD: "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. [34] The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. [35] So they will say, **'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited**.' [36] Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. Ezek 36:33-36

Israel is currently able to produce 95% of its own food requirements and has become a major exporter of vegetables, fruits and flowers to the rest of the world. Flowers (25%), vegetables and field crops (wheat and corn and sorghum) (45%) and fruit (25% including 10% citrus) comprise most of this list. The list of exported fruits (more than forty types) and vegetables is quite long. Cotton is also a major exported crop – nearly $125 million worth per year. Israel is one of the world's largest flower producers and exporters, even exporting tulips to Amsterdam! The scientists in Israel have made great strides and are world leaders in research and development in modern agricultural techniques, soil enhancers, fertilizers and irrigation methods. Because of the greater quantity of rain and the excellent irrigation methods, now the Jewish farmer can plant more than one crop per year. This was not possible until the latter portion of this past century.

In the same manner as God spoke through the prophet Isaiah concerning the increased water and forestation in the latter days, He also spoke through Ezekiel and said…
Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. Ezek 36:33-36

9. **Israel will once again, in the end-times, produce sweet wine in abundance:**
'Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her. [18] **'In that day the mountains will drip new wine**, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water.
Joel 3:17-18
"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; **The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, And all the hills shall flow with it.** [14] I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; **They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them;** They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from

them. [15] I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," Says the LORD your God. Amos 9:13-15

Since coming home to Israel in 1948, the Jewish people have made extraordinary progress in the development of their land. Remember, the land in that area was mostly desert in the hundreds of years before God brought His people back to the land promised to Abraham.

Now, Israeli wine is produced by hundreds of wineries. A few of the larger companies produce over **ten million bottles per year**. In 2010 Israel wine exports will amount to $30 million produced by 150 wineries.

The modern Israeli wine industry was founded by Baron Edmond James de Rothschild, owner of the Bordeaux estate Château Lafite-Rothschild. Today, Israeli winemaking takes place in five vine-growing regions: Galilee (including the Golan Heights), the Judean Hills, surrounding the city of Jerusalem; Shimshon (Samson), located between the Judean Hills and the Coastal Plain; the Negev, a semi-arid desert region, where drip irrigation has made grape growing possible; and the Sharon plain near the Mediterranean coast and just south of Haifa, which is the largest grape growing area in Israel. In 2007, Robert Parker's The Wine Advocate awarded 14 Israeli wines its highest wine rating of "outstanding."

Israel has emerged as an excellent producer of wine in the Mediterranean region. It exports much of what it produces, more to the United States than any other country. Along with the land being very suitable for the growing of excellent grapes, Israel is a world leader in the technological aspects of wine production. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Chardonnay are three of the more popular types of wine coming from Israel. Certainly, there is no doubt that the prophets Joel and Amos were correct when they made their end-times prophecies some 2,500 years ago. As Amos said, "The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it."

10. **God will provide birds of prey and wild animals to clean up the dead:**

The apocalyptic books of the Bible reference many wars that will arise just prior to the coming of the Lord. Ezekiel (Chapters 38 and 39) wrote concerning a war that will precede Armageddon and wreck terrible damage and death upon the forces that invade Israel. Asaph, the Psalmist, also wrote of another fierce war that would result in much death and destruction (i.e. Psalm 83). Certainly, the war that will result in more death than all others will be the war of Armageddon. Due to the combination of massive manpower, powerful armaments and, most likely, nuclear destruction, millions of people will die on the battlefields of Israel. As God will be supernaturally protecting Israel, most of the dead will be enemy combatants. God wrote long ago of one method that He planned to use to clean up the battlefields…

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the **birds** that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, [18] that **you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.**" [19] And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. [21] And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And **all the birds were filled with their flesh**.
Rev 19:17-21

You (Gog, present day Russia) shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; **I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.** Ezek 39:4

thus says the Lord GOD, **'Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field**: "Assemble yourselves and come; Gather together from all sides to My sacrificial meal Which I am sacrificing for you, **A great sacrificial meal on the mountains of Israel, That you may eat flesh and drink blood. [18] You shall eat the flesh of the mighty,**
Ezek 39:17-18

The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter. For **the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in Edom. [7]** And the wild oxen will fall with them, the bull calves and the great bulls. Their land will be drenched with blood, and the dust will be soaked with fat. **[8]** For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause. **[9]** Edom's streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch! **[10]** It will not be quenched night and day; its smoke will rise forever. From generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again. **[11] The desert owl and screech owl will possess it; the great owl and the raven will nest there.** God will stretch out over Edom the measuring line of chaos and the plumb line of desolation…….. **[13] Thorns will overrun her citadels, nettles and brambles her strongholds. She will become a haunt for jackals, a home for owls. [14] Desert creatures will meet with hyenas, and wild goats will bleat to each other;** there the night creatures will also repose and find for themselves places of rest. **[15] The owl will nest there and lay eggs**, she will hatch them, and care for her young under the shadow of her wings; **there also the falcons will gather, each with its mate.** Isaiah 34:2,6-12,13-15

In the verses from Revelation, Ezekiel, and Isaiah listed above, God is warning the nations that will come against Israel in the last days that it will certainly not end well for them. In fact, millions of Israel's enemies will die in the battle of Armageddon which will take place at Megiddo. Jesus Christ Himself will defeat the forces of Satan at that time. Much will be learned concerning this in the last section of this treatise. As noted above, many more will die in the battles described in Ezekiel 38/39 and the 83rd Psalm. What preparations might God be making for these battlefields now? One should keep in mind that there probably will be a significant component of nuclear debris that will make this clean-up process very difficult and dangerous.

Note, that there must be massive quantities of birds of prey in order to accomplish the cleaning up of the dead on that massive battlefield… at least in the manner God sees fit to "clean it up", so to speak. That, in turn, brings us to the point of this "sign"… interestingly enough, the plains of Megiddo have the greatest population of this kind of bird in the entire world! Number one in the world! A coincidence? Maybe… or maybe not. Up to one billion birds of this ilk fly over Israel each spring. One to four billion migratory birds, many being raptors-carrion (eaters of dead flesh) fly over the land of Israel in the fall. Thirty-four species of these man-eating birds of prey visit or live in the area of Megiddo! Israel has turned the area of Megiddo into a preserve for these birds of prey, and they are flourishing. Tiny Israel is a land bridge: because Israel is connected to Egypt, birds don't have to make the difficult journey over the Mediterranean. They fly by way of Israel… some stop off and stay there living in the preserves that have been set up in recent decades. These birds are apparently readying themselves for quite a feast to come.

Along with the numerous birds of prey in the area of Megiddo, there are significant numbers of these birds and wild desert animals in the Petra and Bozrah region just below the Dead Sea as well. This area will be where many of the enemies of Israel fall in battle during the earlier wars of the Tribulation. The bottom line is that God in His providence has provided for an amazing quantity of *birds of prey* and *scavenger animals* in the exact areas that the Bible foretells will one day be filled with fallen enemy forces. After the war detailed in Ezekiel, it will take seven years for the clean-up to be completed… probably taking so long due the utmost care that will be required after nuclear contamination. These birds and animals will be useful in this gruesome, yet necessary, activity.

11. **Jerusalem will be an un-walled city in the last days:**

You will say, 'I will go up against **a land of unwalled villages**; I will go to a peaceful **people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls**, and having neither bars nor gates'-- [12] to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land. Ezek 38:11-12

'**Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls** Zech 2:4

Ezekiel and Zechariah both wrote of the time just prior to the return of Jesus when Jerusalem would once again be occupied by the Jews. The re-gathering by God would have resulted in a well-populated city. The interesting thing, however, is that the city would no longer be protected by the walls that were so necessary in the times during which they lived. Although this prophecy must have seemed odd to those two great prophets as they wrote it down, it has certainly come true today.

Modern Jerusalem, as is true of virtually all modern cities, does not have a wall surrounding it for protection from foreign invaders. This certainly would not have been easy for a man to foresee when this prediction was made over 2500 years ago! Of course, a man did not predict this… it was a prophecy from God.

In the days when this prophecy was written, all cities of any note were protected by fortified walls. This was true of Jerusalem. Remember, Nehemiah was allowed to return to his homeland for the express purpose of rebuilding the walls, as it was such a critically important item for the city's defense. However, even though Ezekiel had just prophesied that Jerusalem was going to be attacked by many surrounding nations, he followed up that prophecy with the one about the city of Jerusalem not having any fortifying walls around its borders! Why in the world would they do that?! The answer today is obvious. Walls would be of no real value in this day of airplanes and missiles and artillery. Other methods of defense have long since replaced the city wall. God, of course, was privy to this knowledge…but, only God would have known about this twenty-five hundred years ago!

12. **The Eastern Gate will remain closed until the coming of Messiah:**

Then the man brought me back to the **outer gate of the sanctuary**, **the one facing east**, and it was shut. **2** **The LORD said to me, "This gate is to remain shut**. It must not be opened; no one may enter through it. It is to remain shut because the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered through it. **3** **The prince himself is the only one who may sit inside the gateway to eat in the presence of the LORD. He is to enter by way of the portico of the gateway and go out the same way."** Ezek 44:1-3

When Jesus entered into Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, He walked through the Eastern Gate. In A.D. 70, the Roman army totally destroyed the Temple and much of the city. This gate was certainly destroyed at that time. Most historians believe that the gate was rebuilt over the remnants of the earlier one in approximately A.D. 520. About one thousand years later (A.D. 1530), the Ottoman Turks sealed the gate shut to prevent the future prophesied entrance of the Messiah. Even a cemetery was placed in front of this sealed gate for the same purpose… to keep the Messiah from passing through the gate. It is the only one of the eleven gates to the city that has been sealed. Although the Muslim leader, Suleiman, ordered the gate sealed in an attempt to prevent the fulfillment of prophecy, he instead, allowed for its fulfillment.

Ezekiel wrote that the Eastern Gate of the Temple would remain closed until the Messiah returns. At Christ's Second Coming, he will enter Jerusalem through the now sealed Eastern Gate. As one would expect, today, as predicted, the Eastern Gate remains sealed. Interestingly, there have been attempts to foil this prophecy in the past… all have been intriguingly impressive failures:

- On December 9, 1917, the Arab leader of Jerusalem, the Grand Mufti, ordered his workmen to open the Eastern Gate. British General Allenby was advancing with his Expeditionary Army as they fought against the Ottoman Empire. The Grand Mufti had closed the other gates for protection, but still needed access through this Eastern Gate. The story goes that as the workmen picked up their sledgehammers to begin the task of opening the sealed gate, Allenby's airplane flew overhead, dropping leaflets telling the Arabs to flee for their lives. They took his sage advice, dropped their sledgehammers and fled the city. The gate remained closed!
- There was at least one additional serious attempt to open this famous gate. In 1967, King Hussein of Jordan decided to build a hotel for Arab pilgrims immediately adjacent to one section of the Western Wall. Presumably, this would have resulted in the closing of the Western Wall for Jewish worship forever. Hussein already had forbidden the Jews from worshipping at their sacred site in 1948. Along with this hotel, the Jordan king decided to open the Eastern Gate in order to allow for easy access to the El Aksa Mosque built on the Temple Mount. As should not be surprising to those who study Bible prophecy, these plans never materialized. At the same time that plans for beginning construction were being finalized, Arabs prepared to attack the Jewish state of Israel. However, in the famous Six-Day War of June, 1967, Israel crushed their attackers. The Muslims who were preparing to open the Eastern Gate, once again abandoned their air-hammers as Israeli aircraft flew menacingly overhead. The Arabs never again attempted to open this gate as the Jews re-captured Jerusalem in that very war. Today, the Eastern Gate remains sealed and will remain sealed until the day the Messiah walks through it.

One day, the Messiah will land on the Mount of Olives, with all His saints, and walk down to and right through the Eastern Gate and into the Temple area. What will happen with the cemetery is unknown… however, the Eastern Gate will remain closed only until the Messiah returns. The prophet Ezekiel was shown what would happen at that time…

Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, **2** and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory. **3** The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown. **4** The glory of **the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east**. **5** Then the

Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. Ezek 43:1-5

13. **Israel will deny the true Messiah until the time of the Gentiles is completed:**

Although it is certainly true that God has brought his "chosen people" back into the land of Israel and has granted them all of the blessings discussed in this section and many more, the Bible says that the nation of Israel will still not recognize Jesus as Messiah until the Church Age is over… after the Rapture. Of course, there will always be a remnant that know the truth, but God will not turn the nation, as a whole, towards the truth of His Son until the tribulation period.

It is common knowledge that the vast majority of Jews do not believe in Jesus as their Messiah, let alone as the Son of God, at this time. The Bible states that God will lead them back into the truth during and because of the events of the Tribulation. Of course, this will be after the completion of the time of the Gentiles and the Church Age in which we currently live. Jesus, Himself, told the Jews of His time that they would not see Him again until they, as a nation, would be willing to say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, *'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'*
Luke 13:35

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that **blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in**. [26] And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:
"The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob
(Isaiah 59:20) Romans 11:25-26

14. **The returning Jews will have no king until Jesus reigns over His Millennial Kingdom:**

For the children of Israel shall abide many days **without king or prince**, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. [5] Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness **in the latter days**. Hosea 3:4-5

As with all of the Bible's other prophecies, undoubtedly, this is also true. Not since Zedekiah was murdered by the Babylonians has either Judah or Israel been ruled by a king or prince. This was over 2500 years ago! Amazingly, not only is Israel no longer a theocracy, but today the Jewish state is governed by a parliamentary democracy comprised of approximately thirty political parties. There are no plans to change this form of government. In fact, this democratic rule will not change until Jesus returns and sets up His Millennial Kingdom on earth. As the verse from Hosea suggests, when the Jews return

and seek their Lord God, they will regain both their God and their King. As the last verse says, this will occur "in the latter days."

15. **The Sanhedrin has been reestablished after over 1,500 years:**

On October 13, 2004, seventy-one rabbis were ordained into the newly formed Sanhedrin. This was quite a momentous occasion as this august ruling body had not been in existence for over 1,550 years! The original Sanhedrin court met for the first time when Moses selected seventy leaders to help him judge the people after they left Egypt…

The LORD said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you. **17** I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone. Num 11:16-17

Ezra reinstituted this ruling body after the Jews returned from Babylon. It continued until A.D. 453 when it met for the last time in Tiberias. Until 2004, Israel and the Jewish people were without this court to rule on important religious issues. However, since early 2005, this new Sanhedrin has met regularly to discuss things such as the building of the third Temple, the selection and training of Levitical priests for future positions in the Temple, and many other important religious topics. In recent years, they have worked to hire architects to develop plans for the future Temple and raise money for all necessary future religious projects. The most important of these projects is the building of the Temple and acquiring all of its associated furniture and utensils.

The return of the Sanhedrin is very important in regards to the return of Jesus. **For the Temple to be rebuilt, and the many prophecies to be fulfilled related to this, the Sanhedrin must be in their proper spiritual and political leadership position.** Now that has been accomplished. The most important decisions on the Temple will be made by this body of rabbis. They have recently determined, interestingly, that the Temple can be built without removing the Muslim's Dome of the Rock. This decision was made after careful study and consideration of the historical records. This is just one example of the type of decision that they are able to make that will affect future Jewish religious life in Israel.

16. **The Third Temple will exist during the Tribulation:**

Plans for the third Temple are well underway. As will be presented in many of the paragraphs that follow, much effort is being undertaken in preparation for the rebuilding of the Temple of God. It is abundantly clear through the reading of the Scriptures that the Temple will be standing and in use during the Tribulation. Note just a few of these verses…

"**Rise and measure the temple of God**, the altar, and those who worship there. ² But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.
Rev 11:1-2

"**On that day** I will raise up the Tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; Amos 9:11

And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall **take away the daily sacrifices**, and place there the abomination of desolation.
Dan 11:31-32

Let no one deceive you by any means; for **that Day will not come unless** the falling away comes first, and **the man of sin is revealed**, the son of perdition, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that **he sits as God in the temple of God**, showing himself that he is God. 2 Thess 2:3-4

There is absolutely no doubt that there will be a third Temple in Jerusalem during the tribulation period that follows the Rapture. There are many verses that speak to this fact. For example, the books of Daniel and The Revelation note that half-way through the tribulation period, the Temple of God will be desecrated by the Antichrist. Obviously, the Temple must be in place for this to occur. There are many other examples that could be given to show that the Temple will be in existence during that time. That being true, and knowing that the Tribulation almost assuredly begins soon after the Rapture, it is likely that significant plans related to the rebuilding of the Temple would already be underway before Jesus comes for His saints in the air (i.e. the Rapture). As it turns out, the Israeli's have spent a great amount of time and money preparing to build their next Temple and return to proper Temple worship as directed in their Scriptures.

For at least twenty years, the Temple Institute has put forth much effort in planning for the building of the next Temple. Recent reports suggest that the plans are complete! All that awaits is the proper political situation to begin to erect what will become the third Temple… the Tribulation Temple. Most prophecy scholars believe that this situation will come very soon after the Antichrist comes onto the world scene and becomes the broker in arriving at a peace treaty between Israel and her enemies. While basking in his victory, and with the knowledge that he will one day take over the use of the Temple himself, he will allow the Jews to build their Temple. However, this peace will be a false peace, soon to come crashing down when the Antichrist desecrates the Temple just 3 ½ years later.

17. **Sacred Temple Vessels:**

Certainly, when the Jews once again are given the opportunity to use their Temple they will have all of the necessary Temple equipment, clothing, utensils and vessels described in the Old Testament. Intriguingly, artisans have been excitedly at work in

fashioning all of these needed items for many years. The people of the Temple Institute have prepared almost one hundred sacred worship objects described in the Torah. These articles even include the linen garments for the Levite priests. Some of these items are quite expensive. For example, a menorah completed over a decade ago and just waiting for use in the Temple costs over $400,000 to complete. It is 6 ½ feet in height and was made with over ninety-two pounds of pure gold. Virtually everything is ready and waiting for service in the third Temple!

18. **Levitical Priesthood:**

One other interesting aspect of the work of the Temple Institute is their recruiting and training of men for the priesthood. Of course, these men come from the tribe of Levi. Orthodox Jewish Bible colleges have trained over five hundred young men for this important position. All of the necessary training, including the preparation for playing of musical instruments, has been completed. These priests are only waiting for the right moment of opportunity and now stand ready to serve their God.

19. **Oil of Anointing:**

The special oil required for Temple worship services was prepared by the priests using five specific ingredients. This oil was used to anoint the Temple, the Ark of the Covenant, and the High Priest. It will be needed for proper Temple worship in the future Temple(s).

And you shall make from these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil. [26] With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony; [27] the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense; [28] the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base. [29] You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy. [30] And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister to Me as priests. [31] And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. Ex 30:25-31

This would appear to present a problem. Where would one find this oil so many years after Jerusalem and the Temple was razed to the ground? One of the ingredients, from a rare plant called "sweet cinnamon" was apparently lost forever some two thousand years ago. Substitutions would not due. Unfortunately, Roman soldiers burned down the only two groves in Israel where this plant was known to grow in A.D. 70! No one knows where or if it is still available today. Jewish scholars throughout history taught that the lack of the special and necessary "oil of anointing' was going to make reinstituting Temple worship impossible… as the priests would not be able to anoint the Temple with the oil as commanded by God. Not only that, but Daniel prophesied that the Messiah would be

anointed with the oil upon His return. Well, God could miraculously solve this problem. In fact, it appears that He did.

In 1952, a now famous copper scroll was found in "Cave 8" at Qumran (one of the Dead Sea caves) during an archaeological "dig". This scroll revealed information that then led other archaeologists to another cave, Cave 811 where a clay vessel containing a solidified gelatinous substance was discovered. It was buried three feet deep and wrapped in palm leaves. The hope was that this gel was the ancient "oil of anointing." The actual oil prescribed by God had five specific ingredients that were noted in Exodus 30:23-26. These were myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, cassia, and oil olive an hin. Incredibly, chemical analysis has shown this clay jar to contain the actual "oil of anointing"… 2,000 years old! Wow! Temple worship may now begin.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid **myrrh**, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of **fragrant cinnamon**, 250 shekels of **fragrant cane**, 500 shekels of **cassia**--all according to the sanctuary shekel--and **a hin of olive oil.** Ex 30:22-24

20. **Ark of the Covenant:**

Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days," says the LORD, "that they will say no more, '**The ark of the covenant of the LORD**.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore. [17] At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts. [18] In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers. Jer 3:16-18

The verses written by Jeremiah point out that after the Jews are settled in Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom, with Jesus Christ reigning from His throne, the Ark of the Covenant will no longer be needed. Therefore, it will no longer be something that any of the people think about or visit any longer. That verse, of course, suggests that prior to the onset of the Kingdom, the Ark was something that was on the mind of the people… and was used in their worship (they "visited" it). Given that the actual Ark of the Covenant as of this point in history has not been used for worship in the Temple for over 2500 years, it is very logical to conclude that it will be brought back into service during the Tribulation. It would certainly be odd if the Temple were rebuilt, the Levitical Priests returned to their proper duties, all of the Temple services were re-instituted… except for the most important of all, those services requiring the Ark of the Covenant. For all of these reasons, it is apparent that the Ark will be returned in time for use in the third Temple of God. It is interesting to review the recent evidence with respect to the current location of the famous Ark. Grant Jeffrey spends a great deal of time reviewing this data in his book, *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny*.

First of all, it is actually true that the Ark of the Covenant was pursued by the Axis Powers in the 1930s. Mussolini, in particular, wanted to find and possess this great Judeo-Christian artifact because of the powers that it was purported to have. Hitler also was intrigued by the possibilities that his evil mind was able to conjure up. This was the basis of the movie, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. The reason that Mussolini went into Ethiopia is because that was the location that the Ark (or an exact duplicate) was taken by the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. This fine looking son of Solomon and Sheba, Prince Menelik I, may have taken the actual Ark there for safe-keeping.

Supposedly, Solomon ordered his craftsmen to build an exact replica of the actual Ark so that his beloved son could take it back with him to Ethiopia when he returned there as a young man. Many believe that Menelik, in fact, took the actual Ark in an effort to keep it safe from foreign invaders that he feared would take it from Israel after the death of his father. The unfortunate fact is that Solomon was being adversely influenced late in his life by pagan women. In any case, Menelik did return to Ethiopia with one of the two arks and took many Jews along with him. Of course, these Jews grew in number greatly through the centuries. They are now called the Falasha Jews… who returned in the 1990s as discussed earlier.

Over the years, many people have reported that the Ark is in Ethiopia. Most of these people believe that it ended up in Aksum, a holy city in Ethiopia… in the Church of St. Mary. Grant Jeffrey goes into great detail about many varied reports over the last eighty years about the Ark being safely guarded in Ethiopia. For example, Prince Mengesha Seyoum, the governor-general of Ethiopia was interviewed on America television in 1990. He stated that the Ark was then safely hidden and protected in St Mary's of Zion in Aksum. He even showed a secret underground passage where the Ark has been kept for all these centuries (~3,000 years). There is an elaborate system of tunnels that also was described in that interview. This is one of three current popular theories as to the whereabouts of the famous Ark of the Covenant. One other theory follows.

There are many people who believe that the Ark that Menelik took with him was, in fact, a copy. The real Ark was left back in the Temple. Of course, the Temple no longer exists. However, many prophecy scholars say that the Ark was hidden underground in an extremely elaborate and deep tunnel system way back around the time of Solomon. The exact time that the Ark was hidden away is not known. Yet, there are Hebrew priests who have claimed to have actually ***seen*** the Ark of the Covenant under the Temple Mount carefully hidden away. On May 15, 1992, on the show "Ancient Secrets of the Bible", Rabbi Yahuda Getz claimed to have seen the Ark under the Temple Mount in one of the tunnel chambers… but from about a fifty foot distance. Another man, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, was with him. They were afraid of violating proper scriptural procedure and did not immediately walk right up to it – one can understand this as others have dropped dead in their tracks for improper handling of the Ark. Before they had a better opportunity to examine these holy items of God, the Arabs broke through and into the tunnel structure

from above and sealed the entire contents from further examination. Apparently, the items that were seen in the underground tunnels at that time will have to wait for another opportunity to be revealed.

There is even one more story concerning the Ark and its current whereabouts. In this report, sources told Grant Jeffrey that an elite team of Israeli Special Forces flew into Ethiopia, carried the Ark out from its location beneath the Church of St. Mary, and then took it back to its current, secure location in Jerusalem. The real Ark, they say, is now back in Jerusalem awaiting the new Temple.

In summary, the real Ark is either in an underground secure tunnel system in Ethiopia, underneath the Temple Mount in one of the many tunnel systems, or nearby the Temple Mount somewhere safe in Jerusalem… or somewhere else. Time will tell… but, many, if not most, prophecy scholars believe that it is in one of the three locations mentioned above. If not, God will reveal its location at the proper time.

21. **Blue Dye for the garments of the High Priest:**

"You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. Ex 28:31

The high priest wore robes that were dyed with a very special and rare blue dye. More importantly, this blue dye came from a rare source. This dye was known as *tchelet*. Since the days of the Second Temple, the source of this dye has vanished. Jewish sources have written that it was going to be impossible to reinstitute proper Temple worship due to this serious problem – God requires that His instructions be followed and the High Priest's robe needs to be colored with the appropriate blue dye.

Fortunately, in the late 1990s, Jewish divers discovered the hillazon snail in the Red Sea. Amazingly, this is what is required to make the blue dye! The Temple Institute has already made a fine supply of this requisite dye and used it to properly color the beautiful newly tailored robes. God's providential intervention is always at work!

22. **A red heifer without blemish must be born and sacrificed to purify the Temple in Israel:**

"This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD has commanded, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a **red heifer without blemish**, in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never come. ³ You shall give it to Eleazar the priest, that he may take it outside the camp, and it shall be slaughtered before him; ⁴ and Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood seven times directly in front of the tabernacle of meeting. ⁵ Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight: its hide, its flesh, its blood, and its offal shall be burned. ⁶ And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the fire burning the heifer. ⁷ Then the priest shall wash his clothes, he shall bathe in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp; the priest shall be unclean until evening. ⁸ And the one who burns it shall wash his clothes in water, bathe in water, and shall be unclean until evening. ⁹ Then a man

who is clean shall gather up **the ashes of the heifer**, and store them outside the camp in a clean place; and they **shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification; it is for purifying from sin** Num 19:2-9

I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. [25] Then **I will sprinkle *clean water* on you, and you shall be clean**; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Ezek 36:24-25

This is a very interesting sign. Ezekiel notes that the Israelites will be gathered together from all the nations into which they have been scattered, and then brought back into their promised land. Prior to their resumption of proper worship, they will need **proper ceremonial cleansing**… as will the new Temple that they will build for worship and meeting with God. Unfortunately, ashes of a "perfect" red heifer are needed for this ceremonial cleansing… and their whereabouts are currently unknown. In fact, the Copper Scroll that was found in 1952 stated that the last offering of the sacrifice of the red heifer was in A.D. 68. Two years later, Jerusalem was attacked by the Romans. Prior to this attack, priests were able to hide the ashes along with other important items and bury them for later use. However, as already noted, no one today knows their current location. Interestingly, directions are given in the scroll concerning where to look for the buried goods. Given the changes in terrain in the past two thousand years and the somewhat nebulous instructions, the directions have so far been too difficult to follow… of course, that may well change.

Whatever the current situation may be, God, in the Old Testament Scriptures, states that certain rites of purification are required to dedicate the Temple of the Lord. Since a new Temple will be built prior to the mid-point of the coming Tribulation, it is obvious that whatever is needed for proper ceremonial cleansing must be available by that time. The Temple and the ancient stones on the Temple Mount (which have been defiled by blood over the centuries) both need to be cleansed via a specific ritual cleansing. A red heifer is needed. Moses Maimonides (the great Jewish rabbi and Torah scholar of the 12th century) believed that there were only nine red (spotless) heifers ever used in the making of the ashes. He said that the tenth one would come on the scene only when the Messiah was ready to appear.

Therefore, if we are living in times that are close to the Second Coming of Christ, it would make good sense if the ashes of a spotless red heifer would soon come onto the scene. The people in the Jewish Temple Institute clearly understand the need for this special animal. In fact, since the 1990s, several red cattle have been bred in hopes that one will be born without a blemish of any kind. There have been a couple of occasions where it looked like a perfect red heifer had been born… only to have a slight defect appear after aging for two to three years. In fact, Rabbi Reichman of the Institute had even certified one of these animals just a little while before it showed its color defect. Unfortunately, in an area that had been bruised, a few white hairs began to grow. At a ranch in Mt. Carmel,

cattle continues to be bred, waiting for the necessary red heifer – the one born a pure red color and without one blemish. Certainly, God will produce the needed heifer whenever the time is right… it is possible that this animal is already alive today!

23. **In the last days, Israel will be surrounded by Arab enemy nations:**

The prophet Asaph who lived during the time of King David, wrote the Psalm that appears below. In it he told of the coming day when Israel would be surrounded by many enemy nations who would come against them from all sides. The prophet calls on God to help His "people" in the ensuing conflict. He asks God to pursue the enemy, frighten them, and shame them, so that these enemy forces might know without any question that their God was the Lord, Most High, over all of the earth.

Certainly, it is true that Israel was surrounded by enemies as described by Asaph during the times that he wrote. There are many Bible commentators who view Psalm 83 (see below) as referencing only the times back in the Kingdom Age of Israel. Lately however, there are many prophecy scholars who see an eerie similarity between the nations that are mentioned in this Psalm and the nations that currently threaten Israel. Very possibly, as is true with so many of Old Testament prophecies, there was a true and proper fulfillment for this prophecy for the time not long after Asaph lived as well as a future fulfillment in the latter days.

In any case, be it an impressive coincidence or prophecy, a fairly straight forward study of current events shows that the nations that Asaph wrote concerning will very likely be involved in a future conflict with Israel. The prophecy follows:

Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, And do not be still, O God! [2] For behold, **Your enemies make a tumult**; And those who hate You have lifted up their head. [3] They have taken crafty counsel against **Your people**, And consulted together against Your sheltered ones. [4] **They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more."** [5] For they have consulted together with one consent; **They form a confederacy against You**: [6] The tents of **Edom and the Ishmaelites**; **Moab** and **the Hagrites**; [7] **Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;** [8] **Assyria** also has joined with them; They have helped the **children of Lot**. Psalms 83:1-8

So pursue them with Your tempest, And frighten them with Your storm. [16] **Fill their faces with shame, That they may seek Your name, O LORD.** [17] Let them be confounded and dismayed forever; Yes, let them be put to shame and perish, [18] That they may know that You, whose name alone is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth. Psalms 83:15-18

Here are the locations for each of the nations mentioned above:

- Edom and the Ishmaelites – located south and east of the Dead Sea
- Moab – located east of the Dead Sea

- Hagrites – Hal Lindsey says that the people of Saudi Arabia descended from this nation of people; several other prophecy scholars state that many of these people also reside in modern day Egypt
- Gebal – current day Lebanon
- Ammon – located east of the Dead Sea, just north of Moab
- Amalek – located southeast of Israel
- Philistia – located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea – south-central modern day Israel, including the Gaza Strip
- Tyre – located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea just north of Galilee
- Assyria – near modern day Syria – north of Israel
- In summary, the nations that today represent those ancient nations above are: Lebanon, Egypt (most likely), Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian territories within Israel. Note that they surround the little country of Israel, excluding the fact that the west side of Israel is mostly bordered by the Mediterranean Sea.

Certainly, each of these modern day countries have reason to want Israel defeated. There are certainly similarities between the nations listed here. If this Psalm does have prophetic significance, and this is debatable, it will be interesting to see the future interactions between all of the nations mentioned above. In any case, all of these nations have a long standing animous towards the Jews and their nation, Israel… just as Asaph noted so very long ago. God told them and the world through His Holy Word that Israel would be hated through the ages by other nations… and they certainly have been.

24. **Israel will remain invincible after it becomes a nation again until Jesus needs to come onto the scene at the Battle of Armageddon:**

Since 1948, Israel has been attacked in three major wars and six lesser wars, yet, despite being vastly outnumbered, they have destroyed all attacking foes. Some of the stories concerning those wars have shown to almost any open-minded person that God, supernaturally, had a significant hand in those victories.

There is absolutely no evidence in Old or New Testament prophecies that Israel will be defeated once they have been gathered from the four corners of the earth by God. Instead, God will bring His "chosen people" back to Israel and provide them with all of the other blessings that are being described within these pages. At some point in the not too distant future, after the land of Israel (including Jerusalem) is in the possession of the Jews once again, the Messiah will return to earth. Until His return God will protect Israel from foreign invasion… "the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem". He will "seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." There will finally come a war at the end of the Great Tribulation for which Jesus, Himself, will return to earth and will provide the victory for Israel over the forces of evil. Until that time, God will bring victory to

Israel using amazing providential miracles. A few examples of these miracles will be given after the biblical verses that follow…

In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place--Jerusalem. 7 "The LORD will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah. 8 **In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them.** 9 It shall be in that day that **I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.** 10 "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Zech 12:6-10

For behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the LORD. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.' " 4 Now these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah. 5 "For thus says the LORD: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, Of fear, and not of peace. 6 Ask now, and see, Whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins Like a woman in labor, And all faces turned pale? 7 Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And **it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it**. Jer 30:3-7

Behold, **the day of the LORD is coming**, And your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then **the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle.** 4 **And in that day (this speaks of Armageddon when Jesus will come to save Israel) His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two.** Zech 14:1-4

Israel has been involved in several wars since it became a nation once again in 1948. As the Bible prophesied, God has protected them from all foreign aggression ever since. A country of only seven million people as of 2009 (and, of course, markedly less in the 1950s and 1960s), Israel has been victorious in the 1948 War of Independence, 1956 Suez Crisis, the very amazing 1967 Six Day War, the War of Attrition (1968-1970), the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the Lebanon War of 1982, and they were solely responsible for

taking out the Iranian Nuclear program (bombed the Osirik Reactor) in June 1981. There was a stalemate of sorts a couple of years ago, but Israel has not lost a war since their reformation… and, the likelihood of that looks miniscule given what Zechariah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had to say 2,500 years ago. Since 1948, Israel has won three major wars and six smaller skirmishes against vastly great forces; although they were sometimes outnumbered by over 25 to 1!

Although each one of the wars that Israel has fought since their independence in 1948 has had evidence of divine intervention, the Six-Day War is replete with multiple examples. However, all of the wars that Israel has been involved in over the past six decades have had their share of miraculous, godly interventions. The following are just a few of the apparent miracles that occurred during the Six-Day War and the Yon Kippur War. An interesting example is also noted from a battle in 1958.

In the well known war of 1967, a vastly inferior number of men with vastly inferior armaments ended up bringing victory to the forces of God. Even *Life Magazine* reported that "Israel's victory on five fronts in a short sixty hours, is absolutely astonishing". Here are some extraordinary events from that and other recent Israeli conflicts:

1. Egypt came at Israel from the southwest, Syria from the north and Jordan from the east. Estimates were that 465,000 troops, over 2,800 tanks, and approximately 800 aircraft were ready to attack on those three borders with Israel. The rabbis in Jerusalem were readying public parks to be used as cemeteries. The Soviet Union had poured $2 billion worth of arms into the Arab nations. Israel's enemies brought at least twice as many soldiers, three times as many tanks and four times as many airplanes to the battlefield. Yet, they lost!
2. Just a few days before the war began, new and inexperienced officers were placed in command of the majority of the Egyptian brigades.
   On the morning of June 5, 1967, Israeli planes attacked the Egyptian planes while still on the ground and gained an incredible victory. Although the Israeli planes were spotted in plenty of time for the Egyptian planes to get up in the air and escape destruction, there was a “comedy of errors” in the ranks that resulted in no one giving the command for the Egyptian pilots to get their planes in the air. For just one example, late the previous night the commander in chief and many of his top officers were busy watching a belly dancer perform. This led to their not being available the next morning for the onset of some very important duty... as the war began!
3. The most striking aspects of godly intervention revolved around multiple angelic sightings by both Israeli and Arab forces. In each instance, these angels helped the Israeli army to victory. Remember, there were multiple reports from various sources and at various times. These were really angels!
4. An example from the 1950s of an angelic intervention: The Israeli soldier, Gershon Salomon, a member of the IDF in 1958, was involved in a battle on the

Golan Heights against the Syrian Army. After being run over by an enemy tank, the Syrian soldiers advanced toward him to "finish him off". Suddenly, they ran away. Why? At a later date, Syrians soldiers reported to United Nations officers that they had seen thousands of angels around Salomon and had, therefore, fled in haste. At this same time that the Syrians were running away, Gershon heard the voice of God speaking to him. God was not yet finished with him. In fact, he became convinced that God wanted him to devote the remainder of his life to work on the Temple Mount. Salomon became the leader of the Temple Mount Faithful organization.

5. Although it was not an angelic sighting, one additional, similar, incredible sighting was confirmed by Israeli and enemy forces in both the 1948 and 1967 wars. In each of these wars, separated by nineteen years, a small squad of Israeli soldiers became pinned down by much larger, and well-armed, advancing enemy forces. In both instances, the Israeli soldiers quickly used up their remaining ammunition in a desperate attempt to defend themselves. Seemingly nothing lay between these brave soldiers and total annihilation. As the enemy soldiers approached, guns at the ready, they all suddenly stopped. Then, in complete awe and surprise, every one of these men looked up and over the heads of the Jewish soldiers. Many of them called out the name of the Jewish patriarch, Abraham. Already having stopped their advance, they quickly turned and ran away. These small bands of Israeli soldiers, those in the war of Independence of 1948 and those in the famous Six Day War of 1967, could not believe or understand what had just happened. They had been saved, literally, by God. They all lived to tell the story. In both cases, confirmation was provided by some of the enemy forces that they had actually seen the figure of Abraham – larger than life. God must have introduced the Jewish patriarch into the scene to save the brave Israeli soldiers from certain death. The fact that this figure was immediately identified as Abraham also had to come from a God-given miracle. For this incredible event to happen once would be fantastic; yet, it happened at least twice, separated by nineteen years, under almost identical circumstances.
6. After evaluating the many reports that he heard from all combatants that he interviewed and seeing for himself the course of the Six-Day War, the military correspondent for the secular Haaretz Newspaper summed it up with the report: "*Even a non-religious person must admit this war was fought with help from heaven.*"
7. Col. Uri Banari gave an interesting account of the Israeli conquest of Shechem. Although the total story is more involved, the essence is that thousands of Arabs mistook advancing Israeli troops for their own allies. The Israeli army just walked in while their enemy welcomed them by waving white handkerchiefs! The enemy crowds cheered their entrance! At one point, finally, a shot was fired

in the air by one of the Jewish soldiers because an Arab guard refused to disarm. The Arabs ran for cover, followed this with the raising of the white flag of surrender, and that battle was over… although it cannot really be called a battle. Later, it came out that the Arab forces there had mistaken the Israeli army for an allied Iraqi force. Once again, God's providential care came to the aid of Israel. It surely can be easy when God does the fighting.

8. At one point, an Egyptian truck mounted with machine guns approached two lone soldiers, each with a rifle and a few bullets. Having been caught unaware, these two young Israelis waited for the worst. They knew their time had come to die, so they aimed their guns and prepared to go down fighting. The truck stopped. No shots rang out. They slowly approached the truck. Still no shots. When they arrived at a point where they could see into the truck, eighteen enemy soldiers were looking out at them in fear for their own lives. Quickly, the Israeli soldiers yelled out, "Hands up!" That did it. The Arabs gave up immediately. The two lone Jewish men walked the enemy men back to their base. On the way, one of them asked why the eighteen men did not simply blast away at the two Jews with their guns and or the machine guns. Amazingly, the answer was, "I don't know. My arms froze – they became paralyzed. My whole body was paralyzed, and I don't know why." That same Israeli soldier replied later when questioned, "How can one say that God didn't help us?"
9. The Six-Day War resulted in an incredibly unlikely series of events leading up to an impressive victory for Israel. Israeli forces fought hard and courageously. However, it was so apparent to the officers at West Point that there was no way that Israel should have won that war on its own merits, that they will not even study that war in their classes concerning the tactics and strategy of war. In other words, given that an army cannot typically plan on God intervening so blatantly and frequently to bring it victory, the faculty at West Point felt it a waste of their time to study the tactics of that particular war. One of their generals said that what concerns West Point is the study of tactics and strategy, not miracles. That is quite a revealing statement!
10. Yom Kippur War: At one point in this 1973 war, an Israeli soldier took captive a column of Egyptian soldiers (as did Sgt. York in WWI), and led them to his fellow soldiers and captivity. When asked why he allowed a lone soldier to capture his entire group of men, the Egyptian responded with surprise, "One soldier? There were thousands of them." He reported seeing all of these Jewish soldiers from a distance. As he approached, eventually all but the one Israeli soldier disappeared. However, the Egyptian column surrendered in fear of their lives. Of course, the Israeli soldier was mystified, as he was not privy to the surrounding army of angels provided by God. God has promised that Israel will not again be defeated and lose their status as a nation, "No evil shall befall you,

nor shall any plague come near your dwelling, For He shall
give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways." Psalm 91:10-11

11. Yom Kippur War: Commander David Yinni, was preparing to retreat from the Syrian army, when he realized that he and his men were trapped in the middle of a minefield. He quickly ordered his men to hit the dirt and by crawling carefully, and using their bayonets, to clear the mines. They had to dig ten to twelve inches deep to locate and then carefully disengage each encountered mine. The slightest mistake, and they would be blown up. They had to finish clearing the mines in order to escape the oncoming Syrian force. The morning was approaching quickly. This was a painstaking job and it was taking far too long to finish in time. **One of his men prayed.**
Suddenly, a windstorm came upon them out of nowhere. It was so strong that it lifted up their tanks and rocked them. By the time the storm moved on, it had literally blown off 30 inches of topsoil. That was seemingly impossible, yet it happened! The Israeli soldiers could then see every single mine, walk between them and quickly make their escape. God once again had saved His people.

In conclusion, God has His hand on Israel and will continue to protect this nation throughout these end-times and into the Tribulation. Plenty of other nations will try to drive Israel into the sea, but none will succeed. Many a miracle will be sent by God, as necessary, to defend that little country of promise. It will be interesting to watch in the years to come.

25. **Jerusalem rebuilt in nine specific directions:**
"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, that the city (Jerusalem) shall be built for the LORD **from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate**. [39] The surveyor's line shall again **extend straight forward over the hill Gareb; then it shall turn toward Goath**. [40] And the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes, and **all the fields as far as the Brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east,** shall be holy to the LORD. It shall not be plucked up or thrown down anymore forever." Jer 31:38-40

Jeremiah certainly was very specific about how the Holy City of Jerusalem was going to be rebuilt in the last days. God gave him the specific order in which the various sections of the Holy City would be built. The terminology is foreign to the reader of this modern time on earth. However, there are Jewish historians who have been able to show just how, once again, another of God's prophecies has been fulfilled literally and completely.

George Davis wrote concerning this prophecy in his book *Fulfilled Prophecies That Prove the Bible*. A Jerusalem professor, Peter Stoner, also wrote in his book *Science*

Speaks: An Evaluation of Certain Christian Evidences that the odds of rebuilding the city in the manner and order written by Jeremiah was 1 in 80 billion. I believe that Dr. Stoner went a little overboard in his assessment as he was trying to prove his point that only God could forecast something like this… and have it come true so literally. On the other hand, Jeremiah's prophecy was quite specific and multifaceted on this matter of how Jerusalem was going to be rebuilt and, according to several Jewish historians, it absolutely has come true.

26. **Israel will become a nation with many natural resources in the latter days:**

The coming war prophesied in Ezekiel will bring Russia, Iran and many Arab nations against Israel. It is easy to understand why all of these nations will want to come against Israel… except for possibly Russia. Every one of the nations mentioned by Ezekiel has an inherent and long-standing hatred for the Jews… and they want to see them annihilated. However, Russia will want something more. Many prophecy scholars believe that they will be coming to defeat Israel because they will want to receive a bounty. In fact, this is what Ezekiel says… 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: [11] You will say, 'I will go up against a **land of unwalled villages**; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates'-- [12] **to take plunder and to take booty**, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and **against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land**. Ezek 38:10-12

It is certainly true that Israel has turned their nation into a land rich in agricultural products in these last sixty years. Israel, as we have seen, is doing extremely well in many areas of production. However, it is still true that most countries are still typically interested in two items more than any others when it comes to the natural resources of other countries, i.e. energy products (e.g. oil and gas) and minerals. That begs the question… how is Israel doing with respect to these items? The answer will surprise many.

Everyone knows that the Arab countries currently have a monopoly on oil. The top five countries in oil production are Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates. The U.S. ranks eleventh. What about Israel? As it turns out, there are people who have actually taken the Old Testament Scriptures to heart and formed companies to search for oil and natural gas based on what is written there. They have done this because these Scriptures seem to strongly suggest that much natural bounty from the earth and sea will be discovered as the world approaches the end-times.

Beginning in the 1990s, there have been companies formed to search for oil and natural gas in Israel and the adjoining Mediterranean Sea. Joel Rosenberg, a writer of best-selling books on eschatology, wondered about just this topic while writing his recent book, *Epicenter*. He also happens to be an insider with respect to Israel as he used to work for their current Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Joel devoted an entire chapter of his

book to show how recent discoveries of both oil and natural gas have excited many people who now believe that great discoveries lie just around the corner.

And of Joseph he said: "Blessed of the LORD is his land, With the precious things of heaven, with the dew, and **the deep lying beneath**, [14] With **the precious fruits of the sun**, With the precious produce of the months, [15] **With the best things of the ancient mountains, With the precious things of the everlasting hills, [16] With the precious things of the earth and its fullness** Deut 33:13-16

(these verses may very well point to energy products from the earth and sea)

Many scholars, including a Russian Jewish geophysicist and oil man named Tovia Luskin, believes these verses point to oil and/or natural gas lying beneath the surface in the land God gave to Israel. John Brown has joined forces with him as they now have a company searching Israel for these products. Gene Soltero, an MIT trained petroleum engineer, is another oil man now doing the same thing. He is the CEO of Zion Oil, the company founded by John Brown. These people, and many others, are putting their money and time where their beliefs lie…

Rosenberg listed some of the Bible verses that have excited these oil men:

1. Genesis 49:25 From the God of your father who helps you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, **blessings of the deep that lies beneath**…
2. Deuteronomy 33:13-16 (see above)
3. Deuteronomy 33:19 for they will **draw out the abundance of the seas, and the hidden treasures of the sand.**
4. Deuteronomy 33:24 More blessed than sons is Asher; may he be favored by his brothers, and **may he dip his foot in oil**.
5. Deuteronomy 32:12-13 The Lord alone guided him……. and He made him **suck honey from the rock, and oil from the flinty rock.**
6. Isaiah 45:3 **I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places**, so that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.

Since all of these oil and Bible believing men have begun to look for oil and natural gas, some really positive results are beginning to materialize. Take a look at this headline from a U.S. Department of the Interior report only a few months ago:

*U.S. GOVERNMENT REPORT: ISRAEL HAS **122 TRILLION CUBIC FEET OF NATURAL GAS** OFFSHORE (they also reported in this one area **1.7 billion barrels of recoverable oil**)*

There have been several other sites on land that have revealed many millions of recoverable barrels of oil as well. The Israeli newspaper, *Ynet News*, reported that the recent finds of oil and gas should soon allow Israel to become an exporter of oil! This was confirmed in an article in late December, 2010 noted below:

A Wall Street Journal headline reported… "BIG GAS FIND SPARKS A FRENZY IN ISRAEL". The largest natural gas reserve that has so far been discovered in Israel is worth approximately $95 billion. More than 16 trillion cubic feet of natural gas has been discovered off the Haifa shore in a joint U.S.-Israeli drilling operation. The French press reported that Israel has found such great quantities of oil and natural gas in this past decade, with much more to come, that they can become an exporter! They are quickly catching up to their Arab neighbors with respect to these incredibly valuable energy commodities.

Not only does Israel show evidence of soon being a major player in the energy field, they also are producing in several other areas. They have become a big producer in technology. Bill Gates, the Microsoft billionaire, has been quoted as saying that "Israel is like part of Silicon Valley." Wall Street tycoon, Warren Buffet, recently invested 4 billion in a *metal working company*. Israel is a leader in *microchip production, industrial oils, diamonds, fertilizers, many minerals*, etc. The Dead Sea is source of great wealth to Israel. *Magnesium Chloride, Sodium Chloride, Calcium Chloride, Potassium Chloride and Magnesium Bromide* are all available in great quantities from this sea… **estimates range into the trillions of dollars**. Israel is ranked far ahead of Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon in gross domestic product. Benjamin Netanyahu recently stated, "**In ten years, Israel could be one of the ten richest countries in the world**." No wonder that one day soon Russia will join forces with Iran and other Arab states in an attempt to take over the land of Israel… but, God will not allow it!

27. **Israel would be partitioned by other nations.**

The prophet Joel wrote almost exclusively about the last days. He noted that God would bring His people back to their "promised land." He also said that the Gentile "nations" would divide up that land. This has been a top priority for the United Nations since Israel's statehood (i.e. since May 1948). Currently, **the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and Gaza, have been divided up into Jewish and Palestinian settlements**. The United Nations wants Israel to give up even more land! Apparently, it is not enough that they have to face daily missile attacks originating from Gaza – beginning almost immediately after they relinquished that land for peace. Virtually all foreign nations also want Israel to divide up Jerusalem as well. Hopefully, Israel will have learned their lesson after what has happened due to their ceding of Gaza to the Palestinians. There has never been any "land for peace" offer that has brought any lasting peace for Israel… usually, not even for a matter of weeks! As the saying goes, "fool me once, shame on you… fool me twice, shame on me." Hopefully, Israel leadership will not forget this.

"For behold, in those days and at that time, When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, ² I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there **On account of My people,**

My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land. Joel 3:1-2

28. **The ancient city of Petra will exist and become the refuge for fleeing Jews (from the forces of the Antichrist) during the Great Tribulation:**

I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like *sheep of the fold* ("sheep of the fold" is the Hebrew name for the city of Bozrah/Petra). Like a flock in the midst of their pasture; they shall make a loud noise because of so many people. Micah 2:12

when you see the *'abomination of desolation,'* spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), [16] then let those who are in Judea **flee to the mountains** (Petra). Matt 24:15-17

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**. Rev 12:6

In 1994, a treaty was signed between Israel and Jordan. Jordan then joined Egypt as only the second Arab nation to normalize relations with Israel. Since that time, there has been a resurgence of travel into that ancient and beautiful "rock" city of Petra. Following the agreements, Israel and Jordan opened their borders. Several border-crossings were erected, allowing tourists, merchants and workers to travel between the two countries. In fact, it is now a top tourist destination. Israeli tourists have started to visit Jordan, many to see the "Red Rock" of Petra - a stone-carved Nabatean city which has fascinated tourists for many years. Most tourist trips to Israel that originate in the United States include Petra as one of their stops.

Given this recent normalization of relations between Israel and Jordan, it certainly will make it much easier for the frightened Jews of the Tribulation to flee to their old standby Petra. It is an excellent hiding place southeast of Jerusalem that is filled with carved out mountains already to use as hiding places and living quarters as they wait for the coming of the Messiah during the final 3 ½ years of the seven year Tribulation. I suggest that the 1994 treaty is just one more evidence of God's providential care in the world to prepare for the re-entry of His Son, Jesus.

Summation of Prophecies Related to the Nation and People of Israel:

God gave the world many signs to herald the Second Coming of His Son, the Messiah. He spoke of these signs in the Old and New Testaments as He wanted the Church always to be looking for this wonderful event. In recent decades, dozens of these signs have come to fruition, especially those signs that concern the "chosen people", Israel and the Jews.

In May, 1948, Israel became a nation once again… this was an unprecedented event. Their twelve tribes once again united, Jews were brought back from all over the globe. Even the

national language of Hebrew was reborn! Jerusalem soon became their capital once again. All of these events were the fulfillment of prophecy.

God foretold of the days when He would once again bless Israel in many ways: an increase in rain and water to change the deserts to lush vineyards and allow orchards and forests to flourish. These things have come to pass. Flowers and vegetables have become plentiful and profitable. God also said that in the latter days, great natural resources would be discovered in the land and under the sea. They certainly have been, just in the last ten years. The Temple was also prophesied to be rebuilt and to be ready for the return of the Messiah. The Levitical priesthood must be ready, the instruments of worship need to be available for use, the oil of anointing and all things required for Temple worship should also be ready for the Messiah's return. All of these things have already come to pass in just the last couple of decades!

God also warned that Israel and its capital city would be fought over by other nations in the last days. Yet, God would supernaturally protect them and they would not be defeated in battle. Many examples were given in support of this prophecy.

Israel will not be led by a king in these latter days. No, not until the Messiah returns will they be a monarchy again. However, Israel will resist turning to this Messiah, King until the Tribulation. Then, "all Israel will be saved"… by Him. In fact, Jesus will come at the conclusion of the Tribulation, walk through the currently sealed Eastern Gate, and rescue Israel during the battle of Armageddon. Far more importantly, Jesus will save these tribulation Jews eternally after they turn to **Him** in faith as the true sacrificial Lamb of God. So, God has already given the world a great many signs of His Son's soon return. In fact, He gave us even more…

The End-Time Signs seen in the world and in the "Gentile nations":

1. **Revival of Roman Empire:**

   The Old Testament book, Daniel, describes in some detail the fact that in the end of days the Roman Empire will revive, become powerful, and then be quickly and decisively defeated by the coming of the Lord Jesus. Prior to the Roman Empire coming into power, there were three other kingdoms that had conquered and ruled the middle-eastern world, including Israel and the holy city of Jerusalem. God foretold this series of events to Daniel in the following manner:

   "You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue--an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. **32** The **head of the statue was made of pure gold**, its **chest and arms of silver**, its **belly and thighs of bronze**, **33** **its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. 34 While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but *not by human hands*. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces** at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a

huge mountain and filled the whole earth. "This was the dream, and **now we will interpret it to the king**. 37 You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; 38 in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. **You are that head of gold**. 39 "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. 40 Finally, there will be a **fourth kingdom, strong as iron**--for iron breaks and smashes everything--and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. 41 Just as you saw that **the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. 42 As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. 43 And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.** Dan 2:31-43

These verses from Chapter 2 show that the fourth world kingdom to come onto the scene (the Roman Empire) will eventually become divided into ten parts (represented by the ten toes). When in this form, it will be a mixture of strong and weak parts (e.g. these could be ten nations or ten divisions of a larger entity)… and will not stay united. As will be seen later in the book of The Revelation, there will come a time when Jesus Himself will come to earth to defeat this federation just before He sets up His Millennial Kingdom on earth. Chapter 7 goes into more detail on this same topic…

Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. 3 Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. 4 "The first was like a **lion**, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it. 5 "And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a **bear**. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!' 6 "After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a **leopard**. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule. 7 "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was **a fourth beast--terrifying and frightening and very powerful**. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left**. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns. 8 "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one**, **which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully.** Dan 7:2-8

We see that in verse 7 and 8 above, that **the final form of the Roman Empire will have one individual (a little horn) which will rise up to uproot three of the original ten horns** (i.e. there will be ten "divisions" of the kingdom in the latter days) and take over as leader. Note that the Bible shows that this "horn" will have the characteristics of a man… in fact, he will be a man, the Antichrist. This "Little Horn" will take on the whole world for a time and be very successful for a season. He will eventually wage war against Christians (the saints). Ultimately, the Messiah will return to earth to defeat this Antichrist in the terrible battle of Armageddon, followed by the setting up His Millennial Kingdom!

I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell--the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. **21** As I watched, **this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.** Dan 7:20-22

In summary, the Book of Daniel, in Chapters 2 and 7, carefully outlines the description by the prophet Daniel of a very important dream of King Nebuchadnezzar and a vision that God gave to Daniel, himself. Both of these miraculous events resulted in amazing prophecies concerning the various world powers that would come on the scene extending over several thousand years of world history. The book of Daniel foretold the fact that at some point in the future, the fourth world power, the Roman Empire, would reconstitute and be ruled by one very powerful Anti-Christian leader… the Antichrist.

It is the opinion of every prophecy scholar that holds to the premillennial tribulation view, that the fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire, will be reborn in the latter days. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's own vision is interpreted as follows:

1. The first kingdom – (head of fine gold = the **lion**) --- represents Babylon
2. The second kingdom – (chest and arms of silver = **bear**) --- represents the Medes & Persians
3. The third kingdom – (thighs of bronze = **leopard**) --- represents Greece and their various leaders
4. The fourth kingdom – (legs of iron = ***beast***) --- represents Rome
   The *fourth kingdom revived* --- represents the Roman Empire revived with ten divisions, eventually giving its power to a very charismatic world leader, the Antichrist (certainly, this type of event is not that unusual in history… note how the charismatic Adolph Hitler rapidly rose to power in Nazi Germany)

The fourth kingdom is described as having two legs. These two legs represent the two divisions of the Roman Empire. Rome was divided for centuries into the western and eastern divisions – the west had its capital in Rome, the east with its capital in Istanbul. Eventually, these two legs would "grow" into ten toes, being a mixture of iron and clay – a

mixture of strong and weak. In these latter days, since the nation of Israel has been re-established, there has been evidence of the coming together of the many nations of the old Roman Empire which will now be discussed. We know that there has to be a revival of the Roman Empire because the first one never had a ten nation confederacy and it certainly was never suddenly crushed by the Messiah.

The important question to be asked is what, if any, evidence is there that the Roman Empire is beginning to come back into power? For so many centuries, it has been non-existent.

We have already mentioned in some detail many of the amazing prophecies that have been fulfilled relating to the re-gathering of the nation of Israel. After Christ died and ascended back into heaven to sit at the right hand of His Father, the Church Age began. The prophecy often referred to as **the seventy "seve**ns" (Daniel 9:20-27) gives detailed information concerning **the future dealings of God with His "chosen people**". In these verses, the actual time that Christ would come into Jerusalem for His final appearance and crucifixion is actually given. In fact, this concludes the first sixty-nine of the seventy periods of seven years. After the death and resurrection of Jesus came the current time in which we live, the Church Age. During this period (the Church Age), there is a "break" in the counting of the seventy "sevens". This "break" relates to the fact that God is now dealing almost exclusively with the Church, not with Israel. The final seven year period is known as the tribulation period and will come at the conclusion of this Church Age.

This tribulation period will immediately precede the onset of the Millennial Kingdom and will be the time that God uses to bring His "chosen people" back into harmony with Him… Israel will finally understand that Jesus is the actual Messiah. Also, the Bible tells us that God will send His Son, Jesus, at the conclusion of this Great Tribulation to defeat the Antichrist at the Battle of Armageddon. Given that the Antichrist will be the leader of the revived Roman Empire, and he will come onto the world scene very soon after the Rapture, we certainly would expect to see at least some signs of a revival of this empire if we are living in the latter days. As it turns out, we do.

Let's take a look at what has been going on over the last half-century. Of course, we know that Israel became a nation once again in 1948. Jerusalem became part of Israel in 1967. The clock began ticking with these events. One certainly would expect to see some action relating to the re-gathering together of the components of the Roman Empire. The western portion of the Empire had fallen apart in 476 A.D. The eastern part (the Byzantine Empire) in 1453 A.D. Obviously, neither of these two portions of the previous empire was crushed by Jesus.

David Jeremiah noted in his recent book, *What In The World Is Going On*, that Winston Churchill said the path to European peace and prosperity required that, "We must build a United States of Europe." (p.58) After several smaller steps towards this re-unification, on March 25, 1957, the Treaty of Rome was signed by six European nations to create the European Economic Community – the Common Market. These nations were

France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Interestingly, this treaty was signed in Rome! The United Kingdom, Ireland, and Denmark joined in 1973, Greece was added in 1981, and Portugal and Spain joined in 1986. This added up to twelve nations at that time. Then the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and resulted, eventually, in the removal of the economic borders between the community of European nations. The *euro* was introduced in 2002. By 2007, the European Union had added more countries to bring its total to twenty-seven! Intriguingly, Israel is not being allowed to join this union due to its supposed human rights violations from its "occupation" of Gaza, the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank. There are those who have stated that Israel would be allowed entrance if they would sign the appropriate peace treaty in the future.

The leadership of this now very large and powerful union currently rotates every six months between the various member nations. There is a change planned in the near future to elect the president to 30 month terms. As is quite obvious, over the past fifty years there has been a very impressive coming together of the nations that represent those countries and lands that used to make up the old Roman Empire. In other words, we have seen the *revival of the old Roman Empire*. The European Union is now very big and wields much power, especially economic.

Just as Daniel's prophecy foretold, however, this current "empire" (i.e. the European Union) does appear to be a combination of iron and clay. The E. U. certainly has much power economically, politically, and even militarily, but there are problems with several weak member states, and significant racial, cultural and religious tensions within the Union. Greece, for example, just recently had to be rescued out of bankruptcy… and they remain in deep economic trouble. Ireland also is struggling financially. There is a significant amount of tension between the Muslims and Christians within these nation-states.

Most prophecy scholars believe that the world is on the precipice of a coming world government that will be ruled by one impressive, charismatic man coming out of this European Union… the future Antichrist. Just prior to this occurring, the European Union will have been re-structured in some fashion to contain ten divisions. In fact, there have already been discussions of doing this among the member nations of the Union. Out of this conglomerate of nations will come the Antichrist. He will at first be welcomed as the answer to the world's growing problems. He will bring temporary peace to Israel and the world. But then, literally, all of hell's demons will break loose onto the world's scene and bring great destruction onto Jerusalem, Israel and new believers in Christ. A showdown will soon come as the end of the Great Tribulation is approached. All of this will be reviewed in great detail in the last section of this treatise.

The point to be remembered is that there is significant evidence showing that the European nations have already come together in great numbers (twenty-seven nations) to form what could – for the purposes of understanding Bible prophecy - be reasonably referred to as the revived Roman Empire. We are living in the latter days.

2. **One World Government:**

He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And **he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.** [8] All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. Rev 13:7-8

According to the Bible, in the last days the world will be governed by one central government. At that time, all people will come under the leadership, and hence, the control, of one person… the leader of that world government. The Bible refers to the ultimate and final world leader as the Antichrist. When this individual first comes on the world scene, he will be looked upon as a very charismatic and very competent leader. He will be followed because of his ability to bring the world together. Almost assuredly, the world will have been undergoing a time of marked unrest… if not chaos. This Antichrist will be capable of uniting the nations who had previously been at enmity with one another.

Interestingly, even in the 1960s the idea of a New World Order was broached in some writings. On Jan 17, 1961, Dwight Eisenhower warned the people of the United States of a possible coming New World Order. However, in general, during those years this idea was considered by most people to be more of a conspiracy theory by certain Christians who spoke and wrote about it due to their conception of the end-times. Now, things have changed markedly. No longer is the idea of a New World Order an idea of only the fringe… i.e. of the so-called "crackpot" Christians. Today and for some time now, there have been many noteworthy people who have proposed this form of government for the world.

For example, George H. W. Bush spoke about it during his term in office. On March 6, 1991, he told the nation after the first Gulf War, "we can see a new world coming into view. A world in which there is the very real prospect of a **new world order**. In the words of Winston Churchill, a 'world order' in which 'the principles of justice and fair play ... protect the weak against the strong ...' A world where the United Nations, freed from cold war stalemate, is poised to fulfill the historic vision of its founders. A world in which freedom and respect for human rights find a home among all nations."

This was followed later by former President Bill Clinton who on Sept 6, 2006 while speaking at the Kennedy Center, agreed with former President Bush's comments on the New World Order and then added "I think it is important that every American have a world view." President Obama frequently talks about this future world government… in fact, there are current world leaders who would like to see him in the role of the leader! Former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, said that in the next four years we will see the beginning of a New International Order. In an interview in 2007, Kissinger said that "there was a need for a New World Order." He stated, when asked about the opportunities awaiting Barak Obama as President, that with Obama's charisma "a New World Order can be created." He added that this current economic crisis was an opportunity to do that very

thing. Gordon Brown, a recent Prime Minister of England, is a great proponent of the New World Order. On May 17, 2007 he said, "A New World is emerging, it is a New World Order that is significantly different with radically new challenges for the future." The point of all of these quotes is to show just how much the idea of a New World Order has captured the imagination of the top world leaders. They want it, and they are working toward it every day.

So what would be the end result of this New World Order? It would consist of a world central bank, one global currency, and world energy control. Several people have already pointed out that a crisis (economic or military or political) would very likely be the final catalyst for bringing this New World Order into existence. For example, Henry Morgenthau, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, stated that "Nations will be forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank for a financial bailout, but only under the condition that borrowers abandon their national sovereignty." In recent years, many of the world's nations were at the very brink of doing this.

In recent years there has been much activity in the United Nations to try to chip away at national sovereignty. Recommendations have been made to assess a sales charge on all arms deals, international trade, international money transfers, international air and sea travel. There are those who have proposed an international income tax on all the people in the world. Now, these are only suggestions by certain U.N. organizations. In the future, these things may actually be implemented.

Some see the future of the United Nations moving toward a system like that of the European Union. Unfortunately, if that were to occur, our current capability to have a reasonable say in our national government would suffer greatly. The people of Europe have little to do with the running of the EU. The European Parliament has no significant power when compared to the *unelected* European Commission. This commission is made up of twenty-one selected (not elected) individuals. That is also where the power lies. Once a nation has lost its sovereignty, for whatever reason, they are not likely to get it back. The future New World Order will invest its power, almost assuredly, in the hands of an unelected group of people or one charismatic individual. The Bible tells us that at some time in the future, the entire world will be under the control of one man… the Antichrist. This is also consistent with where our leaders want to take us… although, they certainly have no plans to put the actual Antichrist in control. It will just work out that way.

It is an interesting fact that President George W. Bush in 2005 signed a formal agreement to join the United States with Mexico and Canada in a North American Union. Lou Dobbs reported this on his show on CNN in 2006 as he was horrified that our government would merge our national interests with Mexico and Canada without so much as one word of debate in the halls of Congress. This agreement has the capability to turn our three countries into something resembling the European Union. This may well be one more step to the globalization of America… North and Central America at the very least.

At some point in the coming years, it is likely that a world crisis (most likely economic, similar to the recent one, but worse) will lead our nation and many others to turn to the idea of a New World Order for the salvation of our countries… or at least, what our leaders believe will be their political and economic salvation. Just remember how quickly our leaders voted to spend trillions of dollars in their attempt to right the economy in the fall of 2008. The general public had no say in the process whatsoever. One day, something like this will happen again, but on a very much bigger level, both with respect to money and numbers of nations. Chaotic world conditions will demand a great leader… or at least someone who appears to be one.

Once the leader of this New World Order assumes control, he will have access to modern technology to exercise that control. The ability to control the population will be greatly enhanced by the use of a micro-chip linked to a "global computer." The late anchorman, Peter Jennings, told of more than 100 Mexican Law Officers who had microchips implanted in their arms for testing of this program. These RFID (radio frequency id) chips can be scanned. A person's location can be tracked via satellite. The VeriChip corporation recently purchased Steel Vault. They now call themselves Positive Chip. They have linked individual's health care information, via Health Link, to their credit information. This is the first time that chips have been suggested for use to track a person's economic status along with their health status.

Everything is in place for a one world government to come into being. As people such as Hiliary Clinton and Rahm Emanuel have just recently implied, all that it may take will be one more crisis to tip the scales just enough so that our country will join with others in forming this New World Order. There are already many world leaders who literally are asking for it!

3. **There will be a major conflict between Russia, Iran and several of the nations surrounding Israel:**

Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [2] "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of **Magog**, the prince of **Rosh**, **Meshech**, and **Tubal**, and prophesy against him, [3] and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. [4] **I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out**, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. [5] **Persia**, **Ethiopia** (Cush) and **Libya** (Put) are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; [6] **Gomer** and all its troops; the **house of Togarmah** from the far north and all its troops--many people are with you. [7] "Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them. [8] After many days you will be visited. **In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel**, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. [9] **You will ascend, coming like a storm,**

covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you."
[10] 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in
your mind, and you will make an evil plan: [11] You will say, 'I will go up against **a land of
unwalled villages**; **I will go to a peaceful people**, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling
without walls, and having neither bars nor gates'-- [12] **to take plunder and to take booty**, to
stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people
gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst
of the land. Ezek 38:1-12
You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be **in the
latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me,**
when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes." [17] Thus says the Lord GOD: "Are
you he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who
prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them? [18] "And it will come
to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," says the Lord GOD,
"that **My fury will show in My face**. Ezek 38:16-18

The verses above were written down by the prophet Ezekiel almost 2,600 years ago. He wrote concerning the end-times on this earth just before the Tribulation would begin. In the previous chapter (Ezekiel 37), the prophet had written about the return of the Jewish people to Israel using the "word picture" of bones and sinews coming together to depict the nation of Israel's rebirth in the latter days. In this next chapter, he warned of the gathering of a coalition of many nations that would come against Israel in war. Interestingly, God pointed out that He would ultimately be behind this war ("**I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out"**) as He was going to use this war for His glory and to bring Israel back to where they belonged… trusting in God and knowing that Jesus was their true Messiah.

There has been much written in the past several decades concerning this future war by prophecy teachers, in particular concerning the alignment of nations that would make up the coalition against Israel. Today, the evaluation of that topic proves very interesting indeed. Joel Rosenberg has recently written a best-seller, *The Ezekiel Option,* in which he took the prophecy of Ezekiel 38 and turned it into an exciting novel… Joel received good reviews for his writing prowess. His non-fiction book, *Epicenter*, may even be more interesting as it goes into factual details showing how much of the middle-east political situation is shaping up to suggest that the war predicted in this 38th Chapter of Ezekiel could be just around the corner. It is interesting to read about how the writing of Rosenberg's book developed. For example, when he first began to write a book on the end-times, he wondered about the fact that Iraq was not mentioned in these verses in Ezekiel. At the time, Saddam Hussein was still in his ignominious glory, a powerful figure in the region, and with a marked hatred of Israel… it was very difficult to imagine a war involving many of the Arab nations, Russia, etc., but excluding Iraq. It was going to be

difficult, he thought, to write a believable book without involving Iraq in this future Russia/Iran/Arab war. Then came September 11, 2001. A few years later, and Iraq is a fledgling democracy and ally of the United States! Now, the setting described in Ezekiel 38 has just about all come together.

Let us take a look at the nations that will come against Israel… and lose:

- Magog – Russia (Gog is the ruler of Magog and leader of the invasion)
- Rosh – modern day Russian people
- Meshech, Tubal and Gomer – all are parts of modern day Turkey
- Persia – Iran
- Ethiopia (Cush) – this includes parts of modern day Somalia and Northern Sudan
- Libya (Put) – Northern Libya, Algeria, Tunisia

Ed Hinson and Tim LaHaye say that this prophecy is "most likely a prophecy of a "Russian" led invasion of Israel." Which parts of "Russia" may be a matter of debate, but Russia's involvement in this invasion is clearly indicated. The reason quote marks are placed around Russia is that these men are not sure which parts of the former Soviet Union and current day Russia correspond to the Rosh and Magog of 2,500 years ago. With all of the other nations noted, Israel will be attacked by a massive enemy contingent. All of these nations are currently either very anti-Israel or moving in that direction quickly. For example, in November 2002, Turkey elected a pro-Islamic party to govern the country. All of the other nations listed above have been anti-Semitic for a long time. As we also know, Iraq is now a democracy, and Afghanistan is being kept at bay by the United States. Thus, all of the nations that are predicted to come against Israel make good sense, even today. All of those nations not mentioned or noted to stay out of the fray also make sense. All is ready, all is in place, awaiting God's unknowable, perfect timing.

Without God's support, victory in this war would be impossible. However, God will ensure that Israel will win this war. The possible timing of this latter day war will be discussed in the fourth and final section of this treatise. Suffice it to say, that most scholars believe this battle will come sometime before the Battle of Armageddon.

4. **Babylon – the great city is overthrown, never to be inhabited again**

Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, **will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. 20 She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there**, no shepherd will rest his flocks there. 21 But desert creatures will lie there, jackals will fill her houses; there the owls will dwell, and there the wild goats will leap about. 22 Hyenas will howl in her strongholds, jackals in her luxurious palaces. Isaiah 13:19-22

A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries." Rev 14:8

'Woe! Woe, O great city, **O Babylon, city of power**! In one hour your doom has come!' "**The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more--** Rev 18:10-11

She will be the least of the nations-- a wilderness, a dry land, a desert. **13** Because of the LORD's anger she will not be inhabited but will be completely desolate. All who pass Babylon will be horrified and scoff because of all her wounds. Jer 50:12-13

The LORD will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land. **3 On the day the LORD gives you relief from suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage, 4 you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon:** How the oppressor has come to an end! Isaiah 14:1,3-4

In Zechariah 5, the prophet has a vision of a basket with a woman in it (the woman is said to represent wickedness). The angel told Zechariah that he was taking the basket… "To the country of Babylonia to build a house for it. When it is ready, the basket will be set there in its place." Zech 5:11

This vision came when Zechariah was speaking about what would happen during the Tribulation. More details concerning this will be given in the final section of this book. The main point here is just that Babylon will have been rebuilt before or during the time of the Tribulation. Otherwise, none of these verses would make sense. The city has to be there in order for it to be rendered desolate. Not only that, but note that Rev. 18:11 points out that the merchants of the earth will mourn because that once great city (Babylon will be an impressive economic center in the early to middle years of the tribulation period) will no longer exist and, therefore, there will be no one left to purchase their goods.

The preceding prophetic statements in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and The Revelation, show that there will be a time where Babylon will be overthrown by God **never** to rise again. In fact, this once great city will not be inhabited in any way down through the ages after this final destruction. Although Babylon lost the war to the Medo-Persians, it has yet to experience the sudden obliteration of its city as described in the above verses. As a matter of fact, the seven gardens that were so famous still existed in some form in 25 B.C. when Strabo, a famous geographer, visited and wrote about that city. It was still a city of some note during the early Church Age. Even in A.D. 1100, it was significant enough to have two Mosques in it and was even enlarged soon thereafter. Today, there are several small villages and some newer buildings in the area that was where the ancient city stood. Interestingly, in recent years, there has been a concerted effort to restore Babylon to its former glory… or, close to it.

Saddam Hussein was intent on rebuilding Babylon to its former glory. He gave it a good start before his death in the early part of this century. The current government of Iraq wants to restore Babylon because of its rich heritage. They realize that it could become a

great city and tourist attraction once again. The Future Babylon Project is now underway. The United States has already contributed to its budget. Iraq is also receiving help from the World Monuments Fund and the U.S. Embassy. Given the massive oil money available to Iraq, the continued stabilization of their nascent government and the fact that the people there want to rebuild their most famous landmark as soon as reasonably possible, it may not be long before Babylon is again an elegant, majestic city - ready to welcome tourists. That is certainly a reasonable interpretation of the Bible verses above.

It should be noted, before leaving this topic, that there are some scholars who interpret some of these verses using the word Babylon to mean something quite different than the literal city of Babylon. They have a precedent for this as well in that during the apostolic times sometimes the word "Babylon" was used to mean the city of Rome. However, a literal interpretation of the Bible certainly does say that Babylon will be re-built in the end-times.

5. **World-wide (Global) communication will exist at the end-time:**

And **their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city** which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, **where also our Lord was crucified**. [9] **Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies** three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. [10] And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. Rev 11:8-10

In the verses above, the dead bodies of two prophets during the end-times will be seen by all of the world in an instant of time. That possibility did not exist until the advent of satellite television. Now, of course, it has become commonplace to broadcast important images completely around the world. Events such as the Super Bowl, World Cup Soccer, royal marriages, etc. are broadcast to every television set around the globe. During his vision of the Tribulation, John saw that the incredibly important deaths of these two prophets will be similarly broadcast around the world. Fifty years ago, this was not possible. Today, it is easily accomplished via satellite television or over the Internet. This is a significant sign of the end-times as this capability has only been available for a couple of decades.

6. **Preparations for the Mark of the Beast and a cashless financial system:**

He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to **receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,** [17] and that **no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast**, or the number of his name. [18] Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate **the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: his number is 666.** Rev 13:16-18

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then **I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word**

of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. [5] But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. Rev 20:4-5

As these verses state, there will be coming a time, during the Great Tribulation, that people will have to choose between taking the "Mark of the Beast" and rejecting Jesus, or staying true to Christ and thereby likely dying a martyr's death. The False Prophet will command all humanity to receive this "mark" as a mark of allegiance to the Antichrist… and, therefore, also to Satan, the god of the Antichrist. One might ask how can anyone come up with a reasonable way to place a mark on so many billions of people? Not only that, but what would be the point of doing it? Let's take a look at the answer to these two questions and see why this is just one more sign of the soon coming of the Lord.

- Why would someone want to mark the body of a person? Quite obviously, if a mechanism could be found that could unmistakably identify all people "instantly", and do this without the use of ID cards or similar items that can be copied or stolen, this technique would be of significant value to a government that wants to exact complete control over its populace. By doing this, the government could control virtually anything it wanted, such as the following: buying and selling, coming and going, etc. There is no better way to do this than to place that "mark" of identity on or within each person's body. Obviously, this form of identification would be almost foolproof.

  As will be shown in another "sign of the end-times", the world will be moving toward a global, and cashless society in those times. Financial transactions will typically not involve cash… if cash remains at all. Instead, by scanning a person, the necessary information will be obtained to enable any appropriate debit or deposit of "money" from or into their bank account. This transaction will be completed instantaneously. In some ways, this sounds great. However, there are terrible potential consequences if one despotic leader or tyrannical government controls all of these transactions!
- How can this type of transaction be done in an effective and reasonable manner? Until recent years, there simply was no way that any government could exact such excessive control over their populace. Lately, however, this ability has been realized in the form of miniature computer microchips. These chips have the capability to store massive quantities of information on every person. Complete financial, legal, biometric, and medical records are just some of the items that would be accessible to anyone who scans the chip. These chips are actually smaller than a grain of rice and contain more than five megabytes worth of information… plenty to contain all relevant information that any government might require to exercise control over their citizenry. Microchips have been designed to store a permanent, non-modifiable, identification number. Card scanners even now can access the implanted sensors in the chips and send information anywhere in the world instantaneously. Global positioning systems will be able to

track every person. Every year, the capabilities of these chips become more conducive to their universal use by the coming Antichrist. They are already good enough to serve his evil purpose!

As the verses above from Chapter 13 of The Revelation note, there will come a time that the number of the Beast (666) will be inserted into the hand or forehead of every person… if that individual wants the opportunity to buy or sell things, such as food. Without this implantation, life would obviously be very difficult for all and impossible for many. For those who reject this mark, God tells them in Chapter 20 of The Revelation that many will be martyred for their stand for Christ. Importantly, all those who do stand for Christ, whether they are martyred or die in some other way (while hiding out from the Antichrist) during the Tribulation, upon their death, will be ushered into heaven to live and reign with Christ. Unfortunately, those who do take the "mark" will be, in essence, pledging allegiance to the Antichrist and, thereby, rejecting Jesus. Their eternity is sealed, and it is the same eternity as that of Satan and the Antichrist… an eternal life in hell.

7. **A 200,000,000 army of horsemen will march against Israel at some point during the Tribulation:**

Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, [14] saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." Now **the number of the army** of the horsemen was **two hundred million**; I heard the number of them. Rev 9:13,14,16

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that **the way of the kings from the east might be prepared**. Rev 16:12

Here we see that during the Great Tribulation a vast army from the east will march against Israel. In Rev. 9, a two hundred million army of demonic horsemen were released. In Rev. 16, the Euphrates River is seen to dry up to allow a vast army of anti-Israeli forces to approach that nation from the east. Certainly, this was not going to happen during the time of Christ as there were no armies even approaching that size. Historians say that there were less than 450 million people in the entire world at that time. In days gone by, people often would interpret this verse (and many others as we have noted before) figuratively. For example, maybe this meant just a very large fighting force.

Today, however, it looks more likely that God actually did mean that 200 million men would come against Israel from the east in the last days. No one can be sure. It is true, however, that China and North Korea can easily amass that many men.

It is also very interesting that the government of Red China has spent enormous sums of money to build a highway across Asia that heads directly toward Israel. Grant Jeffrey states that no foreigners are allowed near this road. This highway is now complete. This highway was built at a great cost of lives and money. The question remains at to what

use it will be put. The book of The Revelation may have the answer. Much more will be said about this topic in the next section.

8. **Knowledge and travel will increase at an extraordinary pace:**

God gave his prophet Daniel, over 2,500 years ago, an amazing series of prophecies. Many of these prophecies concerned the end-times… the days leading up to the Tribulation and the return of the Messiah. God also made it clear that Daniel was not going to understand all of the prophetic word that he had just been given. Much of it would not become clear until the very time it was about to unfold… the end-times.

"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; **many shall run to and fro**, and **knowledge shall increase**." Dan 12:4

"Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Dan 12:9

These verses seem to point to two main things concerning the time just prior to the Tribulation; there will be a significant increase in the speed of travel and the **amount of knowledge** available and understood by mankind will be increased. It is so very obvious just how quickly people can travel from one place to another around the world today. From the first man, Adam, up until the beginning of the 20th century there was not very much change in the speed of travel. Basically, the horse set the pace for all of those years. Twenty to thirty miles per hour was the speed limit that man has lived with forever… until the last hundred years or so. Now, with the advent of race cars, the airplane, and especially space travel, this "pseudo barrier" has been totally abolished… just as God foretold.

Also, in an extraordinary manner, human knowledge has exploded in recent decades. For centuries, the amount of knowledge available to man increased very slowly. At times, it actually went down… for example, in the Dark Ages. However, in the past 150 years, the quantity and quality of knowledge has increased significantly. There have been so many ways that people have tried to quantify this fact. It has been said that the sum total of human knowledge now doubles every 20 months! Maybe a better grasp on this concept can be attained if one just thinks about how much more knowledge we all have today as one considers some of the following items compared to what was available in 1900:

- The workings of the cell (DNA, proteins, amino acids, mitochondria, etc.)
- The ability to cure many human diseases – totally new knowledge of bacteria, viruses, antibiodics, chemotherapy, etc.
- Knowledge to build airplanes, satellites, cars
- Television, phones, computers!!!
- The Internet – fast and effective spread of human knowledge – also, consider the massive amount of information that is available through the Internet. It really is amazing!

These are just a few of the many modern developments that demonstrate the vast increase in knowledge in recent times… certainly consistent with the prophecies of Daniel.

Let me make just one last point on this issue. It is said that 80% percent of the world's total knowledge has come forth in the last ten years and that 90% percent of all the scientists who have ever lived are alive today. These statistics truly are incredible!

9. **Euphrates Dries up:**

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river **Euphrates**, and **its water was dried up**, so that **the way of the kings from the east might be prepared**. Rev 16:12

The Euphrates River has always been a very important river, especially in biblical times. The Apostle John saw, in his vision from God in The Revelation, that this great river would be dried up in the end-times in order to allow for the massive army from the kings of the east to travel into the Middle East for their war against Israel. This river has always been a virtual impassable barrier in the past. Of course, God could accomplish this task instantly should He desire. However, as noted earlier, He typically seems to act in a more providential way through seemingly "natural" means. That brings us to a recent development related to the building of dams by Turkey. A massive dam, called the Ataturk Dam, was completed in 1990. It is the fifth largest dam on earth and can hold back the great Euphrates River, allowing for the passage of an army of men from the "east". It is one mile long and 600 feet high.

A recent article in the New York Times is also of interest. The front page of the July 13th, 2009 edition had the following headline, "Iraq Suffers as the Euphrates River Dwindles." It is interesting to note that even this newspaper mentioned the prophetical significance in the article. "The shrinking of the Euphrates, a river so crucial to the birth of civilization that the Book of Revelation prophesied its drying up as a sign of the end times, has decimated farms along its banks, has left fishermen impoverished and has depleted riverside towns as farmers flee to the cities looking for work."

Whether the course of nature itself causes the drying up or whether the Ataturk Dam accomplishes the ultimate "drying up", for the first time in history, the Euphrates now can be crossed by a large army. Of course, these types of events are just what one would expect to happen just prior to the coming of the Messiah.

10. **Jesus will appear to people in dreams and visions:**

I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. **29** Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. Joel 2:28-29

It is a very interesting phenomenon that is seen to be happening in the Middle East concerning religion in these last days. As the quote from the prophet Joel points out above, God, through His Holy Spirit, will intervene in the lives of many individuals to demonstrate His reality and true identity in a mighty way. The Holy Spirit will be "poured out" by God in the time just before Christ returns.

As should be no surprise in the politically correct world in which we live, there are many pseudo-intellectuals among the liberal media and in the government that have concluded that Christianity is losing the battle for the minds and souls of the people of the Middle East. Wrong. Unfortunately, it is true that because of the fear of death, most people do tend to practice the Muslim religion into which they have been born. To do otherwise, requires great courage because for a Muslim to deny his faith, may result in his death! Amazingly, although that is true, there still are record numbers of Muslims turning to the one true Savior, Jesus Christ in that part of the world… and every other part of the world as well. Let us take a closer look at the facts.

First of all, note some of the nonsense that is being propagated by the liberal press and media. Joel Rosenberg, a Messianic Jewish scholar who writes many best-selling books on the topic of the end-times, noted in his bestseller, *Epicenter*:

- Author Charles Sennott recently wrote a book in which he made the claim that Christianity was now about to die out in the land in which it began.
- The liberal public television network, NPR, talked of the "dwindling number of Christians in the Middle East."
- The Denver Post in writing about the Christian community wrote that "in 50 years they may well be extinct."
- Sam Huntington, who wrote "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order", "In the long run… Mohammed wins out."

The problem with all of these claims and many, many more like them, is that they are simply not true. Although the religion of Islam is growing in numbers at a fast pace, Christianity is growing much faster. This will be analyzed later in this book in more detail. Secondly, it is absolutely true that the religion of Islam gains the vast majority of their adherents simply via birth … to turn to another religion, as already mentioned above, is fraught with extreme danger. Even so, as will be shown, amazing numbers of Muslims are still turning to Jesus as He is making it so very clear that He is the way, and the truth and the life… and that no one comes to the Father, except through [Him]! John 14:6

Let me list just a few of the examples of Muslims turning to Christianity from Rosenberg's book, *Epicenter*:

- In Egypt, 10,000 new believers worship in a "garbage village" every weekend. The *Jesus* Film sold 600,000 copies in the year 2000 alone. Approximately 1.5 million copies of the Bible are sold yearly in one of many formats. These are not given away, but purchased. This means that people are very interested in learning the truth about the Lord Jesus.
- Up to 40,000 people have given their hearts to Jesus in recent years in Morocco alone.

- In Algeria, the nearly 100,000 new Christians have alerted and troubled the Islamic clerics. Laws have been passed in an attempt to terrorize those teaching about Jesus. Christians face up to five years in prison for sharing their faith… yet, Christianity persistently continues to grow in the face of this deadly opposition!
- In the Sudan, the most amazing story of turning to Christ is seen. More than one million Sudanese have become Christians since 2000! The more they are tortured and killed by the radical Muslims, the more they turn to Christ. The Muslims clerics are horrified, but they cannot quell this growing faith in Jesus.
- In a live interview in 2001, Sheikh Ahmad Al Qataani said in an interview on Aljazeera television that six million Muslims convert to Christianity each year. This is not a religion that is dying out in the Muslim controlled nations.
- Since September 11, 2001, the known numbers of Christians in Afghanistan has grown from 17 people to over 10,000 believers. This is in spite of severe persecution.
- Many other examples of Christian converts in Central Asia could be noted.
- Since Saddam Hussein's fall there have been at least 5,000 Iraqi people who identify themselves as Christians. Tens of thousands more are secret Christians who are understandably afraid of "coming out" openly to the general community about their new faith in Christ.
- In Iran, more people have come to Christ in the last 20 years than in the previous 1400 years! In 1979, there were only 500 known Muslim converts to Jesus. At this time, one Iranian minister told Joel Rosenberg that he believes that there are more than one million Iranians who believe in Christ as their Savior.

So, as these examples clearly demonstrate, there are very significant numbers of formerly Muslim people who are now converting to Christianity. That begs the question… why now? Certainly some of the credit must go to the evangelistic efforts now being brought to the regions involved. This includes missionaries, television, Bibles, and films on Jesus. Also, as so many in Sudan have said, the stark contrast in the religion and God of Islam versus the religion and God of Christianity has enlightened many people to the truth of Christianity. Intriguingly, and amazingly, it seems that the main reason that many people are converting to Christianity is that Jesus is personally inviting them… literally!!!

To quote Rosenberg, "What is bringing these Iranians to Christ are dreams and visions of Jesus, just as in Iraq, though in much larger numbers." There are scores of examples given on many different web sites of Muslims receiving dreams and visions from Jesus that has resulted in their conversion to Christianity. It is interesting to note that when one searches the Internet for reports of Christians seeing visions of Allah or Mohammad there are no reports to view. On the other hand, when doing the search for Muslims seeing visions of Christ, there are **hundreds** of sites to visit. Personal testimonies of innumerable former Muslims who came to believe in Jesus as their Savior because He came to them in

visions or dreams can be seen on various YouTube sites and read about on scores of other web sites. Incredible! There are literally hundreds of examples of these incredible encounters with the living Savior. In fact, a recent Muslim survey revealed that **42%** of Muslims convert to Christianity primarily due to Jesus appearing to them via dreams or visions. Other surveys reveal similar statistics. It will be worthwhile to review some of these testimonies to understand the general idea of what is causing this influx of Christianity to that region of the world:

- Christine Darg, author of *The Jesus Visions: Signs and Wonders in the Muslim World* states that "He is going into the Muslim world and revealing, particularly, the last 24 hours of His life - how He died on the cross, which Islam does not teach - how He was raised from the dead, which Islam also does not teach – and how He is the Son of God, risen in power." "We receive lots of letters about people who have had dreams about the Lord, visions, even miracles."
- The dreams and visions seem to fall into one of two main categories. In what many are calling a "preparatory dream", Jesus typically appears in a white robe to confirm His true identity and that He is the only way to heaven. The second type of encounter revolves around Jesus empowering the new convert in the face of persecution. Jesus emboldens the new believer to trust in Him for all of their needs in spite of and through any persecution that may come.
- Another type of encounter that has been noted is neither a dream nor a vision, but often referred to as an "encounter" in these reports. For example, there was one Egyptian Muslim who was reading in Luke where the Holy Spirit landed upon Jesus at the Jordan. As he was reading the words, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased", a wind broke into his room and an audible voice spoke these words, "I am Jesus Christ, whom you hate. I am the Lord whom you are looking for." The man recalls that he "wept and wept, accepting Jesus from that time."
- Joel Rosenberg recalls another impressive encounter that a group of Iranian Muslims recently had with Jesus. When the steering wheel of the car of two Christian men carrying a carful of Bibles inexplicably jammed while driving down a mountain road in Iran, the driver had to slam on the brakes of the car to avoid crashing. When the men regained their composure they heard an old man knocking on their car window. He asked them if they had the books. "What books?" was the reply. "The books Jesus sent me down here to get," answered the old man. As it turns out, recently Jesus had come to everyone in his village with the same dream to tell them to follow Him. This was followed by another dream in which Jesus told him to go down to that road at that time to pick up the "books" that would explain all about what it meant to follow Him. Well, now they had their Bibles! That is quite a story… hard to believe, even. However, it is absolutely true and there are

scores more stories like this that are reported in many books and on so many Internet sites.

- Since this is really not the place to continue with example after example of these incredible visions and dreams, let me suggest just a search on Google of the phrase, *Muslim dreams and visions of Jesus.* Then get ready to potentially spend a few days listening, watching, and reading many fascinating testimonies of Muslim encounters with Jesus.

Summation of Prophecies Relating to World-Wide Events:

Not only did God foretell many prophetic end-time events relating specifically to His "chosen people", but He also spoke of many end-time events that will affect the entire world and the gentile nations therein. Daniel was given a vision of a one-world government that will arise out of the old Roman Empire. As the time of Christ's return neared, a world-wide economic and political system will come into existence. At some point, a charismatic world leader will come onto the world scene and assume a position of world leadership. This leader will be the Antichrist. Both of these world systems are taking shape even now: the European Union has become a world economic force already. Not only that, but there is an almost incessant call by many world leaders for a New World Order. Given the terrible condition of the current world economy, including that of the United States, it will not take much additional economic collapse for the nations of the world to turn to a world economic system as well as a New World Order of government. The Bible tells us that is exactly what will happen as the world moves into the Tribulation.

God also told of a future day when Russia will team with Iran and invade Israel. This war is on the horizon even now. Russia and Iran are currently involved in making mutual treaties… and only a very naive person would not suspect Iran's interest to revolve around its obtaining nuclear weapons technology. Other wars have also been prophesied in the Old Testament, and we can see these future events begin to unfold as we look at the 200 million man army of Communist China, the current capability for the drying up of the Euphrates River, and the rebuilding of Babylon. Most everyone understands the prophetic significance of the current "cashless society", the capability to give anyone and everyone a mark under their skin for identity purposes, and the massive increased knowledge explosion in recent decades. Everything, including travel and the spreading of the gospel, is moving incredibly fast these days. All of these things were foretold in the Bible to be signs of the end-times.

I believe that possibly the most amazing fulfilled end-time prophecy to be that noted by the prophet, Joel. He said that in the end-times the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh… old and young. The true stories of how Jesus is coming in dreams and visions to thousands of Muslims, resulting in their conversion, is an incredible sign that His coming is very near. Even with all of these prophecies being fulfilled, Jesus, Himself, gave us many more in His Olivet Discourse…

The Olivet Discourse:

Jesus' own words in His Sermon on the Mount of Olives just before He went to the cross give the most complete information concerning the world scene just before He comes back to the earth to rescue the world from Satan and his demons.

Signs of His Coming

Watch out that no one deceives you. **5 For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ, 'and will deceive many. 6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars**, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. **7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of birth pains**.
9 "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, 11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13 but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. **14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.** 15 **"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.** 17 Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. 18 Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. 19 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! 20 Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.
21 For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. 22 If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. 23 At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For **false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible.** 25 See, I have told you ahead of time. 26 "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. 29 "Immediately after the distress of those days
"'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'
30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. 32 **"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come**

out, you know that summer is near. 33 Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. 34 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The Coming of the Son of Man

36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 **As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.** 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. 42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because **the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him**. 45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' 49 and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. 50 **The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of**. 51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matt 24:4-51

Let us now take a look at some of these signs that Jesus said would be coming to fruition in the latter days and see how these days we live in compare:

1. **There will be a marked increase in people claiming to be the Messiah:**
   For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ, 'and will deceive many. For there shall arise **false Christs**, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.
   Mathew 24:5,24

   It is true that there have been people who have claimed to be the Messiah since the time when Jesus said those words on the Mount of Olives. The first known false messiah was a man named Simon Bar Cochba, a Jewish rebel commander who led a revolt of the Jews against the Romans in A.D. 132. Many Jews joined into the battle against Rome as they thought that Cochba was the actual Messiah… the kind of messiah that they had

wanted… a warrior. Things worked out poorly for these Jews, to say the least. The Roman Emperor, Hadrian crushed the rebellion, killing 500,000 Jewish soldiers and three million Jews throughout the rest of the Roman world. Over the following centuries, an occasional false messiah would arise, attract a following, then die. The history books suggest that about one false messiah has appeared each century… at least those that have made enough of an impression to have made it into the books. Then came the 20th century. Things have changed dramatically!

As Jesus said in the verses above, in the end-times there will be ***many*** coming claiming to be the Messiah (Christ). As we shall see, the number of people who have recently come on the scene with this type of claim is unprecedented. Why is that so?

The times in which we live make it very advantageous for certain charismatic individuals to convince others that they are God… or, more easily, the Messiah. There are obvious financial benefits to having people believe this lie. In some cases, the prestige and power garnered from taking this kind of this power trip can be very hard to resist. Up until the latter part of the 20th century, it was very difficult to spread a messianic message to large numbers of people. Until there was television, this basically had to be done through face to face preaching. Possibly the use of books and radio was able help a little as well… but only to a fairly small degree. However, this all took a lot of time and effort and money. These are three things that most charlatans do not care to spend.

However, now that television has become a big part of our culture, many more devious men (and even women) are all too willing to delve into this medium to spread their false messianic message. A very charismatic man or woman may well be able to convince the ignorant and naïve people of the world that they are actually watching the true Messiah via their home television set… or within the walls of a large auditorium. Typically, the message is accompanied by impressive "bells and whistles" that "hook" these lost and searching souls before they realize what happened.

Of course, these are just a few of the logistical and practical reasons for the increased number of messiah claims in these times. It also is happening because of the spiritual environment we live in… the falling away from the Christian faith of much of the world, the increase in false religions including the New Age belief system that is becoming increasingly popular. Certainly there are a myriad of causes for this rise in false messiahs. Whatever the cause in any particular case, let me mention just a dozen or so of the more infamous characters to come on the world scene in the past couple of decades… and this will only scratch the surface:

Sun Myung Moon (Unification Church) – He came into prominence in the 1970s. He still has a following as he claims God sent him to earth as the Messiah to complete the job Jesus started.

Charles Manson: Claiming to be Messiah, this crazed man led many into his web of deceit and was responsible for the cruel deaths of many (at times he claimed to be Satan as well).

Yahweh Ben Yahweh: He claimed to be the black Messiah as he told his followers that blacks were the only true Jews. God and the apostles were also black. At one time, at least 12,000 people followed him… and, at times, were willing to kill white people for him (he reportedly was responsible for killing dozens over the years). Whites were characterized as "white devils."
Laszlo Toth: This "messiah" ran up to Michelangelo's "Pieta", hammered it in many places while yelling "I am Jesus Christ, risen from the dead."
Wayne Bent: God supposedly anointed him as Messiah in July, 2000. He spent most of his time as Messiah in New Mexico as a polygamist.
Iesu Matayoshi: Iesu is a Japanese man who claims to be the Messiah who someday will rule over the world.
David Koresh – David is quite infamous. Recall that in 1993, his Branch Davidian religious group was caught in a stand-off with the U.S. government. This eventually led to eighty of his followers dying in a fiery death in Texas.
David Icke: David is a former soccer player from England who claims to be the Messiah and lectures all around the world about the New World Order… and makes a lot of money.
Jose Miranda: While based in Miami, he claims to be both Jesus and the Antichrist. He plays both sides of the fence.
Maitreya: He is the great spiritual teacher for our age that has been expected to arrive any time now by people such as Benjamin Crème. He is supposed to just suddenly appear at places all over the world. Crème had set up television interviews for this "Messiah" in the past, but Maitreya wasn't able to make his appointed interview… maybe next time.
Rael: This guy is a former journalist and race car driver… now a self-proclaimed Messiah
Mahdi: This is a Muslim Messiah who will come at the end times.
Jim Jones: In 1978, he had 913 of his followers commit suicide by drinking poisonous kool-aid. That is where we now get expressions such "don't drink the kool-aid."
Marshal Applewhite and Bonnie Nettles: Heaven's Gate New Age Cult came to an end in 1997 when thirty-nine followers committed suicide in order to leave this world on a spaceship that was hiding behind the Hale-Bopp comet. At least, that was the plan. Prior to this, many of the males were castrated.

There are many more people who could have been added to this list. The point is that there have been many false messiahs in recent decades… far more than at any other time in history. There are a variety of reasons for this, many noted earlier. The bottom line is that Jesus said that this increase in false messiahs will occur just prior to His return. The Rapture should not be very far away.

2. **There will be an explosion of False Prophets:**
Many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Matt. 24:11

Along with the markedly increased amount of false messiahs in the world today, there are multitudes of false teachers and prophets as well. In fact, due to television, and

the money available to charlatans via that medium, there are more coming along every year. Note that this is just what Jesus said would happen in the end-times.

Of course, there have always been a certain amount of false prophets and teachers. The Apostle Paul frequently warned the readers of his letters (in the Pauline Epistles) that they beware of the Judiaizers. Another problem in those days was the false doctrine of Gnosticism. In both of these cases, simply put, the gospel of Jesus Christ was perverted. The gospel is certainly not a difficult thing to understand; on the other hand, there are literally scores of religions, many even claiming to be Christian, that do not preach the true gospel of Jesus Christ. That situation has certainly increased in recent times. Let us take a look.

Until the mid-20th century, all religions tended to spread their message in essentially the same manner. There were local churches, missionaries, and, in many religions, there were evangelists. Most all religions had some form of "holy book" that they could share with interested individuals. Most often, the belief in a particular religion was passed down from one generation to the next within families. Times have really changed.

Over the last sixty years, television has changed the face of many things in the world, including religion. It has become possible in recent years to reach virtually the entire world with any given message (including religious messages) via television and the Internet. This has helped spread the true message of Christ to hundreds of millions. Unfortunately, these electronic mediums have also opened up the world to false prophets and their teachings. Some of these men and women have sacrificed the truth of Jesus and His gospel for their own financial gain… many have become truly wealthy by perverting the Word and soliciting financial donations from all kinds of people – often those folks who can least afford it - and these gains have been very lucrative for many of these charlatans.

Some of these false prophets like to spread what has come to be known as the "*name it, claim it, gospel*" or the "*health and wealth doctrine*". This is defined by Wikipedia as "believers have a right to the blessings of health and wealth and that they can obtain these blessings through positive confessions of faith and the 'sowing of seeds' through the faithful payments of tithes and offerings." Teachers using this false doctrine have convinced, at least for a while, tens of millions of people. This is very unfortunate for many reasons. Certainly, many people give these idiots much of their hard earned money – in hopes that God will give them more money in return. At other times, those that have been duped give money in order that they may be healed by God. Unfortunately, Jesus never promised His followers anything of this sort… this is just one of the sick, false doctrines that has become so very popular in these latter days.

One other completely false doctrine that is perpetuated by people such as Oprah Winfrey is that there is more than one way to get to heaven. On many occasions, this television magnate has said that there are many ways other than the Christian way to get to heaven. On her television show she said, "There couldn't possibly be just one way" to an

audience member who stated that Jesus said that He was the only Way. She went on to say, "I am a Christian who believes that there are many more paths to God other than Christianity." Certainly, Jesus disagreed with her. In John 14:6, Jesus said to His disciples after Thomas had specifically asked Him how to get to heaven,
"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."
Winfrey went on to say that Jesus came to show us "Look, I am going to live in the human body and I am going to show you how it's done." She said absolutely nothing about His sacrificial death on the cross… the cross, and its incredible importance, means nothing to these false prophets.

Eckhart Tolle, a New Age leader and mentor of sorts to Winfrey, has the same kind of belief system. Unfortunately, there are many in the world today that are perverting the gospel in similar ways… yet, like Oprah, they claim to be Christian!

In addition to the New Age folks and those pushing the "health and wealth" doctrine, there are many other false prophets. These include many claiming to be Christian, such as the Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and Christian Science adherents. Scientology, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam are also religions claiming that only they have the answer. All of them are false religions.

The question for any person comes down to which one of these multiple religious choices is the correct one? As was reviewed in some detail in the first section of this treatise, only Christianity has the evidence firmly on its side! As we continue on the path toward the Rapture, these false doctrines and false teachers will only continue to grow.

3. **Worldwide Apostate Church (i.e. there will be a falling away from the Church):**
Let no man deceive you by any means: **for that day (the Day of the Lord) shall not come, except there come a falling away first,** and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." 2 Thess. 2:3
"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;" I Tim. 4:1&2.
At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other
Matt. 24:10

The United States clearly was founded on Christian principles. All through the early documents of our nation, our Christian God was referenced as the foundation of the constitution of the United States of America. People such as John Adams, George Washington, Samuel Adams, John Quincy Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Patrick Henry, James Madison, Abraham Lincoln and scores of others have written and given speeches extolling the necessity of building our nation on Jesus Christ and the Bible. Note the quotes from many of these men in the first section of this treatise. For those who want to pursue this further, take a look at just one of many web sites that

show the primacy of the Christian faith in the founding of our nation noted below: [http://www.eadshome.com/QuotesoftheFounders.htm]

During the 19th century, there were great Christian evangelists and preachers in England and the United States such as D.L. Moody and Charles Spurgeon. Throughout the 20th century, men such as Billy Sunday and Billy Graham have brought the Christian message to millions of people around the world. As discussed elsewhere in this section, there are more people coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ in recent years than at any other time in history. However, the paradox is that there has also been a falling away from the true Christian message in those nations that had at one time been the stalwarts of the Church. Nations such as those in the European Union and the United States have fallen victim to Secular Humanism. This "religion" posits man as his own god… so to speak. Secular Humanism has been defined as "*the doctrine emphasizing a person's capacity for self-realization through reason; rejects religion and the supernatural*"; another definition is "*a religious worldview based on atheism, naturalism, evolution, and ethical relativism."*

This apostasy began over fifty years ago, but really gained significance in the 1960s after our country legislated God out of our schools. Soon thereafter, abortion was legitimatized and legalized (1973). Homosexuality was deemed to be a totally reasonable and honorable lifestyle beginning in the early 1970s. Now, judges have taken to legislating from the bench to make homosexual marriage legal and available in more and more states. Christianity has been marginalized all throughout Europe and the United States as people, including many clergy, have embraced Secular Humanism as their religion. This has led to the popular religions of the day as evidenced most clearly by Oprah Winfrey. Recently, she has emerged as a leader in the New Age religion of our time. Claiming to be a Christian, she denies the cross of Jesus and the necessity of believing and trusting in Him for salvation. As was mentioned above, Oprah has clearly contradicted the words of Jesus when He said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14:6). Oprah has stated often that there are many ways to heaven… not just through Jesus Christ. Both Jesus and Oprah cannot be correct.

Secular Humanism has replaced Christianity as the ruling belief system in the United States, Canada, and European nations. Much of the world that used to be at the forefront of Christianity has succumbed to apostasy. That is what Jesus and Paul told us would happen before our Savior would return. It is also true that millions are coming to Christ in these last days. An intriguing paradox, but one prophesied two thousand years ago.

4. **Wars and Rumors of Wars:**

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7 **Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.** Matt. 24:6,7

The 20th century showed a dramatic increase in the number and scope of wars in the world. Of course, there have been two world wars. The Red Cross estimates that over 100 million people have died in armed conflict since 1901. In 1993, there were twenty-nine major wars fought.

War has been, unfortunately, a common event all through the ages. However, since WW II there has been a war somewhere on this earth at all times… usually more than one. Sixty million people died in WWII alone.

However, the most terrible aspect of modern warfare is the possibility of total annihilation of great numbers of people… even, the entire planet if enough nuclear bombs are exploded! Biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction have also made a big impact on the world, beginning primarily in WWI. They have made a big comeback in recent years and pose a major threat to the world today.

The nations of the world have armed forces with literally hundreds of millions of soldiers, ready to go to war at any time. Grant Jeffrey noted in his *Armageddon: Appointment With Destiny* (p. 233) that almost fifty percent of the world's scientists are working on weapon-related research. Forty percent of all scientific funding goes to arms research. China is expanding its army at an incredible rate. They are also selling more tanks and other armaments to Africa than all western countries combined as they can produce these arms at a fast pace and cheaper than the western countries. Not only is Africa joining in this arms race, but the Arab countries are buying great quantities of weapon systems as well. Iraq has purchased a significant amount of fire power from Russia in recent years, including much nuclear material and information. Muslim Arab nations are now a threat to stability in Europe. Very, very, soon, Iran will have the nuclear bomb. The United States has sold large quantities of arms to Israel as well as many Arab nations. Israel has developed many of her own weapons as well. At this time, there are numerous countries in the possession of many weapons of mass destruction. Some of these countries are very likely to use them without any concern about the ultimate consequences. Jeffrey stated that there was "one military weapon and the equivalent of four thousand pounds of explosives for every man, woman, and child worldwide." (ibid, p. 235) Keep in mind that there are over six billion people! Even if he is off in his calculation by a factor of ten, this is still an amazing quantity of destructive power… much of it in the possession of people who are certainly less than emotionally stable… and that is using terminology that is being very kind.

To give an idea of the power of modern weapons, one Trident missile can launch from 10,000 miles away and detonate within 100 yards of the target. The explosive power carried on just one submarine is greater than all of the fire power delivered during WWII… by both sides combined! Over one trillion dollars is spent on armaments each year worldwide. Newly developed *Electro Magnetic Pulse (EMP) Weapons* can paralyze a nation such as the United States for up to three months. Computers, businesses, television, cell phones, most other communications, railways, airports and any other power generated

system would shut down immediately. Experts say that it would take months or even years to return the power to normal in the United States. The United States economy would be devastated and its military would take a serious blow. Terrorist groups could get the capability to launce this form of weapon from North Korea, China, Russia or Iran (soon to have it) either directly or by theft. The weapon could be delivered by a Scud missile from a ship in the shipping lanes off the coast of the United States. Scud missiles are available in the weapons market for about $100,000.

The biggest concern about future wars on earth relates to the massive increase in devastating power of the weapons currently available for use by so many nations and individuals. **This fact is one of the major reasons I believe that the coming of Jesus cannot be far in the future**. Why? **There has never been the development of a weapon system that has not eventually been used in some manner and by someone.** The United States used the Atomic Bomb in WWII. Chemical weapons have been used many times now… in WWI, by Iraq against the Kurds and Iran. Someone or some people used biological weapons against the United States (anthrax) immediately after 9/11/2001. There are other examples that could be given as well. The point is **that someone, probably a rogue terrorist, will someday use a nuclear bomb against some nation… maybe more than one bomb. This may well trigger a massive nuclear response.** Likely, without the intervention of the Messiah at that time or very soon after, the world would come to an end. However, **the Bible does tell us that Jesus will intervene and put a stop to all of the destruction… and lead us in to the Millennial Kingdom of peace!**

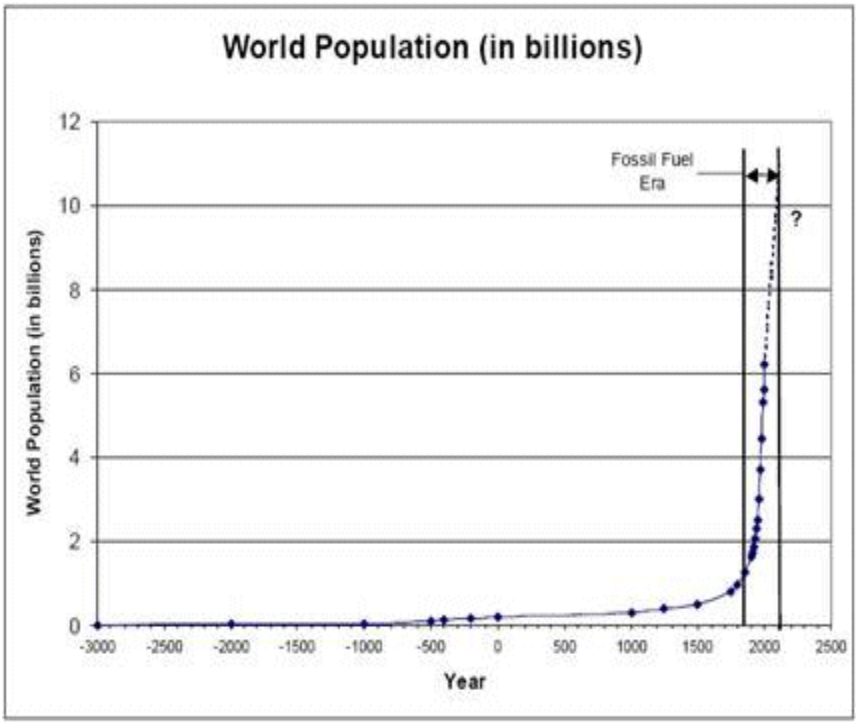
5. **Famines:** There will be **famines** and earthquakes in various places… Matt. 24:7

Certainly, there have been people who have gone hungry in every generation of the historical record. However, there is no denying that the current world hunger situation throughout the world is very grave. Just taking a look at recent United Nations reports shows the massive problem of famine in many nations. In just the last year, the United Nations has stated that **one billion** people suffer from hunger! This is an increase of over 100 million hungry people over the last couple of years, primarily due to the financial crisis in which the world now finds itself. Food aid is at a twenty year low. The director general of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) said that the level of hunger poses a "serious risk" to world peace and security. Almost 20% of the world goes to bed hungry every night! If one adds those in the sub-Saharan Africa with those in the Asia-Pacific region, almost one billion people are undernourished. Kostas Stamoulis, the director of the FAO, notes that "it is the first time in human history that we have so many hungry people in the world." The head of the World Food Programme (WFP), Josette Sheeran, says the world may be reaching a point where the global system can no longer cope with the massive numbers of malnourished people.

Places such as Darfur, Ethiopia, and Somalia are in critical need of food resources… yet, not nearly enough is coming. An estimated 3.2 million people, 42% of the population, in Somalia are malnourished. One is six children are considered acutely malnourished (requiring specialist care) and are in danger for their lives every day according to the FAO.

There is no reason to expect that these things will become any better. Deserts are increasing at a rate of 15 million acres per year. Tens of billions of tons of topsoil are being lost yearly as well. Forests are being cut down at an alarming rate. Coupled with the population growth (over 225,000 people added per day), the diminished food supply is a disaster that shows all signs of only growing much worse.

A closer look at the rate of population growth is in order. From Adam until Jesus, the population grew from one to ~150 million people. From Jesus until the beginning of WWI it grew to 2 billion people. In 1962, the population reached 3 billion; 5 billion in 1980; 6 billion in 2000; 7 billion today. Take a look at the graph below:



One of the many things that Jesus stated concerning the time just before His return was the fact that so many people would be suffering from famine. Certainly, famine is unfortunately a very serious and ever increasing problem in our world today.

6. **Pestilence:**

And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and **pestilences.** Luke 21:11

The increase in famine in the world has just been discussed, and the amazing increase in the number and severity of earthquakes will be noted below. Jesus also told his audience just before His crucifixion that the world would see a very serious problem of *pestilence* during the time of the Tribulation. Webster's dictionary defines pestilence as "a contagious or infectious epidemic disease that is virulent and devastating." There have always been serious infectious diseases in the world. However, the world today has reason to be very concerned that a devastating problem with severe, even lethal, contagious diseases may be just around the corner. Let us take a look at this problem in the world today.

Probably the best example of how quickly an infectious disease can appear on the scene yielding devastation and death is seen in the viral agent commonly referred to as AIDS. This terrible disease came onto the world scene in the very late 1970s and began to take its terrible toll on the populace immediately. It took three to four years to identify the culpable viral agent… and decades to reach a point where there is some hope for those who get infected… if they are treated early enough and indefinitely. Even given the current treatment, an estimated 22.4 million adults and children in sub-Saharan Africa are currently infected with HIV. 1.4 million Africans died from AIDS in 2008. 14.1 million children have lost one or both parents to the AIDS virus. 1.8 million children have the virus themselves! In 2008, an estimated 33 million people between the ages of 15 and 49 were reported as being infected with the virus. Approximately 300,000 children die each year due to AIDS. There is still no cure for this disease, and it has been over thirty years since it came onto the world scene. This is just one example of a *new* infectious disease in our world. There are many others.

Tuberculosis has now mutated to become a much more virulent organism. Malaria has done the same. Dysentary kills millions of people around the world as well. Avian influenza (H5N1) continues to cause deaths worldwide. One-third of the cases in Egypt prove fatal. This is a scary disease.

Malaria kills three million people yearly! It is one of the worst infectious diseases on the planet today. Tuberculosis has also made a comeback and potentially could become a serious killer again. The problem is that a drug resistant strain has come onto the scene. Only time will tell how this will spread among the populace. *Many other infectious diseases are mounting a terrible comeback at this time. For many years it looked as if drug therapy would wipe out these killers. Unfortunately, these bacteria and viruses have the capability of mutating and becoming even more potent killers… and many have already done so.* One of many examples is MRSA, Methicillin Resistant Staph Aureus. This has become the scourge of hospitals around the nation in recent decades as it is often hospital acquired and very, very difficult to eradicate. It can be deadly.

One other important point is that so many infectious agents are also now switching over from their typical animal (non-human) host and becoming infectious to humans (such as the AIDS virus). Here are just a few that have made this jump in recent years: Ebola, West Nile, Lyme Disease, SARS, bird flu, and swine flu. Newsweek Magazine stated that ***there have been thirty new contagious diseases come onto the world scene since the mid-1970s causing combined tens of millions of deaths***! That is what is so worrisome about the H5N1 influenza. All it would take would be for a ***deadly*** infectious agent, such as HIV or H5N1… or any such agent, viral or bacterial… to come onto the scene, as so many already have lately, ***and*** be **as easy to spread as the common cold**. **Imagine the potential disaster that this could lead to as it quickly spread throughout the world.** These types of infections have begun to appear in recent decades. All it will take is the "perfect storm" of this type of an infectious agent to devastate multiple hundreds of millions in very short order… and there really is little, if anything, we can do about it. The Associated Press in 2006 reported that "Humans risk being overrun by diseases from the animal world, according to researchers who have documented thirty-eight illnesses that have made that jump over the last twenty-five years." Of course, the AIDS virus has been the most destructive plague the world has ever seen! The biggest recent worry is noted in a recent article in *National Geographic* (Oct. 2005), where they reported that deaths from a widespread bird flu pandemic could range from "7.4 million to an apocalyptic 180 million to 360 million." A really big problem today is the ever increasing global travel that allows for infectious agents to travel from one continent to another in a matter of hours! If any one of the many influenza viruses ever again becomes extremely virulent, mass death will certainly quickly result. Consider that in 2009 that one in six Americans became infected with the Swine flu. What if that had been extremely deadly?!

Grant Jeffrey includes in his discussion of the increase in pestilence in the last days the ever increasing problem that comes from the introduction of chemicals into the earth and atmosphere. Although the statistics may well be influenced by political bias, it is certainly not a good thing when the Toxic Substance Strategy Committee reported to the President of the United States in 1980 that 90% of cancer is caused by the introduction of toxic chemicals into our environment.

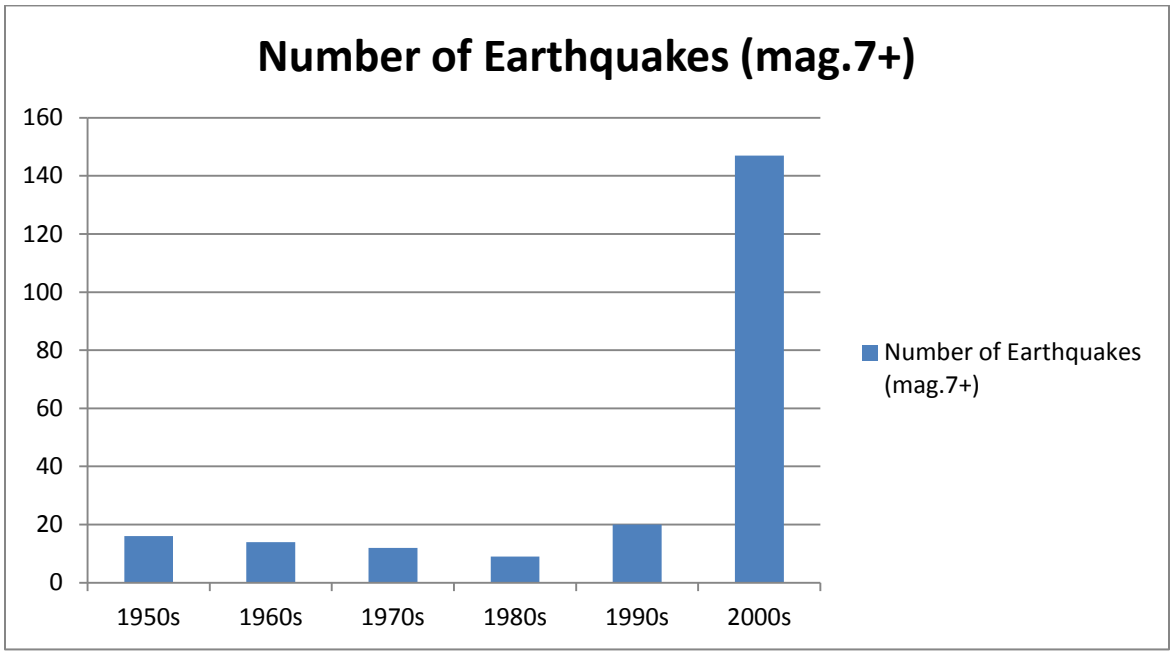
Jesus tells us in His Olivet Discourse that in the days leading up to His return, the world will be experiencing an increase in this type of problem. During the Great Tribulation, the increase in pestilence in our world will become a devastating killer.

7. **Earthquakes:**

There will be famines and **earthquakes** in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Matt 24:7-8

It is quite incredible to look at the statistics concerning the increase in large earthquakes during recent years. The chart below will show the marked increase seen over the last ten years of earthquakes with a magnitude of 7.0 or greater on the Richter Scale. It

is important to point out that this magnitude earthquake has been tracked for over a century so that there is no doubt that the world is seeing a huge increase in recent years.



In the last five years, there has been 79 magnitude 7+ earthquakes, showing that the pace continues to increase (e.g. there have been 37 in the last two years alone which was far more in two years than any individual decade of the last century)! The earth has seen seven major earthquakes in the first ten weeks of 2011 alone. There have been three "Great" (> 9.0 on the Richter scale) earthquakes in the past eleven years (normally there is only one per twenty years). Six of the ten largest earthquakes on record have occurred since Israel became a nation again (1948). Three of these were in the past six years! **Note also that the graph above demonstrates that these devastating earthquakes have increased an astounding seven-fold in the last decade compared to every previous decade of the 20th century.** This recent significant upsurge in the number of earthquakes is quite a blatant sign of the likely soon coming of Jesus.

As has become quite obvious in the last decade, terribly destructive tsunamis often accompany these huge earthquakes. Two of the most destructive tsunamis in history have occurred in the past seven years (Indonesia – 2004: Japan – 2011).

8. **There will be an increase in those martyred for their faith in Jesus:**
"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. Matt. 24:9

In the two thousand years of the Church Age, approximately 70 million faithful Christians have given their lives because of their faith in Jesus. Sixty-five percent of these

martyrs died within the last one hundred years! This is quite an astonishing fact. While there are so many in the world today who like to think that we are working our way to an idyllic New World Order, nothing could be further from the truth.

Places such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nazi Germany, Turkey, India, Nigeria, East Timor, Cuba, many of the former Soviet Republics, Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries have contributed significantly to the quantity of these terrible murders of the saints during the past century. The virtual genocidal martyrdom in Rwanda and Burundi in the 1990s produced more martyrs than at any other time period in history. An average of 160,000 Christians are martyred yearly since 1990 according to Antonio Socci, an Italian journalist who has studied this subject extensively! In strong agreement with this statistic, the Gordon-Conwell Seminary arrived at essentially the same number when it came out with their study showing that there were approximately 171,000 martyred each year. In today's world, places such as Nigeria, Algeria, the Sudan, and Pakistan are major contributors to this number.

Socci also noted that Communism and Muslim Fundamentalism are the greatest fuels for this persecution of Christians in the modern world. Lately, this has been most severe in the Sudan.

Although it is difficult to believe for those Christians who live in relative religious peace in the United States, but millions of their brothers and sisters around the world suffer greatly, even unto torture and death. As the Bible prophesied, as the end times approached, there would be a great turning against the Church in the world resulting in an increase in the persecution against those in the Church. Although this persecution is already very bad, it will get even worse after the Rapture for anyone who chooses to follow Jesus Christ. However, God forbid if any other decision is made by those who are left behind.

9. **The love of most people will grow cold:**

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. Matt. 24:12

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: [2] For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, [3] unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, [4] traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, [5] having a form of godliness but denying its power. 2 Tim 3:1-5

This prophecy made by Jesus is a very difficult one to quantify. In fact, almost impossible to do so. On the other hand, if one just thinks about these statements by Jesus and Paul and then takes a moment to reflect on the times in which we live, I believe that it will not be hard to recognize that wickedness is increasing around our nation and world… and, as these verses state, this has been the result of the fact that the natural love many people should be expected to have for one another (especially their own spouse and children) has "grown cold."

Let us take a look at just a few things as representative examples:

a) **Abortions:** This is certainly one of the more significant sins taking place in the world today that suggests strongly that we are living in the last days. It is difficult to believe that our Lord will allow this horrific murder to continue unabated. And, it looks like the only way for it to stop is for Jesus to stop it Himself.

Just take a look at the number of abortions that take place every year. The amazing number of cases per year is 42,000,000! An incredible 42 million lives are snuffed out each year in the world; approximately 115,000 each day. This cannot be something that God will tolerate much longer. It is ridiculous that our Congress cannot pass a law to make even horrific partial-birth abortions illegal. In these cases, babies that are obviously viable are ripped apart while their head remains inside their mother's womb… if they were allowed to come out of the womb first, then this killing would be deemed first degree murder. Because of our absurd laws, if the infant is killed while its head is still inside the mother, it is not technically murder. Unbelievable! How can so many people be so ***icy cold*** in our world today? Approximately, 95% of all abortions are performed because the birth of that particular baby is stated to be "inconvenient" by the mother.

b) **Murder:** Even murder is now done at a rate and for reasons that show the deterioration of our society. For example, there are thousands of prisoners being murdered every year in China (and other countries such as India) just to harvest their organs for use in other people… a kidney may bring a fee of $10,000! As discussed in another area in this section, millions of people are murdered each year for all sorts of absurd and hateful reasons – such as what is euphemistically called "ethnic cleansing". Another recent addition to the list of murders committed is the "suicide bomber". Muslim extremists have convinced many thousands of their countrymen and women that it is a wonderful idea to bomb themselves and others to expedite their trip to heaven and help Islam take the world over for Allah. One final point… virtually every day one can read about some heinous murder that happens in most every reasonably sized city in America. No longer do most of these murders shock people… because today these murders are so commonplace.

c) **Homosexuality:** Of course, homosexuality has always been an issue… including in biblical times. What we see happening in our world today is *the acceptance of this deviant sexual practice as normal.* This was not the case until the early 1970s. Before that time, homosexuality was always considered as a pathology and treated as such. Although I have no problem with those people who say that people are either born with homosexual tendencies or heterosexual tendencies (this may be true in some, or even, many cases), I differ with their conclusion. The Bible says that engaging in homosexual acts is a sin. There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that it is fine to engage in homosexual acts… as long as the person was born with those tendencies. In the same way that it is also a sin to engage in fornication

(including sex before marriage or adultery), even if there is a natural urge or tendency to do so, it is a sin to practice homosexuality. There may also be a natural tendency to lie and cheat for many if not all people – yet, these things are sins. Therefore, the fact that a person may be born to desire a person of the same sex, is not an excuse to act on this desire. It would still be a sin. God says we are not to sin.

d) **Sexual immorality:** It is quite apparent to everyone over the age of sixty that sexual immorality in the United States has rocketed upward beginning in the 1960s. This is also true in Europe and Great Britain. In fact, in our world today, sexual immorality is typically accepted as normal behavior… and not looked upon as a sin. God sees it as a sin… just as He sees homosexuality as a sin.

e) **Angry, brutal people:** More than 2.7 million children are abused each year in the United States alone. Twelve percent of women are raped in the United States at some point during their lives. Hundreds of thousands of children are abused each year across the world. Most of these cases go unreported!

White slave trading is another horrific example of the depths to which so many have sunk in our increasingly immoral world in this age. Places such as Thailand, Japan, Israel, Belgium, Germany, Turkey and the United States are common destinations for these human "slaves". The major source countries of these women slaves are Thailand, China, Nigeria, Bulgaria, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Estimates are that over 100,000 people have been sold into this horribly degrading form of slavery.

f) **Childhood Pornography and Prostitution:** The use of children in the heinous acts of prostitution and pornography by evil adults in the world today is incredible and hard to believe. For example, in India, approximately 1.2 million children are forced into prostitution. In fact, about 40% of all prostitutes in that nation are children. That is the same percentage estimate given by the authorities in Thailand. In so many parts of the world, child prostitution is tolerated by the authorities! The thought is that if a child is over the age of twelve, and if the child does not file a complaint, no crime has been committed. There has been the development of a child sex industry in recent decades. Sex tourists pay to travel to certain countries in order to engage in all sorts of sordid sex acts with children. Of course, this type of activity is amazingly heinous and filled with all manner of mental and physical consequences for these children. Thailand, Cambodia, India, Brazil, and Mexico are the top countries in providing this horrific immoral activity to perverts around the world.

In summary, the main point here is that over the last 40-50 years, the morality of people in the United States and in most of the world has eroded significantly. The immoral activities in our world today have escalated to levels that are certainly shocking to anyone

who has even reasonable moral standards. However, many of the people in our world today have become hardened to sin and immoral activities. They have become "lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God." That is why very little is being done to rectify most of these terrible problems. This is what we would expect if we are living in the latter days. Jesus will be coming to correct this situation soon.

10. **Rise of Anti-Semitism: You will be hated by all nations because of me** Matt. 24:9

Today, Israel and the Jewish people face unparalleled hatred from other nations and people of the world. This hatred of God's "chosen people" was predicted thousands of years ago in the Scriptures.

It is important to keep in mind that Israel and its people were not particularly ostracized by other nations of the world before the time of Christ. Sure they were involved in wars with other nations such as Assyria and Babylon. Later, they had to struggle against the Greeks and Romans. However, there was no particular hatred from any country against the people of Israel simply because of their origin (with the exception of those people who were the descendents of Ishmael and Esau, for example, the Edomites coming from the progeny of Esau). After the time of Jesus, however, anti-Semitism began to rise. The Romans expelled the Jews from their land in A.D. 70, as they trampled the city of Jerusalem and completely destroyed the Temple. In A.D. 135, Hadrian continued the persecution when he murdered hundreds of thousands more Jews and even renamed their homeland, Palestine.

Later, with the naming of Christianity as the state religion of Rome, some early Christian fathers came out against the Jewish people. St. Augustine wrote that they were a "wicked sect" and should be banished because of their evil. Others called them Christ killers because of the role of some Jews in the crucifixion of Christ. In Norwich, England in 1140 A.D., a superstitious priest and an insane monk charged a local Jewish man with killing a Christian child in order to procure Christian blood for the preparation of matzo bread for a Jewish holiday. This false and absurd charge begat even further attacks against the Jewish people. The Crusaders and the Muslims also trained their sights on the "chosen people" of God. Jews were even blamed for instigating the Black Death by poisoning wells… even though they were dying just like so many others. Even Martin Luther was an anti-Semite as he wrote a treatise entitled, "Of Jews and Their Lies" in which he said that their synagogues should be set on fire. All through the ages since the death of Jesus, Jews have been targeted for the rage of many people.

Incredibly, a book published in the late 19th century, *The Victory of Judaism over Germanism* by Wilhelm Marr, postulated that Jews were genetically different than Germans and therefore could never be assimilated into the German race. It is interesting that during the late 19th century in Austria, so many Jews rose to the top of many preferred professions such as law and medicine. Others were jealous of them and sought to punish the Jews. Hitler was a youth at this time, and he also learned to hate the Jews. This, of

course, led to the zenith of anti-Semitism when so many people went along with Hitler as he carried out the Holocaust of six million Jews. He could not have done it without so many people and countries looking the other way.

Anti-Semitism still runs rampant in the world today. A recent survey in Spain revealed that one in three Spaniards is anti-Semitic. One in three Germans in another recent survey were also found to be anti-Semitic. Sweden reported a 57% increase in anti-Semitic crimes last year in their country with 250 crimes against Jews being committed (i.e. simply because the person was a Jew)! Scotland reported that this type of crime increased by 300%. In Canada, anti-Semitic incidents reached record levels in recent years. The point is that all over the world anti-Semitism is prevalent, and is gaining more ground every year.

Just think about the reaction to the world community to the situation between Israel and the Palestinians. Personally, I find the reaction incredible. Virtually every nation other than the United States (and typically England, Canada and Australia) either is silent concerning the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, or they take the side of Palestine. Israel is constantly being castigated by the United Nations. In my review of over 225 resolutions by the United Nations that related to the current situation between the Palestinians and Israel, I could find no resolution that condemned any action by the Palestinians – not for any of their suicide bombings, the incessant attacks from Gaza as bombs land on Israel almost daily (even though Israel gave up Gaza so this would not happen), and so many other breaches of previously agreed-upon ceasefires. On the other hand, Israel was "condemned" by scores of resolutions by the United Nations. The whole thing might be looked at as an absurd practical joke were it not so terribly serious and deadly. There does not seem to be any reasonable or logical explanation for the consensus of world opinion against Israel in all of this. I suggest that this "upside down" viewpoint must be satanically inspired.

One fact that seems to be ignored by all of the nations of the world is the attitude of the Palestinians with respect to Israel. For example, the Justice Minister, Freih Abu Medein, came out with the following edict in 1997, "The death penalty will be imposed on anyone who is convicted of selling one inch of land to Israel." In fact, Arab men have been killed for doing just that. This did not elicit any significant outcry from the United Nations or any other individual nation. It seems that it does not matter how the Jews are treated. Nothing at all, including terrible hate speech, suicide bombings, daily missile attacks from Gaza, etc.,…. i.e. nothing at all seems enough to bring the world community to the defense of Israel and the Jews even though they inhabit just a fraction of their biblically promised land.

The simple fact is that the Jews are hated by many people in the world today. God said that they would be and they are. They are His "chosen people", but God has obviously allowed them time to see how they would do without His guidance and help. The answer is quite obvious. God will bring even more judgment upon them during the Great Tribulation

– in order to bring them back to Him. God will indeed bring the Jews back into His "fold" during that time. They will finally recognize Jesus as the Messiah and God will lead them to victory as will be shown in the last section of this treatise.

One more point should be made clear. God has always said that those that bless Israel will be, in turn, blessed. However, those who curse Israel……. they will be cursed! All nations, including the United States and those who live therein, should take care to heed these words!

11. **Kingdom Preached to the Entire World:**

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. Matt 24:14

"Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth. Isaiah 45:22

Jesus told His audience on the Mount of Olives just a couple days before His crucifixion that just before His return to earth the gospel would have been preached throughout the entire world… "as a testimony to all nations". Of course, the "good news" of Jesus' wonderful sacrificial death was only locally known in the decades following His death. Even after the spread of Christianity throughout the majority of the Roman Empire, most of the remainder of the world remained totally unaware of the person and work of the Son of God. Before this message was spread further, the Dark Ages came upon civilization. Almost a thousand years went by before the Renaissance once again gave hope to the world. With the invention of the printing press, the Bible was made available to many more people.

Over these last several hundred years, dedicated missionaries and Bible translators have continued to spread the gospel to every continent. However, it has only been since the invention of satellite television and the Internet that the gospel of Jesus Christ has truly been preached into the entire world… every continent, every nation has now been reached by the gospel message of our Lord in our day. Let us take a look at some recent data.

Grant Jeffrey points out in his book, *Armageddon: Appointment With Destiny*, that almost **fifty percent of Africans** have become born-again Christians within the last century. Given that only three percent were Christian at the onset of the twentieth century, it is amazing how things have changed in our time. **Indonesia** gives another example of the growth of Christianity in recent times. Although mostly Muslim, **twenty percent** have recently accepted Christ as Savior! **Russia now has over one hundred million Christians**. **Koreans** had rejected Christ almost without exception as World War II began. Now **fifty percent are believers**. As has been pointed out in an earlier *sign*, **Muslims are turning to Christ is surprisingly vast numbers** in the past couple of decades.

China may be the greatest example of this end-time coming to faith in Christ. In 1950, after over 100 years of continuous missionary intervention, there were only one million Christians in all of China. Quite a price was paid by many for trusting in Jesus.

For over one hundred years, there have been tens of thousands of Christian martyrs in China. For example, in the infamous Boxer Rebellion, around the turn of the 20th century, 188 foreign missionaries and more than 32,000 faithful Chinese believers were butchered simply because they were Christians. However, even though the penalty for following Christ in that communist country is still very severe (tens of thousands of Christians have been martyred under their communist rule), **approximately 125,000,000 have turned their lives over to Jesus in recent decades.** Most of this has had to take place in the underground Church. These people are intensely craving the Word of our Lord and are willing to risk their very lives just to hear the gospel and to learn how to live for the Lord.

Jeffrey also noted that the Lausanne Statistics Task Force on Evangelism revealed even more impressive details on the growth and spread of the gospel in recent years:

- In 1430, one percent of the world was Christian
- In 1790, two percent called themselves Christians
- In 1940, three percent of people were Christian
- In 1997, ten percent were Christian – and it has risen even faster over the last decade

In other words, it took 510 years to increase from one to three percent, but only 57 years to go from three to ten percent! In total numbers, this may be even more impressive. In 1934 there were 40 million evangelical Christians. Today there are approximately 650 million!

Religious broadcasters are today broadcasting to every language group throughout the world. Wycliffe translators have translated the Bible into 3,850 languages reaching over 98% of the world's population. The Gospel of John has been translated into virtually every human dialect in the world.

The number of people becoming new Christians each day is estimated (in a detailed study by researchers from *World Christian Encyclopedia)* to be 125,000!!! In this past decade, there is a net gain of approximately 42,000,000 Christians every year on this earth. With the ever increasing rate of evangelization, **estimates are that one billion more people will become Christians in the next decade. Evangelical Christianity is growing at the fastest rate of all.**

Although Islam is increasing rapidly in the world today, studies show that Christianity is increasing at almost twice their rate! Why? For one thing, there are more than eighty thousand missionaries currently spreading the gospel throughout the world. Extremely importantly, the message concerning the Christian God is true! For another, as Muslims emigrate away from their home countries and become "westernized", they are finally able to hear the logical arguments behind the Christian message… without the fear of being beheaded. The most amazing reason is that Jesus is appearing to significant numbers of Muslim people in dreams and visions to assure them that He is the only "way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6 Because of this, many million Muslims have recently accepted the gospel message.

Jesus said that the end would come when His gospel message was preached throughout the world… that time is certainly at hand.

12. **Doomsday Weapons and the melting of the elements:**

Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: [2] A day of darkness and gloominess, a **day of clouds and thick darkness**, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains…… A **fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; The land is like the Garden of Eden before them, And behind them a desolate wilderness;** Surely nothing shall escape them. Joel 2:1-3

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. [22] And **unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved.** Matt 24:21-22

But the **day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night, in which **the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat**; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. [11] Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, [12] looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which **the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat**? 2 Peter 3:10-12

The description given here by Peter is a pretty good way of describing the melting of the elements via the effects of a nuclear holocaust. Indeed, the earth will be on fire and everything in the path of the massive blast will melt with incredible heat. Things will dissolve. Matter will melt. The prophet Joel gives us another glimpse of the destruction left behind after a nuclear blast.

The energy produced by a nuclear explosion is millions of times more powerful per gram than conventional explosives. The temperatures reached are in the tens of millions of degrees. When there is a surrounding material such as air, rock, or water, the radiation rapidly heats it to an equilibrium temperature (i.e. the same temperature as within the bomb). This causes vaporization of surrounding material resulting in its rapid expansion and a massive shockwave. The effects are devastating and difficult to imagine. Indeed, "the elements actually will melt with fervent heat!" This is what the Bible tells us will happen just before Jesus Christ comes again.

Jesus told us in His Olivet Discourse that unless He came and shortened the time of this terrible Great Tribulation, all of humanity would be destroyed. Thankfully, He will come and usher all Christianity into the Kingdom!

Conclusion:

There are so many things happening today in the world that suggest that it is very likely Jesus will soon return. The Bible gives the reader many different signs so that people can know when the time is close at hand for His Second Coming. Although Jesus is clear about the fact that no one will know the day or hour of His return, He is also clear that people should be aware of the *season* of His return.

In his address on Mount Olivet, Jesus spoke on the topic of His Second Coming. He told His listeners that the world would deteriorate into very perilous times as that day approached. Jesus noted that many alive in those days would experience terrible famine, pestilence, earthquakes, and wars. Although the gospel would finally be spread throughout the entire world, there would also be a marked increase in apostasy. False messiahs and false prophets would spread Satan's lies to all those who would listen. Yet, millions would die for their love of Jesus. All of these signs are here in the world today.

We have just reviewed in some detail fifty different "signs of the times" that suggest strongly that we are indeed living in that *season*… the last days. We live in a world filled with ever increasing numbers of hateful nations and terrorist men and women. Many are soon to be armed with nuclear weapons. It unfortunately seems very likely that some crazed and/or demonically possessed individual will one day use them. That could start a chain reaction that might very well lead to a nuclear holocaust. However, Jesus simply will not allow that to happen. He will literally come on His white horse to save the world and His saints within it. Those who have accepted Him as their Savior will be riding along with Him as He returns to the Mount of Olives on that glorious day known as His Second Coming!

There are incredible prophecies concerning these last days in both the Old and New Testaments. Let us now take an even closer look at many of these prophecies…

Biblical Eschatology -- End-Times Prophecy

Introduction:

In this last section of this treatise, a reasonably detailed commentary on biblical end-time prophecy will be presented. As most people know, the last book of the Bible, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, is the most important and comprehensive book on eschatology ever written. John the apostle was given this incredible vision after having been banished to an island named Patmos, located a little southwest of Ephesus, Asia-Minor. Therefore, a detailed exegesis of this prophetic book will be undertaken in the last portion of this section.

Hundreds of years before this God-given vision to John, many other prophets of God were given similar prophecies about the "last days". As has already been explained, because the Jews of the Divided Kingdom (i.e Judah and Israel) rejected God and His Law, God allowed for their land and people to be conquered… resulting in the Jewish people being scattered throughout the world. This has become known as the Jewish Diaspora. The Roman conquests of A.D. 70 and A.D. 135 concluded this forced dispersion.

One Old Testament prophet, in particular, by the name of Zechariah, had many visions and dreams over the course of his lifetime concerning the latter days. Many of these were concerned directly with the re-gathering of the people of Israel by God… which will happen in the end-times. His Old Testament book is a fine example of the amazingly impressive common thread of prophecy that God has woven through His Bible, in part, to demonstrate its veracity. Therefore, prior to commenting on John's vision of the Apocalypse, a separate, less detailed, commentary will be undertaken of this Old Testament prophet's book… the book of Zechariah.

Although there were eschatological prophecies in virtually all of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, several of the prophets of those times were especially used by God to write about the finally re-gathering of Israel and the Millennial Kingdom. Although there will not be a *separate* commentary on any one of these other great books of the Bible, the information that God revealed to each of these prophets will be referenced, when appropriate, in the remainder of this treatise. In particular, much will be written about those topics covered by Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel. Actually, many of their comments on the end-times have already been discussed in the preceding portion of this treatise. Of course, there are many others that have and will be mentioned, such as the prophets, Joel and Amos. The prophecies given by Jesus on this particular subject were very important as well. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus gave His disciples a lot of information concerning the times of His Second Advent. In particular, He addressed this topic when He gave what has come to be known as the Olivet Discourse.

Commentary on all of these books and prophets will next be given to summarize what God has revealed concerning that which will take place beginning with the Rapture of His Church, continuing through the seven year Tribulation, followed by the Millennial Kingdom, and then concluding with entrance into the final age of the eternal New Heaven and New Earth. This discussion will begin with a brief summary of the words written twenty-five hundred years ago by the prophet Zechariah.

Zechariah

Introduction:

Before beginning the commentary on the final book of the Bible, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, it will be worthwhile to review briefly the prophecies of Zechariah. This man was a great prophet of God who lived approximately 500 years before Christ. It is incredible to see how his prophecies line up with all of the others we shall be discussing.

Zechariah was born in Babylonia many years after Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Judah, overtook Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple of God, built almost 400 years earlier by King Solomon. Nebuchadnezzar brought back many thousands of men, women, and children to his home country. Many of these Jews served the Babylonians as slaves. Still others, such as Daniel and Ezekiel were given positions of greater responsibility and authority.

After King Cyrus defeated these same Babylonians in 538 B.C., they were allowed (and even encouraged) to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their Temple and to re-settle their own homeland once again. Many of the Jews decided that it was easier to remain there in Babylonia as they had become accustomed to their surroundings. However, approximately 50,000 Jews did return to their old homeland of Jerusalem. King Cyrus allowed for their return while under the divine influence of God…

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, **the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:** "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: **"'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. 3 Anyone of his people among you--may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD**, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem Ezra 1:1-3

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, the people soon got to work on the project of rebuilding the Temple of God…

Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. Ezra 3:2

Although initially the building project went well, it was not long before there was a confrontation between the returning Jews and their former adversaries, foreigners who had come to live in the land after Judah had previously fallen to Babylonia. The final result of this political clash was that the Temple building project was halted for almost fifteen years! Finally, after some interesting political intrigue, the project was resumed in 520 B.C. Two prophets were instrumental in exhorting and inspiring the people to resume their building - Haggai and Zechariah. Haggai preached his first sermon on this subject on Aug. 29, 520 B.C. His word from God at that time was the impetus for the people of Jerusalem to once again begin the work to complete the Second Temple. After Haggai's second sermon of encouragement that same

October, it would appear that the prophet Zechariah may have become the prominent prophet from that point onward. Apparently these two prophets were quite successful, as this Second Temple was completed in 516 B.C.

It is clear *that Zechariah had much to say and write concerning the future plans of God for Israel.* His ministry began in late 520 B.C. and continued for many years thereafter. Many theologians believe that the latter portion of Zechariah's prophecies may have been given to him by God much later in his life. As shall be shown, Zechariah was given much information by God concerning the future of his nation, Israel. He wrote all of this down in the Old Testament book which bears his name. This book can be divided into three sections:

- Zechariah's eight visions
- A question concerning fasting
- Two Burdens of Zechariah

The reason for presenting this brief commentary on Zechariah is to show just how much was shown to the Old Testament prophets concerning the future plans that God had for Israel. In particular, God did indeed have plans for His chosen nation and was not going to simply abandon them because of their unbelief and rebellion in those days. He would not abandon them forever, even after their rejection and involvement in the crucifixion of His Son some 500 years after Zechariah wrote of His visions from God. Surely, the Jews were going to suffer greatly because of their sinful actions; there would be no doubt about that.

However, God will always honor His covenants. He had promised their forefathers that He would eventually bring a significant remnant of their people and nation back to Himself in the latter days. Many of the prophets were given knowledge of these facts. The prophet Zechariah was given much detailed information on these issues. Hence, the commentary on this book below…

The Eight Visions: (Chapter 1-6)

The book begins with the Word of the Lord coming to Zechariah. The prophet told the Jews there in Jerusalem that they must follow and obey God in the future…"The LORD was very angry with your forefathers. **3** Therefore tell the people: This is what the LORD Almighty says: **'Return to me,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'and I will return to you,'** says the LORD Almighty Zech 1:2-3

Two months after this encounter with God, the prophet received eight visions in just one night – February 15, 519 B.C. All of these visions had to do with the future of Israel and are described in brief below:

The First Vision - The Rider on the Red Horse: During the night I had a vision--and there before me was a man riding a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were red, brown and white horses. I asked, "What are these, my lord?" The angel who was talking with me answered, "I will show you what they are." **10** Then the man standing

among the myrtle trees explained, "They are the ones the LORD has sent to go throughout the earth." And they reported to the Angel of the Lord (a theophany of Jesus) who was standing among the myrtle trees, "We have gone throughout the earth and found the whole world at rest and in peace." Zech 1:8-11

The man on the red horse is identified as the Angel of the Lord. All of the other riders reported to Him. They said that the nations of the world were at rest and at peace during that time. That is, these foreign nations were doing reasonably well. However, Jerusalem had been lying in essentially an abandoned state for over seventy years. This situation did not please Jesus at all. Therefore, He interceded to God, His Father by saying…

Then the **angel of the LORD** said, "**LORD Almighty**, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, which you have been angry with these seventy years?" So the LORD spoke kind and comforting words to the angel who talked with me. Zech 1:12-13

This first vision also showed Zechariah that Jesus was angry with the Gentile nations that had gone too far in their punishment of Israel. Although it was true that God had used nations such as Assyria and Babylon to discipline his "chosen people", now **it was time for God to begin His restoration of Israel. This restoration would begin at the time of Zechariah's writing but find its ultimate fulfillment upon the return of the Messiah. The Father then responded…**

'I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there my house will be rebuilt. And the measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem,' declares the LORD Almighty. Proclaim further: This is what the LORD Almighty says: **'My towns will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem."** Zech 1:16-17

The Second Vision - Four Horns and Four Craftsmen: Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were **four horns**. [19] And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these?" So he answered me, "These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." [20] Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen. [21] And I said, "What are these coming to do?" So he said, "These are the horns that scattered Judah… but the **craftsmen** have come to terrify them and throw down these **horns of the nations** who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter its people." Zech 1:18-21

In this second vision, Zechariah sees "four horns" that represent nations that were responsible for the scattering of the Jews throughout the world. These horns may well point to Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. There is a difference of opinion on that topic. There is agreement, however, **that they do represent four particular nations that were responsible for the dispersion of the Israelites throughout the world**. Then, the craftsmen enter into the picture. They represent the judgment that God has planned against those four nations who have persecuted His people. J. Vernon McGee and Merrill Unger think that these craftsmen depict

Medo-Persia (defeated Babylon), Greece (defeated Medo-Persia), Rome (defeated Greece), and Jesus Christ (who will defeat the revived Roman Empire when He comes again).

The Third Vision - A Man to Measure Jerusalem: Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. 2 So I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length."……. '**Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls**, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. 5 For I,' says the LORD, 'will be a wall of fire all around her, and **I will be the glory in her midst**.' " Zech 2:1-2,4-5

In this vision, Zechariah is shown that **Jerusalem will certainly again be rebuilt**. Not only that, **it will be a city without walls**. God, Himself, will live there and be the glory within the city's midst. That has not happened yet, of course, but **it is a prophecy of what will be the case during the Millennial Kingdom**. God continued to tell what it would be like during that glorious time…

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, **I am coming and I will dwell in your midst**," says the LORD. 11 **Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst**. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you Zech 2:10-11

The Fourth Vision: The High Priest, Joshua: Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, (a theophany of Jesus) and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the Angel. 4 The Angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you." Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the Angel of the LORD stood by. Zech 3:1,3-5

This next vision begins with a scene in which Jesus (the Angel of the Lord), Satan, and Joshua (the priest of Israel at that time, who represented that nation) are speaking to one another. At the time of this vision, Israel certainly was a nation that "wore filthy clothes". They were a fallen nation that had turned away from God and His Laws. Yet, God was telling them that He would not forsake them, ever. Some day they will have their sins forgiven and will put on "rich", clean, garments (representing holiness). The clean turban, part of a high priest's dress, symbolized that Israel would have its position with the Lord God restored. This will be because they will have turned to Jesus in the end-times. Note the last verse above… "I have taken away your sin." Only Jesus (the Angel of the Lord in this parable) can do this. Jesus will do this for the remnant of Israel during the Tribulation. This will be discussed in more detail later during the commentary on The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

"This is what the LORD Almighty says: '**If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements**, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and **I will give you**

a place among these standing here. [8] "'Listen, O **high priest Joshua** and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: ***I am going to bring my servant, the Branch.*** [9] See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are **seven eyes on that one stone,** and I will engrave an inscription on it,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and **I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.** [10] "'**In that day** each of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig tree,' declares the LORD Almighty." Zech 3:7-10

The above series of verses are very powerful. Joshua, as these verses say, is actually a symbol… a symbol of unrepentant Israel of that day and up until their final restoration. The Lord God says that He will one day send His servant, ***the Branch*** **(Jesus)**. He will be a stone as well. **The Bible often refers to Jesus as a stone. He is the chief cornerstone of the Church; He is also a stumbling stone for Israel until the time of the end.** The seven eyes are a symbol of His divine omniscience. Jesus knows all and sees all.

At the end of the Church Age, however, the *Branch* will remove the sin from that land (and from all people who choose to trust in Him). Finally, Israel will turn to Him in faith as they recognize Jesus as Lord and Savior and Messiah. The use of the term Branch points to the fact that the Messiah is a branch from the root of Jesse (or David). As the Branch, Jesus is the descendent of David, the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and will one day sit on the throne in the Millennial Kingdom. **The last portion of this vision shows that Jesus will remove the sin of Israel in one *day*… one future *day*… the *Day of the Lord*.** The last verse of this chapter encourages the Israelite by telling them that there will come a time when all of Israel will dwell in peace and harmony under the Messiah's reign. There are multiple other verses throughout the Old Testament showing that there will come a time when the Lord will restore Israel once again. As just one example…

"Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. [2] After two days he will revive us; **on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence**. Hosea 6:1-2

The Fifth Vision: The Gold Lampstand and the Two Olive Trees: "I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights. [3] Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." Zech 4:2-3

Zechariah's fifth vision on that incredible night revolved around a gold lampstand topped by a bowl with seven lights. This is the picture of a solid gold menorah – which has long been a symbol of the nation of Israel. The bowl at the top of the lampstand is there to allow for an abundant and continuous supply of oil to keep the lamps burning. The two olive trees described provided a continuous supply of oil to the bowl. As was virtually always the case in the Bible, *the oil here is symbolic of the Holy Spirit of God*. The bowl, in turn, supplies this oil to the seven conduits. Eventually, the oil will power the lamps as they supply light to the world. In other words, **God will use His own power, acting through Zerubbabel, to rebuild His Temple.** God wanted Zerubbabel to be aware that the reconstruction of His Temple was going to be

through the power of God (i.e. the power of the Holy Spirit), not of man. God continued on this theme…

"This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: '**Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit**,' says the LORD Almighty. Zech 4:6

Then the word of the LORD came to me: **9** "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Zech 4:8-9

Then I asked the angel, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?" **12** Again I asked him, "What are these **two olive branches** beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?" **13** He replied, "Do you not know what these are?" "No, my lord," I said. **14** So he said, "**These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth**." Zech 4:11-14

Most commentators suggest that **"the two who are anointed to serve the Lord"** are Joshua and Zerubbabel (representing that time in history). As with so many prophecies in the Old Testament, this prophecy also has an end-times fulfillment. The two that are spoken of will be the *two witnesses* that we will learn about when we study The Revelation. In fact, this is seen to be true if we check out the following verses from that great book…

And I will give power to my ***two witnesses***, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." **4** **These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands** standing before the God of the earth. Rev 11:3-4

The Sixth Vision – The Flying Scroll: "I see a flying scroll, thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide." **3**And he said to me, "This is **the curse that is going out over the *whole land***; for according to what it says on one side, every thief will be banished, and according to what it says on the other, everyone who swears falsely will be banished. Zech 5:2-3

One day in the future, God will judge all sin. So many times in the Bible and so many times in our present day a person can certainly get the distinct impression that God often "winks" at sinful behavior. However, we must always remember that God's timing is not our timing. **God will indeed judge everyone at a time in the future**. Those that have accepted Jesus as Savior will be judged at the **Bema Judgment** by their Savior. Everyone else, all unrepentant sinners, will face the Lord at the **Great White Throne Judgment**. The result of that particular judgment will be a sentence of eternal banishment to hell! God will not be mocked!

The Seventh Vision - The Measuring Basket: **"**Then the angel who was speaking to me came forward and said to me, "Look up and see what this is that is appearing." **6** I asked, "What is it?" He replied, "It is a measuring basket." And he added, "**This is the iniquity of the people throughout the land.**" **7** Then the cover of lead was raised, and **there in the basket sat a woman**! **8** He said, "**This is wickedness**," and he pushed her back into the basket and pushed the lead cover down over its mouth. Zech 5:5-8

In this vision, Zechariah saw a woman sitting in a basket. This woman represented the wickedness of the land. The Angel of the Lord, who always represents Jesus in the Old Testament, pushed the woman down into the basket and then transported it to Babylon. Babylon, as we shall see on so many occasions in this treatise, represents the most evil aspects of our society. This prophecy is telling us that Jesus, at some time in the future, will take the world's evil religious and economic system and move them to that part of the world where they got their start… Babylon. It is noteworthy that approximately 600 years later, the Apostle John will be told the same thing by Jesus (in The Revelation).

"**Where are they taking the basket**?" I asked the angel who was speaking to me. **11** He replied, "To the country of **Babylonia** to build a house for it. When it is ready, the basket will be set there in its place." Zech 5:10-11

The Eighth Vision – The Four Chariots: Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, **four chariots were coming from between two mountains**, and the mountains were **mountains of bronze**. 2 With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, 3 with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses--strong steeds. Zech 6:1-3

Although there is not a complete consensus, most commentators believe that the two mountains refer to the Mount of Olives and Mount Zion. The area between them would be the Kidron Valley. Bronze typically was used to symbolize judgment in the Old Testament. It is likely that the color of the horses corresponds to the color of the four horses of the apocalypse in The Revelation. In both cases they relate to the carrying out of judgment by God against the Gentile nations due to their repression of God's people.

"These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth." The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country." 7 When the powerful horses went out, they were straining to go throughout the earth. And he said, "Go throughout the earth!" So they went throughout the earth. Zech 6:5-7

God gives further interpretation in the preceding verses that there will be four spirits (angelic agents) sent to carry out the aforementioned judgment throughout the entire earth.

Take the silver and gold, make an **elaborate crown**, and **set it on the head of Joshua** the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. 12 Then speak to him, saying, Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying: "**Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH**! From His place He shall branch out, and **He shall build the Temple of the LORD;** 13 Yes, He shall build the Temple of the LORD. **He shall bear the glory**, **and shall sit and rule on His throne**; So **He shall be a priest on His throne**, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both." ' Zech 6:11-13

The verses above point to the interesting fact that Joshua (a priest) was crowned with an "elaborate crown", and not Zerubbabel (the governor of Judea). Zerubbabel was actually in the line of David. God apparently had no plans to restore anyone from the line of David on the throne *at that time*… and He did not do so. On the other hand, God did have every intention of showing Zechariah and the reader of these verses that He was going to do so at a later date. Note that **this Man will be the Branch, (who is, of course, Jesus). He will build the Millennial Kingdom Temple. He will be both the King and the High Priest**. Certainly neither the prophet Joshua, nor Zerubabel, the governor of Judea, were qualified to serve as both king and priest of Israel. Only Jesus is qualified to do this. Jesus one day "shall *sit* and *rule* on His throne" for a thousand years. After that, as we shall learn, there will be a New Heaven and a New Earth that will last for eternity.

Summary of the Eight Visions: (Chapter 1-6)

It is important to put these eight visions of the great prophet, Zechariah, into perspective. Recall that a fairly small portion of Jews had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon beginning approximately eighteen years earlier. The plan had been to rebuild their Temple and attempt to return their life to the way it had been prior to their stunning defeat by the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar. Although the Temple building project began with a flourish, it had now been over a decade and what was left of the city lay dormant. The foundation for the Temple was already beginning to deteriorate. Into this scene came two important prophets of God. God's encouraging Word, supplied through the voice and written words of Haggai and Zechariah, brought Israel back from the ashes. Zechariah, in particular, reported the following to his congregation from his visions from God:

- God was now quite ready for the people of Israel, His "chosen people", to return and rebuild their city and the Temple. One day in the future, it would be a city without walls; it would overflow with prosperity, and God, Himself, would live within its midst.
- God was angry at all those who had gone overboard in their attacks upon Jerusalem, and He would bring judgment upon them.
- God would send His servant Jesus, the Branch, to save the people. If the remnant of Israel would only follow Him, He would save them, and they would live in His presence… in the Holy City of Jerusalem. Although on the Messiah's first visit to the earth He would prove to be a *stumbling block* for Israel, in the latter days, the Messiah would come and be their Savior.
- One day in the future, God will judge all sin and all sinners.
- In the end-times, Babylon will be the center of the Antichrist's earthly reign. It will be the center of immorality and all other types of sinful activity in the world.
- Jesus Christ, the Branch of David, will return to bring in His Kingdom. He will build the Temple and rule in His dual role as High Priest and King of Kings in all of His glory. This will come to pass during the Millennial Kingdom.

A Question Concerning Fasting: (Chapters 7-8)

After the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, the Jewish people originated a few new fasts, which they observed during their seventy years of exile in Babylon. Now, some people from Bethel (a city north of Jerusalem) came to ask the priests and the prophets about whether they should continue with these fasts now that they had returned to their homeland. Keep in mind that these were definitely not the same thing as any one of the feasts of Israel… those feasts were instituted by the Lord God and were certainly to be observed. Instead, these were fasts that were started by the people because their beloved Jerusalem was destroyed. In fact, God also pointed to the fact that the people really were keeping these fasts for themselves, not because of any reverent worship experience they felt toward a Holy God.

The Lord answered through His prophet Zechariah that instead of keeping these fasts that were not instituted by God, they should have instead kept God's Laws. If only they had done that, there never would have been any Babylonian exile in the first place! Then God changed His tone and spoke of a coming day when He would bring His "chosen people" back to Jerusalem from all through the world and dwell with them in peace and prosperity…

This is what the LORD says: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain." Zech 8:3

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "**I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. 8 I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God."** Zech 8:7-8

It is all too obvious that God does not dwell in the city of Jerusalem at this time. However, one day Jesus will, once again, dwell among His people in that Holy City. Of course, that will be during the Millennium.

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "You who now hear these words spoken by the prophets who were there when the foundation was laid for the house of the LORD Almighty, let your hands be strong so that the Temple may be built. Zech 8:9

Before continuing on to speak about the blessings God will bestow on Israel during the Millennial Kingdom, God does take the time to encourage the people to get back out to the Temple Mount and rebuild their Temple of God. Then, He returns to speak of the latter days…

"The seed will grow well, the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will produce its crops, and the heavens will drop their dew. I will give all these things as an inheritance to the remnant of this people. 13 As you have been an object of cursing among the nations, O Judah and Israel, so will I save you, and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong."
Zech 8:12-13

During the last days and especially during the Millennial Kingdom, Israel will be a nation that is truly blessed by God. We certainly see that today as was noted in the previous section. It has become a land of "milk and honey". In so many ways, God is blessing that little section of land east of the Mediterranean Sea. Not only will these blessings become even greater after Christ's Second Coming, but Israel and Judah (once again united at this time) will be saved eternally. The remnant will have finally repented and turned back to God after over 2,500 years!

Then the Lord returned to the topic of the fasts. God told the people who had come from Bethel that in the future they should make the days that had been put aside for mournful fasts, instead, occasions for celebration… i.e. make them "happy festival" days.

Again the word of the LORD Almighty came to me. **19** This is what the LORD Almighty says: "**The fasts** of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months **will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah**. Therefore love truth and peace." Zech 8:18-19
This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, **21** and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going.' **22** And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him." Zech 8:20-22

When the Millennial Kingdom does come, people from all over the world will come to Jerusalem to be in the city of God and to seek Him, to worship Him, and to praise Him.

Summary: (Chapter 7-8)

The people of Israel had engaged in certain annual fasts when they were held captive in Babylon. They had not been instituted by God (such as those of Passover, Feast of First Fruits, Pentecost, etc.). After questioning whether they should continue to keep these mournful occasions, God told them to turn them into joyful feasts, not mournful. God also spoke to Zechariah to tell him how He really wanted, once again, to have a close relationship with His "chosen people"… "I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her." God continued on to say… This is what the LORD Almighty says: "I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God." Zech 8:2,7

Obviously, God had every intention to bring back all of the tribes of Israel and Judah to their promised land sometime in the future. The only question was when that would be. Obviously, that time began in earnest during the mid-twentieth century!

The Two Oracles: (Chapter 9-14)

Introduction:

The second portion of the book written by the prophet Zechariah may well have been written many years after the prophecies discussed above. No one actually knows for certain, although that is the general consensus of opinion. The following prophecies also are mainly concerned with how God will deal in the near *and* distant future with Israel as well as their enemies. A great deal of light is shed on the coming Messiah as well.

Judgment on the Enemies of Israel: (Chapter 9)

Chapter 9 begins with God handing down future judgment upon certain enemies of the Jews. He pronounces it against Syria, Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia. Approximately 175 years after this oracle was written down by Zechariah, Alexander the Great defeated each one of the above mentioned nations as he progressively added to his impressive empire. The nations he conquered were exactly those mentioned in this chapter. It is intriguing to note that when Alexander came to the city of Jerusalem, he remained camped outside the walls of the city… he spared that city from destruction.

The reason that the great Alexander was willing to spare the Temple and the city is noted by Josephus, the renowned Jewish historian. Josephus wrote that the high priest of the city had a vision from God that he was to march out and meet the coming conqueror when he approached near to the city. He did this with a great procession of priests and other people all dressed in their proper holy garments. Alexander, when seeing these men approaching, was reminded of an earlier dream that he had experienced. He said, "*I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself, how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay…..that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians*." (Flavius Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, p. 350) Alexander went on to say that when he saw the high priest come out to meet him, he looked just like the man he saw in his dream. He took that to be a sign from God that everything that had happened up to that point had been the result of God leading him to victory after victory. Therefore, the young king and warrior went into the city of Jerusalem, and worshipped God in the Temple.

One other tradition which is very likely true, is that the high priest brought with him the book of Daniel and showed Alexander the verses in that prophet's book (see Daniel 8 & 11) that had prophesied the young king's future coming (as Daniel had been written 200 years before Alexander lived). This really impressed Alexander.

In any case, Alexander did not attack Jerusalem… this is an historical fact. Zechariah prophesied this when he wrote how the king who had just conquered all of the aforementioned nations would only goes so far as to "camp around" Jerusalem… not attack that city…

I will camp around My house (God's Temple in Jerusalem) because of the army, because of him who passes by and him who returns. **No more shall an oppressor pass through them**, for now I have seen with My eyes. Zech 9:8

In other words, God will protect Jerusalem and His Temple from the enemy armies. By the way, this had a short term fulfillment… during the days of Alexander. Note that God used Alexander to protect Jerusalem from their enemies (as Alexander conquered and subdued them). Then, God kept Alexander from invading Jerusalem as explained above.

This prophecy will have an end-times fulfillment as well. This entire campaign by Alexander foreshadows the last days when Jerusalem will be given protection from God from foreign invasion. It is definitely true that Jerusalem will be supernaturally protected from foreign invasion in the last days. We have already seen demonstrations of this fact over the last 50 years. Several examples of this were mentioned in the last section of this treatise.

The very next verse also found its fulfillment during the last week of the life of Jesus…

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! **Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.** Zech 9:9

There can be no doubt that this is a prophecy of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday (see Matthew 21). Only the verses above were quoted in Matthew as they looked forward to the first coming of Jesus. This King, of course, came to save all those who would turn to Him and accept Him as Savior. His sacrificial death would occur on that first incarnation.

However, the second portion of this prophecy related to the Second Coming of Jesus. The Messiah, would one day return to earth and set up His Millennial Kingdom which will stretch from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth. After Jesus returns, He will set up His Kingdom on the earth and rule the entire world. Israel will finally come into possession of the land that God had promised them from the days of Abraham. As we shall see, King David will rule this land during the Millennial Kingdom. Zechariah put it this way…

He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.' Zech 9:10
As for you, ***because of the blood of my covenant with you*, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.** Zech 9:11

God tells Israel that He will one day free them from their captivity throughout the world and bring them back. The waterless pit is a picture of the Israelites suffering and despair that resulted from their turning away from God and His commandments. Note the reason given why God will free them. It is not because of their good works. It is because of God's unbreakable covenant with their patriarchs… Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, etc. The final result will be…

The **LORD their God will save them on that day as the flock of his people**. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown. **17** How attractive and beautiful they will be! Zech 9:16-17

"That day" is a reference to the 'Day of the Lord". Both are allusions to the fact that God will bring Israel back to Him (*save them*) during the Tribulation. Then, of course, after the Great Tribulation concludes with the return of Jesus, the Millennial Kingdom will commence.

The Final Re-Gathering of Israel: (Chapter 10)

Ask the LORD for rain in the springtime; it is the LORD who makes the storm clouds. He gives showers of rain to men, and plants of the field to everyone. Zech 10:1

The Lord will provide both physical blessings and spiritual blessings to the people of Israel. Zechariah encourages the people to pray for these blessings… He will supply their needs.

the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd. **3** "My anger burns against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders; **the LORD Almighty will care for his flock, the house of Judah, and make them like a proud horse in battle. 4 From Judah will come the cornerstone**. Zech 10:2-4

God will step in and punish the false shepherds of Israel. For far too long Israel had followed false shepherds who had led them astray. He will take care of His flock and, from the tribe of Judah, will provide them with the cornerstone that the whole world will need… Jesus, the Messiah.

"I will strengthen the **house of Judah** and save the **house of Joseph**. **I will restore them because I have compassion on them.** They will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them. **7** The **Ephraimites** will become like mighty men, and their hearts will be glad as with wine. Zech 10:6-7

God continues in the verses above to tell both the Northern Kingdom remnants (house of Joseph) and the Southern Kingdom remnants (house of Judah) that He will strengthen both of these "houses" of Israel. God will eventually gather His "chosen people" back to the "promised land", bless them, and protect them from foreign invasion. God has already accomplished this. The people from the twelve tribes of Israel have come from all over the world to unite once again in their homeland of Israel and continue to do so even today. This re-gathering has been underway for at least the last six decades. The Bible says in many places that this is one of the very significant signs that the return of Jesus is "at hand". This is certainly prophesied by the prophet Zechariah…

Though I scatter them among the peoples, yet in distant lands they will remember me. **They and their children will survive, and they will return.** Zech 10:9

The Two Shepherds: (Chapter 11)

The previous prophecies in Zechariah have been pointing to a final restoration of Israel as has been clearly demonstrated. More details on this theme will follow in the last three chapters of this book. However, this chapter is primarily concerned with presenting two different types of messiahs that will be coming in the future… one that is wonderful and one that is terrible. The first part of this chapter speaks of the rejection of the true Messiah on His first coming. The first few verses show once again that Israel will face severe judgment in the future because of their continued rebellion against God. Israel will therefore be devastated all throughout the land…

Open your doors, O **Lebanon**, so that fire may devour your cedars! **2** Wail, O pine tree, for the cedar has fallen; the stately trees are ruined! Wail, oaks of **Bashan (**in northern Israel**)**; the dense forest has been cut down! **3** Listen to the wail of the shepherds; their rich pastures are destroyed! Listen to the roar of the lions; the lush thicket of the **Jordan** is ruined! Zech 11:1-3

God and the Messiah finally will "draw the line" due to the people of Israel's rebellious nature and actions. For so many years, God had shown mercy toward His "chosen people." With the coming of Christ, however, and the major portion of the Jews rejecting their Messiah, God would allow for the destruction of Jerusalem. This judgment would come at the hands of Titus and his Roman army in A.D. 70. Not only that, but in A.D. 135, Hadrian would lead another Roman force to slaughter hundreds of thousands of Jews in Jerusalem… and rename the city to Aelia Capitalina and the land of Israel to Palestine in an attempt to wipe the whole idea of Israel and the Jew off the face of the earth. This is prophesied in the following verses…

I will no longer have pity on the people of the land," declares the LORD. "I will hand everyone over to his neighbor and his king. **They will oppress the land, and I will not rescue them from their hands.**" Zech 11:6

In the next few verses, God "paints a picture" using two staffs, one names Favor (Beauty), the other Union (Bonds). God is going to show what will happen to Israel because of their terrible sin of rejecting His Son as well as the fact that Israel will be scattered to the four winds until the end-times.

I took two staffs and called one **Favor** and the other **Union**, and I pastured the flock. Zech 11:7

The flock detested me, and I grew weary of them **9** and said, "I will not be your shepherd. Let the dying die, and the perishing perish. Let those who are left eat one another's flesh." **10** **Then I took my staff called Beauty and broke it, revoking the covenant I had made with all the nations.** **11** It was revoked on that day, and so the afflicted of the flock who were watching me knew it was the word of the LORD. Zech 11:8-11

God used Zechariah as an actor to portray the role of the shepherd of Israel. In this role, Zechariah picked up two different staffs, Beauty (or Favor) and Bonds (or Unity). He found that the people rejected him, their shepherd. Therefore, Zechariah, playing the role of the *true Messiah* here, said that he would no longer shepherd them. This breaking of God's conditional

covenant is symbolized by the breaking of the staff called Beauty. It is important to understand that many of God's covenants are unconditional; however, some are conditional. This was made clear by God when He made each of His covenants.

Now **if you obey me fully and keep my covenant**, then out of all nations **you will be my treasured possession**. Ex 19:5 (the conditional *Mosaic Covenant* – details found in Deut. 28)

Further aspects of this conditional covenant follow...

If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your **God will set you high above all the nations on earth**. **2** All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: Deut 28:1-2

However**, if you do not obey the LORD your God** and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, **all these curses will come upon you** and overtake you: Deut 28:15 (then the Lord lists the many ways that Israel will suffer for their lack of obedience)

Zechariah then goes on to speak of the "appropriate" payment for this true shepherd (the actual Messiah)…

I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. **13** And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"--the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the **thirty pieces of silver** and **threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.** **14** Then I broke my second staff called Union, breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. Zech 11:12-14

It is very intriguing that Zechariah, still playing the role of the *true, but rejected, Messiah*, asks the people to pay him what they think he is worth. They pay him thirty pieces of silver! In Old Testament times, this was the cost of re-imbursement to the owner if his slave was gored by someone else's bull. Apparently, the Jews believed that Jesus might be worth the price of a slave! Of course, this was the price of a slave who had been gored by an ox… interesting, considering what happened to Jesus on the cross.

If the bull **gores** a male or female slave, the owner must pay **thirty shekels** of silver to the master of the slave. Ex 21:32

Of course, it is no coincidence that those men who asked Judas to betray Jesus, apparently thought the life of Jesus was indeed worth just thirty pieces of silver too! Not only that, but in this prophetic demonstration and in the terrible incident involving Judas and his betrayal of Jesus, **these silver pieces found their way into a potter's field**.

This whole dramatic reenactment ended with Zechariah taking his second staff, Union, and breaking it in two. This was stated as being indicative of the breaking of the bonds of brotherhood between the Northern and Southern tribes of Israel.

Therefore, the result of both of these staffs being broken was that all of the tribes of Israel had rejected the true Messiah and had become scattered all throughout the world. That is the way things stood for almost two thousand years. Things now have begun to change, however.

The text then turns to another shepherd that will come one day…

I am going to raise up a shepherd over the land who will not care for the lost, or seek the young, or heal the injured, or feed the healthy, but will eat the meat of the choice sheep, tearing off their hoofs. **17** "**Woe to the worthless shepherd**, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! May his arm be completely withered, his right eye totally blinded!"
Zech 11:16-17

Although Zechariah does not have much to say about this coming shepherd, he does note that he will be ruler over the people and land one day. He will not be a good leader. In fact, he will be terrible, a "worthless shepherd" – one who will desert the flock. Zechariah calls for his defeat in battle. This false shepherd almost certainly represents the Antichrist to come.

Summary: (Chapter 9-11)

Chapter 9 speaks of the judgment that God will hand down on the enemies of Israel. It also gives a prophecy concerning the coming Messiah's First Advent… as he comes into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. However, as often is the case with prophecies of the Old Testament, the time period instantly switches to the Messiah's Second Coming when He will defeat His enemies and set up His Kingdom here on earth. His people will reap the benefits of their allegiance to Him… The LORD their God will save them on that day as the flock of his people. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown. How attractive and beautiful they will be!

More details are then supplied concerning the re-gathering of the "chosen people". The northern and the southern kingdoms will be reunited in the end-times when God will also shower many blessings on Israel… physical and spiritual. Before continuing on with additional end-time prophecies, God then speaks to Zechariah of two different types of Messiahs that will come in the future. One will be the true and faithful Messiah. Unfortunately, Israel will reject Him initially and suffer the consequences for at least two thousand years. Then I took my staff called Beauty and broke it, revoking the covenant I had made with all the nations. The nation and people of Israel will suffer for their rejection of Jesus all the way down through history; of course, this is an easily verifiable historical fact.

The "Little Apocalypse of Zechariah"

The Oracle of the Lord against Israel: (Chapter 12)

Prophetically, the last three chapters of Zechariah (Zech. 12-14) are extremely impressive. They have been referred to as the "Little Apocalypse of Zechariah". These chapters got this name as they deal with the same material and events as those covered in The Revelation of Jesus Christ. The word apocalypse means revelation. In these chapters, God outlines His plans for Israel in the last days. He gives the reader a lot of information concerning the Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom to follow… the same topics covered in The Revelation. Right after telling about the rejection of the true Messiah (in Chapter 11), Zechariah is about to tell of the end-times when this same Messiah will come again… however, this time He will come in power and in glory. The phrase "*in that day*" will be seen numerous times in these last three chapters. This phrase refers to the "*Day of the Lord*" – this time period begins with the onset of the Tribulation (of course, those who take the pre-wrath view of the Rapture disagree on this point) and includes the Millennial Kingdom that immediately follows. As shall be seen, so much of this time on earth centers around God's holy city of Jerusalem.

The oracle (i.e. "burden") of the word of the LORD against Israel. Zech 12:1

God begins this chapter by telling us that He is about to reveal important information about a future judgment against Israel. There will be much bad news to follow. However, this book does end with very good news concerning the ultimate outcome of those who follow Christ.

"**I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. 3 *On that day*, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.** Zech 12:1-3

This prophetic section begins with God telling Zechariah that He will supernaturally protect Jerusalem and the surrounding region of Israel against foreign invasion. Note also that the Bible here shows that Israel will be besieged by many nations. In fact, it actually uses the phrase "all the nations" to point out just how hated God's "chosen people" will be during this time in history. Keep in mind just how many nations of the world (e.g. those making up the United Nations) are against Israel today. Typically, the countries making up the United Nations come up with one resolution after another to condemn Israel. Scores of these resolutions have come out of that anti-Israeli body of nations over the last few decades. Rarely is there a country, other than the United States and one of two of its allies, that will support Israel in its constant fight against the Palestinians. For some incredible reason, the Palestinians are always portrayed to be in the right and Israel is always the bad, war-mongering, aggressor… even though it is the Palestinians who are constantly lobbing bombs into Israel and sending suicide bombers to kill

innocent people, including children… and joining so many of their Islamic brothers in calling for the annihilation of Israel and all Jews. How can so many people in the world be so blinded when it comes to seeing what is actually happening over in the Middle East? Not at all surprisingly, this is just what the Bible predicted would happen!

However, "on that day", God will protect Jerusalem and its surrounds against all of these invaders. As was pointed out in the last section, God has already begun this providential protection. Israel has not lost a war with a foreign power since they regained their land and national identity in May 1948. The victories that have come have almost assuredly come with the "providential help" of God. Those nations who have come against Israel have "injured themselves". Israel will continue to be supernaturally protected by God in these last days.

Then **the leaders of Judah will say in their hearts, 'The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the LORD Almighty is their God**.' [6] "***On that day*** I will make the leaders of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but **Jerusalem will remain intact in her place**. Zech 12:5-6

During the Tribulation, there will come a time when people will be required to take the "sign of the beast"… the infamous "666." There will be some who will refuse to take this "mark" as they will understand the ultimate and eternal significance of doing so. Many will die martyr's deaths because of their allegiance to Jesus during these days. Some will escape into the surrounding country and attempt to survive off the land. When the Bible refers to Judah in the verses above, it is alluding to the area surrounding Jerusalem… including places such as Petra and Bozrah. These are regions to which people will have retreated after being chased out of the city.

Now please note that Zechariah wrote that "the Lord Almighty is their God" when writing of the people of Jerusalem. The time will have finally come, after two millennia, where the Jewish nation, as a whole, will have turned their eyes back to God, through faith in the one and only Messiah, Jesus Christ. Those in the outlying areas of Israel will also have repented and turned back to God.

On that day **the LORD will shield those who live in Jerusalem**, so that the feeblest among them will be like David, and **the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD (Jesus Christ) going before them.** [9] ***On that day*** **I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem**. Zech 12:8-9

God will show His power during this time as He supernaturally intervenes to defeat the forces of Satan. Jesus will return to the earth to lead His Christian army over the enemy. All of the men in Israel will be stalwart soldiers at that time… just as their forefather King David was when he led ancient Israel in so many battles three thousand years ago. As will be seen when we

soon study The Revelation, these battles will lead up to the battle of Armageddon… all of these battles will result in total victory for God and His saints.

The Jews will finally see the truth of Jesus as their Messiah and will understand that this is the same Messiah that their ancestors had rejected two thousand years ago. God revealed to Zechariah that He would "pour out" on His "chosen people" "a spirit of grace and supplication." Helped by this supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit, these newly repentant followers of Christ will finally see just who Jesus is and recall all that He had to suffer in order for them (and the world) to receive salvation. They will grieve for all that their ancestors lost because of their unbelief. They will also grieve because of all the pain and suffering that their forefathers caused their Messiah and their God.

I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, **the one they have pierced,** and **they will mourn for him** as one mourns for an only child, **and grieve bitterly for him** as one grieves for a firstborn son. Zech 12:10

Ezekiel is another prophet that was given insight concerning the fate of Israel in these latter days. God spoke to him approximately seventy-five years earlier with a similar message as He was now giving to Zechariah…

"**I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay upon them. 22 From that day forward the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God. 23 And the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin, because they were unfaithful to me**. So I hid my face from them and handed them over to their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. 24 I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their offenses, and I hid my face from them. 25 "Therefore this is what the **Sovereign LORD says: I will now bring Jacob back from captivity and will have compassion on all the people of Israel,** and I will be zealous for my holy name. 26 They will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward me when they lived in safety in their land with no one to make them afraid. 27 When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will show myself holy through them in the sight of many nations. 28 Then **they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. 29 I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD."** Ezek 39:21-29

The Cleansing of Jerusalem: (Chapter 13)

Note that once again the three word expression, "on that day" is used… this time to begin Chapter 13. At some point during this "day", God will cleanse the "house of David" and the people of Jerusalem from their sins. God will cleanse those of royal blood and any commoner who will come to Him. Quite obviously, the time under consideration in the verses to follow is

the Tribulation. The sins of the majority of inhabitants of Jerusalem were certainly not cleansed during the first coming of Christ.

"***On that day*** **a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity**. Zech 13:1

It is important to remember that God will pour out His Holy Spirit upon His "chosen people" to help them open their eyes and recognize their Messiah. Many will realize that Jesus is actually the Messiah. Their relatives had rejected Him two thousand years ago and they had rejected Him up until this time. Now, however, many of these Jews will finally see the "Light" and know that He is Jesus, their Messiah! As mentioned in some detail in the last section, the prophet Joel spoke of this time as well…

Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed. And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. **29** Even on my servants, both men and women**, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.** **30** I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth. Joel 2:27-30

Zechariah continued on…

"***On that day*** (during the Tribulation), I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land. Zech. 13:2

The Holy Spirit will work within the people to turn them away from such things as idols and false prophets as more and more of the people of Israel turn back to God. This will happen during the Tribulation. Of course, as we have already seen, the Holy Spirit of God is already doing a powerful work through visions and dreams that He is currently supplying to the Muslims. More concerning the salvation of the Jews during this time will be revealed when we come to the study of The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Once again, we see that the prophet Ezekiel also wrote of this same tribulation period almost one hundred years earlier…

"'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. **25** **I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.** **26** **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone** and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And **I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees** and be careful to keep my laws. **28** **You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.** Ezek 36:24-28

So we see that there were many Old Testament prophets writing of this "Day of the Lord" when Israel will return to following the one and only Messiah. Ezekiel, Isaiah, Joel, Jeremiah, Daniel, and others wrote of this "day" as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

Then God reverts back for a moment to remind the reader of what was destined to happen when the Messiah made His first appearance on earth…

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is My Companion!" declares the LORD Almighty. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones." Zech. 13:7

In the verse above, God speaks of the first coming of His Son, Jesus. It is interesting to note that God refers to Jesus as "my shepherd" and as the man that is His "Companion" (the words *My Companion* can also be translated as *My Equal* or *My Associate*). God states that when Jesus is crucified (i.e. when the Shepherd is *struck*), the sheep of Israel will be scattered. They would, of course, make a terrible decision in rejecting their Shepherd.

Just under forty years later, their Holy Temple would be destroyed and more than one million of the Jews would be killed; many others would be scattered throughout the world. Over 580,000 more Jews died at the hands of Hadrian just sixty-five years after that. Hadrian tried to blot out the memory of this Jewish state and the city of Jerusalem by enacting many restrictive laws, changing the names of the land and some of the cities and encouraging the worship of many false Roman gods. It would take almost two thousand years before God would decide, in His grace, to bring the Jews back to their homeland in preparation for His coming again.

Then, Zechariah again speaks on the subject of the "Day of the Lord."

In the whole land," declares the LORD, "**two-thirds will be struck down and perish**; yet **one-third will be left in it. [9] This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"** Zech 13:8-9

In the verses above, God reveals that in the "Day of the Lord" two-thirds of the Jews will die… this will be a terrible time of death and destruction. In fact, it is no surprise that one other name for this time in history is "the time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble". However, even though so many will perish, God will use this tribulation period to bring a very important and significant number of His people back to faith in Him. One-third of the Jews will survive the "fire". They will be sanctified by the "fire" as they turn to follow and worship the Lord. They will believe and say, "The Lord is our God!" Paul writes of this third of Israel that will be saved during this time in his letter to the Romans…

Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so ***all Israel*** will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will

turn godlessness away from Jacob. 27 And **this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.**" Romans 11:25-27

Here God makes His covenant to have the *deliverer*, Jesus, turn the nation of Israel away from their current godlessness. Jesus will then save them from their sins. All of this will come after "the full number of the Gentiles has come in" (i.e. after the conclusion of the Church Age).

Jesus Returns to be the Lord of Lords and King of Kings: (Chapter 14)

The prophet Joel once wrote… Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the ***day of the LORD*** is coming. It is close at hand-- Joel 2:1

Indeed, the day of the Lord is coming. Zechariah writes of this time now…

A ***day of the LORD*** is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. 2 I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Zech. 14:1-2

In the early stages of the last battle campaign to be fought prior to the onset of the Millennial Kingdom, the Antichrist and his forces will gain the initial upper hand. That situation will not last very long as Jesus will come with His saints to defeat His satanic foe.

3 Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. 4 **On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives**, east of Jerusalem, and the **Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south**. Zech. 14:3-4

Since the Mount of Olives is not now split in the manner described above, it is obvious that this will be a future event. This is mentioned as just a little more evidence for a future Millennial Kingdom (although, hopefully, no further evidence is needed at this point).

You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. **You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.** 6 On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. 7 It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime--a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light. 8 On that day **living water will flow out from Jerusalem**, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter. Zech. 14:5-8

The day on which the Lord Jesus returns with His heavenly saints to bring victory in the war against evil, there will be many incredible physical events. Suffice it to say here what Zechariah wrote twenty-five hundred years ago… "It will be a unique day." One intriguing

aspect of the upheaval of the topography will be that there will be a river flowing out of the Holy City. It will flow into the Mediterranean and to the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea will no longer be "dead" as the waters will allow for sea life at that time.

After Jesus takes care of the business of winning the war with the final campaign being the battle of Armageddon, He will assume His rightful position as Lord and King of the entire earth. Jerusalem will finally be secure, never again to be threatened with a foreign invasion…

The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. **10** The whole land, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become like the Arabah. But Jerusalem will be raised up and remain in its place, from the Benjamin Gate to the site of the First Gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses. **11** **It will be inhabited; never again will it be destroyed.** Jerusalem will be secure. Zech. 14:9-11

The last several verses of the book of Zechariah describe the plight of those nations and people who came against Israel. Jesus will punish those people and those nations that came against Jerusalem…

This is the plague with which the LORD will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. Zech. 14:12

Those nations and people who survived the war against Jesus and His saints will be required to worship every year in Jerusalem and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. During the Millennial Kingdom, there will no longer be vile, immoral people (*Canaanites*) entering the Temple of God ever again.

Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem (the Christians that will come out of these nations and enter the Millennium) will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to **celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles**. **17** If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. **18** If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The LORD will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. **19** This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. **20** On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. **21** Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the LORD Almighty, and all who come to sacrifice will take some of the pots and cook in them. **And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD Almighty.**
Zech 14:16-21

Summary: (Chapter 12-14)

This portion of Zechariah is really an impressive prophecy of the end-times. First, the Tribulation is described, and the fact that a significant remnant of Israel will turn back to God and the true Messiah during that time. God will bring His people back into the land of promise and pour out His spirit upon the Jewish people in *that day*.

I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, **the one they have pierced,** and **they will mourn for him** as one mourns for an only child, **and grieve bitterly for him** as one grieves for a firstborn son.

God will supernaturally protect them from the surrounding nations. They will know that God has done this. No nation will be able to defeat them. God will cleanse them of their sins through their belief in the true Messiah *in that day*.

Mention was also made in the prophecy that the Shepherd was "struck" when He came the first time. That resulted in the Jewish sheep being scattered for a very long time. However, in the end-times, they would once again be brought back and united as a nation under God.

In fact, Zechariah is told by God that one-third of the nation of Israel will be brought through the fire of judgment and testing during the Tribulation and come out redeemed and ready to enter into the Millennial Kingdom.

In the last chapter, Zechariah wrote about the battle of Armageddon. Jesus will defeat the Antichrist and Satan and usher His saints into the Kingdom. As will become apparent after reading the commentary on The Revelation that is to follow, God had given His prophet Zechariah a preview of the apocalyptic vision that He would later reveal to the Apostle John approximately 600 years later.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The final section of this treatise consists primarily of a detailed commentary on the last book of the Bible… The Revelation of Jesus Christ. When a very old man, the Apostle John was banished to the Isle of Patmos, off the south-west coast of Asia-Minor, because of his leadership position in the Christian Church. While John was living there, Jesus came to him in a tremendous vision, and presented this great apostle with a great deal of information concerning the end-times of the world. Jesus told John to write down the vision so that believers all through the ages would be aware of what was to come one day in the future, right after the Rapture of the Church. This vision, after a few preliminary remarks relating to the various churches of that day, details the events that take place after the Rapture… i.e. the Tribulation… and concludes with what it will be like in "eternity future"… where all Christians will live together in a glorious, newly constructed heaven and earth.

In addition to the commentary on The Revelation, there will be additional discussion on the Rapture of the Church, the coming war outlined in Ezekiel 38-39, and end-time information given to Daniel concerning the Tribulation and the Antichrist. Where appropriate, prophetic insights will also be gleaned from other Old Testament prophets. Although it is not always possible to give exact time sequences in some of the events about to be described, a fairly reasonable time-line of end-time events can be determined from a study of these Old and New Testament books.

One other important point is worth making. As will be seen, there are times when the exact meaning of certain verses in The Revelation can be interpreted in more than one way. This has led some to think that this important book is just too difficult to attempt to understand. Some say it is just too esoteric and symbolic. This is not true. In most cases, the Bible actually interprets the difficult passages itself. Even in those verses that can be reasonably interpreted in more than one way, the overall meaning does not appreciably change regardless of which meaning is accepted. In other words, the gist of each chapter is agreed upon by virtually all conservative biblical scholars… only a few relatively insignificant details are debatable. These passages will be pointed out as we go through each chapter and it will become obvious that the areas in question are not really that important to the overall meaning of the book.

Before beginning the chapter by chapter exegesis of The Revelation, a brief overview might be in order. Some knowledge of the sequence of events that begins with the Rapture of the saints will make it much easier to follow along with the commentary on The Revelation. By knowing where we are going, and the events along the way, the details of how God will take His family to their final home of the future will be easier to follow. One must remember that God wants to bring as many people into a saving relationship with Him as possible, given the fact that all people do still have the free will to accept Him or reject Him. God will be using the seven year Tribulation to bring a great many of His "chosen people" back to Him. The Jewish people will finally understand who Jesus really is… the Messiah that they have been waiting for all of these years. Many Jews will turn to Jesus during the Tribulation… these Jews, in turn, will help

bring many additional Gentiles into the Kingdom. Before beginning the commentary on The Revelation, here is a very quick overview of what is to come, most likely beginning in the fairly near future:

- The Rapture of the Church will occur
- A war will occur that involves Israel, Russia, Iran, and many other Middle Eastern nations (just before or just after the Rapture). Actually, there may well be a series of wars in a short period of time in that region of the world.
- The Antichrist will come onto the scene and broker a peace treaty with Israel – peace will finally come to Israel, or so it will appear…
- This treaty will mark the beginning of the Tribulation – the first 3 ½ years will involve the Antichrist's rise to power and the concurrent rising influence of the ecumenical, apostate church.
- In the middle of the seven year Tribulation, the Antichrist will show his true colors and come against Israel and desecrate the re-built Temple.
- The final 3 ½ years of the seven year Tribulation comes… sometimes called the Great Tribulation. Terrible events will transpire as God delivers His judgment onto the unrepentant sinners in the world while the Antichrist strikes out against those who refuse to worship him.
- The end result of this battle of good vs. evil will be the Battle of Armageddon.
- Jesus comes with His saints (Christians that are already in heaven) to defeat Satan and his minions in the valley of Megiddo.
- The idyllic Millennial Kingdom begins.
- After this thousand year reign of Jesus on earth, the Millennium comes to an end; Satan is loosed for a short period of time and leads an unsuccessful revolt against Jesus. Satan and his demons are thrown into the "lake of fire" where they will spend eternity. All those people who have rejected Jesus over the millennia will also face an eternity in hell.
- The New Heaven and New Earth will be refashioned by God, and all Christians will spend eternity with the Holy Trinity living in this beautiful, perfect, and ultimate "universe."

Now, let us take a close look at The Revelation of Jesus Christ that was given to the Apostle John as the first century A.D. drew to a close…

The Revelation of Jesus Christ:

Chapter 1: Jesus appears to the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, **2** who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. **3** Blessed is the one who

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

The last book of the Bible begins with the proclamation that Jesus Christ is going to show His followers what will happen in the future in the words that follow. Jesus did this by sending an angel to His good friend, John. As one may recall, John even referred to himself while writing his gospel to the world as "the one Jesus loved". He spoke of himself in this way to show the very special relationship that existed between the Master and His youngest disciple. Now, sixty years after John last saw Jesus alive on earth, John was the only living disciple (now he was called an apostle). He was about to be given an incredible description of end-time events just a few years before going to be with his Lord.

The reader of this book is told that a blessing is in store for anyone who reads and covets the words in the prophecy. Let us now closely study this book and warrant the blessing promised by Jesus. Jesus says the time of His return is near…

John, **to the seven churches in the province of Asia**: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to, and **from the seven spirits before his throne**, **5** and **from Jesus Christ**, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, **6** and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. **7**Look, **he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him**, **even those who pierced him (**most probably a reference to the Jews as seen in the prophecy by Zechariah)… And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, **the one they have pierced**, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. Zech 12:10**)**; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. Rev 1:4-7 (Note the marked similarity between this vision to John and the vision to Zechariah, six hundred years earlier).

The revelation then goes on to say that this vision is sent to a particular group of seven churches in Asia-Minor. Jesus begins with the salutation of grace and peace to His friend, John, and all those who subsequently read the message about to be given to John. Not only does Jesus give this greeting, but the verse also says that the "seven spirits" before His throne do so as well. Many commentators believe this reference is to the Holy Spirit and point to Isaiah 11 as evidence. In that chapter, the Holy Spirit is noted to have a multifaceted aspect to His work… The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- Isaiah 11:2 The number seven that is used in this verse typically points to the *perfection* that is found in the person and work of the Holy Spirit of God. No one can be certain exactly what Jesus meant when He spoke of the "seven spirits". However, the main point is simply that Jesus, the Lord Himself, is going to be speaking to John through a vision. He will be giving John a detailed

description of what will occur in the heavens and earth as this present age draws to a close one day in the future. Jesus, the first-fruits of our salvation, is about to begin His discourse on this subject.

First, however, the angel makes sure the reader knows that Jesus "loves us" and frees everyone from their sins who turns to Him in repentance and belief. In fact, as is mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament as well, believers are now co-heirs with Jesus. Christians are promised a kingdom and a priesthood with Jesus for all eternity...

Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Romans 8:17

One day, Jesus will return to this earth in the same manner that He left to go back to His Father in heaven… After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. Acts 1:9

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

Jesus then speaks to John to tell his friend that He is indeed the "Beginning and the End". Jesus has existed from eternity past and will exist forever into the future. Jesus, as God the Son, was not created… He has always been… He has always existed. Every thing or being that comes into existence at some point in time must be created by some other being. That is only logical and is absolutely true. Yet, there is no philosophical problem (i.e. no logical problem) with a being having existed from eternity past… i.e. having never been created. God, by necessity, must be this kind of being. God, therefore, has no creator. He does not require one. He is Almighty. If a being requires a creator, that being cannot be omnipotent… therefore, it cannot be God.

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was **on the island of Patmos** because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. **10** **On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit**, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, **11** which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." Rev 1:9-11

John begins by outlining the circumstances of his situation at the time of the vision that he was about to describe in detail. He notes that he is our brother in Christ and currently was enduring the persecution of Emperor Domitian as he had been banished to the Island of Patmos because of his Christian beliefs and because he was a leader of the Church. John then tells the reader that "on the Lord's Day" while he was "in the spirit" he heard Jesus, in a loud voice, tell him to write down what he was about to dictate to John and send it off to be read by each of the seven mentioned churches. That makes it quite apparent that the information was certainly meant for the churches of that day. Most theologians also believe that these messages have additional meaning for others down through the ages.

When John said that he was in the spirit "on the Lord's Day" it is not certain whether he meant that it was a Sunday, or whether the vision that he received was concerning the "Great Day of the Lord" often mentioned in the Scriptures. John MacArthur is convinced that this is a reference to Sunday. The outstanding theologian, John Walvoord, who wrote the fine book, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, noted that Christians at that time referred to the day of Christ's resurrection as the "first day of the week"… never was it referenced in those days as "The Lord's Day". Walvoord states that the expression is "rather a reference to the *Day of the Lord* of the Old Testament, an extended period of time in which God deals in judgment and sovereign rule over the earth….. The New Testament term is therefore the equivalent to the Old Testament expression "the *day of the Lord*." In other words, John had been projected forward to that future day when the Tribulation would be visited upon the earth and all of its inhabitants. John was alone, away from his fellowship with other Christians on the mainland. Yet, God was now transporting him into a spiritual state where he was about to learn the details about what would happen during those end-times upon this earth, eventually resulting in the ushering in of the wonderful Millennial Kingdom. John then heard a voice…

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw **seven golden lampstands, 13** and among the lampstands was someone "**like a son of man**," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. **14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire**. **15** His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.

John turns to see who was speaking to him. He sees seven golden lampstands with an incredibly impressive man standing among them. A little later on in this chapter, the meaning of the golden lampstands will be given. The man is described in some detail right here. It becomes quite obvious when one looks at this description that this man is Jesus. His head and hair were the color of purity and righteousness – white as snow.

Daniel was given a similar vision of God… "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool." Dan 7:9

Continuing on, this man was dressed in the typical fashion of an Old Testament priest and judge. The golden girdle was a symbol of authority and was worn by the High Priest. Of course, Jesus is our High Priest… and, obviously, Jesus has the ultimate authority. The Greek words that are expressed as "eyes were like blazing fire" actually would be better translated as "his eyes shot fire". The mention of His feet being like "bronze glowing in a furnace" is symbolic of divine judgment. In other words, Jesus was ready to judge the world and the description of His eyes certainly looked as if the world was going to come up very short of His expectations! Jesus would begin to give His assessment of the various churches in the very next portion of John's vision. As the fifteenth verse notes, the voice of Jesus is coming forth with great power as He is

passing down His judgment. After speaking to the seven churches, a detailed description of the coming Tribulation will begin. It is during this Tribulation that Jesus will pour out His wrath upon mankind.

In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. Rev. 1:16

Jesus is seen holding seven stars in His right hand. These stars are said to be the angels of the seven churches about to be addressed by Jesus. Some commentators believe these to be real angels, others believe that they represent the leaders of each of the seven churches in that day. Regardless of which is true, Jesus is telling the reader that He holds the leadership of each church in His hand. He will be there for them when called upon in faith, He will protect them, and He will expect them to take good care of His Church as well.

The sharp double-edged sword implies a powerful weapon of judgment that will be wielded by Jesus as necessary. Jesus is omnipotent. Obviously, His power is complete. That includes His power of *judgment* and His power to *protect* His Church over Satan. Jesus will do both during the Tribulation. This power and glory is symbolized in the description of His face…

His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Rev. 1:17

It is really interesting to contemplate what it must have been like for John to receive this heavenly visit from his old Friend and Master, Jesus. At first sight of Him, John drops right to the ground as if dead! The vision of Jesus in all of His heavenly glory and power is just too much for John to comprehend. John had seen Jesus virtually every day for many years in his youth, but nothing prepared him for the sight of "glorified" Jesus in His Heavenly Kingdom. Think about all of the saints in history that have dropped to their knees when in the presence of the most Holy God (e.g. Moses, Isaiah)…

Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. **I am the First and the Last**. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And **I hold the keys of death and Hades.** "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: **The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.** Rev 1:18-20

The first portion of the vision comes to a close as Jesus reaches down to comfort John and place him at ease. Jesus does remind John of who He is… the First and the Last, the resurrected Son of God, the God who will live forever. And, very importantly to all humanity,

Jesus tells John that He is the one who holds the keys to death and Hades. It is within His power alone to bring people with Him into heaven or send them into an everlasting hell.

Jesus concludes by telling John to write of those things he has seen in the past, what he sees happening now, and what Jesus is about to tell him concerning the future.

Interestingly, The Revelation can be divided into these three time periods fairly easily; Chapter 1 tells of things in the past, Chapters 2&3 will tell of things happening at that time in Church history, and Chapters 4-22 will reveal the future to John and all of mankind. Let us take a look at Jesus' messages to the seven churches He chose to speak to concerning their Christian walk…

Chapter 2: Jesus gives a message to the church at Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum:

In the next two chapters, Jesus spoke to seven churches in the area then known as Asia-Minor… today, it is modern Turkey. There were scores of churches by the time this vision was given to John, yet only these seven were singled out by Jesus to be written about. Seven is a number often chosen by God as a number of completeness or perfection. Apparently, these churches were particularly good examples of certain important points that Jesus wanted to make to John and, by extension, the rest of the world – i.e. all those that would one day read The Revelation. By using these seven churches, God would be able to teach us those things He wants us to know concerning His Church for all ages as well as certain things concerning the varying individual "walks" of Christians. Apparently, God used His providential care (He miraculously uses the events of human history to work out His divine purposes) in order to be able to use these specific churches as good examples of the varying spiritual condition of the Church and the individual. Each of the churches mentioned here in Asia-Minor had developed certain characteristics that Jesus would mention… some good, some bad. The order in which they fall on the map (see next page) and are written about in these two chapters, corresponds to the varying characteristics shown by the Church throughout history. Again, this suggests the use by God of His providential care.

As already mentioned, almost every prophecy scholar thinks that the *lessons* Jesus has to offer these seven churches are not only meant for these first century congregations but to a broader audience as follows:

- Jesus is indeed speaking to **each of the seven individual churches** in the latter first century.
- Each of these churches also **represents a certain time period, or age, in Church history** as will be pointed out below. There does seem to be a fairly impressive similarity between the characteristics of the actual churches mentioned and the various Church Ages that followed down throughout history. This may be related to God's providence or it may be just coincidental. Just keep in mind that there certainly are respected theologians who do not believe that Jesus is referencing future Church Ages when He speaks about these seven churches in Asia-Minor.

- The lessons meant for each of the seven congregations can also **represent seven different "walks" with the Lord that differing individual Christians may have**. Each person should examine themselves to see which one (or two) of the characteristics of these churches best exemplifies their own life as they work toward sanctification… and then correct any noted deficiencies (i.e. sinful tendencies).

In the following commentary, the manner in which Jesus spoke to each of the seven first century churches and how these messages from the Lord may well relate to a given corresponding Church Age will be discussed. These words of commendation and correction from the Lord also apply to the individual Christian… in a similar fashion as they do to the Church as a whole.

- "To the angel of the church in **Ephesus** write: These are the words of him who holds the **seven stars in his right hand** and walks among the **seven golden lampstands**: Rev. 2:1

Jesus is about to speak to the church in Ephesus…

His Commendation: **I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false**. **3** You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Rev. 2:2-3

Here we see that Jesus is pleased with this church because of their hard work for the Church. They had not tolerated evil and had endured the very real difficulties of the first century Church… to include markedly terrible persecution, even unto death. They had persevered, even in the light of difficult times, the challenge of Gnosticism, Judaizers, the Roman authorities, etc. They were still staying faithful to the Lord Jesus. On the other hand…

His Condemnation: Yet I hold this against you: **You have forsaken your first love**. Rev. 2:4

During the early Apostolic Church, the passion for following Jesus was quite evident. The apostles spread out throughout the region bringing the good news of the gospel to everyone in their path. The freshness of their recent encounter with the risen Christ was very evident to all. Paul was on fire for his Master once he had the Damascus experience. However, as the decades went by, the Roman persecution began, and the apostles all died except for John… some of the enthusiasm certainly died out. Jesus was not pleased about that situation. He let the church there in Ephesus know this. He wanted them to remember what their relationship with Him had once been like…

His Recommendation: Remember the height from which you have fallen! **Repent** and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. **6** But you have this in your favor: **You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans,** which I also hate. Rev. 2:5-6

Jesus told them to repent and return to the way they had been in their early history… i.e. when Paul and Timothy had stirred them on with their passion, preaching and teaching. Jesus let them know that if they continued down their current path, He would remove their church as a testimony to Christ. Jesus did add that He was impressed that they were so against the practices of a group who were referred to as the Nicolaitans. This was a sect of people who apparently called themselves Christians, but engaged in immoral activities as if it were not a problem (as they inappropriately separated out the spiritual things from physical practices). They also created problems due to their practices of ecclesiasticism – their strict use of a church hierarchy got in the way of the individual member's freedom of worship. They were too bogged down in unimportant things – a lot like the problems Jesus addressed often concerning the Pharisees. Jesus hated this type of thing and was pleased that the Ephesian Church was also against this sect.

His Promise: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.** Rev 2:7

Jesus concluded His words to this church by reminding them that everyone in that church, or any church, who stayed true to His gospel would one day eat from the tree of life. That is, they would one day live forever in heaven!

The Church Age (Ephesus):

The Church Age that is represented by this local church in Ephesus was the first century Church. This may be called the Apostolic Church. In fact, when John wrote about this vision from Jesus as the first century wound to a close, he was the only remaining apostle. It was true that the first century Church, as a whole, was faithful to Jesus. This allowed for a rapid growth of Christianity in the seventy years following the resurrection of Christ. It is also true that they fought diligently to keep heresy out of the Church. Their leaders, Paul, Peter, John, James and many other apostles and ministers seemingly had to continually teach and preach against those that would bring heretical teachings into their congregations. The Judaizers and the Gnostics were the most prevalent of these false teachers. Yet, as the first century came to a close, the Christian Church was in good standing overall. As was true with the actual church at Ephesus, the fire that was found in the early years of the Church may have cooled some, but the doctrines had been saved from those who would pervert them and the true gospel was still understood and

preached throughout the land. Many Christians were so devoted to their Savior that they gave their lives for Him.

- "To the angel of the church in **Smyrna** write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. Rev. 2:8

Jesus spoke next to the angel of the church in Smyrna.

His Commendation: I know your afflictions and your poverty--yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Rev. 2:9

Jesus had only kind words for this church. This church was about 35 miles north of Ephesus; it was a seaport and wealthy city, just a little smaller than Ephesus. Alexander the Great had given this city its start. The majority of the people in that city had little use for the Christian Church. Instead, they apparently found it to their liking to persecute those Christians that they found. Evidence shows that this congregation endured much persecution yet remained faithful throughout it all. Most in the church were poor as Jesus pointed out. However, because of their faithfulness to the Lord, they were very *rich* indeed! It is not a coincidence that the city still exists today and has a healthy Christian population.

His Condemnation: Jesus has no words of condemnation for this church!

His Recommendation: Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. Rev 2:10

Jesus gave the members of this church words of encouragement. He did let them know that they still have difficult days ahead… many would actually be martyred for their faith and allegiance to Him. One classic example of this is Polycarp, soon to become the bishop of this church. He was boiled in oil and burned at the stake in either A.D. 155 or A.D. 168. However, regardless of the tortuous times that many had to endure, the crown of eternal life that they had coming to them upon their entrance into heaven was certainly worth all of the pain and suffering that they would have to bear. In any and all cases like these on earth, the relative time any Christian must spend as we endure hardship and suffering for Christ's sake, is only a "blink" compared to the coming glory of heaven that awaits the faithful.

No one really knows what Jesus specifically meant when He mentioned that they would suffer persecution for ten days. Maybe one had to be in that city at that time to understand the

exact meaning of that statement. The essence of it, of course, is that they would be experiencing persecution in the future, "even to the point of death".

His Promise: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death. Rev. 2:11

Jesus once again told those who would listen that anyone that would stay true to Jesus, through whatever trial came their way… even trial unto death… would never really die. In fact, they would inherit an eternal life in heaven.

The *second* death will come to Satan, his demons and those who reject Jesus Christ at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. No Christian will ever face this *second* death.

The Church Age (Smyrna): The Persecuted Church – A.D. 100-313

The Church Age represented by the local Smyrna Church is considered to be the Church in existence from the years A.D. 100-313. This is sometimes called the "Persecuted Church". In the same way that the Christian members of the first century church at Smyrna were looked down upon and often terribly persecuted, so was the Christian Church in general from the end of the Apostolic period until the edicts of Constantine. There were several periods of deadly persecution during these two centuries. Emperor Decius attempted to eliminate all Christians during his reign beginning in A.D. 249. Fortunately for the Church, Decius was killed two years after coming to power. His successor, Valerian, was not much better. Between A.D. 303-311, co-emperors Diocletian and Galerius issued a decree that would result in all Christians being killed unless they would sacrifice to pagan gods. Tens of thousands (possibly much more) of Christians were martyred during these various reigns. It was not until Constantine came onto the scene that this period of martyrdom came to an end.

As the church of Smyrna held up so well under terrible persecution, so did the Church as a whole during the time period of A.D. 100-313. Both were very poor, and both endured great persecution. That is, the Christian Church as a whole, during this time period, mirrored the experiences of the local congregation in Smyrna.

- "To the angel of the church in **Pergamum** write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. Rev. 2:12

Jesus next addressed the angel of the church in Pergamum. This city was well known for its worship of pagan idols. Two of the more prominent idols of worship were Bacchus and Asclepius.

His Commendation: I know where you live--where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city--where Satan lives. Rev. 2:13

Jesus noted here that Satan lived and reigned in their city, Pergamum. Given the dominance of idol worship in this city, it certainly was reasonable to state that it was the city where Satan lived. Jesus commended the church for staying true to Him even though they had to endure the slings and arrows of Satan. The people in the church retained their faith in Christ.

His Condemnation: Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. **15** Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Rev. 2:14-15

Even though the church remained true to Christ overall, Jesus was still concerned with the fact that some among them were beginning to fall prey to the heretics who taught pagan worship. Some in the Church congregation had fallen into the practice of sexual immorality and idol worship – one cannot get much worse than that. Also, as opposed to the church at Ephesus, some in this city's church had bought into the teaching of the Nicolaitans… Jesus hated this.

His Recommendation: Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. Rev. 2:16

Jesus then told this church to turn back to Him… that is, He told them to repent! He said that He would soon come and fight against those who were not following Him. He will use the sword of His mouth… the Word of God. Recall that the sword of Jesus is double-edged. It is sharp and easily capable of separating the saved from the lost. By the way, as we shall see, in the 19th Chapter of Revelation, at the end of the Great Tribulation, Jesus will come back to earth to conquer Satan with the sword of His mouth and assume His role as King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Literally, all Jesus has to do to have something (i.e. anything) happen (e.g deliver divine judgment), is to speak… that is what is meant by the power of the sword of His mouth.

His Promise: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a *new* name written on it, known only to him who receives it. Rev. 2:17

Once again, Jesus asked the church to hear the words of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives within each Christian. Jesus noted the utmost importance of listening to the Spirit and learning the lessons He teaches. All Christians should cultivate through prayer and fasting the ability to hear and understand the Spirit of God. What an incredible asset that would be to the

living of our daily lives! Jesus said that He will give the overcoming Christian some of the manna (daily spiritual food needed for living a sound Christian life) only available through Him.

The white stone with a new name written on it is more difficult to interpret. In ancient times, the laying down of a white stone meant an acquittal in a trial. Therefore, most theologians think that this white stone, with a particular Christian's "new name" (bestowed by God) written on it, represents an acquittal from the death sentence that should be due as a result of the sins committed by that person. Instead, Jesus has paid the penalty for the individual in question and God now sees that person as being innocent. It is up to each individual to decide what their relationship will be with Jesus. This decision is always between God and the individual. No one can make that decision for another.

It is certainly comforting to know that Jesus has given an "eternal acquittal" to everyone who believes on Him as their personal Savior.

The Church Age (Pergamum): The "State Church" - A.D. 313-590

During this time period, the Church became more and more a state form of religion rather than a group of devoted people who had a deep personal relationship with their Savior, Jesus. Constantine was the emperor who adopted Christianity as the religion of, and for, Rome. Theologians such as Walvoord and LaHaye suggest that the doctrine of the Church during these centuries remained essentially correct, but the practices of the Church began to become problematic. Unfortunately, as the decades and centuries came and went, more and more of the pagan practices and beliefs began to become a part of the Roman religion. The Bible no longer was the only authority behind the Church. The concept of Church tradition came into being and new changes began to seep into practice. For example, below is taken from a chart in the book *Revelation Unveiled* written by Tim LaHaye:

- A.D. 300 – prayers for the dead began
- A.D. 300 – making the sign of the cross introduced
- A.D. 375 – onset of worship of saints and angels
- A.D. 593 – doctrine of purgatory introduced
- A.D. 600 – prayers directed to Mary, not Jesus
- A.D. 600 – worship services conducted in Latin even if people could not understand

It is interesting to note that Pergamum means *marriage* as the Church appeared to become *married*, so to speak, to Rome during this time period. The Church became much more regimented and much less spiritual during this Church Age. Jesus recommended that the church of Pergamum read and study (i.e. return to) the Word of God… the sword of the mouth of Jesus. Any time people (including the Church as a whole) begin to stray from the true gospel and words of our Lord, it is imperative that they return to a deep and careful study of the Word.

During this time in history, the Church began to stray away from the Bible and its teachings. Their move toward an ecclesiastical hierarchy (in the Catholic Church) was certainly not conducive to a strong spiritual state for its congregations. Obviously, by conducting all

worship services in Latin, regardless of the language of the people, the Word of God was not going to be well learned and practiced.

- "To the angel of the church in **Thyatira** write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. Rev. 2:18

Jesus now moved on to talk to the angel of Thyatira. He repeated the earlier description given concerning His eyes and His feet. The representation of His eyes like "blazing fire" suggests His searching gaze into their hearts to judge their motives. The burnished bronze characterization of His feet points to the judgment that would come to this church if it did not repent…

His Commendation: know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. Rev. 2:19

Once again Jesus commended a church for their good deeds. Apparently, the people of this church had their hearts in the right place. Jesus noted their love, faith, service and perseverance… all wonderful attributes for any congregation. However, all was not going well within that church as pointed out in the next comment by Jesus…

His Condemnation: Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. Rev. 2:20-23

This church was dealing with some serious problems. In particular, there was a woman who had assumed a position of leadership and was leading members far astray of the message of the gospel. People were not being taught to obey the words of Jesus. Instead, this prophetess, Jezebel, was actually teaching them that it was perfectly fine to engage in sexual acts of immorality. Not only that, she was also involved in idol worship, at least to the extent that she condoned the eating of food that had been used in the worship of these pagan idols. Simply put, this church was becoming involved in pagan worship as a normative practice – *the separation between the moral values of the church and the immoral practices of the world had dissolved.*

Jesus was not going to tolerate this situation regardless of how many good deeds the people in the church performed. Remember, it is not by works that people are saved, instead it is

by the grace of God through faith in His Son, Jesus. We are asked to believe the gospel message and to demonstrate our love for Jesus by obeying His Word. We are never to have any other gods before Him. Jesus told us how we can know if we are His disciples when He said…"If you love me, you will obey what I command." John 14:15

Jesus goes on to tell this church that He will pronounce judgment upon them if they continue in their evil ways. If they were to repent, then Jesus would forgive them. If not, Jesus would punish them, each according to their deeds.

His Recommendation: Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who **do not hold to her teaching** and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come. Rev. 2:24-25

In these verses, Jesus gives the remedy for those in that church who want to follow and trust in Him. Do not follow that Jezebel! If a person does follow that heretic, they will end up learning the secrets of Satan's kingdom and follow that evil one into the very pits of hell. Jesus instead says to the members of that church and any similar church that they should hold on tight to the Word of God until either Jesus returns or they go to meet Him upon their passing on into eternity. It is certainly a significant disadvantage to be living in a church or Church Age that is steeped in paganism… however, it is still possible and still necessary to hold on to Jesus and the His teachings.

His Promise: To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations-- 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' -- just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Rev 2:26-29

Jesus finished His comments to the church at Thyatira with a wonderful promise of things to come. If the people held on to Him throughout their life here on earth, one glorious day they will receive their just reward. They will be given a position of power in the future Kingdom of Christ. By the way, this is the first mention of the coming Millennial Kingdom in The Revelation. Just as Jesus has received authority from His Father, the remnant of that church congregation that remained true to Jesus will also receive authority from Jesus. Not only that, but they will also be given "the morning star!" Who is this Morning Star? Jesus will tell us a little later that… "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." Rev 22:16

The Church Age (Thyatira): The Pagan Church - A.D. 590-1517

As has been demonstrated in the discussion of the first three churches that were addressed by Jesus, this church at Thyatira had characteristics that were similar to a future Church Age… the "Pagan Church". As it turned out, during the time period that we now know as the Middle

Ages, the Church reached its highest level of paganism. Its hierarchy sought to combine many of the beliefs of the Church with pagan rituals and philosophy – of course this had to result in a very dark time in the history of the world and the Church. The Church continued the downward track that had begun in the previous age, known as the "State Church". For example, take a look at just some of the rituals that were next added to the church worship services:

- A.D. 709 – kissing the Pope's foot
- A.D. 786 – the worshipping of relics and images
- A.D. 850 – the use of "holy water" began
- A.D. 995 – canonization of dead saints
- A.D. 1074 – priests forbidden to marry
- A.D. 1090 – rosary invented by Peter the Hermit
- A.D. 1123 – celibacy for priests
- A.D. 1232 – the Inquisition begins
- A.D. 1190 – the system of indulgences was initiated
- A.D. 1215 – transubstantiation
- A.D. 1229 – Bible forbidden to laypeople
- A.D. 1414 – Cup (wine turned to blood of Christ) forbidden to laypeople
- A.D. 1439 – Purgatory becomes official Church dogma
- A.D. 1546 – Tradition granted equal authority with the Bible
- A.D. 1546 - Apocrypha added to the Bible
- A.D. 1854 - Immaculate conception of Mary
- A.D. 1870 – Pope declared infallible on certain matters
- A.D. 1950 – Assumption of Virgin Mary
- A.D. 1965 – Mary proclaimed Mother of the Church

This is just a sampling of the many additions that the Church of Rome has added to the teachings of Christ and the apostles. As is obvious from the dates noted above, the period of time during which these changes were made extended beyond the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. However, in general, there is no doubt that the Church had its largest foray into paganism during the Middle Ages. With the coming of the Reformation, changes for the better were to begin. This will be seen as we review the comments made by Jesus to the next two churches.

SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION
THRACE
MACEDONIA
Philippi
Neapolis
Byzantum/
Constantinopolis
Amphipolis
Pella
Thessalonica
Berea
Samothrace
Nicomedia
Nicaea
Imbros
Troas
MYSIA
Lemnos
Assos
Larissa
Demetrias
Adramyttium
Lesbos
Pergamum
ASIA
Mytilene
Thyatira
GALATIA
Sardis
Caesarea
Chios
LYDIA
Smyrna
Philadelphia
Antioch
Iconium
CAPPADOCIA
Corinth
Athens
Samos
Ephesus
Hierapolis
Laodicea
Olympia
Argos
ACHAIA
Colossae
Lystra
Derbe
Miletus
Patmos
Halicarnassus
Attalia
Perga
Sparta
Cnidus
LYCIA
Tarsus
Antioch
Seleucia
Pieria
Patara
Myra
Rhodes
Salmone
CRETE
Phoenix
Fair
Havens
Lasea
CYPRUS
Salamis
Paphos
SYRIA
Sidon
Damascus
Tyre
Ptolemais
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
NABATEA
Caesarea
2-28-04
www.Biblenews1.com
Jerusalem
JUDEA
0
100
200
300Miles
0
180
360
Km
Alexandria

BLACK SEA
ADRIATIC
SEA
PONTUS
Rome
THRACE
Byzantium
BITHYNIA
MACEDONIA
Phillipi
GALACIA
Thessalonica
Puteoli
Pergamum
Thyatira
CAPPADOCIA
AEGEAN
SEA
Iconium
Sardis
GILICIA
Tarsus
Philadelphia
Laodicea
SICILY
Ephesus
Rhegium
Corinth
Athens
Cnidus
Seleucia
Antioch
SYRIA
Syracus
Rhodes
CYPRESS
CRETE
RHODES
Damascus
MALTA
Fair Havens
Salmone
Sidon
Tyre
PHOENECIA
Lasea
Capernaum
Cauda
Caesarea
Jerusalem
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Bethlehem
Alexandria
CYRENAICA
SINAI
THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF
THE BOOK OF REVELATION
Rev. 2-3
Memphis
SYRTIS
EGYPT

- "And to the angel of the church in **Sardis** write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars:

Jesus then spoke to the church in Sardis. He reminded them in this introduction of His unity with the Holy Spirit ("He who has the seven spirits") and the fact that He was the leader of the angels of all of the seven churches… for that matter, He was the head of the entire Christian Church.

Sardis was the capital city of Lydia in Asia-Minor. It was a wealthy city during that time, known for its carpet industry. In addition to the Christian Church, this city also engaged in a lot of pagan worship. Their most famous pagan structure was built by Alexander the Great. Alexander actually re-built a temple first constructed approximately 300 years earlier by King Kroisos of Lydia. During the late first century, this temple, built to honor the Greek goddess Artemis, was large and impressive.

His Commendation: "I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive. Rev 3:1

Jesus noted that He was aware of their accomplishments. He also pointed out that they had done some things worthy of their Master… and they were obviously still in existence (i.e. alive). However, overall, He was very disappointed in them…

His Condemnation: but **you are dead**. [2] …… for I have not found your works perfect (i.e. complete) before God. Rev. 3:1-2

Jesus got right to His point which was that although this church did do some worthwhile things and did have a basic understanding of the gospel, they were actually "*dead*"! Of course, this indictment from Jesus is very severe. What does He mean by saying that they were dead?

This church was basically just going through the motions. They had lost the desire to live with the help of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This church had lost its spirituality.

His Recommendation: Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die…… Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. Rev. 3:2,3

Jesus warned them to think back to a previous time when they knew what it meant to live for Christ using the power of the Holy Spirit. They needed to get back to prayer, Bible study, witnessing and teaching others, worshipping, fasting, etc. All of these important aspects of living a victorious Christian life had been forgotten by this congregation. Jesus exhorted them to remember what it meant to be a spirit-filled Christian, then repent of their recent sinful lives and return to their true love, Jesus Christ.

His Promise: You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. [5] He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. [6] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' Rev 3:4-6

It is interesting to note that Jesus alluded to just how far this church had sunk when He mentioned that "even in Sardis" there were still a *few* who were worthy Christians… but only a few. Jesus promised those that did *overcome* (and there will be some) would walk with Him in white. These overcomers will one day be dressed in the white clothes symbolic of purity. Since they will have received Jesus as their Savior, they will be looked upon as pure by God. Jesus will be their intermediary. He will confess their name before His Father. They will be judged as worthy to be co-heirs with Jesus through all of eternity. Jesus concluded by telling everyone there in Sardis to "listen up" and hear what He was telling them… and repent!

The Church Age (Sardis): The "Reformed" Church – (A.D. 1517-1750)

The Church Age that is likened to the church at Sardis is the "Reformed" Church. Of course, Jesus said that this church was a "dead" church. At first, it seemed odd to me that so many theologians would suggest that the Church coming out of the Protestant Reformation was "dead"… but many do. Here is their reasoning. On Oct. 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his famous *95 theses* on the door of the Catholic Church in Wittenberg, Germany. This began the Reformation. The logic behind Luther's protestations was excellent… individuals are saved by faith, and faith alone. Jesus Christ paid the total penalty for Christian souls when He sacrificed Himself on the cross so many years ago. Unfortunately, this fact had been lost to a great degree as so much in the way of "good works" had been added as a requirement for salvation by the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy over the centuries. This proclamation by Luther was therefore of excellent long term value. All of that is true and a great advancement for the Church of Jesus Christ.

However, in the years that directly followed, the result of this divide between the Catholic and Protestant Church caused many other problems. For example, there were many differing Protestant sects that developed… each with their own separate belief system. Although it was great that the Protestant groups allowed, encouraged, and helped with the dissemination of the Scriptures, the controversy that developed between all of the differing religions led to a lessening of spirituality in the Church. The Reformers had removed much of the doctrinal errors and rituals from the Church… which was very good… but, they had failed to bring back the power of the Holy Spirit into the Christian Church. There was virtually no spiritual life during this time of the Church. This was about to change…

- "And to the angel of the church in **Philadelphia** write, 'These things says **He who is holy**, He who is **true,** "He who **has the key of David**, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens": Rev 3:7

Philadelphia is located about twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis. As most probably know, the name means "brotherly love". It remained a city with a significant Christian presence until it was conquered by the Turks near the close of the Middle Ages. Certainly, Jesus was impressed with their service and dedication at the time of this letter.

It is interesting to see that Jesus points out to this church that He is Holy and True. Of course, the characteristics of holiness and truth are essential to the Lord Jesus. Many times He is described via the use of these terms:

"I am the way and the **truth** and the life. John 14:6

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the **Holy One of God**." John 6:68-69

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and **True**. Rev 19:11

He is the One who has the key of David. He is the One who opens… the door. Jesus alone has the control over this "door"…

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. **8** All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. **9** I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. John 10:7-9

I will place on his shoulder the **key to the house of David**; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. Isaiah 22:22

On the other hand, some theologians suggest that this refers to the fact that Jesus alone has the keys to the Kingdom (as well as the key to salvation). If this is the case, He is alluding here to the open door of evangelization of His truth and the gospel message. This meaning is suggested by the next paragraph…

His Commendation: I know your works. See, **I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it**; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Rev 3:8

Christ told them that He was aware of their works… as He told all of the churches (He is omniscient and knows everything about every church and individual). Jesus commended this church for their faithfulness to Him and to His word. They had been true to Him and not been adversely influenced by the world. They were not getting involved in pagan rituals and immoral activities. They had not forgotten their first love, Jesus Christ.

Importantly, Jesus told them that He had set an open door before them. No one could shut it. Jesus wanted them to use their strength and faith in Him to walk through that door and evangelize the Roman world. The city was an important gateway to the eastern portion of the Roman Empire. They had plenty of opportunity for missionary work. Importantly, the people in this church had taken advantage of their opportunities to reach others for Christ, and their good works were noted by Jesus.

It was excellent that Jesus did not have any **condemnation** for this church.

His Recommendation: Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. Rev 3:11

Jesus also told these folks that if they continued doing what they were currently doing, worshipping Jesus in spirit and truth, obeying His Word, and evangelizing the world, that they would one day enter heaven and receive their just reward.

His Promise: [9] Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie--indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. [10] **Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.** [11] **Behold, I am coming quickly!** Rev 3:8-10

Jesus assured this congregation of believers that He would protect them from the forces of Satan. In fact, He would make those involved in the practice of any of the various false religions of that day acknowledge this church and the fact that they were loved and appreciated by their Savior. In this local church and many others by the end of the first century, many Jews had become quite disrespectful of the Christians. Although all of the Church leaders in the Apostolic era were Jews, by the next generation (and the one following), most Jews had become enemies of the Church, unfortunately. These Jews had come to reject Jesus. Of course, this situation exists to this day, although now most Jewish people seem to simply not recognize Jesus as the Messiah… they do not seem to have any particular animosity toward Him.

Because this church had been so faithful in their obedience to Jesus… always persevering regardless the cost, Jesus promised that He would keep them from the "hour of trial" that shall come upon the whole earth. This must be an allusion to the Tribulation. There is no other trial that matches His description. This church of Philadelphia is one of the better examples of how these letters to the seven churches may well also refer to certain Church Ages… not just the individual first century church. Jesus said that He would keep the Philadelphia Church from the "hour of trial". Well, the hour of trial is yet to come but, of course, that first century church is long gone. However, when this "trial" does come, the people represented by the Philadelphia "Church Age" will have just been raptured up to meet Jesus in the air. So therefore, Jesus will indeed keep them from experiencing the "hour of trial"… i.e. the Tribulation to come.

Jesus followed that statement with the comment that He would come quickly. The fact is that Jesus will indeed come quickly… He will come to rapture His saints as noted above.

The Promise Continued: He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. [13] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' Rev 3:12-13

Jesus told the Philadelphia Church that all who persevered (i.e. overcome) would one day enter heaven and that Jesus, Himself, will claim them for His own. The New Jerusalem will appear out of the heavens after the completion of the Millennial Kingdom. It is at that time that all Christians will have Jesus inscribe onto them in some manner His "new name" that will identify each and every Christian with Christ forevermore.

The Church Age: (Philadelphia): Missionary Church (A.D. 1750-present day)

The Church Age that has been associated with the church at Philadelphia is referred to as the Missionary Church and came on the world scene in the mid-eighteenth century and has continued up until the present time. In particular, this church is characterized by their missionary and evangelistic zeal. Some examples include William Carey in India in the late 18th century, David Livingstone, Adoniram Judson (missionary to Burma), Billy Graham, Billy Sunday, and thousands of current missionaries to China, Africa, South America, and virtually every other nation on the face of the earth…if not every nation in the world at this time. It is true that the gospel is available in some fashion (ex. television, radio, missionary, Internet, etc.) in every nation on the face of the earth even now! Over the last 250 years, there has been a renewed emphasis in the Evangelical Church to follow the commandment of Jesus to take His message to the ends of the earth.

- "And to the angel of the church of the **Laodiceans** write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: Rev 3:14

This church in the city of Laodicea was the seventh and final church that Jesus addressed here in the early portion of His vision given to John. This wealthy city was the last in the circuit that began at Ephesus. It was located about forty miles east of Ephesus. Very little is known of this church from the early Church Fathers as it apparently had little influence upon the spread of Christianity.

Jesus did not have any **commendation** for this church. It had the distinction of being the only church that He apparently was unable to find any compliment to share with them. Obviously, this was not a good beginning to His comments to the Laodiceans.

His Condemnation: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. [16] So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. [17] Because **you say, 'I am rich,** have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—
Rev 3:15-17

The basic problem with this church was that it just seemed to "exist". It had no passion at all for Christ and His message. They apparently just went through the motions when it came to their Christian service. If they were "cold" to Jesus, it still would be very possible that by gaining knowledge of the truth about Him, they might then turn to Him for salvation… such as was the case with Saul… who became Paul. Of course, it they were already "hot" (i.e. "on fire") for Jesus, the situation would obviously be even much better!

However, this church was made up of wealthy individuals who apparently became involved in various church meetings and socials, organizations and meetings, etc. Materially, they were a wealthy congregation. They even boasted of this fact. What was certainly missing, however, was the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. Without the influence and power given by the Holy Spirit of God, no church can do anything of value. They really did not let Jesus into their lives. They are like so many of the people of the United States today who claim to be Christian but really do not even know what that term means. They typically think that it means that they were born in this country and look at the Bible as being a fine book. They would have no idea what Jesus means by being "born again". Their works, to paraphrase the Bible itself, would be as "filthy rags" (from Isaiah 64:6). In this, the only important sense of true wealth, this church was destitute... i.e. wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.

His Recommendation: I counsel you to buy from Me **gold refined in the fire**, that you may be rich; and **white garments**, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and **anoint your eyes with eye salve**, that you may see. [19] As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Rev 3:18-19

Jesus did give this church some much needed advice. It certainly was in need of it. Since this church does represent one aspect of the present day Church, His words are meant for many in the *apostate church of our day*. Jesus told the Laodicean church that they needed to reject trying to find worth in their financial and material wealth… it cannot ever be found there. Instead, He told them to "purchase" refined gold from Him, also white garments to cover their nakedness and eye salve to anoint their eyes as they were spiritually blind. All of these things represent what is available through **gifts from the Holy Spirit of God**. By repenting… by

turning their lives over completely to Jesus, they would save themselves from eternal damnation. Jesus told them that He was chastising them because He loved them! Hopefully, this would result in their repentance.

His Promise: Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. [21] To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. [22] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Rev 3:20-22

Jesus finished His comments to this church with a simple, but wonderful, promise. If they would only repent, and ask Him to come into their lives, He would come in and become a part of their lives. All that was missing was their asking. From time immemorial, the Trinity had determined to give mankind the freewill to make that terribly important decision. Free will was at play. No man or woman is a robot. However, if anyone does answer the knock by Jesus at the door of his/her heart, He will not only come in and save them from that moment on, but He promises them a heavenly home one day with Him and His Father. What a wonderful promise from our Lord. Remember also that this promise was given to a church in very bad spiritual condition… it is never too late to repent and turn to Jesus… as long as one feels the pull of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Church Age: (Laodicea): Apostate Church (A.D. 1900-Present)

It is certainly true that there is a large portion of the modern day Church that is filled with the Holy Spirit and has excellent missionary zeal, i.e. the church of Philadelphia. Unfortunately, there is also a significant portion of the Church that has turned away from true worship in spirit and truth. This might be referred to as the Apostate Church… and it is found in the age in which we currently live. In the same way that the first century Laodicean Church was primarily interested in their material possessions, many of the churches in recent times have turned away from Jesus and toward a "lukewarm" sort of church as well.

They typically are very rich churches with wealthy preachers, gorgeous buildings, thousands in the congregation, a "feel good" message each and every Sunday, promises of wealth and health to everyone who follows a certain formula of worship or prayer and very charismatic, if not very theologically informed, preachers. Typically, this Laodicean modern church also just wants to "get along" with pretty much every other religion and belief system. Therefore, many will not spend much if any time at all preaching the true gospel message and the necessity of following Jesus. That might offend someone. This kind of church is "lukewarm" to use the words of Jesus. Jesus wants everyone to know and understand verses such as John 3:16 and John 14:6 ("I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.)

Although it is true that many of these churches have large local congregations, it is the "Philadelphia type" missionary church that has spread the gospel around the world at such an incredible pace over these last fifty years. Unfortunately, some of our larger churches today are

in danger of being far too self-sufficient. Many are materially very wealthy but spiritually very destitute. Jesus commanded us to worship Him in spirit and truth. All Christians and Churches must take this command to heart!

Seven Churches of Revelation

Ephesus: The First Century Church A.D. 33-100
Smyrna: The Persecuted Church – A.D. 100-313
Pergamus: The "State Church" - A.D. 313-590
Thyatira: The Pagan Church - A.D. 590-1517
Sardis: The "Reformed" Church – (A.D. 1517-1750
Philadelphia: Missionary Church (A.D. 1750-present day)
Laodicea: Apostate Church (A.D. 1900-Present)

Summary: (Chapters 1-3)

The Apostle John was given an incredible vision by the Lord Jesus while living on the Isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea just off the southwest coast of Asia Minor. He had been banished there in ~ A.D. 96 by the Emperor of Rome, Domitian. Jesus sent "his angel" to show John certain events, some present, and some to come. John was reminded of the true identity of Jesus, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." He was also reminded that Jesus would be coming back in the clouds one day and everyone would recognize Him, including those that had once pierced Him.

Then Jesus appeared to John in all of His heavenly majesty. John was so amazed at this encounter with Christ that he immediately dropped to the feet of Jesus as if he had suddenly fallen down dead. Jesus quickly calmed and reassured him and then and told him to carefully write down "what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later." The first portion of the vision would be concerning seven churches in the area. Jesus told John to "write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." As we have just discussed, the things that Jesus told John about each of these churches have application to the actual churches of that day, to the Church Ages over the last two thousand years, and to each individual Christian. In other words, Jesus had a word of encouragement and correction for all of these entities through what He told His apostle friend, John. John was then shown much, much more about what was to come. The next nineteen chapters will go into detail concerning these things.

John is next given a vision of the Tribulation:

Before continuing on with this commentary on The Revelation, certain terms and events that will soon be introduced (when writing about John's incredible vision from Jesus) will be explained in some reasonable detail in the paragraphs that follow. A good working knowledge of these things will help immeasurably in the understanding of the concepts broached during the remainder of John's unique, apocalyptic book.

As has been explained previously, there are very bright and outstandingly committed Christians who have a different opinion about the order of events that will follow. However, since so many reasons why so many prophecy teachers believe in the premillennial, pretribulation Rapture of the Church have already been explained in Section 2, only that viewpoint will be specifically outlined in the paragraphs that follow. Obviously, the premillennial, pretribulation Rapture of the Church is the eschatological viewpoint that I hold.

However, where appropriate, effort will be made to show how the events of the end-times would differ if it should turn out that those with the pre-wrath, mid-trib, or post-trib point of view are correct. In the concluding paragraphs, a brief mention of how the classic amillennial conception of the Kingdom would alter end-time events also will be presented. Although some think that it is a travesty for anyone to carry a point of view different than their own, this is certainly not true. In fact, it is sad when any Christian gets all heated up on non-essential matters such as these.

Of course, there are some principles that a Christian should never compromise. All Christians should clearly know what it means to be a follower of Christ (e.g. John 3:16, 14:6)… the gospel message is what is truly important, and what unites His children. On the other hand, literally millions of strong Christian people disagree on these various methods of interpretation of end-time events (e.g. the meaning of the Millennial Kingdom, just who or what is meant by "Israel" in New Testament times, etc.). However, the basic understanding of what becomes of people after death does remain the same in every reasonable end-times scenario of which I am aware:

- All people are saved by faith in Jesus Christ,
- Jesus is coming again someday,
- He will set up His Kingdom when He comes (be it the New Heaven and New Earth right away or the Millennial Kingdom followed by the New Heaven and New Earth).

The variable details are indeed interesting and important, but not crucial. Now, let me begin by briefly defining, once again, the Rapture of the Church.

The Rapture of the Church: As much time has already been spent on this topic in Section 2, only a brief review of this wonderful event will be undertaken here. Recall that at some point in the future, Jesus will come to "catch away" His Bride, the Church. Jesus will not actually come to rest on the earth at that time. Instead, He will meet up with His Church *"in the air"*…

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. **14** We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. **15** According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. **16** For **the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, *we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air***. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thess 4:13-17

We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- **52** in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. **53** For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 1 Cor 15:51-53

Note that these verses do not mention that Jesus came back onto the earth… yet. This is an important point in the pretribulation view of the Rapture. In fact, they say that Jesus will come back to meet up with His saints in the clouds. The clouds have often been used to signify the presence of God:

By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of **cloud** to guide them on their way. Ex 13:21.
While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the **cloud**. The LORD said to Moses. Ex 16:10-11
After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a **cloud** hid him from their sight. Acts 1:9 There are multiple other examples.

One other major difference in the Rapture vs. the Second Coming is that the Rapture can happen at any moment… even now. That is not true of the Second Coming… certain events, such as the appearance of the Antichrist, will take place prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Therefore, the Rapture is not viewed as the same event as the Second Coming of Jesus. Seven years after this Rapture, Jesus will come back again to the earth. More will be said on this topic later.

With the Church suddenly disappearing from planet earth, there obviously will be an incredible upheaval of certain nations and societies on the earth… especially, the people of the United States (as there are so many Christians in this nation). The sudden loss of millions of productive people from many nations of the earth will create a terrible worldwide panic. Very likely, there will be a sudden economic crash in the United States. Many lives will be lost simply because of the sudden disappearance of critical people (such as, doctors, pilots, bus drivers, police officers, fire fighters, soldiers, etc.). It would be difficult to describe just how devastating this event will be on this nation. As will also be discussed below, there will also be world-wide problems involving war, as usual. The Middle East will finally boil over.

It is into a situation just like this that a charismatic master of deceit will enter… the Antichrist. In fact, very soon after the Rapture, the Antichrist will be the architect of a peace treaty with Israel that will usher in the seven year Tribulation. More on these concepts will follow.

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ: During the seven years of the Tribulation, God will pour out His wrath upon the unrepentant sinners on the earth. This will clearly be outlined in John's vision. One of the very important purposes of this period of time will be to convince the people of Israel, the Jews, that they need Jesus in their lives. Many of the "chosen people" will turn back to God, i.e. turn and accept Jesus during this time. Jesus will be recognized as the true Messiah… finally. Israel will confess their sin of rejecting Jesus on His first coming and plead for His return. Jesus will return in glory and triumph as the Tribulation draws to a close. Jesus will come back to defeat Satan and His minions (i.e. the Antichrist, the False Prophet, demons, and unrepentant mankind). Jesus will lead His saints to victory in the famous Battle of Armageddon. Then, the Millennial Kingdom will be ushered in by Christ.

He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. **14** **The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean**. **15** **Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations**. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. **16** On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Rev 19:13-16

May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father **when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones**. 1 Thess 3:13

God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you **7** and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. **This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.** 2 Thess 1:6-8

Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. 4 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. Zech 14:3-4

There are at least twenty verses (like the ones above) that describe the actual Second Coming of Jesus back to the earth where He will promptly defeat Satan and set up His Millennial Kingdom. They point out obvious differences between this Second Coming and the Rapture. For example, as noted in an earlier section, in the Second Coming:

- Jesus will return with His saints – not to gather them to Him
- He will come to defeat His enemies
- He will come to judge the inhabitants of the earth

- Every eye will see Him
- There will be many signs of this coming
- He will set up His Kingdom at that time
- There are several other differences that can be listed… refer back to Section 2 for a more complete listing

The Tribulation: Sixteen of the final nineteen chapters (i.e. Chap. 4-19) are related to the final seven year Tribulation that God will bring to pass onto the earth. Jesus spoke of this time when He gave His Olivet Discourse. He said that His Second Coming would occur at the conclusion of this very difficult time. "Immediately after the distress of those days
"'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. **31** And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. Matt 24:29-31

A great deal of the Bible speaks about this Tribulation. In fact, Tim LaHaye noted that it is mentioned at least 49 times by Old Testament prophets and at least 15 times in the New Testament. As we shall be seeing, God devoted virtually an entire book of His Bible to this subject matter. The Apostle John wrote all about this time period in the last book of the Bible, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. In other words, it certainly would appear that God wants everyone of His saints to understand what this time will be all about. That will be the goal of the remainder of this treatise.

So, what is the purpose of the Tribulation? Actually, there are several. For one thing, it is the time that God will use to bring the current order of things to an end. "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, **to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.** Dan 9:24

God will also bring an end to the "time of the Gentiles."
For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. **24** And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. **And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled**. Luke 21:23-24

God will once again turn His attention specifically to Israel. He will use this tribulation period to bring a large remnant of the nation of Israel back into a saving relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus. One other aspect of this period is for God to deliver judgment to unrepentant sinners. He will do this in a powerful and destructive manner. A third reason will be to fulfill the promises to Israel. Many of the promises God has made to the people of Israel have yet to be fulfilled. God will honor and fulfill these covenants during the Tribulation and/or the period that follows--- the Millennium. One more reason will be to provide mankind with one

last jolt to have sinful people consider once again whether they want to turn to Jesus as Lord and Savior… or give their allegiance to the Antichrist (i.e. Satan).

One may ask, "Where does the Bible say this period will last for seven years?"

Then he (the Antichrist) shall confirm a covenant with many for ***one week*** (seven years); But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate." Dan 9:27

What follows are just a few more verses that describe some of the aspects of the Tribulation…

The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey his command. **The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful**. Who can endure it? Joel 2:11

"The great day of the LORD is near-- near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the LORD will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. **15 That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, 16 a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. 17 I will bring distress on the people and they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD.** Their blood will be poured out like dust and their entrails like filth. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's wrath. In the fire of his jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth." Zeph 1:14-18

"But from thence ye shall seek Jehovah thy God, and thou shalt find him, when thou searchest after him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in **tribulation**, and all these things are come upon thee**, in the latter days thou shalt return to Jehovah thy God, and hearken unto his voice.**" Deut 4:29-30 (Here is a prophecy showing that God will use this time to bring a remnant of Israel back to Him. There are many others).

Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is **the time of Jacob's trouble**, But he shall be saved out of it. 8 'For it shall come to pass in that day,' Says the LORD of hosts, 'That I will break his yoke from your neck, And will burst your bonds; Foreigners shall no more enslave them. 9 **But they shall serve the LORD their God, And David their king, Whom I will raise up for them.** 10 'Therefore **do not fear, O My servant Jacob,' says the LORD, 'Nor be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar**, **And your seed from the land of their captivity**. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, And no one shall make him afraid. 11 For **I am with you,' says the LORD, 'to save you**; Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, Yet I will not make a complete end of you. **But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished.' 'You shall be My people, And I will be your God**.' " 23 Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD Goes forth with fury, A continuing whirlwind; It will fall violently on the head of the wicked. 24 The fierce anger of the LORD will

not return until He has done it, And until He has performed the intents of His heart. In the latter days you will consider it. Jer 30:7-11,22-24 (Once again, God tells the reader that He will bring Israel back into His fold.. during the time of *Jacob's trouble*).
For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. [22] And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. Matt 24:21-22

So, we see that there will be a period of seven years of Tribulation that will follow right after the Antichrist has brokered a treaty with Israel. God will use this to accomplish His purposes… as He providentially uses all events of mankind. This time of Tribulation will come soon after the Rapture although the exact amount of time between the Rapture and the treaty signing is not given. The actual events of this Tribulation will be described in detail in the commentary on the remaining chapters in The Revelation.

The various wars during the end-times:

- **Ezekiel 38-39:** This war has already been discussed in fairly significant detail in Section 3 of this treatise. It will be a war that may well arise at the onset of the Tribulation, or soon thereafter. Russia and Iran will lead the enemy contingent of nations against Israel. God will intervene to bring a glorious victory to Israel… and it will be obvious to all that God was at the controls. Over 80% of the enemy Russian forces will die. This war will be one of the major reasons that many in Israel will return in faith to the Lord. Hal Lindsey believes that this war will come near the mid-point of the Tribulation. Israel will be living in supposed "peace and safety" after signing the treaty brokered by the Antichrist to begin this seven year period of judgment. This treaty very likely will come after Israel has defeated the many Arab and Palestinian forces as outlined in the Psalm 83 war.
- **Psalm 83:** Joel Rosenburg and Hal Lindsey are both fairly convinced that the nations mentioned in this book of the Old Testament will come against Israel as a prelude to the larger "Ezekiel war" (above) that will follow it within a few years. Both note that the recent events in Egypt and surrounding nations are setting the scene very nicely for this war to occur. It may not be long before one or more of these nations are ready to attack Israel. Remember, however, they will not prevail, as God is supernaturally protecting Israel at this time. A complete listing of the involved nations can be found in the 83rd Psalm and earlier in this treatise.

  Hal Lindsey and Perry Stone suggest that Syria may be a participant in this war… joining with those nations listed in this Psalm. They get this idea from Isaiah 17 (which speaks of the destruction of Damascus) and the known fact that Syria is certainly an enemy of Israel, one that likely has nuclear capabilities. This war may well involve nuclear weapons. Many prophecy teachers think that this war will just precede the Rapture of the Church.

- **Babylon:** This war will come near the conclusion of the seven year Tribulation. Babylon will have been rebuilt once again to a great city of note. It will be the economic capital of the Antichrist. However, this fact will be responsible for the destruction that God will bring upon this city as He crushes it completely and forever, never to be rebuilt again.
- **Armageddon:** This, of course, is the infamous last battle of the Tribulation. It will be the greatest war ever seen. Massive numbers of people and nations will come against Israel, especially their capital city of Jerusalem. The battlefield will be amazingly large. It will stretch from the plains of Megiddo in the north to Edom in the south, a distance of approximately 200 miles. Armies will come from every direction: north, south, east and west. Just prior to their inglorious defeat at the hands of the satanically controlled Antichrist, Israel and all those who have turned to faith in the true Messiah will rally as Jesus and His saints suddenly arrive from heaven to quickly and easily defeat the enemy forces. This victory will usher in the Millennial Kingdom.
- **Final War:** As the Millennium draws to a close, God will allow Satan one last opportunity to roam freely on the earth… and to attempt to influence people to follow him instead of the Lord Jesus. Some people will choose this terrible path. Satan will himself lead these unfortunate souls against the forces of God and promptly be crushed. This will result in the total and final defeat of Satan and his cohorts (demons and unrepentant humans). They will be thrown into the depths of hell. Those people who followed him will first face the Great White Throne Judgment. All will be found guilty and all will face an eternity in hell. However, there will be levels of punishment and these will be revealed at this time.

The Antichrist: The Antichrist will come onto the scene only when the world is about to enter into the tribulation period of time. Of course, as he most certainly will be an erudite, charismatic individual with great powers of persuasion, it is safe to assume that he will be an adult. It is also safe to deduce from the biblical text that this Antichrist will be a man. His ultimate goal will literally be to become king of the world. He will actually be able to accomplish this feat, but only with supernatural help from the devil. This will be outlined in the commentary on The Revelation, soon to continue.

Much of what is known about this evil person is gleaned from reading Daniel 7, 9, and 11. Of course, his end-time actions and ultimate fate are revealed in Revelation. Most prophecy scholars who take a premillennial, pretribulation view of eschatology, as is taken here, believe that this man will make himself known very soon after the Rapture of the Church. The world will be in an uproar after that event as so many people will have disappeared from the earth. Life, as they say, will go on, but there will be a need for a great leader to help the people deal with the aftermath of the Rapture. Later on, a possible scenario of the early years of the Tribulation will be given; a suggestion will be made as to how this evil man will use a confluence of world events to become *the* leader on the world scene.

It is interesting that a brief synopsis of the entire seven year earthly career of the Antichrist is given in the seventh chapter of Daniel. Although the Bible states that He will come out of the revived Roman Empire, it never does say what his nationality will be. Most prophecy students believe that he will be a Gentile as he will be leading a large collection of Gentile nations. Others think that he will be a false messiah. For that reason, they believe that he will be of Jewish descent. Of course, for the Jews to believe that he is their long awaited messiah, he would have to be Jewish. In other words, his heritage is a debatable issue. In any case, He will come onto the scene just before the beginning of the Tribulation. He will rise to great power by the mid-point, dominate the whole world for most of the next 3 ½ years. He will blaspheme God and make his own laws, contrary to those set down by God. However, this untenable situation will not last very long as he will be soundly defeated at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation by the "Most High". Note how this was seen and written by Daniel:

"Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed, and trampled down the remainder with its feet, and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head, and **the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell**, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts, and which was larger in appearance than its associates. "I kept looking, **and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One**, and **the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.** Dan. 7:19-22

Daniel then interprets this portion of his dream…"Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms, and it will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it._'As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings._'And **he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One**, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; **and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time** (3 ½ years)**.** 'But the court will sit for judgment, and **his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever**. 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all **the kingdoms** under the whole heaven **will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One**; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.' Dan. 7:23-28

The same story is told later, in Chapter 8, by the prophet Daniel…
"In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. **24 He will become very strong, but not by his own power** (it will be power given to him from Satan). He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. **25** He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, **he will destroy many**

and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power (Jesus will come and defeat the Antichrist and Satan at the end of the seven years). Dan 8:23-25

A couple of important verses in Daniel 9 show that the Antichrist will confirm a treaty with Israel. This will herald the beginning of the Tribulation. Also, these verses show that the Temple must be rebuilt at some time prior to the mid-point of the seven year Tribulation as it will be desecrated by this evil leader…

"Know and understand this: **From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens**.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. **26** After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. **27** **He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven**.' **In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation,** until the end that is decreed is poured out on him". Dan 9:25-27

The Antichrist will actually claim to be God as he makes the Temple of God his own. He will be a very powerful and evil dictator during the final years of the Great Tribulation…

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that **he takes his seat in the temple of God,** displaying himself as being God He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, **proclaiming himself to be God.** 2 Thess 2:3-4

"Therefore when you see the **abomination of desolation** which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. Matt 24:15-18

Many other details concerning the Antichrist and his activities will be discussed as he is presented in the pages of The Revelation.

The False Prophet: This man will come on the scene during the Tribulation as the religious leader that will exhort people to worship the Antichrist as God. He will be able to perform miracles that will certainly help him to deceive the people into following the Antichrist. As shall also be shown, he will be the individual in charge of forcing all people to take the mark of the beast onto their forehead or right hand… or suffer terrible physical consequences, including death. He could be looked at as the "right-hand man" of the Antichrist.

Judgments of God:

- **Bema Judgment:** The heavenly saints will one day stand before Jesus Christ (as will all people) to face a judgment. Their judgment will not have anything to do with salvation as that will have been determined earlier, immediately upon their acceptance of Jesus into their lives as Lord and Savior. However, they will have their works judged and they will also be eligible to receive rewards based on how they lived their lives while on earth.
- **The Resurrection and Judgment of the Tribulation Saints:** The people who become believers during the seven year Tribulation, and are then are subsequently martyred, will be given their resurrection bodies immediately after the Great Tribulation. The Apostle John is shown the time of the resurrection of those people, Jew and Gentile… I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Rev 20:4
- **The Resurrection and Judgment of the Old Testament Saints:** Almost all modern day pretribulationists believe that the Old Testament saints will also be raised and judged soon after the Second Coming of Christ. They base this on the fact that although these men and women are saved by the grace and sacrifice of Jesus, they are not technically members of the Church (which began at Pentecost). Also, verses such as Daniel 12:1-2 suggest this posttribulation time of resurrection as well:
  "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered. **2** Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life… Dan 12:1-2

  On the other hand, earlier stalwarts of the faith, such as Darby and Schofield, believed that these saints would be raptured with the Church. They felt that Christ died for them just as much as He did for the Church. Therefore, these men suggest, the Old Testament saints will be raised during the Rapture of the Church. Of course, only God knows the answer to this question, for certain.
- **The Judgment of the Sheep and Goats**: At the conclusion of the Tribulation, there will still be a certain number of Christians and unrepentant sinners alive. Jesus will gather them to a judgment to separate those who will enter into the Millennial Kingdom from those who He will banish to an everlasting hell. This is written about by Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46. The essence of this portion of Jesus' sermon is that those "nations" (i.e. people around the world, very possibly exclusively Gentiles) who have been a blessing to the people of God (some say these are the Jewish "brothers" who have accepted Christ during the Tribulation, others believe this is reference to any and all "brothers" of Christ) will be separated out from those who have treated God's children badly. Jesus began to explain this as follows…

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. **32** All the nations will be gathered before him, and **he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats**. **33** **He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.** Matt 25:31-33

Jesus went on to explain that those sheep (who were now separated out on His right) had helped Him out many times over the course of their life down here on earth. These people were puzzled as they did not recall helping Jesus in the past. That is when Jesus replied…

The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the **least of these brothers of mine,** you did for me.' Matt 25:40

In an analogous fashion, Jesus reprimanded those on His left (the goats) for not helping "the least of these" people, (i.e. those in need). Their fate was then spelled out…

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' Matt 25:41

It is very important to understand that all the sheep in this anecdote by Jesus are faithful followers of Him… they are saved by their faith in Him. All of the goats have rejected Jesus and their actions demonstrate this fact. No one will enter heaven because of their good works. However, as James points out so clearly in his epistle, a true saving faith will always result in good works.

John Walvoord believes that there is a similar judgment, yet separate, for the Jewish people who survive the Tribulation. Those who are believers will assume their rightful position in the Kingdom. Those that are still unrepentant sinners will not be allowed to enter into the Kingdom. They will face the Great White Throne Judgment at the conclusion of the Millennium.

- **Great White Throne Judgment:** At the end of the Millennial Kingdom, all those who have died without Christ (i.e. all unrepentant sinners) will stand before God (most prophecy scholars believe this will be God the Son, Jesus). These people will not be judged to determine if they deserve heaven or hell. That has already been determined. Instead, this judgment is to delineate the reasons for their eternal damnation and to determine the level of eternal penalty to which they will be subject… as there will be levels of hell.
- **The Final Judgment of Satan and His Demons:** This judgment will take place at the conclusion of the one thousand year Millennial Kingdom. Satan and his demons will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone for eternity. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Rev 20:10

The Marriage of the Lamb and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb: The Bible uses the metaphor of marriage for the relationship of Jesus Christ to His Church. Jesus is the Bridegroom, the Church is His Bride. From eternity past, the Trinity made the decision that this

marriage would one day take place. Jesus certainly paid a very enormous price for His Bride; He gave His very life on the cross and paid the penalty for "her" sins. Certainly, that was a wonderful show of His love. One day, during the time of the Tribulation on earth, the "ceremony" of the marriage of Christ to the Church will take place. This will take place in heaven prior to Christ's return to set up His Kingdom on earth. Soon thereafter, Jesus will return to earth and bring along His Bride at that time. The marriage supper will follow the ceremony, of course. The exact nature and timing of this glorious event are debatable. Of course, there is complete agreement that the occasion will be a wonderful experience for all in attendance. Indeed, many important guests will be at the marriage supper of the Lamb. A few additional details of this majestic event will be presented in the commentary on The Revelation that will soon continue.

The Temples of God:

- **The Tabernacle in the Wilderness (aka The Tent of Meeting):** This was the original Temple built while Moses led the Israelites through their forty years journey in the wilderness. It was constructed according to specific instructions from God. It could be moved from place to place as the Israelites moved along in their journey that would eventually land them in the "Promised Land." God's presence on earth was found within this Tabernacle. Various activities were performed within this structure, such as sacrifices for the sins of the people as well as other important worship services… led by the Levitical priests. The Ark of the Covenant also found its home in this structure. This tabernacle would no longer be required after Solomon built the actual Temple of God.
- **Solomon's Temple:** This grand structure was built by King Solomon after his father, King David, had carefully drawn up the plans. These plans were given to David from God Himself. This Temple was absolutely glorious and costly. The priest would perform the appropriate worship activities throughout the year. It was built in approximately 950 B.C. Unfortunately, the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed this Temple in 586 B.C. They burnt it to the ground after stealing everything they could find of value.
- **Zerubbabel's (aka Herod's) Temple**: As per God's prophecy approximately 175 years earlier, King Cyrus issued a decree (in ~538 B.C.) that resulted in many of the Jews returning to Jerusalem with the express purpose of rebuilding the Temple. Although this project was delayed, the Temple of Zerubbabel was finally finished in 515 B.C. It was not as grand a structure as the opulent first Temple of Solomon. However, it was a fine Temple and served the people in their worship of God. Five hundred years later, King Herod decided to refurbish this Temple in a very expensive manner. Herod spent over forty years on this incredible project, and when he was done, the Temple of God in Jerusalem was considered by many to be the most beautiful edifice in the world. Unfortunately, the Roman army destroyed this Temple in A.D. 70. The Lord Jesus foretold of this terrible destruction just days before His crucifixion. It was burnt to the

ground in an attempt to retrieve every last ounce of gold that was used in its building.

Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." Matt 24:1-2

- **Jesus:** Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. John 2:19-21
- **The Christian:** The individual Christian, upon accepting Jesus as Savior, will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. Hence, in this Church Age, each Christian is truly the Temple of God. That is why it is so important that all Christians take very good care of what goes into that body and what comes out (e.g. their words).

  But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; Acts 1:8

  I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, Eph 3:16

  You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. Romans 8:9
- **The Tribulation Temple**: As has already been alluded to, the Antichrist will desecrate the Holy Temple of God at the mid-point of the Tribulation. Not only that, but he will assume the position of "god" during this time… abiding in the Temple. Obviously, this will require a Temple to be in existence during that time. As has been shown in the previous section, a great deal of preparatory work and money has been spent over the last twenty-five years getting ready to build this Temple. As soon as the word is given to go forward, construction could begin on the Temple within just a few weeks! It would take no more than two to three years to complete.
- **The Millennial Temple**: The prophet Ezekiel wrote extensively on the Temple of God that will be in existence during the Millennial Kingdom (see Ezek. 40-48). According to the information written by Ezekiel, this Temple will be located a little north of the current walled city of Jerusalem, and it will be very large. Both Millennial Jerusalem and the Millennial Temple will be much larger than their corresponding predecessors. The architect and builder will be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Some scholars (e.g. Grant Jeffrey) believe that this Temple will co-exist with the third Temple during the Millennium. Christ will cleanse it after His Second Coming and victory over Satan and the Antichrist.

  "'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' **18** that have been known for ages.

  Acts 15:16-18
- As will be seen in the last portion of The Revelation, there will be no need for a Temple of God in the New Heaven and New Earth.

The Millennial Kingdom:

The Millennial Kingdom is alluded to all throughout the Bible (e.g. Ezek 34, 37, 40-46, Psalms 2, 24, 72, Isaiah 2, 11:3-5, 12, 29, 33, 65:20, Dan 7:13-14, Amos 9:13-14, Zech 2:10-11; Zech 14:3-4, Matt 24, Rev 20 and other chapters). In the latter chapters of The Revelation of Jesus Christ, John sees the vision of Jesus coming to set up this Kingdom on earth. We have already reviewed the various theological opinions on just what the Millennial Kingdom will be like, and when and where it will take place. This was done in the second section of this treatise. The conclusion was that, although there are fine Christian men and women with varying ideas on this subject, the strong belief here is that there will be an actual one thousand year earthly kingdom that will have its onset immediately after a seven year Tribulation. Jesus Christ will come with His saints from heaven to bring to a conclusion the horrific war, called the Battle of Armageddon, at the end of the seven year Tribulation. He will then begin His Millennial reign on earth. Let us take a look at what life will be like during that time.

First of all, the population of the earth at that time will be made up of an eclectic group of people. There will be God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, who will once again live on earth among the people. He will have with Him all those that have been saved since the beginning… since Adam and Eve. This, of course, will include all of the Old Testament saints, the Church, and those who were saved during the seven year Tribulation. All of these people will appear in their glorified bodies! The last group to join Christ in His Kingdom on earth will be those people who made it through the Tribulation alive. These will all be followers of Christ. They will still be subject to death, although the Bible makes it clear that the life expectancy in the Millennium will be much longer than it is today. "Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. (Isaiah 65:20) All of the individuals just mentioned will live together during this time. It is not made clear how much time the resurrected saints, all adorned in their glorified bodies, will spend living upon the earth as compared to time that they will spend living in heaven, itself. We shall have to wait and see about that issue. According to the verse quoted above from Isaiah, some people will live to be several hundred years old! Of course, the only people who will die during this time are those who entered into the Kingdom with their mortal bodies and those born to these people. All of the people who entered into the Millennium in their glorified bodies cannot die… not even by accident.

The Bible also points out that in the Kingdom there will be a dearth of disease. Typically, only those who turn away from Jesus during this time will have to be concerned with disease and death. Certainly most of the mortal people will choose to follow Christ and, therefore, will be blessed by Him…

No one living in Zion will say, "I am ill"; Isaiah 33:24
But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,' declares the LORD, Jer 30:17
I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, Ezek 34:16

In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Isaiah 29:18

Apparently, those who enter the Millennial Kingdom at its onset can look forward to Jesus healing their infirmities.

The centerpiece of the Millennial Kingdom will be an enormous and beautiful Temple. The prophet Ezekiel was given a detailed explanation of this Temple and of the worship services that would be carried out during this period (Ezek. 40-46). The land upon which this Temple will sit is described in the last two chapters of this book (Ezek 47-48). Not only is the land where the Temple will be built designated, but the land is also allotted for the tribes of Israel and the Messiah. Details for this are found in the last chapter of Ezekiel. This Temple will be extremely large. Details of the dimensions are given in Ezekiel 40-42. It will be the last of the temples of God. The first Temple may be considered to be the Tabernacle of Moses that was used all of the years that the Israelites wandered through the desert. This was followed by Solomon's Temple, the Temple of Zerubbabel (later rebuilt by Herod), and the Tribulation Temple. Some suggest that we should remember that Jesus referred to Himself as a Temple (John 2:21) and those who make up the Church are also the Temple of the Holy Spirit. All of these temples were discussed in more detail just a few paragraphs earlier.

Animal sacrifices will be observed as an important part of worship. Note what the prophet Ezekiel wrote…

It will be the duty of the prince to provide the burnt offerings, grain offerings and drink offerings at the festivals, the New Moons and the Sabbaths--at all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel. Ezek 45:17

These sacrifices will not have anything to do with salvation, of course, since Jesus was the all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. During the Church Age, Jesus gave His followers the Lord's Supper to look back and remember His sacrifice. This sacrament has no power to forgive sins. In the Millennium, these animal sacrifices will be a method to remember and honor what Jesus did for all humanity. They will be similar in concept to the current day observation of the Lord's Supper. It is interesting that God has ordained that the sons of Zadok will be the priests of this Temple (see 1 Chron 6:8). That is a promise that God will fulfill in the Kingdom Age.

The LORD said to Moses, **11** "Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites;……. Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him. **13** He and his descendants (Zadok is in this particular line of Levitical priests) will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites." Num 25:10-13

There are no allusions to the ark, the mercy seat, the high priest, or the Law as the need for these will have ended in the Millennial Temple. The presence of Jesus will supersede any need for these. This Temple will also be the center of government where Jesus will reign over

all the nations in the earth all the way through the Millennial Kingdom and beyond into eternity… (e.g. Isaiah 11:1-10 and many others refer to this fact)

For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. [10] "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people. Isaiah 11:9-110

Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." **The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.** Isaiah 2:3

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. [7] Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end**. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,** Isaiah 9:6-7

He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. Psalms 72:8

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. **The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,** [33] and **he will reign over the house of Jacob forever**; his kingdom will never end." Luke 1:32-33

they will see the **glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God**. Isaiah 35:2

As was the case in the Old Testament, the glory of the Lord will fill the Temple once again…

Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, **and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.** Ezek 43:5

While Jesus will be the King over the entire earth, David will be His co-regent in Jerusalem. The twelve apostles will also have a special place in the Kingdom…

I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. [24] **I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince** among them. I the LORD have spoken. Ezek 34:23-24

they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. Jer 30:9

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

With Jesus being the benevolent King over the whole earth and all therein, the government will be perfectly administered. That does not mean that everyone will be perfect, as they will not. There will still be many humans on this earth, with their free will to do right… or wrong. Certainly, there will be much more stimulus to do good at that time than there is today, but sin will still exist. Jesus will rule with perfect justice and expediency. Therefore, those that do sin will be quickly judged and punished.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; [4] but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. [5] Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. [6] The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. [7] The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and **the lion will eat straw like the ox** (carnivorous animals will no longer eat meat). [8] The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. [9] **They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.**
Isaiah 11:3-9

He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. **Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.** Isaiah 2:4

No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it. Isaiah 35:9

Given the fact that only Christians will enter into the Millennial Kingdom, and that there will be many saints of God to help keep the world going in the right direction, and, most importantly, Jesus will be the King, the Millennial Kingdom will be an absolutely wonderful place to be. There will be no wars; people and even animals will get along very well together, as there will be very little strife among nations and individuals.

This will be a time of great prosperity. There will be no poverty, no lack of food, and a great feeling of security among the people. The land will produce an excellent quality and quantity of crops and beautiful flowers. It will be a beautiful place to live. In fact, one would assume that the biblical account of the Millennial Kingdom is where many of those who initiated the New Age Movement got the concept for their religion. Of course, the major difference is that in Christianity Jesus brings in this wonderful New Millennial Kingdom. In the false religion of the New Agers, mankind brings this age into being. That is never going to happen.

I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. [21] They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. [22] No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. [23] They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. [24] Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. [25] The wolf and the lamb will feed together……. says the LORD. Isaiah 65:19,20-25

"'I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of wild beasts so that they may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety. [26] I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. [27] The trees of the

field will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people will be secure in their land. Ezek 34:25-27
The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; Isaiah 35:1
He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows. Isaiah 30:23

During the Tribulation, there will be much upheaval taking place on the earth. God's judgments will certainly cause major changes in the earth. In particular, there will massive earthquakes, on a scale not ever seen before. Due to these earthquakes and other traumatic events, such as nuclear war, tidal waves, volcanoes, possible meteor and/or asteroid impacts, etc. the topography of the earth will have changed greatly. Islands will be less numerous and many of those that do remain will be flattened to some degree. There also will be a change in the mountain ranges as we know them today. Certainly there will still be mountains and valleys, but some will be in different configurations than they are currently. This will not present a problem, just something that one can expect to see at that time. (Ezek. 47:1-10; Joel 3:17-18; Zech 14; Rev. 16:17-20) Jerusalem will be altered as well…
On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and **the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south**. Zech 14:4

For the first time ever, Israel will possess the land that God promised them in His covenants with them. This land will be divided up among the twelve tribes. Jerusalem will be about forty miles in circumference… much larger than its size at this time. A certain choice section of the land will be set aside for the Messiah. Interestingly, the Millennial Temple will be several miles north of the current walled city of Jerusalem. Of course, the New Jerusalem will be much larger than that of today. There will be a river that will flow out of the Temple and, after passing south through Jerusalem, this river will split to send one branch east to the Dead Sea and another west to the Mediterranean Sea. The land surrounding Jerusalem will have become a plain after the Tribulation. The only portion of this geographical region of Palestine that will be elevated will be Jerusalem itself. This will result in it becoming all the more impressive during this reign of Christ. People will come from all nations to worship there.

The boundaries and size of Jerusalem and the surrounding land of the Millennial Israel are detailed by the prophets Zechariah (Zech. 14) and Ezekiel (48-49). The land of Israel will be divided into three portions. The northern portion will be divided among the seven tribes of Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah; the southern portion is set aside for the five tribes of Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad. The middle section, called the Holy Oblation will be given to the Lord.

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; **it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.** Isaiah 2:2

Then he measured the temple; it was a hundred cubits long, and the temple courtyard and the building with its walls were also a hundred cubits long. Ezek 41:13

Although there will only be Christians at the onset of this thousand year period, people born during this time will still have the freedom to choose to follow Jesus or reject Him. Given the excellent circumstances that each individual will typically be born into, one would certainly believe that the vast majority of people will choose to become Christians… i.e. follow Christ as Savior. Importantly, Satan will be bound during this time.

As the Millennium draws to a close, God will release Satan from the *abyss*. Satan will once again have the opportunity to affect mankind. There are varying reasons suggested why God will choose to do this, but He does not explain this action in His Word. Therefore, all of those reasons are pure speculation. Whatever the reason, Satan will once again gather up all those who have rejected Jesus and make an abortive attempt at a coup. This whole insurrection will be quashed by God immediately. Satan will then be banished to the "lake of fire" were he will live for the rest of eternity…

And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Rev 20:10

At the conclusion of the thousand years, with Satan and his demons sent to the eternal lake of fire, God will then turn His attention to the "construction" of the New Heavens and the New Earth. This is spoken of to the prophet John in the 21st Chapter of The Revelation. Just prior to this creative work by God, He will judge the unrepentant sinners of all eternity when they all appear before Him at the Great White Throne Judgment. All will be banished to hell after that appearance.

New Heaven and New Earth: These are the terms that God uses to label the eternal home for all saints of all ages. They both will come into existence right after the conclusion of the Millennial Kingdom. From Job and Abraham, to Moses and Joshua, to David and Elijah… all the way down to the last person saved during the Millennial Kingdom, every saved person will spend their eternity in the New Heaven and the New Earth. God will describe in some detail this future home for the Godhead, all angels and saved mankind at the conclusion of The Revelation.

A Possible Scenario of Soon to Come World Events:

Now that most of the people, places and events of The Revelation have been explained, a possible scenario of coming world events that might herald the coming Tribulation will be discussed. Most likely, at some time in the not too distant future, world events will continue to coalesce and result in God rapturing His Church out of the world. This event will set into motion the Great Day of the Lord (a.k.a. The Tribulation, the time of Jacob's Trouble, etc.). No one can be certain of the specific nature or the exact sequence that will usher in the seven year Tribulation. What follows is just one of many ways in which the world may enter into this time.

However, it is a reasonable conception of what may occur based on biblical prophecy and current events.

It is worth reviewing several current events that have recently come together that suggest strongly that we may well be living at the cusp of the Tribulation. All of the following items have been thoroughly documented in the previous section. Keep the following in mind:

- The European Union has already become a major economic player in the world. There are currently twenty-seven nations in this conglomerate and, according to Grant Jeffrey, plans are under discussion to eventually place the power into the hands of ten major nations or entities in order to make decision making processes less cumbersome. This entity can appropriately be looked upon as a Revival of the Roman Empire.
- There is a major move in the world today toward a global government and world banking system.
- Virtually every nation in the world is in severe economic distress. The United States is no exception; it has recently added multiple trillions of dollars to its massive financial debt. In early August, 2011, their credit rating was lowered for the first time in history… this was a major economic setback. Greece and Ireland have already gone into bankruptcy of some form and had to be rescued by the European Union. Greece is still in serious economic trouble. By early summer, 2011, Italy was also experiencing serious economic difficulties. This list of economically compromised nations continues to grow at an alarming rate.
- There is a significant trend toward an ecumenical religious system in the world that is certainly looked upon as an apostate religious system by true Christians.
- Everything is absolutely ready for the coming of the Lord. It would not even take any obvious supernatural intervention to accomplish most tasks that are known to be completed (via prophecy) during the seven year Tribulation. For just one example, builders are basically "standing by" to re-build the Temple as soon as they get the go-ahead. This could easily be completed in 3 ½ years from now if necessary!
- The Middle East geo-political situation is amazingly ripe for the predicted wars of Psalm 83 and that of Gog-Magog written about in Ezekiel 38/39.

Now, let us see how all this may come together to thrust the world into the Tribulation.

First of all, it should be pointed out that there are some prophecy teachers that believe that the Psalm 83 War is basically the same as the war described by Ezekiel (Chapter 38-39)… maybe just another theatre of that war. However, the consensus of opinion seems to be that they are two separate wars, one leading into the other. Two very well known prophecy teachers, Hal Lindsey and Joel Rosenberg postulate reasonable scenarios. It is likely that at some point in the relatively near future, one of two events will be sure to occur, either the Rapture will be quickly followed by the war of Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38/39 or it will quickly follow these two wars (Rosenberg's belief). As a third possibility, Hal Lindsey believes that the Rapture will take place

between these two wars. Although it is impossible to predict the exact order of events, the likelihood is that both wars and the Rapture will occur within a few years of one another. As has been shown in some detail in the last section, the time is really approaching and the nations are aligning in a manner that an invasion of Israel by those countries named by the Psalmist Asaph (Psalm 83) and the prophet Ezekiel (chap. 38/39) may soon occur. Unfortunately, it is likely that one or both of these wars may involve nuclear weapons. God has promised to come to the aid of Israel and defeat the invading forces completely and convincingly. This will be done in such a way that there will be absolutely no doubt of God's role in this victory. Let us take a look at the nations that will be coming against Israel in each of those two wars:

- Psalm 83 – enemy nations will include Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and the Gaza Strip. Note how both Egypt and Jordan currently are at marked risk of being led by anti-Israeli forces in the very near future.
- Ezekiel 38/39 – enemy nations will be lead by Russia and Iran, but also include the Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Libya, Turkey, and likely other surrounding Islamic nations.

Before continuing on in this overview of the Tribulation, let me just quickly mention two other intriguing ideas that have been postulated by prophecy teachers Hal Lindsey and Perry Stone. Both of these well known authors and lecturers believe that there may very well be two additional prophecies that tell of coming world events. These can be found in Isaiah 17 and Isaiah 19. The first of these relates to coming events in Syria, the second involves Egypt:

- Isaiah 17: Damascus will no longer be a city but will become a heap of ruins… In the evening, sudden terror! Before the morning, they are gone! Isaiah 17:1&14

  There has been mounting evidence over the past few years that Syria has accumulated a significant arsenal of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). For one thing, there is little doubt that they possess biological and chemical weapons ready for use. They were so close to having nuclear weapons that Israel had to make a pre-emptive first strike on a nuclear reactor site in northeast Syria on September 6, 2007. However, there is good evidence gained since that time, that Syria has four nuclear facilities besides the one hit by Israel four years ago. The Institute for Science and International Security has stated recently that they believe that Syria is far more advanced in nuclear capabilities than previously thought. ISIS chief, David Albright, has said to the Jerusalem Post that there is significant evidence that truck convoys took WMD's into Syria from Iraq in the weeks just before the war began. He said that there are four potential sites in Syria where they may well be working on these nuclear weapon systems. Many in the Israeli and United States intelligence community are concerned about chemical and biological weapons as well. Israel is keeping a wary eye on that nation along with so many others in the region. Lindsey suggests that the biblical prophecy above implies an exchange between Israel and Damascus (or a pre-emptive first strike by Israel on Damascus) that will result in the destruction of Damascus and the beginning of the Psalm 83 war. This is

a reasonable scenario considering the current geo-political situation in the Middle East and the prophecy of Isaiah and Asaph in Psalm 83.

- Egypt: Interestingly, in a recent television show, Perry Stone spoke of a likely civil war within the nation of Egypt. He got this from reading the prophecies in Isaiah 19. It is certainly an interesting fact that exactly that conflict has recently ensued!
  "I will stir up Egyptian against Egyptian-- brother will fight against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city." Isaiah 19:2

  The prophecy continues with, "I will hand the Egyptians over to the power of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them," declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty. Isaiah 19:4

  In the late winter of 2011, a civil war in Egypt erupted. The final result will not be known for some time. Will Egypt be eventually taken over by the caliphate and ruled by Islamic Law? God only knows. Several other nations in the region have also recently experienced these civil wars (e.g. Libya, Tunisia and **over a dozen** other nations or territories in North Africa)! These are all cause for concern, especially for Israel. It will certainly be interesting to see what happens in these next few years in the Middle East.

All of this unrest will eventually lead to a war or wars against Israel. The good news is that Israel will come out victorious with the conspicuous help of their God in any and all of these wars. This interesting fact was shown to be prophesied in the Bible in the previous section. This God given miracle, and the fact that God will pour out His Spirit upon the Jews at this time, will serve to bring back a large remnant of Israel to a saving belief in God… which means, of course, a belief in Jesus as their Messiah and Savior. As the prophet Joel said, in that *Day of the Lord*, "Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed. 'And afterward, **I will pour out my Spirit on all people**." Joel 2:27-28

A particularly favored scenario by Hal Lindsey is that the Psalm 83 war will precede the Rapture. Not long after that war, Jesus will rapture His saints. Of course, the Rapture will cause incredible chaos in the world, especially in the United States with their large percentage of Christians. For one thing, the ability for the United States to respond to help their allies, such as Israel, will be basically nil. Their economy will be in shambles. Even their military will suffer. With so many contributing people gone into heaven, the industrial capabilities of America will also be stifled. Certainly, for at least several years, the United States will not be a major player on the world scene… we will need help much more than we can give help!

Over in the Middle East, after the Rapture and the war just described, Israel will have just come off of a major victory. The world will be recovering from the war and the results of the Rapture. Even in Europe, the Rapture will have created major problems. Africa, Korea, South America and most other nations of the world will have major changes to undertake to recover from the loss of so many productive Christian individuals (as these nations have many Christians). Onto the world scene will step a great and charismatic leader. He will come out of

the revived Roman Empire and assume the leadership position of the European Union. This individual will convince the world of his ability to bring back some semblance of order and peace.

After their amazing victory, Israel will begin to turn back to God. The Bible says that the charismatic leader noted above will broker a treaty between Israel and her enemies. Of course, this leader is also known at the Antichrist. He will be hailed as a great architect of peace and a great world leader. Once this treaty is signed, the Tribulation will begin. It will last for seven years and be filled with God's judgments and the evil deeds of the Antichrist backed by Satan. The treaty that is signed will allow the rebuilding of the Temple. The building will start immediately as so many of the Jews will have turned their face toward their God. They will be anxious to start their worship services once again after almost two thousand years.

If Lindsey is correct, the war described in Ezekiel will occur in the early years of this seven year Tribulation. Israel will once again be lead to victory by God's intervention. Of course, as already pointed out, many prophecy teachers believe this war had already been won by Israel just preceding the Rapture. The third, less likely, option is that both the Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38/39 war will be fought back-to-back soon after the Rapture. In every scenario, God will have clearly intervened to lead Israel to victories over overwhelmingly superior man-made forces; this fact will be important in leading the Jews back to faith in their God.

With the exception of the war(s) involving Israel, the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation will be *relatively* "peaceful". The Antichrist will use his powers of persuasion and charisma to progressively increase his power. He will befriend Israel. He will use his military acumen when necessary to add to his power. He will join forces with the apostate world ecumenical religion simply because it will be prudent to do so… initially. However, once he gains enough power, he will enter into the Temple of God in Jerusalem and desecrate this Temple. This will happen at the mid-point of the seven years…

He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him". Dan 9:27

After this desecration of the Temple, the Antichrist will suffer a wound that is apparently unto death. He will be seen to come back to life! Of course, this will add to his already impressive stature in the eyes of the world. Much more will be said on this topic later. The net effect will be that the Antichrist will assume even greater power. He no longer will need to continue the charade of a mutually beneficial, peaceful cooperation with the apostate church. Instead, he will declare himself god and act as such. He will have a right-hand man, the False Prophet who will require all mankind to worship the beast and take his "mark", 666, onto their body (onto the hand or forehead). Many more details will be elucidated with the coming commentary on The Revelation.

The last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, known as the Great Tribulation, will be characterized by the judgments of God on the unrepentant sinners of the world along with the martyrdom that will result from the Antichrist's actions against those that reject the "mark of the

beast". Admittedly, it is the only appropriate action – to reject the mark, 666. Although that is certainly true, all those who do this will either be martyred for their laudable decision or they must successfully run and hide in the mountains of Israel.

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand-- **16** then **let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.** Matt 24:15-16

The Tribulation will draw to a close when multiple nations rise up against Israel by the hundreds of millions, only to be defeated at Armageddon by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with His saints. This concludes a brief synopsis of the likely events of this time in history, the Tribulation. Much more detailed information was given to John the apostle by Jesus while he was in Patmos. The following verses and commentary will reveal just what will happen during that time of God's judgment on the nation of Israel and the remaining nations of the world.

Overview of The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Chapters 4-22)

After John is given the seven messages meant for the various churches in Asia-Minor, he is suddenly taken away in the spirit to God's throne room in heaven. John is about to be given an incredible vision of the events that will come upon the earth in the end-times. He will first be given a brief visual tour of this beautiful heavenly abode of the Godhead. He also will get a glimpse of the continuous worship of God that takes place in heaven.

Then, John will become witness to a powerfully poignant event. God, the Father, is holding a very important sealed scroll in His right hand. No one is found that is worthy to take this scroll from God and open it. Finally, Jesus will come forward and take the scroll. He will be proclaimed worthy by all of the heavenly hosts. This scroll is the "title deed to the earth". Through the opening of the scroll, Jesus will accomplish several things: the reclamation of the earth from Satan, the judgment of the entire world for their sins, the defeat of the Antichrist and Satan, and the eventual setting up of the Millennial Kingdom followed by the New Heaven and New Earth. This is obviously an incredible event that is about to take place.

John will then witness Jesus as He will begin to open the scrolls, one seal at a time. The first four seals will release the judgments brought on by the four horsemen of the apocalypse. The opening of seals will continue. Finally, Jesus reaches the seventh seal. After a poignant pause, this seventh seal will be opened. This releases the trumpet judgments. They will be handed down consecutively by angels. As will be seen in the pages that follow, the judgments continue to become more terrible as the Tribulation progresses.

Intermittently, John is shown scenes that do not directly relate to a particular judgment being reigned down upon the earth. There are interludes in the progression of the opening of the seals, trumpet and bowl judgments that allow John to learn about certain important events taking place during this seven year period. For example, after the sixth seal is opened, John is shown 144,000 Jews that have been given the seal of protection by God. They are descended from the

twelve different tribes of Israel. These Jewish men will serve as great evangelists to the world. John is also shown a vision of two Jewish witnesses that will be given miraculous powers and be supernaturally protected by God for 3 ½ years. They also will serve as evangelists for God during this time. John is witness to the fate of all of these men.

Importantly, John also learns what will happen to the Antichrist, Satan, Israel, Michael, and the False Prophet as the vision continues. All five have important roles to play in the end-time Tribulation. As the last part of the Great Tribulation approaches, the 7th trumpet is blown. This, in turn, releases the seven bowl judgments. The bowls are poured out and the worst judgments that the world will ever see become a reality.

As Satan and the Antichrist prepare to defeat Israel and all those who have chosen to follow Jesus, God continues to judge unrepentant mankind and the earth. Mystery Babylon, the false religious system falls… then Babylon the Great, the one world economic and governmental authority presided over by the Antichrist also is demolished via the judgments of God. World War breaks out with its center in the Middle East. Millions of men (possibly as many as 200 million) march from the east toward Jerusalem. With multiple satanic forces converging on Jerusalem from virtually every direction, Jesus finally returns with His saints from heaven to the Mount of Olives. The forces of evil are soundly defeated by the Word of His mouth.

Soon thereafter, Jesus will set up His Millennial Kingdom. John is shown the glorious nature of this Kingdom. This apocalyptic vision ends as John is also given a vision of the New Heaven and New Earth. They will be brought into being after Satan and all of his minions are thrown into the lake of fire forever. All those who have chosen to follow the Lord will live with Him in heavenly bliss forever.

A detailed commentary on these chapters now follows…

Chapter 4: The Heavenly Throne

The first two sections of The Revelation of Jesus Christ have now concluded. The first three chapters spoke of things that had happened in the past or that were happening at the time in history when John received his vision. As we have mentioned, there may well have been some allusions to the Church Ages down through time as well. A great deal of information had been given to John about the Church of Jesus Christ.

Now, however, John is going to be told about future events exclusively… amazing events of terrible world-wide tribulation, war, famine, death, Jesus and Satan, heaven and hell and so much more. Interestingly, no further mention of the Church will be **made in the entire book**. Why? Remember that all this will happen after the Rapture (i.e. the pretribulation view of the Rapture)… therefore the Church will no longer be on earth.

The first scene takes place in heaven…

[1] After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." Rev 4:1

The main portion of this end-time prophecy given to the Apostle John began with a loud voice speaking "like a trumpet" telling him to come up into heaven. The first two words of the first verse, "After this" point out that these events must occur *after* those events of the first three chapters. In fact, John was about to hear and see just what was going to happen all the way down through history to the time of Christ's Second Coming.

[2] Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, **a throne set in heaven**, and **One sat on the throne**. [3] And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Rev 4:2-3

John did not travel into heaven bodily at that time. Instead, Jesus transported him "in the spirit". He was immediately faced with the beautiful sight of God's throne. God's throne is where all power, knowledge and activity originates and is sustained. Light emanates from His throne illuminating everything around it. This is the control center of the universe and everything within it. God is described by using precious stones as a metaphor. He is said to be like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance. This jasper stone is also mentioned in Chapter 21:11 as having a clear, crystal… diamond-like appearance. The sardius stone is a beautiful ruby red stone. This stone was found in the area of Sardis, hence the name. The light pattern made by all of this was that of a rainbow; it shone gloriously around the throne just like that noted by Ezekiel when he had the tremendous opportunity to view God's throne himself.

Like the appearance of a **rainbow** in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.
Ezek 1:28

[4] Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. Rev 4:4

Surrounding the throne of God were twenty-four other thrones that seated twenty-four elders, clothed in the white robe of a priest, signifying purity. Each elder also wore a crown of gold. Although there are some who suggest that these elders may be angels, the fact that they wear crowns and sit on thrones and are referred to as elders (angels never have been deemed to be elders) make this very unlikely. Not only that, but the Greek word used here for crown (stephanos) is that used for the crown of a martyr… a crown never worn by an angel. For these and other reasons, most commentators believe that the elders referenced here are men. That is almost certainly true as the next chapter shows in verse 5:9. Here the elders sing to Jesus that… You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood. (Rev. 5:9) Angels were never redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

Dr. Harry Ironside, who wrote an excellent book on The Revelation, is convinced that these twenty-four elders represent the heavenly priesthood of believers. This is consistent with

the fact that in the Old Testament times there were twenty-four priests that were chosen to represent the entire priesthood… i.e. all of the of the priests of Israel… of which there were thousands. In other words, these elders symbolize *all of those believers* who have every lived up until the time of that scene in heaven. This would, of course, include all of the Old Testament saints plus all those who became Christians in this current Church Age. There are some who believe that twelve of these men are the patriarchs of Israel and twelve are twelve apostles of Christ. No one can be sure of the exact identity of these elders, nor is it really all that important to know. What is certain is that they have important positions in heaven and sit on thrones near to the throne of God.

[5] And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Rev 4:5

John noted next the intriguing fact that lightning, thunder and voices proceeded out from the throne of God. Thunder and lightning represent the judgment that will come from God during the coming Tribulation. His wrath will be meted out upon those remaining upon the earth after the Rapture. This Tribulation will serve more than one purpose. It certainly is meant as a punishment, but it also will be used to remind Israel of God's power and serve to bring back Israel into His fold. Although Satan will cause much havoc during the coming Tribulation, primarily the events experienced and described in this prophetic book are the direct result of God's wrath being levied upon mankind.

The seven lamps of fire are also noted in the verse above; they are the seven Spirits of God. This is simply a beautiful representation of the Holy Spirit and the seven-fold characteristics of its nature: the Spirit of the Lord, wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord (as noted in Isaiah 11:2).

[6] Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. Rev 4:6

This is an interesting picture of the heavenly scene in front of God's throne. It is instructive to note that the "sea of glass" will also be referenced in Rev. 15:2. In this verse, Jesus pointed out that those that have trusted in Christ were standing on this glass sea. Of course, this gives some clues as to what this metaphor might mean… and not mean. For one thing, the fact that is a sea and clear as glass allow many interpreters to conclude that it conveys stability. Tim LaHaye suggests that this stability may allude to the Word of God or the Church itself, now in heaven. Frankly, since God chose not to interpret this expression for us, we really do not know what it means. It may well simply be an explanation to the reader as to the beautiful appearance of the setting in front of God's throne… that is what I believe is the case.

And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. [7] The first living creature was like a **lion**, the second living creature like a **calf**, the third living creature had a face like a **man**, and the fourth living creature was like a flying

eagle. [8] The four living creatures, each having **six wings**, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: **"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"** Rev 4:7-11

John next is shown some very intriguing creatures, all with eyes in front and in back of their heads. One looked somewhat like a lion, one like a calf, one a man, and the fourth like a flying eagle. They were all located around the throne of God. Each had six wings and had the duty and opportunity to praise God continually, day and night, by saying words of praise as noted in verse eleven. The prophet Isaiah was given a vision of a similar being in heaven. Note, once again, the common themes and pictures coursing all through the Bible… "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. ² Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" Isaiah 6:1-3 Therefore, it is very likely that these beings are seraphims, a powerful order of angelic beings. They also were positioned around the Heavenly Throne of God and sang out with continual praise.

Once again, God chooses not to explain the reason behind the varying appearances of these angels. Some have speculated that they have the appearance that they do as each represents a different aspect of God's personality:

- Lion – Jesus is the lion of the tribe of Judah (picturing the Lord's strength)
- Calf or Ox – Mark paints Jesus as a lowly ox, the servant of Jehovah
- Man – Luke shows Jesus as the perfect man
- Eagle – John describes Jesus as the lofty eagle, the divine Son of God

Other prophecy scholars have come up with a variety of differing ideas as to the reasons behind the appearance of these seraphims. It is really not possible to know why they looked like they did to John in his vision… nor is it of any real importance.

Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, [10] the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: [11] "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." Rev 4:1-11

As will become apparent, these four angels will play important roles in the coming judgments of the Tribulation. One of them will call forth the rider on the white horse of the apocalypse. One other will herald the coming economic downfall of the world. Still another, will hand out the seven bowls of judgment to the seven angels, as will be seen in Chapter 15.

The final verses of this chapter show that there is continual praise going on before and around the Throne of God. This is being led by great elders of the Church, now in heaven and by exalted heavenly angels who have been given this very important assignment. The elders cast their crowns before the Throne of God in honor of His power, glory and love. They continually praise God for the wonder of His creation.

Chapter 5: Worthy is the Lamb of God

A beautiful picture of Jesus and His role as the redeemer of mankind is about to unfold in this next chapter. After Adam (and Eve) sinned, there was no way that any man or woman was going to be able to live a life worthy of one day going to heaven. Their sin resulted in their loss of the title deed to the earth and the gift of an eternal life with God. Unfortunately, Adam would pass on his sinful nature to his progeny. All subsequent people would be born with this "original sin" and would not be able to live the perfect life necessary to one day enter into a perfect heaven. Fortunately, God, in His infinite mercy, sent His Son, Jesus, to rectify this horrific problem. Jesus came to earth, born of the Virgin Mary. He then lived a perfect life on earth. Finally, while still a young man, He willingly died on a cross to pay the penalty for all mankind's sins. Jesus was and is our "redeemer kinsman". Because of His love and actions, those that trust in Him now have the ability to enter into heaven upon the "first death." Many already are there with Him at this time and many more will join these saved people in the years to come.

Interestingly, there is another aspect to this redemption which is shown here in Revelation. The Redeemer Kinsman will come to take back even more from Satan. He will take back control of the earth. For all too long, Satan has been the god of this world. That will change one day. The beginning of that change is described in the next several verses…

[1] And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. [2] Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" Rev. 5:1-2

John next sees God holding a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed in an impressive manner with seven seals. This had to be a very important scroll. Then, a powerful angel appeared to announce a challenge to all in the heavenly audience. Who out there was worthy to begin the task ahead… that is, the task of opening the scroll in a systematic manner? Remember, this scroll was sealed. This meant that wax had been applied to it so that the contents were hidden until this seal was broken. As we shall see, this particular "document" had been sealed in such a way that only certain portions of its contents would be revealed as each succeeding seal was broken. Roman wills were sealed with the name of the rightful heir was on the outside. Only this individual could break the seals and open to "release the inheritance". That "rightful heir" was now being sought by the angel. This angel may well have been Gabriel as this is the type of activity he often performed. However, this angel's identity is not given. No answer came forth from the crowd…

[3] And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. [4] So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. [5] But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep.

Not only was no one coming forward claiming the capability to open the scroll and its seals, but John somehow was given the knowledge that no one was able to even *look* at it. John knew that this scroll was important for the future of humanity and began to cry. In fact, when we later see what is in the scroll and see what results when its edicts are carried out, it will become obvious that this scroll contains, in essence, the *title deed* to the earth. John is terribly upset because no one has come forth to claim this *deed*. Satan therefore, so far, is still in charge and things are looking good for him.

However, one of the twenty-four elders, with knowledge of the situation, calmed the Apostle John by letting him know that someone was indeed there that could open and read the scroll…

Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." [6] And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, **stood a Lamb as though it had been slain**, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are **the seven Spirits of God** sent out into all the earth. [7] Then **He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne**. Rev 5:3-7

The elder told John that **Jesus**, the **Lion of Judah**, the Root of David, would open the scroll and loose its seven seals. This elder refers to Jesus as a Lion and as coming from the line of beloved David, the former King of God's "chosen people". This, of course, relates to His power and the fact that Jesus was about to begin His reign as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He would begin the transformation of the earth from its current fallen state.

John then took a close look up into the area where God the Father, and Jesus were seated and saw His great old friend. Jesus was now in His glorified body, yet still identifiable to John as the Suffering Servant that he knew so well just sixty years earlier. The wounds that Jesus had received upon the cross were still apparent. Yes, this was the **Lamb of God** who had given His life on an old wooden cross back when the elder statesman, John, had been a very young man.

This Lamb is described as having seven horns and seven eyes. Horns are another symbol for power, especially that of a king or great leader (Daniel uses this term to point to several rulers… such as Alexander the Great). Seven horns connotes great (or in the case of Jesus, perfect) power. The seven eyes are interpreted for us as the "seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." This has been mentioned earlier as the seven aspects of the Holy Spirit of God. Of course, the seven eyes could also certainly represent the ability to see and understand all that is happening in the world – which Jesus certainly does. Remember that the number "seven" represents perfection in the Bible. This verse is therefore pointing out that Jesus will be

demonstrating His great Royal power on this earth in the near future as He and the Holy Spirit will use their omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence to see and judge all the world. After that introduction, Jesus then walked over to His Father and took this extremely important scroll out of His hand. Jesus was just about ready to begin the opening of the seals.

[8] Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. Rev 5:8

As soon as those heavenly cast members who were surrounding God's throne saw what Jesus did, they immediately knew what was about to take place. Therefore, the angels and the elders fell down in immediate prayerful worship, with their heavenly musical instrument, the harp, and began to sing a new song never before sung to God. It is interesting that the prayers of all Christians are referred to as a sacred incense… the worshipful prayers of the saints are sweet to our Lord.

[9] And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, [10] And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth." Rev 5:9-10

Here, in a song sung to Jesus, He is worshipped as being the only individual worthy of opening the scroll and its seals. The reason for this worthiness is spelled out clearly. Jesus shed His blood to redeem all those who would turn to Him as their Savior… from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

When the Millennial Kingdom of God does begin, the saints will be kings and priests and reign with God and Jesus on the earth… just as John saw in his vision.

[11] Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, [12] saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" Rev 5:11-12

John then took a more detailed look around. He saw an astounding sight! Not only was the beautiful singing coming from those angels and saints around the throne room of God, but there also were literally hundreds of thousands more angels and Christian souls singing their song of worship to honor their King and Savior Jesus.

[13] And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" [14] Then the four living

creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever. Rev 5:13-14

As we shall see in the next chapter, Jesus will begin to open the seals. Although these seals do contain the title deed to the earth, they do not actually contain a description of the inheritance. Instead, the breaking of these seals reveals, step by step, just how Jesus will reclaim what is rightfully His. These seals reveal the various judgments that He will execute upon the fallen world and the unrepentant sinners therein. The judgments become more and more severe as the time of the Tribulation moves along. Just before the end of the seven years, Jesus Christ returns to the earth with His saints to come into a direct confrontation with Satan and the Antichrist. Jesus Christ will save Israel, defeat Satan, and chain him in the *abyss*. Satan will no longer be able to oppress the world with his evil any longer.

Chapter 6: The Seals are Open – The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

At the beginning of this chapter, the Lord Jesus does what only He can do… He begins to open the seals that were introduced in the previous chapter. Jesus was about to wield His omnipotent power onto this earth, i.e. onto His creation. It was now time for Him to take back His world from Satan. Jesus would do this over a seven year period known as the Tribulation which is described in the next dozen or so chapters. As we shall see, when He is finished with this work, everything will once again be made right. However, there will be much God-given judgment coming to this earth prior to Jesus accomplishing His ultimate purpose. Much of this book deals with this godly judgment.

Jesus will loose His judgment on the earth through three different mechanisms: seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. Some commentators believe that these varying judgments run concurrently; that is, the trumpet judgments are carried out during the same time as the seal judgment, etc. However, since the opening of the seventh seal introduces the "trumpet judgments" and the blowing of the seventh trumpet introduces the "seven bowls", it is far more likely that these three types of judgments run *consecutively* over the seven years of Tribulation. That is the method of interpretation that will be used in this treatise. This is also what most modern prophecy scholars believe to be the case.

Remember, only Jesus was deemed worthy to do the task of opening the seals. The opening of six of the seven seals are mentioned in this chapter. With the opening of each seal, incredible earthly events occur as will be described in the verses below. Everything that is described in this chapter relates to future events - in fact, all of the remaining chapters describe events that are coming during the future Tribulation and beyond. These seven seals are judgments that will be handed down by God during this Tribulation as the climax to our present age. These judgments are what those people who remain on the earth after the Rapture deserve. These judgments also serve as a stimulus to some, including many of God's "chosen people", to turn to Jesus as Savior. In fact, there will be many people who come to a saving knowledge of Jesus during these years of Tribulation.

[1] Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." [2] And I looked, and behold, a **white horse**. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. Rev 6:1-2

Jesus began next to open the first seal of the scroll. One of the four serephims who was positioned very near Jesus called out with a thunderous voice to John to watch what was about to take place. Amazingly, John saw a white horse appear with the opening of that first seal. Now this white horse and the remaining horses to come onto the scene are representative of something other than actual horses.

Four horses and horsemen of the apocalypse are about to be introduced. They are metaphors for various types of inhumanity that the world has experienced (and will experience again in the future) as the result of the sinful nature and actions of fallen mankind.

The white horse had a rider who was armed with a bow. This individual rides in onto the scene at the beginning of the seven year Tribulation. A crown *was given to him*… it does not say who gave him this crown. After receiving the crown, the rider rode his horse out to conquer whatever lay in front of him. This horseman is none other than the Antichrist. He has a bow, but no arrow. He will carry no ammunition. He will be crowned as a man of peace, yet have every intention of carrying out his plan to conquer the entire world. At some point just prior to the onset of the seven year Tribulation, the Antichrist will come onto the world scene as a very charismatic world leader. He will be heralded for brokering a peace treaty between Israel and their enemies. However, just as in the time of Jeremiah, this treaty will not be worth the paper it will be written on. Jeremiah was persecuted for constantly warning his nation of their coming destruction, but was decried for his words as the people and leaders of Judah turned to those prophets who painted a rosy (albeit incorrect) picture of the future.

They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace. Jer 6:14

As another recent example, recall Neville Chamberlain of England. He returned one September in 1938 in triumph because he had brokered a deal with Hitler that would secure peace for England. "*My good friends, for the second time in our history, a British Prime Minister has returned from Germany bringing peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time.*" That did not work out too well. Winston Churchill was the "Jeremiah" of his time. He was well aware of Hitler's motives and said so during those years prior to WWII. However, his dissenting opinion was shouted down in Parliament… until much later when he was seen to be all too correct. Then, he was made Prime Minister! However, by that time, England had found itself engaged in what would turn out to be seven years of a terribly costly world war. The point is, a peace treaty is only as good as the honor of the nations and people who agree to the terms.

Although the Antichrist will initially carry himself as a great man of peace, his ultimate goal will be the complete dictatorial dominance of the world. Millions will be slaughtered during his years in power. Much more will be learned about him when we reach Chapter 13.

When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." [4] Another **horse,** fiery **red**, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. Rev 6:3-4

The second seal was next opened by Jesus. Now a different angelic creature told John to come up closer to see the result of the next seal opening. Another horse rode out; this one was fiery red with a rider as well. This rider's interest was to make war. His goal was to turn one nation against another, one people against another. He was equipped with a sword to show his bellicose nature. Although the Antichrist had promised peaceful co-existence as he came into world power, this certainly will not last very long. Of course, he had no intention of bringing in peace, only of using this deceitful claim, coupled with his magnetic personality, as a method to gain world dominance. Soon, war will break out among the nations as indicated by the Red Horse. Lindsey thinks that this may be when the Ezekiel 38/39 war takes place. There will be many wars during this time period, the most destructive coming at the end of the seven years as will be seen later.

[5] When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a **black horse**, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. [6] And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine." Rev 6:5-6

The next seal was about to be opened. John, once again, was asked to "come and see". This opening revealed a black horse with a rider who had a pair of scales in his hand. Black is often used to symbolize famine. Of course, famine also often accompanies or follows war as well and we have just seen that the world was at war after the breaking of the second seal. This famine will be associated with severe worldwide inflation.

A denarius was a day's pay for most people in the 1st century. During these perilous times, a day's pay would barely provide enough for one person to eat! In other words, the black horse is a metaphor for the terrible famine that will grip much of the earth in those days. A great many people will not have enough money to survive.

It is intriguing to note that the voice said not to "*harm the oil and the wine*." Grant Jeffrey and Tim LaHaye suggest that this simply shows that there will still be a class of people that will not suffer the effects of the famine… they will enjoy the pleasures of wine and oil, symbolic of wealth in Biblical times. Certainly, these people will be followers of the Antichrist and be located in areas that still have plenty of food available. Places like this will certainly still exist, it is just that much of the world will be experiencing famine. All those who do not take the sign of the beast will certainly not have enough to eat!

[7] When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." [8] So I looked, and behold, a **pale horse**. And the name of him who sat on it was **Death**, and **Hades followed with hi**m. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth. Rev 6:7-8

The fourth horse of the apocalypse is the infamous horse of death… the pale horse. The rider was given the name "Death". He rode along, accompanied by hell (Hades). The rider and his cohort, Hades, were given power over 25% of the earth. They were given the power to kill by various means… via war, famine, plague, and beasts. Keep in mind what was pointed out in the last section of this treatise… there is a significant increase in various plagues in our world today. All it will take is just the right mutation of a virus or bacteria to create a "superbug" that will be able to kill literally tens of millions of people throughout our world… and there will be nothing that we as humans will be able to do about it!

Interestingly, one other method by which men and women will die will be via some interaction with the *beasts* of the earth. The beasts mentioned here are not easily understood. They may well refer to animals, of course. Some commentators, such as Tim LaHaye, point out that Bible prophecy also uses the word *beasts* to refer to human governments of the world… (e.g. as seen in the book of Daniel). Exactly what is meant in this verse is unknown, but in some fashion the "beasts of the earth" will contribute to the death of many men and women. In total, when all the various causes of death are combined, one-fourth of the world's population will have died! That will be almost two billion people!

Many prophecy teachers believe that the opening of the fifth seal will mark the mid-point of the seven year Tribulation. However, no one can definitely pinpoint the timing of these seal judgments or how they relate to the middle of the seven year Tribulation. As we have seen in Section 2, there is a vast difference of opinion on this topic. In any case, the outpouring of God's wrath will become even more potent when this seal is opened…

[9] When He opened the fifth seal, **I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held**. [10] And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" [11] Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. Rev 6:9-11

As will be shown in more detail in later chapters, there will be many people who come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ during the Tribulation. Recall, the Rapture will occur just prior to the beginning of this seven year period. There will be no Christian saints on the earth immediately after the Rapture, of course. However, the world will not be without Christians for long. Unfortunately, those people who become saints during this terrible time of trouble will be literally hunted down by the Antichrist and his minions. Since they will not take the sign of the

beast, they will not be able to buy or sell food and other necessities for life. Many, if not most, will die or be killed during those years. Only a relative few, most likely, will escape into the hills and mountains and scavenge off of the land what they need for sustenance. The tens of thousands who will be killed will be seen by John in his vision *under the altar*. These Tribulation saints will be in heaven. They will wonder out loud just how long God will allow this terrible time of judgment to continue on earth. As David often did in the Psalms, these saints will cry out for justice from God. They want God to punish their evil persecutors. God will intervene during this time and answer them in a loving manner. Each will be clothed in a beautiful white robe representing their new-found purity, provided to each one of them by Christ and His incredible sacrifice on the cross. God will simply ask them to rest comfortably a little while longer as He still has a little more that He wants to accomplish on earth.

They will then be told that God was waiting just a little longer as He was not willing to let any person perish and be lost for eternity. There were still some who would repent and turn to Jesus. However, God would very soon complete His Kingdom with the addition of a few more saints and then Jesus would then come and usher in His Kingdom while meting out justice as well.

[12] I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was **a great earthquake**; and the **sun became black as sackcloth** of hair, and the **moon became like blood**. [13] **And the stars of heaven fell to the earth**, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. [14] Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and **every mountain and island was moved out of its place.** [15] And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, [16] and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! [17] For the **great day of His wrath** has come, and who is able to stand?" Rev 6:12-17

These concluding verses in Chapter 6 show the terrible judgment that will come when Jesus opens the sixth seal. The first five seal judgments show how the world in the latter days will go from a very trying time in the early years of the seven year Tribulation to an ever more dismal time of Great Tribulation. From the early years when the Antichrist used his charm and cunning to gain control of the world's governments to the ever increasing wars between various nations that soon followed, to the devastation resulting from severe famine and disease, the world will see an increase in the severity of these judgments as the years of the tribulation period pass. Most of these events will seem to come upon mankind as a result of the sinful nature and actions of man… as opposed to being obviously a supernatural intervention from God. However, all of them, ultimately, will be handed down as a portion of the wrath of God.

At some point, in the second half of the seven years, there will be the onset of many devastating natural disasters destroying much of the earth and mankind. This will start with the opening of the 6th seal by Jesus Christ. God at this time will more blatantly step in to the world

scene to carry out His judgment upon this sinful earth. The disasters of the sixth seal far surpass those of the first five seals.

Several of these events are mentioned in the closing verses of Chapter 6 above. A great earthquake will rock the world. As we have seen in the previous section, the number of major earthquakes in this last decade has increased by ten-fold over recent decades. The earthquake mentioned here is only one of several that are noted to occur during the Great Tribulation. Apparently, some celestial event will alter our perception of the sun and moon and subsequently adversely affect our earth. Exactly how this will manifest is unknown… but, one example of this type of change occurred while Jesus still hung on the cross… as the sun was blackened out even though a natural eclipse was not possible during that time period). Another biblical example can be found in Exodus when Moses called down one of the ten plagues on Egypt…

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt--darkness that can be felt." **22** So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and **total darkness covered all Egypt for three days**. **23** No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived. Ex 10:21-23

There is mention of these celestial events occurring during the Tribulation in a few books of the Old Testament. For example,

See, the **day of the LORD is coming** --a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger-- to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. **10** The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. **The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light**. **11** I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. Isaiah 13:9-11

No one can say for sure just what will be the cause of the darkness that will engulf the earth at this time. However, with **multiple great earthquakes, aberrant solar activity, the likely asteroid collisions with the earth's surface, likely multiple nuclear bomb explosions at some point (leading to "nuclear winter"), volcanic eruptions and massive spewing of dark ash**, etc., it is not difficult to imagine non-supernatural causes of this darkness. As we know, God may simply bring this darkness onto the earth via a supernatural miracle… that is just as simple for Him. Although, as has been noted earlier, God usually does not act in this manner.

The scripture continues and notes that the stars of heaven fell to earth. It may not be coincidental at all that there are so many astronomers nowadays that warn us every few years about the possible soon crashing into the earth of **one asteroid or another**. If and when one of these "stars" does make a "direct hit", an incredible earthly crisis will result. Things such as mountains (crumpling to the ground after a massive earthquake and/or volcano) and islands (e.g. being destroyed by a massive Tsunami) moving "out of their place" would not be unlikely. The exact series of events will remain a mystery until God's judgment is actually unleashed during those days. However, we can be sure that the heavens and the earth will be changed adversely in a supernatural fashion as the Great Tribulation moves forward towards its climatic event!

Naturally, men and women will do whatever they can to protect themselves during this perilous time. Since much of the man-made protection of houses and buildings will be gone,

many will head for the mountains and caves for protection. According to these verses, at least a large portion of those left on the earth to experience this destruction will understand that it is coming from a wrathful God as punishment for their rejection of Him and His edicts. They will do their best to hide from His wrath. Of course, this is *never* possible.

With the opening of the first six seals, the various, consecutive catastrophic events of the Tribulation are revealed. The 8th Chapter will begin the dialog on what will occur after the seventh seal is opened. However, the 7th Chapter addresses another issue first…

Chapter 7: Jesus Seals 144,000 Jews

The vision that John sees here in Chapter 7 is often referred to as an "interlude". It is not simply a continuation of the description of judgment being handed down by God. The reader is given some further explanation about certain topics prior to resuming the description of God's future divine judgment of the world. This comes just before Jesus opens the last seal, i.e. the seventh seal.

This chapter deals with two distinct groups of people living on the earth during these years. One group consists of a remnant of the "chosen people" who will finally understand that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah… i.e. the person that they rejected two thousand years ago actually was (and still is) the real Messiah. The second group consists of Gentile people who will become saved even through those terribly dangerous years of the Tribulation.

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. [2] Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, [3] saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have **sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.**" Rev 7:1-3

The implication of these first three verses is that God will use four angels to unleash some of His judgment upon the earth during the tribulation period. Of course, in Chapter 6 we have just reviewed some of the judgment that will be brought to bear on the world during that time. However, God uses another angel to command these four angels to wait until God has sealed the servants of God with an eternal seal of salvation. Only then, will the judgment begin. These seals denote ownership and authority and provide the bearer with the comforting knowledge that he is now living under the safety net and the ultimate authority of God. It is interesting to note that in some fashion the seal of their salvation will evidently be applied to the foreheads of these future saints… as we shall see, the Antichrist will require his followers to receive a seal on their forehead or hand. It is not surprising that the Antichrist will copy the Lord.

[4] And I heard the number of those who were sealed. **One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed**: [5] of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; [6] of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; [7] of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; [8] of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed. Rev 7:2-8

The next seven verses simply show that God will seal (save) at least 12,000 people from twelve different tribes of Israel. It is interesting to note that there are over twenty different times that lists of the tribes of Israel are mentioned in the Scriptures. At times, Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh are substituted for Joseph when the list is given, often leaving out Levi (the priestly tribe) to arrive at the number of twelve tribes. In the list here in The Revelation, the tribes of Levi and Joseph are mentioned while those of Dan and Ephraim are omitted. Many believe that these two tribes were left out here because of their connection with idolatry in Israel. On the other hand, Dan is named first in the future distribution of the land mentioned in Ezekiel 48. The point is that the Bible almost always (if not always) references the twelve tribes of Israel when it is actually calling attention to *all* of the "chosen people" in all of the tribes. Therefore, it may be that God is saying that He plans to use *at least* 144,000 Jews to be His super evangelists in the early portion of the Tribulation – most likely gathered from all of the tribes of Israel. Certainly, they represent at least the twelve tribes enumerated. One other intriguing point to notice is that the first tribe of Israel listed is the tribe into which Jesus eventually was born.

On the other hand, it certainly would not be any difficulty whatsoever for God to literally choose exactly 12,000 Jews from each of all of the twelve tribes of Israel. Some suggest that over the last 2,000 years, there would have been too much intermarriage for there to be a pure genetic descendent from each tribe. First of all, given the fact that families and tribes typically would have migrated together into the world, I doubt that to be true even if God had not moved to prevent this situation. More importantly, God could have providentially protected and separated out any number of Jews from each tribe for His missionary use during the Tribulation. God often uses this type of providential care for His people.

The 144,000 will be sealed for their protection, to serve God as His ministers and evangelists. This will not be that unusual. Throughout history God has protected those that belong to Him. Here are just a few examples:

1. Noah and his family were protected as they lived through the world-wide flood.
2. Rahab was kept from harm during the destruction of Jericho.
3. Lot and his daughters were brought out before the fire and brimstone devastated Sodom.
4. The children of Israel were protected from the death angel in Egypt.

Throughout the judgments the 144,000 will preach the Word with vigor and great effectiveness. They will confront unbelievers with their sin, and call for repentance and faith in the Savior, proclaiming that the cataclysmic events are the work of God as His righteous judgment on the earth. Despite Satan's best efforts many scholars believe that these Jews will all survive to meet Christ on Mount Zion at His Second Coming. There are others that believe that after their finished work here on earth, God will either translate them into heaven or that many will be martyred and join the other Tribulation saints in heaven. In any case, these 144,000 Jewish believers will do a great work for Christ during this very difficult time. They will be blessed by God for their great service and faith.

As is clearly apparent from this chapter, God has definitely not finished with His "chosen people" as some theologians claim. Israel (and Jerusalem) will become the major point of focus once again during this seven year period. These saved Jews will become incredible evangelists for God. They will spread the gospel during the early years of the Tribulation with amazing effectiveness. Along with the troubling conditions that will be on the earth in those early days of the Tribulation, these super evangelists will be successful in winning millions of people to Christ. Unfortunately, as the Tribulation progresses, the Antichrist will be making his evil presence increasingly felt. There will be millions that choose Christ, but even more millions that are intimidated into accepting the "mark of the beast".

A great deal of space was allotted (in Section 2) to show the reasons why I believe strongly that God has not finished with His "chosen people", Israel. I believe that He will once again deal with them as a nation and people during this time of Tribulation. I do believe that God deals with all individuals in the same manner with respect to eternal salvation. However, in regards to certain things, God has in the past, and will in the future, deal with Israel separately from His dealings with the Gentile nations. Why? Well, God wants to bring back a remnant of the Jews to a saving relationship with His Son. By God's actions in the early part of the Tribulation (winning the war(s) for Israel and pouring out His Spirit on the Jewish people), many Jews will turn back to Him. Secondly, God *always* keeps His promises. God made several covenants with Israel in the Old Testament that have not totally been honored, yet. God can be counted on to keep these promises. Many verses were listed earlier to show the biblical prophetic verses that pointed to Israel returning to God in the end-times. Here are just a sampling of the many…

"And **I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son**, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born. Zech. 12:10

"In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity. Zech 13:1

In the whole land," declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; **yet one-third will be left in it**. [9] This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, **'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"** Zech 13:8-9

Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. [26] And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "**The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. [27] And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."** Romans 11:25-27

The scene in heaven continues…

[9] After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,** [10] and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" [11] All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, [12] saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen." [13] Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" [14] And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Rev 7:9-14

The next scene shows a great mass of people in heaven, adorned in white robes, from all nations and races of people. These folks have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus and subsequently died. They were all praising God and Jesus who were on their thrones. One of the elders who was there and was also involved in the worship turned to John and asked the apostle, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" John knew that the elder already was fully aware of the correct answer, so he just replied, "Sir, you know." And, of course, the elder did indeed know and told John and the rest of the world the answer… that the people who were there praising God and Jesus at that time were those saints who had accepted Jesus as their Savior during the Tribulation… only to die soon thereafter, most all by way of a martyr's death for their strong faith in Jesus!

The concluding three verses point out that their faith was very well placed and even though they certainly did have to suffer greatly for a "season", their eternal lives promised to be totally glorious! They will never hunger or thirst any longer. More incredibly, they will never shed a tear again due to sadness or anxiety or pain… or any other reason!!! Why? Because the Lamb of God, now seated in His throne in heaven will be their Shepherd forevermore.

Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. [16] **They shall neither hunger anymore nor**

thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; [17] for **the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.**" Rev 7:15-17

Summary: (Chapters 4-7): John is next shown "a door standing open in heaven." The voice that John had first heard then said, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." Obviously, Jesus was about to show John what was going to happen one day in the future. John found himself immediately in the spirit and in heaven! In fact, the description that follows by John makes it apparent that the apostle has been taken to the throne room of God! The thrones of God and the Son were surrounded by beautiful and important angels. There was a constant song of praise being sung… "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." Worship was continuous, day and night.

Incredibly, John saw the Father holding a scroll in His right hand. John somehow knew that it had to be opened, but there had been no one found who was worthy and able to break the seals on the document. Recognizing the importance of the task (the opening of the scroll would allow the Godhead to reclaim the title deed to the earth), John began to weep. Then one of the elders comforted him by saying, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." Yes, Jesus would be able and willing to open the scroll. The mighty angels sang out to Jesus in praise and worship, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. [10] You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Because of what Jesus had done for mankind, He alone was worthy to reclaim the earth for the world and those who had chosen to follow Him. It was time next to open the scroll, one seal at a time.

In the sixth chapter, Jesus opened one seal followed by another. The opening of the first four seals revealed the infamous judgments often called the "four horsemen of the apocalypse." They were, in order, the white horse (false peace from the Antichrist), red horse (the wars that will soon follow), black horse (worldwide famine and, very likely, economic collapse will come next), and then the pale horse (named Death and Hades, that would pour out even more deadly judgments on the earth from pestilence, famine, beasts, etc.). The fifth seal revealed the Tribulation martyrs under the altar of God asking when God would avenge their blood and pour out His vengeance upon the unrepentant sinners of the world. They were comforted and dressed in white robes and told to be patient just a little longer. The sixth seal opening resulted in a massive earthquake and other incredible solar and planetary destructive events. These cataclysmic events created so much terror that many unrepentant souls prayed to be crushed by falling rocks rather than face these judgments of a Holy God. Before the seventh seal was opened by Jesus, John was shown some important additional information related to this time of Tribulation.

In Chapter 7, a seal of God was put on the foreheads of 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each of twelve tribes of Israel. These tribes were listed. They will be supernaturally protected from the judgments befalling others while they function as great evangelists during the Tribulation. They will be responsible for many people, both Jew and Gentile coming to a saving relationship with Jesus during the very difficult years of the Tribulation. Many of these new converts will pay with their lives as they will suffer martyrdom at the hands of the Antichrist. They will immediately pass into heaven and be seen before the throne of Jesus. They also will be dressed in white robes, symbolic of purity. One of the elders said who they were… "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. He continued on to remind John just how beautiful their eternity would be with Jesus… For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Next, Jesus will open the seventh and last seal…

Those prophecy teachers who hold to the **pre-wrath view** of the Rapture are convinced that the Rapture will occur just prior to the opening of the seventh seal. This will occur *after* the Great Tribulation (which begins with the opening of the fifth seal), which they say is "cut short" just before the actual "wrath of God" is reigned down upon the earth and unrepentant mankind. Recall from Section 2 that, in their opinion, this time is the actual *Day of the Lord*. It is their view that the timing of this Seventh Seal is well into the second half of the seven year Tribulation. The Revelation, Chapter 8, speaks of this time. Of course, it is their view that the Church will be subject to all of the judgments up until this time… as they would not technically be due to God's wrath.

There is a significant difference of opinion on the timing of many of the events and judgments during this seven year Tribulation. For example, the noted **posttribulation Rapture** proponent, Robert Gundry, says, the seventh seal and the seventh trumpet bring us to the *end* of the Tribulation and that the seven bowls are clustered at the end. The sixth seal leads us to the final catastrophe of judgment." (Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, p. 76) Of course, those with the pretribulation view suggest that these judgments occur consecutively; the seventh seal judgment coming *years before* the seventh bowl judgment.

Chapter 8: The Seventh Seal is Opened (loosing the seven trumpets)

[1] When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

The next chapter begins with the opening of the last of the seven seals. This seventh seal releases the seven trumpet judgments which, in turn, will release the seven bowl judgments. The opening of this last seal is followed by a time of silence in heaven as the significance of this event is contemplated. This silence will last for thirty minutes. Thirty is the number in the Bible for mourning (e.g. Israel mourned for thirty days over the deaths of Moses and Aaron). Certainly, there will have been much recent earthly chaos for which to mourn. Other commentators believe this silent period in heaven exists to draw attention to the increased divine wrath that immediately will follow on earth toward the unrepentant sinners. Possibly, it may be an indication that there still is a little time for any remaining earthly sinner to repent… but, not much time. Right after this thirty minutes, the judgment of the seven trumpets is loosed. It should be made clear, that the opening of the seventh seal results in the opening of *all* seven trumpets. As will be seen, the first four trumpets will release judgments that will destroy the ecology of the earth; the next two bring on demons to terrify and destroy humanity. The last trumpet will result in the bowl judgments being released.

[2] And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.
[3] Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the **golden altar** which was **before the throne**. [4] And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. [5] Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were **noises**, **thunderings, lightnings**, and an **earthquake**. [6] So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.
Rev 8:2-6

The seventh seal opening will result in seven angels, who are already in their heavenly position before the throne of God, receiving seven individual trumpets. Just after that happens, one additional angel will come onto the scene, and walk over to stand before the golden altar which stands in front of the throne of God. A few commentators believe this "angel" to be Jesus. The majority, however, believe it to be another angel. For one thing, the Greek word *allos* is used for angel in both verse one and two. For another thing, Jesus is referred to as the "Angel of the Lord" or the "Angel of God" in the Old Testament… not as simply an angel. There is no recorded instance of Jesus appearing on earth as any form of an angel after His ascension into heaven in His glorified body. Jesus, they rightly say, is now in the position of judgment of the earth. He is holding the book of the seven seals and He is directing all of the activities during this seven year period from His Heavenly Throne. Therefore, we can properly assume that this is an actual angelic being.

This angel will carry a golden censer. When that time comes, he will be given incense to offer up to God along with the prayers of all of the saints. He will place the prayers of the saints

and sweet incense onto the heavenly altar of incense. This altar has its counterpart in the altar of incense in the earthly Temple. In the Old Testament days, the priest would sacrifice twice daily (morning and evening sacrifice), using fiery coals from the brazen altar. The angel next will transport this sacrifice into the Holy Place to the altar of incense (e.g. Ex. 30:7,8; 2 Chron. 29:11).

John saw him ignite the incense, which rose toward heaven, emblematic of the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5:8). This is a picture of all of these prayers, prayers that are always ascending into heaven, and thereby to God. Many of these prayers of men ask God to rectify the wrongs of this world. While this sweet smelling incense lofted upwards in front of God, the angel took some of the fire from the altar, placed it into the censer, and tossed it down toward the earth. That is, at some point people want to see the unrepentant sinners and Satan get what they so richly deserve.

At the time pictured here, Jesus is about to answer many of these prayers as He will give the proper judgment to the unrepentant sinners that are still alive on the earth. The action of the angel throwing down the burning fire/coals will result in a powerful reaction from heaven. Great sounds will be heard throughout heaven and earth. In addition to the sound, the universe experiences an episode of powerful thunder and lightning. Once again, the earth will be hit with at least one more massive earthquake. All of these things follow the opening of that seventh seal. This prepared the way for the first of the seven trumpet-bearing angels to raise their trumpet to their lips and blow their horn. The next stage of even greater judgment from heaven is about to begin…

[7] The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. Rev 8:7

God's judgment will again rain down on the earth! Hail and fire will kill many people around the globe. The fires that are started by this heavenly event cause massive forest fires around the world. The result will be the horrific loss of a third of all the trees and vegetation to these fires. The worst part of the Tribulation will have begun with a terrible vengeance from God. He will rain down His justice upon a sinful generation of mankind. Mankind will finally get the justice that it deserves… not the grace that God had freely offered for so many millennia.

[8] Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. [9] And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. Rev. 8:8-9

Further destruction continues with the blowing of the second angel's trumpet. No one can be certain what the "great mountain" actually stands for. It could be an actual mountain that will be ripped apart and burned by impact from an asteroid or meteor. It may simply be the extra-celestial body itself as it crashes into the earth. Whatever the case, much of the earth's

crust is burned and plummets into the oceans of the world. The oceans will be stained with the blood of death and/or turned the color of blood from the horrific destruction of the earth. Imagine the devastating effects from the tsunami(s) accompanying such an event. One-third of the ocean's fish will die at that time. One-third of all of man's ships will be destroyed. Quite obviously, the sea will suffer terrible damage by the blowing of this second trumpet.

[10] Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. [11] The name of the star is **Wormwood**. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter. Rev. 8:10-11

The carnage continues. Another angel will blow his trumpet. A great star will race toward the earth. Many astronomers in recent years have warned of possible asteroid collisions in the not too distant future. Well, apparently at least one will crash into our earth at this time. On the other hand, there are a variety of interpretations of this verse. No one really knows how one-third of the fresh waters of the earth will become contaminated. However, they will. Somehow, the result of this catastrophic event is that one-third of the world's fresh water will become sour and non-potable. Therefore, of course, many people will die from these poisoned waters.

[12] Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night. Rev 8:12

The fourth angel then sounds his trumpet. Again the Bible states that one-third of the world will be adversely affected… in a terrible manner. The sun, the moon and even one-third of the stars will be darkened! Old Testament prophets, such as Isaiah and Joel, wrote of these days (e.g. Isaiah 13:9-11, Joel 2:10, 31-32). Jesus also spoke of these days when He gave His famous Olivet Discourse concerning the end-times… just before His return to earth. He said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Matt 24:29

By some mechanism now unknown to man, all of the heavenly bodies will be changed in incredible ways that will have terrible consequences for those people still left on earth.

[13] And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" Rev 8:13

Before the sounding of the last three angels trumpets, an additional warning is given. The word *woe* is universally used in the Bible to express judgment, destruction, and calamity.

Three "woes" are sounded as a severe warning to all of the remaining inhabitants of the world. In this particular instance, the word translated here as "angel" should be translated as "eagle". That is, John actually said, "And I looked, and I heard an eagle flying through the midst of heaven." In fact, at that time, the people on earth can anticipate actually seeing and hearing an eagle fly throughout the heavens announcing what was about to happen down on earth. "Woes" were attached to these last three trumpets because these next three judgments were going to be increasing difficult, if not impossible, to bear.

Chapter 9: The fifth angel sounded. Demonic locusts are released from "abyss"

[1] **Then the fifth angel sounded**: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. [2] And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. [3] Then out of the smoke **locusts came upon the earth**. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. [4] **They were commanded** not **to harm** the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but **only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.** [5] And **they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months.** Their torment was like the **torment of a scorpion** when it strikes a man. [6] In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them. Rev 9:1-6

The next chapter picks up where the last leaves off. The fifth angel now blows his trumpet to release the first *woe* (which, of course, is the same as the fifth trumpet judgment). Recall that the last three trumpets are spoken of as particularly terrible judgments that God is leveling upon the earth. All of these events will take place in the last half of the Tribulation, often referred to as the Great Tribulation.

This first one begins with John seeing a star falling from heaven to the earth. This "star" is given the key to the "bottomless pit"… a pit that has smoke billowing out of it to a degree that the sky above is blackened. This "star" is referred to as "him" in the second sentence so it is obviously an individual of some sort… either a man or an angel. The strong consensus is that it is an angel, as angels have been used by God during the Tribulation in similar roles, but never a man. J. Vernon McGee believes this angel is Satan himself. Others think that it is an angel from heaven that Jesus will use to begin this time of trouble. In any case, he will be given the power and the authority to open the "bottomless pit" (i.e. the *abyss*).

Incredibly, locusts suddenly appear out of the smoke. These creatures have the appearance of scorpions and will be God's tool to punish the unrepentant sinners still remaining on earth. Virtually all prophecy scholars are in agreement that these "locusts" represent actual demons that have been held in this *abyss* until this time period by God. They will be released in the latter portion of the Tribulation as one aspect of the severe judgment being inflicted onto the unsaved sinners in the world. These demons will be single-minded in their efforts to torture mankind. In fact, it is interesting that God commanded that they refrain from attacking the crops

and vegetables (their normal food). Instead, God wants them to torment all remaining lost men and women on earth… only them. Those with the seal of God will be safe from these "locusts"… however, they will still be the hunted of the Antichrist.

These tortured people will be in so much pain, both physically and emotionally, that they will want to die. But, death will elude them for a little while longer. They will not even be able to commit suicide during this time.

The demon locusts are described as follows:

The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. [8] They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. [9] And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. [10] They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. **Their power was to hurt men five months.** Rev 9:7-10

God does limit this particular judgment to five months… five horribly painful months for those attacked and stung by these demonic creatures. It is not that the remainder of the Great Tribulation is to be easy, but only that a different type of judgment will befall those fallen men and women. Before leaving the topic of the demon locusts, John is shown that these creatures are led by a demon with the name of Apollyon (also known as *Abaddon*). This demon will very likely be considered one of the leaders of Satan's army… one of his chief officers.

And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name **Apollyon.** [12] One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things. Rev 9:11-12

After this hideous fifth trumpet judgment, the sixth angel sounds his trumpet…

[13] Then the **sixth angel sounded**: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, [14] saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." [15] So the **four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind**.
Rev 9:13-15

The sixth angel's trumpet sounding releases four demons that had been previously held bound at the Euphrates River. This was done at the command of Jesus. In this case, and in a few others that we have already seen, Jesus was using demons to work out His will on this earth. It is an interesting fact that God can and does use anything and anyone (saint or unrepentant sinner) to work out His plan for eternity. This is seen to happen quite often throughout the Holy Bible.

Fully one-third of the remaining men and women on earth will now die. Recall that during the seal judgment, one-fourth had already died secondary to the wars, famine, and plagues

mentioned concerning the four horsemen of the apocalypse. This now amounts to 50% of the world's population that enters into the seven year Tribulation will die due to the judgments handed down by Jesus. Many more will be martyred because of their faith in Jesus. The number of deaths during these few years will total in the multiple billions!

16 Now the number of **the army of the horsemen was two hundred million**; I heard the number
of them. 17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of
fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of
lions; and out of their mouths came **fire, smoke, and brimstone**. Rev. 9:16-17

Among prophecy scholars there is a difference of opinion as to the identity of the two hundred million horsemen. For example, Tim LaHaye thinks that their description eliminates the possibility that they could actually be humans. He thinks that they represent a hideous collection of demons. He says, "this is a literal description of unnatural, demon-like evil spirits that come out of the Abyss, advancing under the leadership of the four bound angels." (*Revelation Unveiled*, p. 174) On the other hand, John Walvoord and Hal Lindsey do believe that they represent human soldiers. Lindsey says, "I believe these 200 million troops are Red Chinese soldiers accompanied by other Eastern allies… For the first time in history, there will be a full invasion of the West by the Orient." (*There's A New World Coming*, p. 140) Walvoord explains the graphic description of the horses and riders, "whether these are symbols or the best description John can give of modern warfare, this is an awesome picture of an almost irresistible military force destroying all that opposes it." (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 167)

As seen in the next verse, these demons (or demonically influenced humans) riding on their strange looking horses will be responsible for the deaths of over 1.5 billion people! Their method of warfare will include fire and brimstone… similar to the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. As an interesting side point, in the region of the Dead Sea there are large deposits of brimstone. When it burns, it melts and produces large amounts of colored, suffocating gases.

18 **By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed--by the fire and the smoke and the**
brimstone which came out of their mouths. 19 For their power is in their mouth and in their
tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm. Rev. 9:18-19

People often suggest that if they only had more proof that Jesus really was the Savior, or that the God of the Bible really was the one true God… they would turn to Jesus and accept Him as Lord and Savior. Frankly, God has given a massive amount of evidence for the truth of His reality… and that of Jesus. The evidence is in nature, history, archaeology and, simple logic.

Many people have had their lives changed from that of an atheist (or Muslim, Buddhist, etc.) to a Christian as they studied the evidence for (and against) Christianity. Very intelligent people such as C.S. Lewis, Josh McDowell and Lee Stroebel were avowed atheists who decided to "pursue the truth" and let the "chips fall where they may". I could name a few formerly

atheist friends who have had exactly the same experience. All of these people thought that the evidence that they would discover would affirm their atheist philosophy. Fortunately for them, they found just the opposite. They are now strong Christians who attempt to lead others to the truth.

However, the vast majority of people (at least the adults) just do not want to pursue this truth. I am absolutely positive on this point as I have several relatives who will not even read one or two books on the topic of the truth of the gospel. My word; that might take five or six hours of their time. Apparently, the possible reward of an eternal life in heaven (should they believe on the Lord Jesus as they Savior) is not worth their effort or time. I really cannot fathom why a person would not spend the necessary time to see if Jesus is actually God. Satan must have something to do with this issue… and the pride of the individual. What else? Since over two billion people currently do believe in Christ, it is almost too difficult to believe that most of these doubters think that only ignorant or stupid people would believe the Bible. As has been shown earlier, many of the greatest minds in history were and are Christians. So what is the real reason *not* to pursue the truth of the gospel. Laziness? Pride? The real cause, sadly, is certainly a mystery to me.

After saying all these things, the following verses will not be a surprise…

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. [21] And **they did not repent** of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. Rev 9:20-21

Simply put, the portion of mankind who were killed as a result of this 6th trumpet judgment were those who had rejected Christ. These people were acting like Pharaoh, they knew that this judgment was from God, but they "hardened their hearts". They, instead, had taken the "mark of the beast". Surely, what horribly misplaced allegiance!

Chapter 10: The Mighty Angel and the Little Scroll

Chapter 10 speaks of the time period between the 6th and 7th trumpets. It is analogous to the time period that was mentioned between the 6th and 7th seal judgments (detailed in Chapter 7). In fact, the section extending from 10:1-11:12 is another of the "interludes", an interlude of quiet before the raging of judgment again. This interlude also parallels another that will occur between the sixth and seventh bowls seen later in John's vision. This longest of the interludes is given as comfort to the assaulted believers alive during this time as they endure previously unimaginable demonic terror and an overwhelmingly sinful world. God comforts His people. Of course, He is still in control. He has written down the outcome and it is assured. God will defeat Satan and usher in His Kingdom!

I saw still another mighty angel (the term for angel used here means an angel "of the same kind") coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was

like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. [2] He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, [3] and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. Rev 10:1-3

Although there are some who suggest that this angel is none other than Jesus, most believe it to be an actual angel. For one thing, the term used points to an actual angel, not one of the Godhead. Other reasons for not identifying this angel as Christ are:

- John says that he saw another *mighty angel* – John would not confuse Jesus with an angel.
- Jesus does not appear in The Revelation as an angel.
- When mention of Christ as an angel in the Old Testament it is always as an angel of the Lord… not simply as an angel.

The main reason that some excellent theologians suggest that this might be a reference to Jesus is due to the description of the angel. Obviously, this angel is adorned quite impressively. However, there is no doubt that this is a very "mighty" *angel*, an angel that is a special envoy for Jesus to the earth in the last days. For these reasons, it is not difficult to understand why he would have such a magnificent appearance. Another example of an angel with a glorious appearance is found later in this book… I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and **the earth was illuminated with his glory**. Rev 18:1
In Rev. 18, no one questions that this is the description of an angel. No one need question that conclusion in this chapter either.

Continuing on, this powerful angel is now in possession of the "little book" that had recently been held by Jesus (the same book mentioned in Rev 5:1). The seven seal book had gone from the Father, to the Son, and now, to this mighty angel. Most prophecy scholars believe this "little book" to be the same book as that first opened by Jesus in Chapter 6.

The angel stands with one foot on the sea and the other on land. This indicates that he has authority over both land and sea… given to him by Jesus to dole out these next judgments. This is all consistent with the fact that this book holds the "title deed" to the earth.

This angel then cried out with a loud voice…

When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. [4] Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them." Rev 10:3-4

As a response to the mighty angel's voice, seven thunders spoke out. Most prophecy scholars believe these "seven thunders" to be the voice of Jesus. They refer to Psalm 29 where the voice of the Lord is noted to be like seven different thunders. The Jews spoke of thunder as the "seven voices". Of course, no one can be absolutely sure. In any event, John heard their audible voices and was about to write concerning the message they gave. Suddenly, John was told not to write about the subject matter being discussed at that time. We do not know why. It

is the only thing in the book of Revelation that was kept sealed up. Everything else was reported to us by the Apostle John.

The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven [6] and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that **there should be delay no longer, [7] but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished**, as He declared to His servants the prophets. Rev 10:5-7

Here we see that this angel who is the messenger of Jesus will lift up his hand toward heaven and take an oath to Jesus, the Creator of heaven and Earth. Here is another excellent reason to believe that this angel was not Jesus.

This angel noted that there was no reason for any further delay in the judgments that Jesus planned to mete out on the world. It was time for the seventh angel to blow his trumpet and let the mystery of God for these end-times continue to unfold. The ultimate answer to this mystery would be the Second Coming of Jesus and the setting up of His Kingdom!

[8] Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." [9] So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." [10] Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. [11] And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings." Rev 10:8-11

Now John is spoken to by Jesus and told to go to the angel and ask for the "little book"… the "title deed" to the earth. John did this and the angel did give him the book. This exchange was accompanied by the angel's comment to, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as **sweet as honey in your mouth**." John did just as he was told and the result was just as predicted. So what does this all mean?

The Word of God is inherently sweet. God wants us to "eat" it. Remember Jesus is the Word and Jesus is the Bread of Life. In Jeremiah, it is put this way… Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; Jer 15:16
Also it is noted in Ezekiel, "He said to me, "Son of man, **eat what you find; eat this scroll**, and go, speak to the house of Israel." [2] So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. [3] And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you." So I ate, and **it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness.** Ezek 3:1-3

So at first, the word of our Lord was sweet to John. This was as it should have been. For the Christian, there is nothing to fear in God's Word. In fact, the eternal truths are glorious,

indeed. However, after John had time to reflect upon the meaning of the edicts and judgments that Jesus was about to hand down on the world, the knowledge made his "stomach bitter". It was difficult for John to deal with the judgment that was about to be unleashed upon the world… even though the world was deserving of it.

Chapter 11: The Two Witnesses

The first fourteen verses of this chapter continue to deal with the interlude between the 6th and 7th trumpets. The chapter concludes with the blowing of the 7th trumpet. In general, we shall see the Lord dealing once again with His "chosen people", the nation of Israel. Remember, now that the Church has been lifted out of the world via the Rapture, God is returning to finish His work with Israel… bringing them back, as a nation, to finally recognize the true Messiah, Jesus.

In the opening verses of the chapter, John is given the task of measuring the Temple. This Temple will be the one that will be built in the early years of the Tribulation (as was discussed in the previous section on the Temples of God).

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. ² But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. Rev 11:1-2

John will measure the Tribulation Temple. This measurement will include the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place but not the Court of the Gentiles. The reason given for John not to concern himself with this outer court is that the Gentiles will still be in control of this area. It is important to note that John is to measure "those who worship there" as well. God is also asking John for an account of those people who visit the Temple… what is their purpose in being there, what is their character, and to whom do they place their faith?

³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and **they will prophesy** one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

In reviewing over a dozen commentaries on this verse, there is a reasonable agreement on the fact that no one can know for sure just who these two witnesses will be. For interest, let me list the individuals who are most often suggested as these two men:

- Elijah - In fact, every one of the prophecy scholars that I referenced chose this great prophet as one of the witnesses. This is due to a variety of reasons: he was most often listed to be one of these witnesses in early writings of the Church Fathers, he was translated and therefore has yet to die, and the prophet Malachi predicted that he would return before "that great and terrible day of the Lord" (Malachi 4:5), plus he had a ministry of preventing rain in his Old Testament days, just as the witnesses will do during the Tribulation.

- Enoch – He, like Elijah, has yet to die (he also was translated). Recall, Hebrews 9:27 says that "It is appointed unto men once to die." Therefore, in order for him to die, he must come back to earth again. However, some believe Enoch is unlikely to be chosen by God for this task since he was not a Jew. He lived hundreds of years before Abraham was even born.
- Moses – There are at least four reasons Moses is often mentioned as one of the two witnesses: Moses is obviously a very important member of the Jewish family, Satan tried to acquire the body of Moses after his death… some suggest that this was to prevent Moses from interfering with Satan's plans during the Tribulation, Moses turned water into blood during his lifetime… this will be done again by the two witnesses, he appeared with Elijah and Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. For these reasons, some think Moses will be one of the two witnesses.
- John the Baptist - He was identified as being in the same likeness as Elijah by none other than Jesus; He heralded the coming of Jesus at His first coming… so, he may be helping to prepare the way for His Second Coming.
- Two totally unknown men – Likely, these would be two who turned to Christ after the Rapture.

Along with the obvious fact that no one can know for sure who either of these two men will be, it is also true that there is no total consensus as to where to place their 3 ½ year ministry. On this point, however, there are good reasons to suggest that they will come onto the scene during the last half of the Tribulation… the Great Tribulation period. Scholars such as Walvoord, John MacArthur, and Harold Wilmington believe this to be the case. These witnesses are going to require divine protection from the persecution of the Antichrist. This evil, Satan-controlled, persecution will be markedly more severe during the second half of the seven years of Tribulation. In fact, for much of the first 3 ½ years, the Antichrist will be stealthily moving himself into his eventual position of world leader… most of this will be done via political maneuvering, not murderous persecution. The latter technique will mostly be saved until the last portion of these years. On the other hand, there are still excellent theologians, such as Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye and J. Vernon McGee who have the opinion that these two witnesses will do their work in the first 3 1/2 years of this Tribulation. Only God knows for sure… but we do know what it is that God has these two witnesses accomplish. They will be powerful witnesses for God during this period of time.

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.
Rev 11:4

In this verse, the witnesses are identified as olive trees and lampstands. The olive tree and the lampstand appear to refer back to the same metaphor used in Zechariah:

"there is a **lampstand** of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. ³ Two **olive trees** are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the

other at its left." [4] So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, "What are these, my lord?" [5] Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." [6] So he answered and said to me: "**This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,'**
Zech 4:2-6

In the time of Zechariah, the two olive trees referred to Joshua and Zerubbabel, the two leaders of Israel in that time. These two were witnesses for God in the Old Testament times just as the two witnesses here in Revelation were to be for God during the Tribulation. The olive trees and the lampstands are symbolic of the fact that the message that God will have for the world during the Tribulation will be delivered through the power of the Holy Spirit working through these two divinely protected men. Olive oil was commonly used in lamps as the mechanism of power… to produce light. It is easy to see the analogy to the Holy Spirit working through these two men to bring revival and the light of God to so many in the end-times.

[5] And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. [6] These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. Rev 11:5-6

These witnesses will be supernaturally protected by God. Although the Antichrist and his cohorts will want very much to shut them up (actually to kill them), God will not allow this to happen, at least until they have accomplished their work for God on this earth. After their job is finished, God will bring them home to heaven. This is something we all should remember. As long as we are working for our Lord, God will make sure that we are able to accomplish all that He has for us to do before we go to be with Him in heaven.

Note also that God will give these two witnesses supernatural powers to protect themselves and to affect nature as a means of bringing judgment onto the world. They will be able to shut off all rainfall (as did Elijah in his day), turn certain waters into blood (as did Moses in Old Testament times), and strike the earth with various plagues (again, as did Moses). They will be given the authority and the ability to do these things "as often as they desire." God will place great trust in these men. All of these events will be brought on as godly judgments onto the fallen world.

[7] **When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them**. [8] And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. [9] Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. [10] And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. Rev 11:7-10

After these godly prophets have accomplished their work, either Satan or the Antichrist will ascend out of the *abyss* and kill these two great men. Most commentators believe this reference is to the Antichrist. John Walvoord suggests that it is Satan. In any case, Satan or his henchman comes against the two prophets just as soon as God removes the protective hedge from around them. They quickly become martyrs for Christ.

Jerusalem is said to be like Sodom and Egypt in these verses. This city that is so important to God was also likened to Sodom (because of its *immorality*) during the time of Isaiah (Isaiah 1:10). Egpyt has always been a symbol of *worldliness*, and that is why this nation is used as a symbol for Jerusalem here.

The bodies of the two witnesses are placed on display in Jerusalem to demonstrate the power of the Antichrist. He is proud of the fact that he has just conquered two of God's appointed men. The entire world will be able to see them "lie in state" in Jerusalem for 3 ½ days. Given the fact that these witnesses spent a great deal of time and effort delivering God's judgment upon a sinful, unrepentant world, it is not surprising that millions of people will rejoice in their deaths. However, that is not the end of the story. As Paul Harvey used to say, in the next couple of paragraphs you are going to read "*the rest of the story"*...

[11] Now **after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them**, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. [12] And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. [13] In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. Rev 11:11-13

The Antichrist, the False Prophet and Satan celebrate too soon. With the cameras still trained on Jerusalem, suddenly the two prophets of God come back to life! Fear and awe strike all those who witness this amazing godly miracle. More amazing events quickly follow. These two saints then miraculously are transported up into heaven in a cloud, in a similar manner as Jesus ascended two thousand years ago. Also, just as an earthquake accompanied some of the amazing events surrounding Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, there is a great earthquake at the time of this ascension. This earthquake will probably be limited to Jerusalem. However, with cable and satellite television, the whole world is aware of what is happening. One tenth of Jerusalem is destroyed! Seven thousand people die in this disaster. Finally, after all of this, many of those that remain alive recognize that this is the work of God… only then, do they give to God the glory that He so richly deserves. This concludes the second "woe"…

[14] The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly. Rev 11:14

Those who hold to the **mid-tribulation Rapture view** believe that Jesus will come for His Church at the mid-point of the seven year Tribulation. In the view of Norman Harrison, this will come just before the sounding of the *seventh trumpet judgment* spoken of in Rev. 11. The fact that Rosenthal (pre-wrath view) believes the *seventh seal judgment* comes approximately five years into the Tribulation, yet Harrison says that only the mid-point (the 3 ½ year mark) has been reached by the *seventh trumpet judgment* simply shows how no one really knows exactly when during *these seven years these judgments will be meted out.*

John Walvoord and Tim LaHaye suggest that the third woe is synonymous with the seventh angel sounding his trumpet. This introduces the next series of seven judgments, the seven bowls.

15 **Then the seventh angel sounded:** And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" 16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. Rev 11:15-17

With the sounding of the seventh trumpet, John will hear voices in heaven. They will be shouting that ***the Lord Jesus has decided that the time has come to take back the earth from Satan.*** Jesus had once told his apostles when asked about the time for the restoration of the Kingdom…"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority." Acts 1:7 Apparently, this will be the time that the whole world will learn about Jesus reclaiming His Kingdom here on earth!

Once again, the kingdoms of this world would be ruled over by Christ! The twenty-four elders were also fully aware of this happening and worshipped God, because it was now that time in eternity when everything was about to be made right. Soon Satan would be no more and, literally, all would be right in the world… the Millennial Kingdom was about to begin.

The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth." Rev 11:18

All of the nations of earth were terribly upset as God's judgment continued to escalate upon the unrepentant sinners that remained after the Rapture. During this tribulation time period, God was conducting the Bema Judgment of the saints in heaven. At some point in the future (after the Millennial Kingdom), all of those people who had died without Christ would face the Great White Throne Judgment. Of course, this final judgment would end with the eternal damnation of all those who appeared before God at that time.

[19] Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail. Rev 11:19

Interestingly, John was given a viewing of the Ark of the Covenant that is within the Heavenly Temple. Although the Temple has come and gone on the earth over the last two thousand years, once it was established by God in heaven, it has always been there. The Holy of Holies in the Heavenly Temple is where God reigns on His throne in all of His glory.

Summary (Chapter 8-11):

With the 144,000 Jewish evangelists being sealed for protection, Jesus now opens the seventh seal. This results in the seven trumpet judgments being unleashed on the earth. In other words, this unsealing of the seventh seal encompasses the blowing of the seven trumpets and even the judgment coming from the seven bowls (or vials) that follow. The first four trumpets result in devastation to the earth through fire, hail, meteor showers and possibly asteroid collisions. Both the sea and the fresh waters will be seriously compromised. One-third of sea life will die. One-third of the fresh waters will become non-potable. Nuclear winter from bombs is likely to result in massive environmental damage at some point of the Tribulation as well. In some way, the fourth trumpet results in a change in how the sun, moon, and stars appear on earth. Darkness will cover much of the earth. Unfortunately, that will not even be the worst of the judgments of God!

The fifth trumpet judgment results in the release of demonic locusts from the *abyss* to terrorize the earth and its inhabitants. The sixth trumpet also releases four "angels" (most likely demons) who had been bound near the Euphrates River. They will be responsible for an enemy force, 200 million strong, advancing from the east toward Israel. There is a difference of opinion as to whether this massive army will consist of demons or demon-possessed men. In any event, they will be responsible for killing one-third of the world's population! Simply put, the blowing of these six trumpets will have a devastating effect on the earth and the people therein. Plus, there is more to come.

Interestingly, Chapter 10 gives a little respite from the description of all of this carnage. Here John sees a mighty angel holding a little scroll (that lay open in his hand) come down from heaven. A voice from heaven told John to take the little scroll from the angel. When he did so, the angel told him to eat it. John did what he was told. It tasted sweet in his mouth, but had turned sour by the time it had reached his stomach. Most commentators believe that this means that John was pleased by the knowledge that the unrepentant sinners would get their just desserts,

but still felt some remorse at the carnage that had already been released and knowing that there was much more to come. The angel finished with telling John that "you must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

As Chapter 11 opens, John was given the task of measuring the Temple of God, as well as the altar. God told him to ignore the outer court as that had temporarily been given over to the Gentiles… which currently houses their Dome of the Rock. Two "witnesses" come on the scene as well. Their names are not given, but they may well be Elijah and Moses. The important point is that they will be remarkable men with a remarkable job to do. They will be given the job to testify to the world about Jesus for 3 ½ years. For this period of time, God will supernaturally protect them. They will have miracle-producing powers. After 3 ½ years has passed, the Antichrist will kill them. The powers of evil will gloat over their apparent victory as they disallow a proper burial and make them fodder for mocking. However, after 3½ days, God will breathe life into them once again, they will stand up and be seen by the world via the Internet and television. God will then translate them up into heaven while their enemies (and friends) look on! Another earthquake will befall Jerusalem, killing 7,000 people at that time. The survivors will give glory to God.

It will then be the time for the seventh trumpet to blow. As the 11th Chapter draws to a close, the angel sounds his trumpet and… Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

Chapter 12: The Woman and the Dragon

This next chapter continues to describe the dealings that God has with the nation of Israel. Israel was the "apple of God's eye" until its constant rejection of His precepts and Law, and especially its rejection of the true Messiah, who was, and is, God, Himself. This resulted in God turning His attention for this past two millennia to the Church - the Church being defined as those that have accepted Jesus as their Savior. However, as we have pointed out before, in the seven years prior to the onset of the Millennial Kingdom, God will once again turn back to Israel and bring that nation, as a whole, back into the fold.

Four "individuals" are introduced in this important chapter. They are:

- A beautifully adorned woman - Israel
- A Fiery Red Dragon - Satan
- A Male Child - Jesus
- The Archangel, Michael

The exact identity of the first three of these individuals is not revealed to the reader. Who or what do these three represent?

The twelfth chapter begins with a great sign from heaven. A beautifully adorned woman is seen, clothed with the sun and wearing a twelve starred garland on her head. She happens to also be "with child". The woman is Israel; the twelve stars represent the twelve tribes of Israel.

Ever since God chose to covenant with Abraham, the plan was for the Messiah to one day come from the line of Abraham. This, of course, did happen just like the Old Testament prophesied. Of course, the male child in this chapter is representative of the Messiah, Jesus. Note the opening verses…

Now **a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman** clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. [2] Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. Rev 12:1-2

The clothing of the woman almost assuredly refers back to Genesis 37 where Joseph describes his dream… Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the **sun**, the **moon**, and the **eleven stars** bowed down to me." Gen 37:9-10

The description continues with the description of Christ's and the world's great nemesis, Satan. He is referred to as the fiery dragon…

[3] And **another sign appeared in heaven**: behold, a great (because of his power), **fiery red dragon** (because of his murderous ways) having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. [4] His tail drew **a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth**.

John notes that Satan has seven heads with seven diadems. J. Vernon McGee believes that the seven heads is representative of the "perfection of wisdom" that characterized Lucifer in his original form. In addition, he has ten horns. The ten horns suggest the final division of the Roman Empire first described in detail by the prophet Daniel.

As many probably already are aware, when Satan was banished from heaven because of His prideful fall, fully one-third of the angels decided to join him… these angels are now called demons. Many roam the earth today doing their best to make things miserable for mankind… and they have much success, no doubt. However, their time is becoming very limited!

And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. [5] She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. Rev 12:2-5

We note in the above verses, that Satan was ready from prior to the birth of Jesus to do everything in his considerable power to destroy the world's only chance at salvation. Satan tried many times in the Old Testament to eliminate the Jewish race… hence, eliminating the possibility of Jesus. The idea of somehow hurting God's only Son and/or ruining the plans of the Holy Trinity has always been paramount in the mind of the evil Satan. He used King Herod in the infancy of Jesus to try desperately to destroy God's plans.

Satan also tried in the Old Testament days to cut off the line that was prophesied to bring forth the Messiah. Just one example of this desperate attempt is as follows…

When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family of the house of Judah. **11** But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, took **Joash** son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes who were about to be murdered and put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Because Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and wife of the priest Jehoiada, was Ahaziah's sister, she hid the child from Athaliah so she could not kill him. **12** **He remained hidden with them at the temple of God for six years** while Athaliah ruled the land.) 2 Chron 22:10-12

Of course, we know that God's plans cannot be thwarted. Due to God providentially protecting the toddler, Joash, the Davidic line that would one day lead to Jesus continued. Several years later, Joash did assume his rightful place as King of Israel. Centuries later, the Lord Jesus was born from this line… a descendant of Joash!

Jesus did come to Bethlehem, was indeed born, and successfully completed His incredible mission on earth. After Jesus rose from the dead and met with His friends, proving to them, once again, that He really was the Messiah and God the Son, He returned to heaven to sit at the right hand of His Father. Of course, that is where He is at this time.

6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days (i.e. 3 ½ yrs.).

The woman, Israel, is noted to one day flee into the wilderness of Israel in an attempt to escape the wrath of Satan, the dragon. God will provide for Israel during that time. This will occur after the Antichrist reveals his true, evil nature and begins his inexorable persecution of every individual and nation that will not take upon themselves the "sign of the beast", which is 666. This will occur during the last half of the Tribulation, often referred to as the Great Tribulation.

7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.
Rev 12:6-9

The majority of commentators believe that in the early to midpoint of the Tribulation, a war will break out in heaven. Satan, of course, will be the leader of the demonic forces. God will place the Archangel Michael as Commanding General of the heavenly forces. The battle in heaven will result in not only the defeat of Satan and his forces, but will also result in Satan no longer having access to God's Heaven. As you will recall, until this devastating defeat, Satan did have access to heaven… this is probably best pointed out in the first chapter of Job.

One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. 7 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." Job 1:6-7

After Satan was cast out of heaven, John heard a loud voice saying…

10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now **salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come**, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. 12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Rev 12:10-12

After this victory in heaven by the forces of God, a voice in heaven loudly exclaims that the many blessings of God, including *salvation*, *strength*, the *Kingdom of God*, and the *power of Jesus* have all now at least begun to be realized. Not long after this scene in heaven, Jesus will appear on the Mount of Olives to complete the victory over Satan and evil.

After these things, Satan has been banished from heaven. He still will cause trouble from his base on earth; however, his time will be very limited. He has been overcome by:

- The blood of Jesus
- The word of the testimony of the individual saints; so many Christians have had such strong convictions that millions of them, over the past two thousand years, have endured martyr's deaths at the hands of Satan and his earthly cohorts.

Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." 13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. Rev 12:12-13

Satan will certainly know that his time is extremely short once he is cast out of heaven. He is not the type that will go peacefully! Therefore, John notes that the remaining inhabitants of the earth are in serious trouble… due even for more persecution than they had already been through! The words in the thirteenth verse show that Satan will particularly have evil intentions to persecute Israel. He will be well aware that God has been using this seven year period to bring His "chosen people" back to Him… i.e. back into the saving grace of Jesus, the Christ. Satan has always had a particular vengeance against Israel, as it was God's choice to use the people of Israel as the human instrument to bring His Son into the world. So, to the best of his evil ability, he will pour the trouble onto that nation of people.

14 But the woman was given two **wings of a great eagle**, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time (3 ½ years), from the presence of the serpent. Rev 12:14

As we can see by referring to the book of Exodus, God has used the expression of "eagles' wings" to point to His supernatural deliverance of Israel in the past…'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on **eagles' wings** and brought you to Myself. Ex 19:4

The remaining verses of this chapter continue to concentrate on the battle that will be waged upon Israel by Satan in the last half of the Tribulation. God will provide help to Israel via "two wings of a great eagle" as she escapes into the wilderness. Most commentators believe that this "wilderness" area will be Petra; of course, it could be some other place. Daniel 11:41 and Isaiah 63:1 are two verses that may well suggest that Petra may be the safe haven during those days.

This same flight from the wrath of Satan and his Antichrist forces is spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24:16…

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand-- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Matt 24:15-16

The prophet Zechariah appears to write of this time when he said…

And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the LORD, "That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But *one-third shall be left in it*: [9] *I will bring the one-third through the fire*, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. **I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.' "** Zech 13:8-9

Putting these two prophecies together, the likelihood is that one-third of the Israelites will turn to Jesus and be brought to Petra (and similar locations). They will supernaturally be helped by God through the terrible remaining years of the Great Tribulation.

[15] So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. [16] But **the earth helped the woman**, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. [17] And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and **he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.**
Rev 12:15-17

What is meant by "water" in the above verses in not known. Some believe that it will be actual water that will cause difficulty for those fleeing (like the Red Sea did when Israel escaped from Egypt). Others think that the terms suggesting a flood of water carrying away the people of Israel is really a metaphor for an "army of men". Whichever of the two proves to be the actual problem faced by Israel, God will somehow supernaturally use the earth to defeat the opposition to His people.

Satan will be incensed and will continue to carry out his war against the mounting numbers of Messianic Jews. He will be facing a losing battle in every way. God will protect the masses of Jewish converts as we have already seen. Satan's evil actions and God's supernatural intervention to help the Jews will result in untold numbers of converts to Jesus in those last couple of years of the Great Tribulation. The more Satan tries to defeat God and His people in those last days, the more he loses!

Chapter 13: The Beasts from the Sea and the Earth

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

The beginning of Chapter 13 finds someone standing on the shores of a great seascape. Some commentators believe this individual is Satan; others conclude that it is John who is continuing to describe his vision. So either John or Satan watches as a beast rises up out of the sea and proceeds to walk out onto the land. The "sea" often referred to the mass of Gentile humanity when used in the Bible in the way it is used here. For that reason, some have suggested that the individual who is rising from this "sea" will be a Gentile.

The heads of this beast carry the same description as the fiery dragon in the last chapter (i.e. there are seven of them with ten horns). However, in this case, the reference is believed to be to the same things that Daniel saw in his vision reported in Daniel 7:7-8.

After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a **fourth beast**, dreadful and terrible, **exceedingly strong**. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. **It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.** Dan 7:7

Tim LaHaye is convinced that the ten horns in the opening verse correspond to the ten toes in Daniel 2 and the ten horns in Daniel 7. They are the ten kings that will readily hand over power to the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation. Of course, Satan is the real power behind this evil "monster". A little more will be mentioned concerning the seven heads when we get to Chapter 17.

The next verse shows that this beast is distinct from the dragon. In general, it looks like a leopard, but with powerful feet like a bear. God takes pains to point out that this evil creature has the mouth of a lion… ready to devour anything standing in its way. Although there are some who see this wild animal as the reformed Roman Empire, most believe that this animal represents the Antichrist. Still others believe that it may represent both!

[2] Now the beast which I saw was like a **leopard**, his feet were like the feet of a **bear**, and his mouth like the mouth of a **lion**. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

Whether the beast is best described as the Antichrist or the world governmental system that will be controlled by the Antichrist, the bottom line is that Satan is the mastermind behind it. Satan will be the power and brains behind elevating this "beast" to dominion over the world… for a "season". Three metaphors are used to describe it:

- Leopard – The Antichrist will be swift like the leopard, as was Alexander the Great when he conquered much of the civilized world of his time.
- Bear – This was the symbol of the Medo-Persian Empire that existed prior to the Greek Empire. The bear is symbolic of great power and strength.
- Lion – The lion is ferocious, just like the ancient Babylonians (the lion was actually their symbol).

[3] And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. [4] So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" Rev 13:3-4

At one point during this Tribulation, the Antichrist will receive a wound that will appear to kill "one of his heads". No one can be exactly sure what this means, but since only God has the power over life and death, and since this creature is apparently subsequently raised from the dead, one of three things must be true:

- The wound was actually not unto death, but the beast just appeared to die. Satan used this subterfuge to gain prestige for the Antichrist (having just demonstrated his supernatural powers) and to solidify his following among the people on earth.
- God decided to raise this creature from the dead to carry out His sovereign plan on earth during the Great Tribulation period. As will become clear very soon, the ultimate fate of the Antichrist will be eternal damnation in hell.
- Tim LaHaye and Hal Lindsey think that this may be the manifestation of Satan possessing the body of the Antichrist (and therefore causing his body to rise from the dead) and carrying on his work on earth for the remaining years of the Great Tribulation.

Naturally, in any case, the event will be astounding and convince many of those remaining in the world of the supernatural power and position of this man. There is a fairly wide range of opinions as to when this "mortal" wound and subsequent healing will take place. Hal Lindsey wrote that "sometime before the seven-year Tribulation begins, the Antichrist will receive a mortal wound, be miraculously healed, be indwelt by Satan, and take over the ten nations of what we now know as the Common Market." (*The Rapture*, p. 7) Others believe that this seemingly miraculous healing will take place closer to the mid-point of the Tribulation. Whenever it does occur, many of the people witnessing this event will literally worship this Antichrist. They will be convinced that they should place their trust and faith in him.

5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Rev 13:5

As noted earlier, the Antichrist will come onto the scene at some point prior to the beginning of the entire seven year Tribulation. During the first 3 ½ years, he will use his impressive charismatic political abilities to lead him to a position of great power in the world. Then, during the mid-point of this period, he will show his true colors and desecrate the Temple in Jerusalem. For the remaining 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation, this Antichrist will be in a continual battle with the people of God. We shall see how things conclude a little later on in the book.

6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. 7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. 8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. Rev 13:6-8

As the above verses show, the Antichrist will be a very powerful figure and be able to dominate the world for a period of time. He will have the power of Satan behind him. There will be terrible blasphemy going on in the world. The Temple will be desecrated, as we have seen, and those brave souls who make the correct decision to turn to Christ during these incredibly perilous years will most likely be martyred for that decision. Simply put, this Antichrist will rule the world! Most people will do as they are commanded and turn to him in worship. This will give them a couple more years to live on this earth but will also result in an eternity of damnation soon thereafter. What a horrible decision these people will have made. Yet, keep in mind how many billions make that same decision each day right now… and there is now no threat of death when most people turn to Jesus in the world today.

One final point to make here is that there still will be many individuals who accept Christ into their hearts all throughout the seven year Tribulation. Even when the Antichrist controls the entire world, he will not control each and every individual. There will always be the free will to turn to Jesus for His salvation and love.

9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear. 10 He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. Rev 13:9-10

John here is asking people to listen to what he is about to say. The Antichrist is going to lead many people into captivity and execute even more. These will be those who refuse to follow him. John is encouraging future saints to have the faith, fortitude, and patience to resist Satan's call and stay true to God. This may result in terrible pain, suffering while still alive on

this earth. Of course, many will even die for their belief in Jesus. However, the eternal consequences of making this positive decision for Christ are immeasurably wonderful. On that day, when Jesus comes again to carry out His divine plan for the world and eternity, the Antichrist, Satan, and all of their followers will get what they deserve… and it is eternal death in a devil's hell!

[11] Then I saw **another beast** coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. Rev 13:11

One more character is introduced into this vision of John's… another beast. He has characteristics of a lamb… as does Jesus. However, he speaks like Satan, the dragon. There is virtual complete agreement that this personality is the False Prophet. This "prophet" will come out of the "earth" – what does that mean? There are varying opinions on that topic:

- This False Prophet will come out of Palestine. He will be a Jew who will work with the Antichrist during the first half of the Tribulation to forge a peace treaty with Israel.
- This "coming up out of the earth" simply may mean that he will be the product of Satan, his power coming from down in the *abyss*.

There is total agreement that this False Prophet will be given his power by Satan. Although he may speak at times as if he were a "lamb", instead he will have the intent of the dragon, Satan, himself!

[12] And **he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast**, whose deadly wound was healed. [13] **He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men**. [14] And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. Rev 13:12-14

This False Prophet will be somewhat like a "right-hand" man for the Antichrist. The Antichrist will be the world's political leader. His religious counterpart will be the False Prophet. This evil prophet will be the world religious leader who will encourage people to follow the Antichrist. Hal Lindsey stated, "Millions of people will fall for his deception and honestly believe this False Prophet to be the long-awaited Jewish Messiah." (*There's a New World Coming*, p.192) He will also be able to perform certain miracles that will help him convince people that they should reject Christ and turn to the Antichrist. This should be a lesson to all people that just because someone can actually do certain miraculous feats, does not make them holy. The test must be how that person's actions and words correspond to the Bible's teachings.

It is interesting to outline what some people call the "unholy trinity" and compare them to the real Trinity…

The Trinity	The Unholy Trinity
God the Father	Satan
Jesus Christ	Antichrist
Holy Spirit	False Prophet

15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast
should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

In these verses, the False Prophet uses the power granted to him to make an image of the first beast (the Antichrist) that will actually be able to speak. This will, of course, impress the populace and make it easier for some to follow this evil dictator. Of course, it also will be difficult for most to reject the Antichrist as those people will be doomed to a martyr's death as the result.

16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their
right hand or on their foreheads, 17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark
or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has
understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is
666. Rev 13:15-18

The last few verses of this chapter have the famous reference to the "sign of the beast", 666. This is said to be the number of a man. There will be a time during the second half of the Tribulation that no one will be able to provide for themselves or their family unless they are willing to identify themselves with the Antichrist. Most scholars now believe that this will mean implanting some computer chip underneath the skin that will always be referenced when a person is involved in some financial transaction. If a person does not have this intra-body ID, then they will not be able to buy or sell. Where does that leave one? In serious trouble! The only hope will be to run and hide somewhere in the hills or wilderness and do the best to avoid the Antichrist's police force and somehow find all necessary sources of food and lodging. John suggests that those alive at that time should use their intelligence and wisdom to recognize just who this dictator really is and reject him while turning in faith to Jesus Christ.

Summary (Chapter 12-13):

The twelfth chapter centers around four characters: Israel, Satan, Jesus, and the Archangel Michael. Israel is introduced as the nation that will produce the great Messiah, Jesus, at some point in history. Satan is noted to be a fiery dragon in heaven that was banished from his original home in heaven due to His prideful rebellion from God. Recall also that he took a third

of the angels with him... now called demons. As the god of this earth, Satan has always hated Jesus, the Son of God. He has attempted all throughout history to defeat Jesus. This will never happen, but he will keep trying. After the mid-point of the Tribulation, the Antichrist, under the control of Satan, will persecute and kill any and all followers of Christ, including those Jews who will now be turning to acknowledge and accept their Messiah.

During the Tribulation, a war will break out in heaven. Satan and his demons will fight Michael and the angels. Satan will lose and be banished from heaven, never to return again. Recognizing that his time is very short, Satan will intensify his efforts to defeat Israel and their Messiah. He will go after them with a renewed vengeance and they will have to flee into the hills and mountains around Jerusalem to escape persecution. One-third of Israel will live through this terrible persecution. God will protect them for the last 3 ½ years of this Great Tribulation.

The thirteenth chapter is all about the Antichrist and the False Prophet. John is shown just how the Antichrist will rise into power as he takes over leadership of the revived Roman Empire. He will be the political and military leader of the coming world government. He will suffer a wound at one point that apparently is unto death. When he seemingly miraculously comes back to life, it will cause many people to believe that he is actually God. That will be his claim as well. At the halfway point of the seven year Tribulation, he will come to the Temple in Jerusalem, desecrate the Temple and blaspheme God. His counterpart, the False Prophet will come on the scene at some point. Many believe that he will be a false Jewish messiah. Others identify the Antichrist as the false messiah. In any case, these two evil men will work as a team to deceive the world. The False Prophet will be a religious "promoter" of the Antichrist. In fact, he will make people worship an image of the Antichrist. The False Prophet will be able to actually perform certain miracles to demonstrate his power and authority to the world. He is also famous in biblical history as the man who will make everyone take upon their forehead or right hand the mark of the beast, 666. Without this mark, a person will not be able to buy or sell anything. Also, if a person takes this mark, it will be tantamount to rejecting Jesus Christ.

Chapter 14: The Lamb and the 144,000

Chapters 14 & 15 record certain events before the vial judgments are meted out by God.

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. Rev 14:1

Chapter 14 begins with John seeing "a Lamb" standing on Mount Zion with 144,000 saints there with Him. Of course, this Lamb is Jesus Christ. The saints are obviously those who have placed their faith in Jesus for their eternal salvation. These saints are noted to have the name of Jesus imprinted on their forehead (analogous to those unrepentant souls who will take the number 666 on their forehead or hand).

There is a difference of opinion as to the location of Mount Zion. In fact, there is a wide and varied group of opinions on just who these 144,000 saints represent and the exact location of

this particular Mt. Zion - some believe this to be the Heavenly Mt. Zion, but others, the earthly Mt. Zion. Let us take a look at these differing ideas:

- J. Vernon McGee believes this verse describes the scene at the **beginning of the Millennial Kingdom… Mount Zion being Jerusalem here on earth**. "This verse pictures a placid, pastoral scene which opens the Millennial Kingdom here upon this earth." (*Thru the Bible*, Vol. 5, p. 1005) God will protect the 144,000 Jewish evangelists throughout the seven year Tribulation and they will continue on into the Millennium.
- On the other hand, others, such as Tim LaHaye, think that this scene is being played out in the **Heavenly Jerusalem**. "From the fleshly, debased scene on earth, we are lifted to the lofty heights of heaven, where Jesus Christ's name is honored rather than profaned and where He is the central figure before whom all bow and to whom all voices are raised in adoration." (*Revelation Unveiled*, p. 229) The 144,000 saints are superbly dedicated and pure Christians from all ages standing before the Throne of God.
- John MacArthur believes that the **Mt. Zion in question is here on earth,** and that the 144,000 saints are the 12,000 from each of twelve tribes described in Chapter 7.
- Dr. Harold Wilmington, who wrote *The King is Coming*, believes that the Lord will allow the 144,000 Jewish evangelists to be ***martyred*** after they have performed their fruitful ministry on the earth. In other words, although they will be sealed with protection while they evangelize the world in the early portion of the Tribulation, they will be martyred for their belief in Christ by the Antichrist in the second half of the Tribulation. Therefore, this verse pictures them standing with Jesus on the heavenly Mount Zion.
- Still another opinion on these 144,000 saints suggests that they are the ***translated*** Jewish evangelists… that is, they are brought into heaven without experiencing death. This opinion is held by some because they feel the preponderance of evidence suggests that this is taking place in heaven. The 144,000 are from the twelve tribes as mentioned earlier. Since God has sealed them with His protection, they should be protected from the Antichrist and his evil co-conspirators.

Of course, **only God knows the answer at this time**. However, wherever the location, it is a scene of rejoicing and triumph for Jesus and His saints as we shall see.

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. [3] They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the **hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.** [4] These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for **they are virgins**. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being **firstfruits to God and to the Lamb**. [5] And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God. Rev 14:2-5

John continues to report on this event. He heard a thunderous voice from heaven along with harpists playing their heavenly instruments in the background. The heavenly choir was singing songs of praise and worship. One very special group of Christians was given the gift of learning this angelic song. This group is described by John as 144,000 saints from the earth. These saints were particularly impressive during their lifetime on earth. As has already been explained, there is a wide range of opinions as to just who and where these saints are located. However, there is no question that they, like Paul, were totally "sold-out" to God. For this reason, God gave them the special honor described in these verses.

Once again, there is no need to be dogmatic on the issue of who these 144,000 saints represent. The point is that God will bless an incredibly impressive group of believers with the opportunity to engage in a unique and wonderful worship experience at this time in history. Whether they are the same evangelists that come from the twelve tribes of Israel or another grouping of 144,000 special saints is of no great importance to the overall eschatological story.

6 Then I saw **another angel flying in the midst of heaven**, having the everlasting gospel to
preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people-- 7 saying with
a loud voice, "**Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and
worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water**." Rev 14:6-7

Here we see another individual introduced as a heavenly evangelist sent from God to make sure that all of mankind is reached with the truth of Jesus. This will be an end-times exception to the overall plan of God which has always been to use only men and women to spread the gospel message. The severity of the situation is what will merit this unique exception by God. This angel will preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole world. Unfortunately, not many additional people will respond to this invitation.

8 And **another angel** followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she
has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Rev 14:8

Another angel will announce the downfall of Babylon. The great Babylon will fall from its lofty perch sometime during the second half of the Tribulation. Much more of the future judgment that will come to Babylon will be noted in Chapters 17 and 18.

9 Then a **third angel** followed them, saying with a loud voice, "**If anyone worships the beast
and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he himself shall also
drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His
indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy
angels and in the presence of the Lamb.** 11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and
ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever

receives the mark of his name." [12] Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Rev 14:9-12

The essence of the four verses noted above are well known to much of the civilized world. Although the Bible is not well read by many throughout the world, the recognition that taking the sign of the beast, 666, would be a major mistake is understood by multiple millions around the world! They learn this through the reading of various books and by watching various movies that give their conception of the end times. Some of these books and movies are good for humanity… such as Tim LaHaye's Left Behind series. Some are not as they are not even close to being scriptural. The actual biblical reasons for the conclusion never to take the "mark of the beast" come from the verses noted above.

[13] Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: **'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'**" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that **they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.**" Rev 14:13

There will be many millions of people who come to a saving knowledge of Christ during this seven year tribulation period. Unfortunately, for virtually all of them (if not all), persecution of one form or another awaits this decision. Some will have to flee to the mountains or wilderness to hide from the enemy. Most will be rounded up and martyred for their belief in Jesus. All will suffer after their conversion. This verse does show that when they do pass from this life to the next, their faithfulness will be wonderfully rewarded. They will finally be able to gain rest from their pain and tears… forever!

[14] Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat **One like the Son of Man**, having **on His head a golden crown**, and **in His hand a sharp sickle**. [15] And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." [16] So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

Jesus Christ is pictured here with the golden crown of a victor adorning His head. Jesus sitting on a white cloud is representative of His glory and majesty. He is ready with a sharp sickle to do the necessary harvesting of a particular element on the earth. This harvest is typically referred to as the *grain harvest*. Once again, another angel shouts out, this time to Jesus, to use His sharp sickle to reap the harvest for which He came. Jesus promptly begins His work with the sickle. So what has Jesus come to harvest? The grain harvest symbolizes the separation of the saved from the unsaved. Apparently, Jesus, Himself, will separate the believers from the unbelievers at this time. The unbelievers will then face the judgment that quickly follows.

17 Then **another angel** came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.
18 And **another angel** came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." 19 So **the angel thrust his sickle into the earth** and gathered the vine of the earth, and **threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.** 20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs. Rev 14:14-20

The **grape harvest** follows the grain harvest. This speaks of the battle of Armageddon, with the picture of the winepress and the flowing wine as a symbol of the massive amount of blood of rebellious mankind that will be spilled in that incredible last battle of the Great Tribulation.

Next appeared two additional angels who were about to help in the harvesting. Again, one may wonder what was being cut down. Jesus told us the answer to this question two thousand years ago…

The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. **The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. 40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.** 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and **they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**
Matt 13:38-42

Jesus told his disciples while He was here on the earth that it would be their job to sow the seeds among the nations and peoples of the world, but it would be the job of His angels and Jesus, Himself to do the harvesting at the end of the age. The verses shown in Matthew are a few that point this out. We see that Jesus and His angels will indeed carry this out at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation. It is given unto Jesus the task of judging mankind. Everyone probably recalls the verse given by Jesus as a warning to man…

Judge not, that ye be not judged. Matt 7:1

God has given all judgment to Jesus…

"For **not even the Father judges anyone**, but **He has given all judgment to the Son**, in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. John 5:22-23

The concluding verses in this chapter refer to that time period. Simply put, this harvest will be to weed out of the future Millennial Kingdom (as well as to keep those individuals out of God's Heaven) all those who have rejected Jesus.

Chapter 15: Seven Angels with Seven Plagues

The first verse of this chapter introduces one other great heavenly sign. There will be seven angels to usher in the last portion of God's wrath upon the earth during the latter portion of the Great Tribulation. God has inflicted his wrath on the earth on many different occasions over the course of the last several thousand years. Although God has shown amazing patience over the millennia, there have been times when He has used this discipline to bring His unruly sons and daughters back to Him. Sometimes this repentance takes days, sometimes years and sometimes thousands of years. As history has shown, it is going to take Israel over two thousand years to realize their terrible sin and error in rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and Lord. One point of this verse, however, is that these angels are going to be the last of God's messengers… ever… to usher in any form of judgment onto the earth! The wrath of God will soon be complete.

These angels carry with them seven plagues that will be unleashed onto the world. This is referred to as another sign in heaven. The first two "signs" were noted in Chapter 12, the woman (Israel) and the great red dragon (Satan).

Then I saw **another sign in heaven**, great and marvelous: **seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete**. Rev 15:1

And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and **those who have the victory over the beast**, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, **standing on the sea of glass,** having harps of God. Rev 15:2

John now tells the reader that he saw a "sea of glass" mingled with fire. He also was shown the saints in heaven that had resisted the Antichrist and turned instead to Christ. As they were already in heaven, it is safe to say that 99% of them had been killed by the forces of the Antichrist. Of course, some would have died a more natural death.

What about the sea of glass? You may recall that this imagery was used by John to describe the scene before the throne of God in heaven. As was mentioned at that time, since God chose not to interpret this expression for us, we really do not know what it means. It probably is simply the beautiful appearance of the setting in front of God's throne. In heaven, at least at this time during the Great Tribulation, the Tribulation saints will be there before God Almighty… in His very presence. What an incredible reward for their perseverance and the martyrdom that they must have had to endure! These saints were heard by John to break out in song as they worshipped God…

[3] They sing the **song of Moses**, the servant of God, and the **song of the Lamb**, saying:
"Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty!
Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!

4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?
For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You,
For Your judgments have been manifested." Rev 15:3-4

The **song of Moses** was originally sung by the Israelites along the shores of the Red Sea right after God led them through ahead of the Egyptian army. They were so overjoyed with the wondrous saving gift from God that they sang Him praises…
And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant. Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: Ex 14:31&15:1 (the song is recorded in Ex 15:2-18)

Moses also presented a song to the Israelites that is recorded in Deuteronomy 32:1-43

Of course, not only did these Tribulation saints sing the song of Moses, but they also sang the **song of the Lamb**. This song is first noted in the Bible in Rev 5:9-13

"You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth." 11
"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"
"Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Rev 5:9-13

Of course, this song is a song of praise and thanksgiving to Jesus Christ for being willing to die for the sins of humanity. He shed His blood for anyone and everyone who is willing to place their faith in Him for their eternal salvation. This song praises Jesus and shouts out how much that He has given to the saints. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!

5 After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. 6 And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. Rev 15:5-6

John next looked toward the Heavenly Temple of God. Out of this Holy Temple stepped seven angels carrying seven plagues that they would soon release upon the earth as the final judgment of God on the world. These angels were appropriately dressed in pure, bright linen, their chests having golden bands. This was certainly consistent with their station as heavenly

angels. The logical assumption would be that these angels carried some type of "key" that, when properly utilized by any given angel, would unleash a particular plague.

Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. [8] The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed. Rev 15:7-8

After the angels exited from the Heavenly Temple, an angel previously identified as one of the "four living creatures", gave them each a golden bowl full of the final wrath God wanted to pour out onto the world. Recall that it is very likely that these four creatures are seraphims, a powerful order of angelic beings. They were always described as being positioned around the Heavenly Throne of God and would sing out with continual praise. Although it is uncertain exactly how the seven plagues and the seven bowls full of wrath combine, in some way these seven angels who just left the Temple will pour out the final wrath of God as described in the next chapter. Until that assignment is completed during the last portion of the Great Tribulation, no one will be able to enter into the Holy of Holies as God's glory and power will have filled it with smoke. There are several examples of this type of occurrence in the Old Testament. For example…

Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. [35] And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Ex 40:34-35
When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple. 1 Kings 8:10-11

Chapter 16:
Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." Rev 16:1

Finally, the time for God's most severe judgment had come and John heard a loud voice from the Temple of God in heaven telling the seven angels to pour out the final wrath of God… represented by the "bowls". That began the final judgment of God upon the earth and the unrepentant sinners therein…

So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and **a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast** and those who worshiped his image. Rev 16:2

It is important to note that this first vial (bowl) will be poured out on the earth after people have accepted the mark of the beast within their body. This situation occurs only after the

Antichrist has revealed his true evil colors, at the beginning of the Great Tribulation (the second 3 ½ years). Remember that this dictator will not require worship until after he gains total power over the nations of the world. This is further confirmation that the seals, the trumpets and the bowls are sequentially delivered onto the world by God… not concurrently.

God will deliver this judgment only on those who have joined forces with the Antichrist by accepting his seal. The bodies of the recipients of this judgment will be covered with terrible sores. These sores may very well be symptoms of some kind of cancerous disease. They may be related to radiation poisoning. Certainly, they may be due to some new kind of infectious disease. Whatever the underlying etiology, the disease will be deadly. This is not unlike the sixth plague that God delivered onto Egypt in the days of Moses. Although the saints of that time period will be having terrible problems themselves (as they will be continually hunted down by the Antichrist and be unable to buy or sell), they will not be subject to this plague.

Then the second angel poured out his bowl on **the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.** Rev 16:3

Here we see that an angel delivers God's judgment upon the seas of the world. The oceans and seas of the world will be corrupted and foul. They will no longer be able to sustain life. Obviously, this will be devastating to mankind. This is just an extension of the judgment that began with the second trumpet.

[4] Then the third angel poured out his bowl on **the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.** [5] Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things. [6] For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." [7] And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments." Rev 16:4-7

Once again, we see a plague that extends another earlier plague. This time, the fresh waters are turned into blood. The fresh water began to be polluted during the third trumpet judgment. It will get much worse at this time as the time for Christ's return draws near.

One of God's angels is heard by John to exclaim that this plague was very appropriate and a righteous judgment for these unrepentant sinners of the world. Interestingly enough, this angel is one who was apparently placed in some form of authority over the waters of the earth. Why? Well, for one thing, many of the people that were then facing these plagues had schemed to kill those folks who did turn to Jesus and were martyred for that decision. They had been responsible for a tremendous amount of shedding of blood of the righteous in Jesus… now, they would face the impossible problem of dealing with all of the world's waters being polluted with blood. Divine retribution… literally!

The last line of the above verses shows that there is a comment coming from the altar praising God for His righteous judgments that are now being dealt out to the world. This may well be coming from those who cried out wanting God to avenge their blood in an earlier time in the seven year Tribulation. Recall this verse from Chapter 6…

And they (sainted souls stationed under the altar of God) cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Rev 6:10

It is also worthwhile to recall the numerous times David cried out to God in the Psalms for His righteous judgment against those who had been pursuing the young future king of Israel. God's timing is often not our timing… but, He never fails to deliver what He promises. In this tribulation time, He will deliver His righteous judgment upon all those deserving, unrepentant sinners.

[8] Then the **fourth angel** poured out his bowl on the **sun**, and power was given to him to **scorch men with fire.** [9] And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. Rev 16:8-9

This plague is very straightforward. The angel poured out this fourth plague that resulted in the sun becoming much more potent. We have already seen in the last thirty-five years that the deleterious effects of the sun are ever increasing. There is, unfortunately, a great increase in recent decades of malignant skin cancer, almost all of it is sun related. During the second portion of the seven year Tribulation, there will be a time where God causes the effects of the sun to suddenly increase very significantly. This will cause much harm to people and vegetation as well. The prophet Malachi prophesied of this time… "For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up." Mal 4:1

[10] Then the **fifth angel** poured out his bowl **on the throne of the beast**, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. [11] They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds. Rev 16:10-11

After the horrible skin plague that still would be in full effect, plus the terrible blood curses placed on the oceans and fresh waters of the world, and following the scorching effects of the sun, God will then bring darkness onto the world. The verses say that this "bowl" will be poured out on the throne of the beast. Possibly, this plague will be geographically concentrated at the seat of the Antichrist's power… probably the rebuilt Babylon.

It is interesting that this plague speaks of darkness over the "throne of the beast". We have just seen how the sun will have scorched the earth. Now, however, darkness will envelop the world. There are several references to this darkness during the "Day of the Lord" in both the Old and New Testament. Here are just two of them:

- "But in those days, following that distress,
  "'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; Mark 13:24
- Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light. Amos 5:18

Unfortunately, for all of the people receiving these judgments, few, if any, of them will apparently be prompted to confess their sins and turn to Jesus. In other words, there will be little, if any, conversions regardless of the misery that God inflicts! This will not be true for the nation of Israel, however. As we have seen, they will be awakened by God and the judgments over the course of the entire seven years, and turn, as a nation, back to their God and Messiah, Jesus.

12 Then the **sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates**, and **its water was dried up**, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. 13 And I saw **three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.** 14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to **gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.** 15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." 16 **And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.** Rev 16:12-16

This sixth bowl judgment will prepare the way for the armies from the east. The main nation, one would assume, that will descend upon Israel will be China. However, there are others to consider, including North Korea. Actually, the literal translation of the sentence is "the kings from the 'sunrising'", which is a reference to Oriental nations. These enemy eastern nations will apparently form a confederacy as they attack the forces in the Middle East. The Euphrates River will dry up at this time as prophesied above. Whether this is all done via seemingly natural or obviously supernatural means is immaterial. This will make the passage of a very large army (some say 200 million strong) from the East a relatively easy task.

John then speaks of seeing frog-like spirits coming out of the mouth of Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet – for a total of three. John is then made aware that these odd creatures represent demons that are coming onto the world scene to gather the world forces against Israel in what will be the war of Armageddon. LaHaye, McGee and many other expositors believe that these demon spirits will use their powers of deceit and deception to convince armies from East, West, North and South to come against Israel. The greatest battle(s) of this war will take place in the Valley of Megiddo in Israel. It is interesting that Tim LaHaye, while visiting that sight, was told that Napolean Bonaparte had once remarked while gazing at that beautiful valley scene, "This is the ideal battleground for all the armies of the world." Well, we shall certainly see one day.

John then hears Jesus tell His followers to take heart, as He will be coming soon… as a "thief in the night". The implication is obvious. Jesus will come and defeat the forces of Satan! He tells His followers to remain faithful until the end… it will be well worth it!

17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the
temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, **"It is done!"** 18 And there were noises and
thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake
as had not occurred since men were on the earth. 19 Now **the great city was divided into three
parts**, and the **cities of the nations fell**. And **great Babylon was remembered before God, to
give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath**. 20 Then every island fled away, and
the mountains were not found. 21 And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about
the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague
was exceedingly great. Rev 16:17-21

With the pouring out of the seventh bowl judgment, God will conclude His eternal plan for this dispensation as His creation will then move into the Millennial Kingdom Age. The voice of God will ring out with the pouring of this last bowl, loudly proclaiming that this final act will result in the conclusion of the Great Tribulation – of course, on God's terms. God will say, "It is done". This expression may well be a familiar one to the reader as it is used two other times in the Bible in similar poignant and extremely important circumstances: Jesus said these words on the cross as He finished His great sacrifice for mankind, and Jesus will say these same words again as the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven. He said to me, "**It is done**! **I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End**. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son." (Rev 21:6-7).

Also, as we have come to expect with these major judgments, there will be noises, thunder, lightning and, once again, a great earthquake. This earthquake, to fit the occasion, will be the largest and most destructive in all of earth's history. Jerusalem, the "great city", will be cleaved into three sections. (Tim LaHaye suggests that this "great city" is Babylon. However, virtually all other well-known authors on this topic agree that this city is Jerusalem). Many of the great cities of the world will also be destroyed. Babylon, always representative of the worst of the world, will be hit very hard. Islands will disappear under the oceans; mountains will tumble down to the ground and be no more. Hailstones, many upwards of seventy-five pounds, will fall from the heavens on all mankind. Obviously, many will be killed instantly by these "stones" from the sky. As will be the case with all of these bowl plagues, they will only serve to incense the recipients even more against God… this last judgment will cause none to repent. Blasphemy will ring out, until Jesus comes to quiet the rebellion. When all this is happening, the appearance of Jesus will be extremely imminent.

Summary (Chapter 14-16):

The fourteenth chapter opens with a scene on Mt. Zion. Jesus is there with 144,000 outstanding Christians singing songs of praise to their Savior. Three angels are noted to be preaching to people here on earth: one explains the gospel message, another tells of the soon downfall of Babylon, and the last tells of the absolute importance of refusing to worship the Antichrist (i.e. do not take the "mark of the beast"). A brief reference to the fact that Jesus will be coming back to earth at the conclusion of the seven year period follows. He will defeat Satan, the Antichrist, and their armies at that time, concluding with the battle of Armageddon. Those who have chosen to follow Jesus will have eternal life with Him, and those who have rejected Him will live an eternity in a Devil's hell. Jesus will be the judge as God, the Father, has reserved to His Son this honor and responsibility.

Finally, the last trumpet will sound and the seven vial (or bowl) judgments will be loosed onto the earth. While preparations for this event are underway, victorious heavenly saints will sing two songs to God… the *Song of Moses* and the *Song of the Lamb*. After that praise experience, seven angels will come out of the Temple ready to unleash the seven vials of the wrath of God onto the earth below.

These seven angels are told to pour out each of their vials as the sixteenth chapter begins. Each of these vials represent the worst judgments that God will ever hand down. Vials one through six will be handed down one right after the other in quick succession. The land, the sea, the rivers, and the lakes will be devastated. Painful sores will break out on the people, much like those Job experienced so many years ago. All of the world's water will be like blood. Fish and land animals will continue to die.

The fifth and sixth vial judgments follow. First, the sun will scorch the earth and all those in it… then darkness will cover the land. The sixth vial unleashes demonic hordes that gather the nations of the world to come against the forces of good in the Holy Land. The seventh and final vial is undoubtedly the worst. The most powerful earthquake in history will split Jerusalem into three sections. Hundred pound hailstones will fall all around. The topography of the world will change as islands sink into the oceans and mountains are leveled to the ground. This is why they call this period of time the **Great Tribulation!**

Chapter 17: The Woman on the Scarlet Beast

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the **great harlot who sits on many waters**, [2] **with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication**, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." Rev 17:1-2

This chapter is concerned with the "great harlot" of the world. This harlot sits on "many waters" - the waters symbolize the many nations of the world. One of the seven angels who had a role in the pouring out of the seven bowl judgments, will speak to John at this time. He will

tell John that *God is going to judge the harlot who has been an evil partner with the kings of the earth in the first half of the Tribulation*. Just who is this harlot? The harlot is the apostate religious system that came into great prominence in the early years of the Tribulation. This will be an outgrowth of the ecumenical church which has already made significant inroads in our world today. However, the false church has been around for thousands of years. It will be much easier to spread the lie of this apostate religion after the true Church has been raptured just prior to the onset of the Tribulation.

The city of Babylon has contributed much to this religious 'harlot" ever since the infamous Tower of Babel. God told His people to move throughout the world after the flood and be fruitful and fill the earth. Nimrod had other ideas. His pride and that of many others in that city caused them to stay put and build a monument to their human capabilities… they had a "who needs God?" attitude. "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." Gen 11:4 The great historian Josephus went even further to describe the prideful attitude and actions of Nimrod and the Babylonian peoples:

"Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. **He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it were through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness.** He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. **He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to reach. And that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers.** Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God; and they built a tower, neither sparing any pains, nor being in any degree negligent about the work: and, by reason of the multitude of hands employed in it, it grew very high, sooner than anyone could expect; but the thickness of it was so great, and it was so strongly built, that thereby its great height seemed, upon the view, to be less than it really was. It was built of burnt brick, cemented together with mortar, made of bitumen, that it might not be liable to admit water. When God saw that they acted so madly, he did not resolve to destroy them utterly, since they were not grown wiser by the destruction of the former sinners; but he caused a tumult among them, by producing in them diverse languages, and causing that, through the multitude of those languages, they should not be able to understand one another. The place wherein they built the tower is now called Babylon, because of the confusion of that language which they readily understood before; for the Hebrews mean by the word Babel, confusion." (*The Antiquities of the Jews*, Flavius Josephus, p. 79)

This situation with Nimrod did not please God at all. He promptly confused their speech and scattered them abroad. He then named that city Babel (hence our modern day expression that someone is babbling). Babel was infamous in that time for another reason. Nimrod married

a woman named Semiramis. She had the gall to claim that her first son, Tammuz, was the promised Savior! She instituted a religious system that required people to worship both Tammuz and her. This was only the beginning of a great religious apostasy that spread through much of the world over the next thousand plus years. The names of this mother-child god cult changed from one nation to another, but the idea was the same. For example, in Egypt the duo became Isis and Horus, in Phoenicia it was Ashteroth and Tammuz. The point is that this religious system became the predominant apostate religion of the world. Semiramis claimed to be the "Queen of Heaven". She could grant salvation to the sinner. Her son, Tammuz, was killed by a wild boar and resurrected. It is believed by most Christian theologians that this was the beginning of religious apostasy. Eventually, this became the Baal worship that competed with the worship of God during the divided kingdom stage of Israel. Below are a few of many biblical examples; note the apostasy that the people of Judah had become involved with during the time of Jeremiah…

Then all the men who knew that their wives were burning incense to other gods, along with all the women who were present--a large assembly--and all the people living in Lower and Upper Egypt, said to Jeremiah, **16** "We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD! **17** We will certainly do everything we said we would: **We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and will pour out drink offerings to her** just as we and our fathers, our kings and our officials did in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. Jer 44:15-17

Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? **18** The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and **make cakes of bread for the Queen of Heaven.** Jer 7:17-18

"You will see them doing things that are even more detestable." **14** Then he brought me to the entrance to the north gate of the house of the LORD, and I saw women sitting there, mourning for **Tammuz**. Ezek 8:13-14

Dr Harold Wilmington of Liberty University noted that during the Roman Empire, Caesars were crowned as Emperors of Rome, but also given the title of "High Priest" of the Babylonian (Apostate) Church! It is easily possible to trace remnants of the Babylonian false religious system up to this present day.

The church of the end-times will not worship Jesus Christ. This harlot church will become much more evil and destructive after the Rapture. This chapter of The Revelation shows what will happen to her during the Tribulation. In an effort to gain more power and prestige, she (i.e. the harlot church) will join forces with the Antichrist's world system. For the first portion of the Tribulation, this upstart Antichrist will allow this union to occur, as it will be to his advantage at that time. By the time the mid-point of the Tribulation has come, the Antichrist will be ready to shed himself of his association with this false church. As we shall see a little later, by that time, the Antichrist will declare himself to be God!

So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw **a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns**. Rev 17:3

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. [5] And on her forehead a name was written: **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT**, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. Rev 17:4-5

This description of the apostate church shows just how evil and filthy this "harlot" has become in God's view. The fact that her name is linked with Babylon shows that she leads the false, apostate religious system of the world; she is definitely not a follower of Christ. The fact that this harlot religion has Babylon associated with her name does not necessarily mean that the headquarters of that ecumenical church will be in Babylon. Although it may be there, several scholars believe that it will be in Rome. For example, although Grant Jeffrey and Tim LaHaye believe that a rebuilt Babylon will be a key power center of the Antichrist, they also believe that the center for the ecumenical, apostate religious system will be Rome. Regardless of its location, this apostate religious system will initially partner with the Antichrist and gain a great deal of power. This situation will not last for very long.

Mystery, Babylon the Great is also seen sitting on a "scarlet beast". This means that there has been a teaming up of the ecumenical end-times false religious church with the Antichrist (once again John sees that it has seven heads and ten horns), noted to be red because of his blood-lust for his enemies, Jesus and the people who love the Lord. The Antichrist will rule the world politically and militarily and, at least for a few years, the harlot will exercise the ecclesiastical (religious) power over the nations of the world. In fact, in the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, there may well be a time when this "Babylon" harlot will ostensibly wield more power than the Antichrist. This is symbolized by noting that she is riding the beast, suggesting that she has at least some control over the beast. This would be a similar situation to that found when the Roman Catholic Church exercised so much power in Europe in the distant past. If so, this situation will not last long, as the verses below point out. Recall that by the second half of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will demand to be worshipped as God himself! That will leave no room for this apostate church any longer. The actual fact is that the Antichrist will just *allow* the apostate church to achieve their prominent status as part of his evil plan for world domination during these tribulation years.

This church will be an amalgam of current day protestant, Catholic, Mormons, New Age, Hindu, Buddhist and many other of the world's religions all melted into one big "apostate pot". We can see signs of this coming together today as certain liberal segments of all religions seem bent on compromising their fundamental biblical tenants in the name of harmony. That is not what our Holy and jealous God demands. What is true, is true. Period. If God says it in the Bible, then it is true. It is a terrible sin to compromise these truths for the sake of just "getting along" with all other religions. It is excellent to cooperate with other religions and respect the

rights of others to believe in whatever god or doctrine they choose… but, do not suggest that they may be right if you do not really believe it. It is illogical to think that all religions can be right! That is impossible. However, it is so often seen in the press and on television that people in positions of power make statements that would have one believe that all religions can and will lead to God. Literally, this is impossible since almost all religions have tenants that contradict, logically, all other religions. It may sound nice and comfortable to say that kind of "mush", but that type of statement is simply Anti-Christian!

The woman is arrayed in the colors of wealth and nobility and is covered with expensive stones and gold. John MacArthur says that she is "portrayed as a prostitute who has plied her trade successfully and become extremely wealthy." (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p.2027) God goes even further to describe her immoral filthiness with the description of what is in her hand. Then, to leave no question of her identity, John reads the name given her by God: "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

The Apostle John goes on then to tell more of this evil religious prostitute…

I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.[7] But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the **seven heads and the ten horns**. Rev 17:6-7

The hands of the harlot (false) church are bloody with the blood of Christians and Tribulation saints. Apparently John had a look of amazement to see all this going on. The angel said that he should have been expecting all that he had been just seeing. Then he told John that he would next give him additional information on what was to come.

Given their cooperation with the forces of the Antichrist and therefore, their persecution of the saints, the false church is certainly evil in God's sight. It is interesting that we see today this situation coming to fruition. Just think about the only religion that is typically put down by the leaders of countries, the press and the general ecumenical church groups… the answer is easy; it is those who believe the Bible and the words written there by Jesus and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the persecution of the true Church is obvious (e.g. the method used by Muslims to put Christians in what they perceive to be their rightful place – i.e. prison or the grave). Many other times, the persecution is more subtle… to denigrate their belief in the Holy Bible and the Word of God. In both cases, we see an ever-increasing persecution of the true Church of Jesus Christ in the world today. This tendency will continue and reach new heights in the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation when the false church joins with the Antichrist.

[8] The beast that you saw **was**, and **is not,** and **will ascend** out of the *bottomless pit* and go to *perdition*. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and

yet is. [9] **Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits**. Rev 17:8-9

The angel tells John that this beast, the Antichrist, will eventually go to hell (perdition). That is certainly where he belongs. At first, however, as we noted earlier, there will be an amazing incident where it looks to all the world that this Antichrist has died and been resurrected. Saints will not be fooled, but the unrepentant sinners will see this and be convinced that he is the man that should lead them. Some prophecy scholars think that when the Antichrist rises from the *abyss* (the bottomless pit) after recovering from his apparent deathly wound, he will be demonically empowered by Satan to wage war against Jesus and the saints of God… i.e. he will be "possessed" by the Devil.

On the other hand, there are some who think that the beast in this verse speaks of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire *was*, now *is not*, and *will ascend out of the abyss* when Satan "resurrects" it in the end-times, and then *go* back *to perdition* when Jesus Christ comes again to defeat Satan. This is possible, although some feel it is not possible for an Empire to actually descend into the *abyss*. In any case, the verse is either speaking of the Antichrist or the Empire that he leads during the Tribulation. The vast majority believe this allusion is to the actual Antichrist.

The interpretation of the seven heads and seven mountains is also debatable. Many believe the seven mountains stand for Rome (often called the city on seven hills). The seven heads are said to be seven kings of Rome. For example, some have suggested that the seven kings are specifically the following: Julius Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Domitian, and the last being the Antichrist who gathers together and revives the Roman Empire. The first five were all dead, Domitian was in power when John was receiving the vision, and the Antichrist was yet to come. Therefore, the Antichrist will be the seventh and the eighth king (after coming back out of the *abyss*). Still others, like John MacArthur, suggest that John may have been alluding to kingdoms instead of kings. For example, he lists the following seven: Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greece have all fallen from power; Rome still was the world power at that time, and the revived Roman Empire was to come later… in the end of time. This all relates to this next verse…

[10] There are also seven kings. **Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come**. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. [11] And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition. Rev 17:10-11

Others who have wrestled with the verse above have come up with another set of Roman kings. Regardless of how one specifically views the first six kings, there is no doubt that the last *king* is the Antichrist. Whether one looks at these verses as pointing to nations or kings in the end times, the only **individual** who fits the prophecy is the coming Antichrist. The Antichrist is

the only king that could be the seventh king. Then, because he supposedly will die, he will rise from the dead to become the eighth king as well. That fits very nicely.

The Bible actually makes it easy for us to understand what is meant by the ten horns…

[12] The **ten horns which you saw are ten kings** who have received no kingdom as yet, but **they receive authority for one hour as kings** with the beast. [13] **These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.** [14] **These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them**, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful." Rev 17:12-14

The ten kings referred to in the verses above must be future kings because they have yet to receive kingdoms. In fact, they are the leaders of the ten nations that will join together to make up the Antichrist's confederacy during the Tribulation. These are the same kings that Daniel wrote about and were noted in Chapter 13. Although they will give all of their important power to their leader, the Antichrist, apparently they will receive some token power for a short period of time ("one hour") from that same evil, satanic leader. However, in reality, they are just the puppets of the Antichrist. These kings will join in with Satan and the Antichrist to wage war against Jesus, the Lamb.

[15] Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. [16] **And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.** [17] For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. [18] And **the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth**." Rev 17:15-18

The Bible explains itself in these verses as the waters upon which the apostate church (the harlot) sits are said to be the nations and peoples of the world. At the halfway point of the Tribulation, the confederacy that had been pulled together for a time, between the harlot and the Antichrist and his world political empire, will begin to crumble. The Antichrist will use his control over the military might of his empire to defeat the religious system of the world… which had gained much power up until that time (much like the Roman Catholic Church had great political power during the Middle Ages). Religious Babylon (the harlot of Mystery Babylon) will be destroyed.

The Antichrist will now have total control over the nations of the world. He will demand to be worshipped like God. He will be God, in his own mind. It is intriguing that the Caesars also demanded to be worshipped as God. In so many ways, this final world system of government and religion is so much like that of ancient Rome… no wonder it is referred to as the revived Roman Empire.

The last verse of this chapter introduces the reader to the "great city which reigns over the kings of the earth". This leads right in to the next chapter which tells all about the city named Babylon the Great.

Chapter 18: The Fall of Babylon the Great

Sometime after the incident above, John saw still another angel come down from heaven. This angel had been given great authority by God. The earth actually was "illuminated" because of the glorious appearance of this angel. Quite obviously, this is one impressive angel! Once again, John heard the loud voice of an angel announcing a very important event. The sum total of the message was that the formerly impressive Babylon the Great had completely been destroyed. Now it was only a place for demons and other unclean things to congregate. However, it is important to consider what is meant by Babylon the Great.

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. ² And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "**Babylon the great** is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! ³ For **all the nations** have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the **kings of the earth** have committed fornication with her, and **the merchants of the earth** have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."
Rev 18:1-3

There is very little doubt that the Mystery Babylon, Mother of Harlots is not the same Babylon as the Babylon spoken of here. Some reasons for this are as follows:

- The names are different – Babylon the Great vs. Mystery Babylon, Mother of Harlots.
- The time when this Babylon falls is noted to be *after* the harlot Babylon is destroyed by the ten horns (kings of the revived Roman Empire) i.e. events of Chapter 17 precede events of Chapter 18.
- Mystery Babylon, the Mother of Harlots, will be destroyed by the ten horns (kings of the earth) who are led by the Antichrist; Babylon the Great will be destroyed by the final, massive judgments of God… and these kings of the earth will "**weep and lament**" this event!
- The events described in this chapter take place in the final days of the Great Tribulation (the last portion of the second 3 ½ years). If this Babylon were the same as that discussed in Chapter 17, there would be no time for the Antichrist to reign as the all-powerful false Christ on earth. In fact, he will rule with an iron fist for 3 ½ years after crushing the apostate religious Mystery Babylon in the mid-portion of the Tribulation.

Simply put, Chapter 17 describes the destruction of the apostate religion that had dominated the world up until when the Antichrist was ready to assume control. Chapter 18, as

we shall see, tells the story of how the economic, political and governmental system, known as Babylon the Great, will be taken down by Christ.

Babylon the Great will certainly fall. That is what this introduction plainly tells the reader. Those involved with Babylon also will fall. Three conspirators are listed as follows: nations, kings of the earth, and merchants. In other words, essentially everything will fall as everything will have become corrupted by this satanic governmental and economic system. The only way to be safe from God's wrath will be to reject the Antichrist and his system, repent, and follow Jesus. To follow Jesus, and some still will in the second half of the Tribulation, will likely mean a martyr's death. If one is very fortunate, a person who turns to follow Jesus may find a place to hide in the wilderness or mountains.

The final result will be that Babylon will become a haven for demons and other foul creatures… with no end of this situation in sight. Of course, an important question to consider is exactly what is meant by Babylon the Great? Where is it? There are two common ideas as to where this political, financial power structure will be located: Rome (as this has been referred to as Babylon on occasion in the past) and the actual city of Babylon. If the city is going to be Babylon, then this ancient city will have to undergo much reconstruction from its current state. As we have already learned from the previous section of this treatise, the city of Babylon has already undergone a lot of reconstruction with more on the horizon. Most prophecy scholars do believe that Babylon the Great will be the actual city of Babylon or one built right next to the location of that ancient city. The ancient city may have been the most impressive city ever built. It is mentioned in seventeen books of the Bible. There are some that believe that since the old city has been destroyed, it will not be rebuilt as the Bible does say things to that effect. However, a careful reading of the verses on the future of Babylon reveal:

- If one actually examines the historical record, the city of Babylon has actually never yet qualified under the biblical injunction that, "It will never be inhabited, nor will it be settled from generation to generation; nor will the Arabian pitch tents there." Isaiah 13:20
- It is also true that Jeremiah's prophecy has never come true as yet, "Her cities are a desolation, a dry land and a wilderness, a land where no one dwells, through which no son of man passes." Jer 51:43
- On many occasions, the ruins of that great old city have been taken and used to build new structures. Therefore, one cannot say what Jeremiah claimed would eventually be true of Babylon… "They shall not take from you a stone for a corner nor a stone for a foundation, but you shall be desolate forever," says the LORD." Jer 51:26
  Even recently, some of the houses of Baghdad have utilized some of the stones of that ancient city. In the past, Seleucia, Kufa, Hillah and other cities have taken stones to use in the building of their towns.
- Isaiah goes even further to note that Babylon will eventually be subject to destruction that will come at the hand of the Lord during the end-time. "Wail, for the day of the

LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger." Isaiah 13:6&13

- Isaiah continued to prophecy about Babylon and the fact that God would send judgment upon it one day… the day of the Lord. He wrote concerning Babylon, "See, the **day of the LORD** is coming --a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger-- to **make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.** For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. **"I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity**; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." Isaiah 13:9-11 Babylon has yet to receive this type of destruction.
- And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. Isaiah 13:19 This type of devastation has certainly never befallen Babylon. This is the type of total destruction shown to reign down upon Babylon as the Great Tribulation comes to an end.
- And **great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath**. Rev 16:19

The conclusion from all of this is that, *most likely*, the center of commerce, government, and culture during the last half of the Tribulation will be the rebuilt city of Babylon. However, Rome cannot be ruled out completely.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. 5 For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Rev 18:4

This heavenly voice tells God's people to make sure they do not get mixed up in this anti-God system in any way. God has told His people to come out of "the wicked world" before. One of the better examples, is how God sent two angels to tell Lot and his family to get out of Sodom as God's judgment was about to rain down upon it. Also, in Jeremiah, God told the Israelites to get out of Babylon before He sent judgment upon it… "Move from the midst of Babylon, Go out of the land of the Chaldeans; and be like the rams before the flocks. 9 For behold, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon. Jer 50:8-9

The point is, John was now hearing this voice from heaven encouraging God's people to stay out the world's evil system. He always wants this for all of His followers. God on many occasions has warned His children to flee from the evil influences of this world…
And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
Romans 12:2

Then John hears what the angel is asking God to do to Babylon…

Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. 7 In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.' Rev 18:4-7

There are many times during a typical person's lifetime where it seems only appropriate to seek vengeance against another person due to their evil acts. However, God does not want that to be done. He tells us to leave that up to Him…

Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand Deut 32:35

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Romans 12:19

We see in the verses above the voice calling on the Lord to pay back *double* what the Antichrist and his cohorts have done to punish the Tribulation saints. Although God has, at times, not seemed to punish those people who are terrible sinners in the world today, He certainly will not be mocked. One always must remember, ***God's timing is not our timing***. ***He does things with eternity in mind.*** In this particular case, with time really running down to the very last several months of the world as we now know it, God will punish with great fury those who have rejected Him.

It is interesting to note how the last verse above shows that this Babylon will be still living in luxury and still believing that everything will be just fine, right up to the time of final judgment. The very next verse points out just how suddenly this situation will change…

8 Therefore her **plagues will come in *one day*--death and mourning and famine**. And she will **be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her**. 9 **"The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her,** when they see the smoke of her burning, 10 standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For **in one hour your judgment has come.**' 11 And **the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her**, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: 12 merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; 13 and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. 14 The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. 15 **The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing.** Rev 18:8-15

Babylon the Great will be simply devastated by God! Plagues, famine, fire, death, and the total loss of every item of value will be the ultimate judgment on this city. All those who were involved with Babylon will also suffer greatly. The kings of the nations will be very upset by the loss of this powerful, wealthy, and wicked city because their welfare had depended almost exclusively on its survival! The world's merchants will be devastated as they will see their economic system collapse completely!

This judgment will come suddenly. The Bible says it will happen in one hour. Even if this is not literal, and it may actually be literally one hour, it certainly suggests a sudden and swift judgment. The next several verses show how that city had been "clothed" in nothing but the most expensive and luxurious things. Yet, in one hour, it was all lost. Again, the Word of the God has always led people correctly. Jesus taught us… "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matt 6:19-21

'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! [17] For **in one hour such great riches came to nothing**.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance [18] and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' [19] They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, '**Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.**' Rev 18:16-19

Everyone who is around to witness the incredible destruction of Babylon will be shocked. The followers of the Antichrist will be devastated. The followers of Jesus Christ will be avenged. The formerly great city of Babylon will be destroyed by God, never to be seen again. There will be no more music, art, the buying and selling of crafts and other merchandise, and no more activity of any kind in that crushed and, forevermore, deserted city.

[20] Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!" [21] Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus **with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.** [22] The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. [23] The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. [24] And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth." Rev 18:20-24

The "light" of commerce and government of the Antichrist's reign will have gone out. The bridegroom (Antichrist) and his bride (the unrepentant sinners remaining on the earth) will be silenced. The Antichrist had given it his best shot at ruling the world when God gave him the chance, and he miserably failed! Unfortunately, as the last verse notes, he was responsible for the spilling of the blood of so many millions of Tribulation prophets and saints.

Summary (Chapters 17-18):

Babylon is the subject of the next two chapters. "Mystery Babylon" represents the apostate church which will become very important and powerful when the true Church is raptured out of the world. This false church and the Antichrist will help one another during the first half of the Tribulation….

the **great harlot (the apostate church) who sits on many waters**, [2] **with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication**

I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of *the beast that carries her*

Both of these two satanically controlled entities (apostate church and the Antichrist), will join together to blaspheme the Lamb of God and search out and destroy His followers. At the mid-point of the Tribulation, the very powerful Antichrist (already reigning over the revived Roman Empire) will turn against Mystery Babylon (the false church), destroy it, and assume total political, religious, and economic control of the world…

And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire

The second half of Tribulation, known as the Great Tribulation, will see the Antichrist wield total power over all people and nations. This economic and political power structure is here referred to as Babylon the Great. However, this repressive, evil, and bloodthirsty dictatorship will soon come to an end. As we have already noted, God will increase the severity of His judgments on the earth as the end of the Tribulation approaches. At one point God will no longer allow the Antichrist free reign to wreck havoc on the population. God will destroy Babylon the Great as the Great Tribulation draws to a close. This destruction will come quickly…

And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.
with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.
For in one hour she is made desolate.' Rev 18:16-19,21

Chapter 19: The King of Kings and Lord of Lords

[1] After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! [2] For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." [3] Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" [4] And the twenty-four elders and the four living

creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!"
Rev 19:1-4

This 19th Chapter is one of the easier ones to interpret. In the introductory paragraph, John is being shown a great praise service once again in heaven. Jesus is being praised for His righteous judgment of the earth and those within it. The use of the praise term, "Alleluia" in this chapter is the only place where it is found in the New Testament. The heavenly choir is singing the praises of our Lord Jesus for His total victory over the harlot, Mystery Babylon, and Babylon the Great and its king, the Antichrist.

This choir sings out by noting four of the great attributes of Jesus; His omnipotence, His perfect honor, His heavenly glory, and the fact that He has provided salvation because of His incredible sacrificial love for humanity. Jesus has just avenged the deaths of all those people who had chosen to follow Him at the risk of their earthly lives. Those who gave their allegiance to the harlot, those that followed the False Prophet and the Antichrist himself will all be damned for all eternity.

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures (the seraphims) are seen worshipping God, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" All of heaven will be overjoyed at this victory by Jesus over the forces of Satan.

5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who
fear Him, both small and great!" 6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the
sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord
God Omnipotent reigns! 7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for **the marriage of the
Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.**" Rev 19:5-7

The very next event after the total victory over Babylon the Great and the harlot will be the **Marriage of the Lamb**. As we shall see below, Jesus will be the Bridegroom, and the Church will be the Bride. God, from eternity past, betrothed His only begotten Son, Jesus, to be the future Bridegroom for His elect… those that make up the Church. Another phase of the wedding takes place on earth when repentant sinners turn to Christ in faith and ask Him into their hearts. During the times of Christ, there were several major aspects to any wedding:

- The marriage contract details were typically worked out by the parents of the bride and bridegroom. At some point, the potential bridegroom came and presented a marriage contract (a Ketubah) to the intended bride and her father. He included the "Bride Price" as compensation to the parents of the bride as an expression of his love and for the cost of raising her. Just think of the price Jesus paid for His Bride! Another important feature of this betrothal was when the bridegroom would pour out a cup of red wine, offer it to the potential bride, and then wait to see if she would drink it. Of course, this was a beautiful picture of the blood Christ shed for His bride at Calvary. If the bride drank the wine, the couple was officially betrothed. If any man or woman accepts by faith the fact that Jesus

shed His blood for mankind on the cross, that individual is saved… married to Christ for eternity. The next step was the giving of the gifts. Then, the future groom would return to his family home to prepare a future home for his bride. This was a binding agreement that could only be severed via divorce or death. That is why Joseph was planning initially to divorce Mary after he found out that she was pregnant (see Matt 1:18-21). There is no equivalent method, in regards to the marriage of Christ to His Church, to dissolve the marriage… it is for eternity.

- The betrothal was followed by a time of presentation. There was usually a long time between the betrothal and this stage so that there was ample time to prepare. In this case, one can picture Jesus in heaven as He prepares a home for His Bride. He would also prepare a wedding chamber.

  "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.** John 14:1-3

  Certainly, it is also the time that His Bride should be working toward sanctification with the help of the Holy Spirit of God…

  Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her [26] to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, [27] and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless** Eph 5:25-27
- At some unspecified time in the future, the bridegroom would return for his bride. He would take her back to his home where he had prepared a place for her to live and a wedding chamber (i.e. chuppah). The two of them would be married and then spend *seven* days in the chuppah. This is very intriguing in that after the Rapture of the Church into heaven, there will be *seven* years that the Bride of Christ and Jesus will remain in heaven during the Tribulation. When the Jewish bride and groom emerge, a great wedding feast would be celebrated. The same will be true for Jesus and His Church. Then they both shall live together in the Millennial Kingdom.
- In the marriage supper of the Lamb, the Old Testament saints and the Tribulation saints will be the guests.
- The final aspect of the marriage would be the consummation – this corresponds to the eternal state in heaven.

The last big event of the wedding will be when Jesus and His Church attend the marriage supper. The exact timing of this supper celebration is debatable. There are some (e.g. Tim LaHaye) who believe that this wonderful event will take place in heaven immediately after the wedding. However, many students of prophecy, such as J. Vernon McGee and John MacArthur believe that it will occur on the earth at the onset of the Millennial Kingdom. Whatever is the case, it will certainly be an unbelievably wonderful occasion for all involved.

As noted above, **the marriage will take place in heaven**. The Bible makes it plain as to who will be the Bridegroom and who will be the Bride. When John the Baptist was asked about Jesus, when many of John's followers had taken to following Jesus, John said… He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. John 3:29 John is saying in this verse that Jesus is the Bridegroom and therefore it is very appropriate that the people would follow Him. They will make up the Church… His Bride.

Previously, John had already indentified Jesus as the Lamb of God… The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! John 1:29

Therefore, taken together, these three previous verses (Rev 19:7, John 3:29 and John 1:29) show that **Jesus is the Bridegroom** at this heavenly wedding. The following is a verse where Jesus identifies Himself as the Bridegroom…

Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" **15** Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. Matt 9:14-15

How about the bride? Actually, there are two "wives" of God mentioned in the Scripture. In the Old Testament, Israel is noted to have walked away from her position as "wife" of God. She had committed adultery with many other gods…
Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," says the LORD. Jer 3:20
You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband. Ezek 16:32

This was the Lord God speaking to Israel about her turning away from Him to worship other gods. There are many other verses showing Israel to be the adulterous wife of God. Obviously, Israel does not qualify to be the beautiful bride of Christ at this heavenly wedding.

Paul shows us who will be the Bride in this wedding when he wrote to the Corinthian Church: For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. **For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.** 2 Cor 11:2

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; **25** Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her**, **26** that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, **27** that **He might present her to Himself a glorious church**, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. Eph 5:23,24-27

So, **the Church will be the bride**. Since right after the wedding John sees Jesus ride out of heaven on a white horse, it is felt by virtually all commentators that the wedding will take place in heaven very close to the end of the Great Tribulation… that is, just about seven years into the Tribulation. Remember, The Great Tribulation refers to the last 3 ½ years of this period because the judgments of God and Satan are so severe at that time.

The **Bema Judgment Seat of Christ** will most likely occur before the wedding. During this judgment, Christian saints will receive their rewards for the good works that they performed for Jesus while on earth. Of course, not all those works that are done will be considered worthy when we face our Judge in heaven. However, all Christians should work toward their sanctification all throughout their lives with the hope of hearing one day… 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' Matt 25:21

The next two verses show that the Church will be arrayed in fine linen. This will be because of the righteous acts of the saints. So, even though it is absolutely true that the only reason Christians will gain entrance into heaven is because they are seen to have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ, they will be able to wear beautiful wedding clothing because of **the righteous acts that they have done** since their salvation (i.e. good works). This is another reason that the Bema Judgment most likely will take place prior to the wedding. The attire of the individual saint in the wedding may well relate to the rewards that they receive at the wedding.

And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for **the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints**. [9] Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." Rev 19:8-9

The angel then said that it was a blessed thing to be called to attend the marriage supper. Those who would likely attend would be the Old Testament saints (such as Job, David, Moses, etc.) and the Tribulation saints. Almost every prophecy scholar believes that the marriage will only be for the Christians… defined as those who have accepted Christ since Pentecost up until the Rapture. However, there will be many others that will be invited to the marriage supper, just as is the case in a typical wedding.

Some may wonder why God does not include the Old Testament saints as part of the Bride of Christ. Although it is true that this entire wedding ceremony is a wonderful honor for each Christian, it is also true that the Old Testament saints have a certain special relationship with God from which Christians are excluded. Frankly, it may be true that *all* those who have accepted Jesus prior to the time of the wedding will a part of the Bride of Christ and, therefore, participate as such in this wedding and wedding supper. God does not make this perfectly clear. It is just that it is only *certain* that those who accepted Jesus during the Church Age will be included in the actual wedding ceremony.

[10] And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Rev 19:10

John was so impressed with the glory and beauty of what he had just witnessed that he fell down to worship the angel. He was promptly told to get up as it will always be improper to worship anyone but God. Just after this, John witnessed a wonderful sight coming from heaven…

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called **Faithful** and **True**, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. [12] **His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns.** He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. [13] **He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.** Rev 19:11-13

The stage is now set, the adversaries are ready to do battle, Jesus is ready with His Church in heaven to come and save the world for His people. Satan has already been evicted from heaven, and the earth has been judged with a terrible vengeance by Holy God. The terribly sinful economic, political and religious system of Babylon and the Antichrist has been destroyed. Now there is an urgent need on earth that only God can remedy. Israel is in absolute peril. They have gone to a place in the desert, a place prepared for them.

Jesus Christ, called *Faithful and True*, will then come down to the earth to close out the Great Tribulation. By this time in world history, it will have become quite apparent that Jesus is totally *faithful* and *true*. Everything He has said, that is, all that is in His Word, will have come completely true! He will have many crowns on His head because they will indicate that He is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. His eyes are said to be like a flame of fire representing His righteous judgment upon sin. His eyes were likened to blazing fire also in Rev 1:14 & 2:18.

Jesus is coming on His white horse to completely conquer the Antichrist and his followers at Armageddon. In Roman times, often a general would ride on a white horse after a victorious battle. He would parade his captives in the procession that followed. Actually, the victory over the Antichrist will be a very easy task for the Son of God. However, it will still be incredibly impressive to see just how easy it will be for Jesus to destroy the forces of evil. He will do it with just His Word! Remember, Jesus is indeed omnipotent!

The description of Jesus then continues and points to the fact that Jesus will be arriving on earth's scene with His royal robe dipped in the blood of the enemy's armies. Some suggest that the blood-stained robe points to the blood that He shed for the world. Jesus is also noted to be the Word in these verses. Certainly, Jesus has been called the Word ever since His first coming.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. John 1:1-3

[14] And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. [15] Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. [16] And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Rev 19:14-16

All those who are saints in heaven will have the opportunity to follow their leader, Jesus Christ, down to earth to put down the final rebellion of Satan! This army of saints will be dressed impressively in white linen and given the opportunity to ride on a white horse of victory. Jesus will certainly not be coming this time on a donkey. He also will be riding a great white horse and carry with Him the sword within His mouth. Dr. John Walvoord points out that the sword that is being referenced will be a very large, long, and powerful Thracian sword. Simply speaking, the concept being put forth is that the powerful *Word* will be all that is needed for the omnipotent Jesus to defeat the armies of the Antichrist. The victory will be very swift, with no loss of life for those on the side of the Lord. Note just a few of the verses that show just how easy it is for our omnipotent God (be it the Father, Son or Holy Spirit) to simply *speak* things into existence:

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Gen 1:3
Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. Gen 1:11
Then He (Jesus) arose and *rebuked* the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" Matt 8:26-27

Then, as prophesied in the Psalms, Jesus will rule the world with a rod of iron. "You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.'" Psalms 2:9

Finally, those Jews who had been waiting so long for the "conquering Messiah" will see Him. Unfortunately, so many of the house of Israel had not recognized Him when He came initially to die for their sins. This time, the Messiah will come to the Middle East to stop the carnage that had been going on through so much of the seven year Tribulation. Israel will be on the verge of annihilation by the forces converging on her. The city of Jerusalem will be in marked danger of being overrun. Jesus will put a stop to all of this. Jesus will have then become quite obviously the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Daniel saw that the Antichrist would ultimately face an inglorious defeat at the hands of the Messiah almost 650 years prior to John's vision…

"**In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed**, nor will it be left to another people. **It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end**, but it will itself endure forever. Dan 2:44

John then saw an angel standing in the sun…

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." 19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Rev 19:17-19

Here we see that an angel will be making all the birds in the sky aware of the pending carnage that will result after Jesus and His heavenly army arrive to defeat Satan, the Antichrist, and their armies. There will be massive casualties all over the valley of Megiddo as well as the surrounding region. Frankly, these birds of prey, for which Petra is well known, will help in the clean-up from all the deaths that will result from the final wrath meted out by Jesus.

After His triumphant landing on the Mount of Olives, Jesus will probably first go to Edom, where most of the Jews fled to escape the persecution of the Antichrist over the course of the last 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation. After the satanic armies have been defeated there, Jesus will go to the valley of Megiddo and promptly win the infamous war of Armageddon at that time. The climax at the end of the dispensation will come as He next enters into Jerusalem with His saints. Additional detail on this and the other wars of the end-times has been written about at the outset of this commentary on the Tribulation. However, two Old Testament prophecies concerning this war campaign are noted below:

For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. 4 **And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.** 12 This is the plague with which the LORD will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. Zech 14:2-4, 12

Who is this **coming from Edom, from Bozrah**, with **His garments stained crimson**? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of His strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." 2 Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? 3 "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; **their blood spattered my garments**, and I stained all my clothing. 4 For **the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come.** 5 I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me.

6 **I trampled the nations in my anger**; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground." Isaiah 63:1-6

The chapter ends with John seeing just what will happen to the Antichrist and the False Prophet.

20 Then the **beast** was captured, and with him the **false prophet** who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. **These two were cast alive into the lake of fire** burning with brimstone. 21 And **the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse.** And all the birds were filled with their flesh. Rev 19:20-21

So the Antichrist and the False Prophet are thrown by Jesus into the lake of fire. They will not die there. Instead, they will continually suffer from the terrible burning fire and brimstone. They will here begin what will be their eternal punishment… never will they die, never will they escape! Jesus Christ will complete the battle of Armageddon by seeing to the killing of all remaining unrepentant sinners of the world. There will be so much blood and so much dead flesh that it will be difficult to believe. It will take many months to clean the Middle East of all of this carnage.

All those that have turned to Jesus, both Jew and Gentile, will be saved and enter into the Kingdom; on the other hand, the wicked gathered at the battle of Armageddon will be instantly slaughtered, none will escape. The rest of the world's unredeemed will be judged and executed at the *sheep and goat judgment* which immediately follows Christ's return.

"So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 2 Thess 1:7-9

Chapter 20: The Millennial Kingdom and the Great White Throne Judgment

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. Rev 20:1-3

This next chapter begins with John once again seeing an angel from heaven. This angel is seen coming down to earth with a chain and the key to the *abyss* (bottomless pit). The term that is translated as "abyss", abussos (gr), appears seven times in The Revelation. The *abyss* or "bottomless pit" is a place where demons and other evil creatures are imprisoned by God until they are banished into their final eternal place of punishment… a fiery hell. Prisoners that will already be in the *abyss* include those demons that had attempted to corrupt the human race (seen

in Gen. 6 and Jude 1:6) plus those that were released to torment unrepentant sinners when the fifth trumpet sounded.

By this time of the Second Coming of Christ, the False Prophet and the Antichrist have already been banished to the lake of fire as noted above. As those verses above also note, soon after Jesus defeats Satan in the battle of Armageddon, the devil will be cast into the *abyss*, a temporary place of punishment. An angel will be placed in charge of that most impressive task.

This must be one of the more powerful angels, possibly Michael, as he will be able to lay hold of Satan long enough to chain him up in the *abyss*. There Satan will sit for almost the entire Millennium, unable to torment anyone any longer. There are some folks who have objected to the idea of Satan being chained at that time – or, for that matter, being chained at all. They do not believe that he would be literally chained up for 1000 years. The fact is that God says that he will be chained and kept shut up in the *abyss* for that period of time… therefore, it will happen. The exact nature of the chain can be debated, but the fact that Satan will be unable to influence humanity on the earth, or anything else for that matter, is not in question.

Ever since Adam and Eve, Satan has had the opportunity to tempt and torment, oppress and even possess human beings. After this binding and banishment to the *abyss*, this will no longer be possible. However, there are some people who say that even today Satan is not allowed to torment humanity (e.g. those who suggest that we are currently living in the Millennial Kingdom). That is, in my opinion, a very incorrect belief. Why? The Bible gives a multitude of examples of Satan tormenting people. Therefore, any theory that would suggest that Satan has been bound since Christ's victory over him on the cross, would seem to seriously break down. For example:

- Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. **4** And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. Luke 22:3-4
- "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. Luke 22:31 (Although Peter did let his Savior down at first, he came back strong as a great witness for the Lord)
- Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Acts 5:3
- The god of this age (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Cor 4:4
- For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. **14** And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 2 Cor 11:13-14 (here we see that Satan uses his evil powers of persuasion to deceive mankind concerning the true gospel of Christ)

It is true that the first two examples above relate to a time just before Jesus gave His life for His Church on the cross. However, the other verses are from a period of time after His sacrificial death… and, therefore, after Satan would have supposedly been prohibited from

tormenting humans (due to his defeat at the cross and, supposedly, his resultant immediate binding). As the verses above (and many others in the epistles) point out, Satan is very active on the earth today. That will not be the case during the Millennial Kingdom. His activity will not just be restrained or restricted but *completely eliminated* during this kingdom period. Hence, there must be a *future* Millennial Kingdom… which, as mentioned in much more detail in section 2, is one of the many reasons for presenting here the premillennial view of the end-times. Simply put, Satan is much too active today for us to be living in the Millennium! There are many New Testament Bible verses showing the influence that Satan still wields over mankind at this time (e.g. 2 Cor. 4:3-4 & 11:14; Eph. 2:2; 1 Peter 5:8)

As we shall soon see, God does plan on releasing him just before the thousand years is complete, however.

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And **they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years**. Rev 20:4

John was then shown many thrones in heaven. When the disciples, led by Peter, had once asked Jesus concerning what the future held for those who had followed Him so fervently on earth, Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Matt 19:28

Recall also that the Church had just come back with Jesus when He came down to earth to defeat Satan and his lackeys. Those making up the Church will certainly be with Jesus to help Him reign during that thousand year Kingdom.

Many places in the Old Testament speak of the coming Messiah who will set up His Kingdom on earth. This is especially seen in Daniel and Ezekiel, but also it is mentioned by many other prophets. When this future Kingdom is realized, the Old Testament saints who had followed after God in faith are going to be rewarded by their full participation during that period of time.

John also saw the souls of the many Tribulation saints who had been willing to give their lives because they had such great faith in their Lord. They were great witnesses for Jesus, just as all martyrs have been since the first century. Of course, these saints had totally resisted taking the mark of the beast, 666. Because of this brave, but very wise decision, they now are seen in their glorified bodies and beginning their Millennial reign with Jesus! Their everlasting relationship with God, the Holy Spirit and His Son will, of course, continue at the conclusion of the 1,000 years. They will be able to look forward to that time with wonderful anticipation.

Frankly, as can be seen, everyone who had turned to faith in God from Adam to the last person saved during the Tribulation, will have a wonderful role to play during the Kingdom Age. However, that will not be true for everyone ever born…

5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the **first resurrection.** 6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the **second death** has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. Rev 20:5-6

When John hears about the "rest of the dead", he is learning about what will happen to those who have never accepted God's plan of salvation… the unrepentant sinner, those from Old Testament times and those since Pentecost and those during the Tribulation. Every unrepentant sinner of the Tribulation will be slain and will await their final judgment. Jesus will separate the saved from the unsaved upon His return to earth. This is often referred to as the sheep and goat judgment:

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a **shepherd separates the sheep from the goats**. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world……. "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Matt 25:31-34,41

There will be a thousand years between the first resurrection of the saints and the last resurrection. Those that have been saved by their faith in Jesus will only experience one resurrection – that will be enough. During the thousand year reign of Jesus on the earth, these saints will be priests of God and Christ, doing whatever God has in store for His people for that time.

For those who have not accepted God's plan for their life, they will be resurrected at the conclusion of the Millennium. Then, after a second judgment to be discussed a little later, **these people will face a second death**… for which there will be no return.

The following is a summary of the **first resurrection**:

- **The Church** – *at the Rapture*, the Church will rise up to meet Jesus in the air. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.** 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first.** 17 After that, **we who are still alive** and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thess 4:14-17 (note that Rev. 20:6 points out that those in this first resurrection "shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him"). That is certainly a wonderful promise!

George Elden Ladd certainly is one of the better spokesmen for those who hold the **posttribulation view**. Ladd believes that Christ's Second Coming will consist of the defeat of Satan and the Antichrist at Armageddon and the resurrection of ***all*** of the saints. "Another event which occurs **simultaneously** with the resurrection of the saints is what we call the Rapture." (The Last Things, Ladd, p. 85) This combined Rapture and resurrection is described here in Revelation 20… *according to Ladd.* The Church will go through the entire seven year Tribulation period.

- **Old Testament Saint**s - at the close of the Tribulation, the Old Testament saints will be raised to be with Jesus in heaven – There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time **your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered**. Dan 12:1
- **Tribulation Saints** - When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. **10** They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" **11** Then each of them was given a white robe, and **they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed**. Rev 6:9-11 Earlier in The Revelation John had seen that the Tribulation saints were being told to wait just a little longer for their resurrection bodies as God was going to raise all of the people who turned to faith in Jesus during this seven years at the same time. Once the Great Tribulation was over, these saints would be raised. This would occur at *approximately* the same time as the resurrection of the Old Testament saints. And, of course, the aforementioned quote from this chapter shows that these saints will be resurrected at this time… And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then **I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God**, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. **And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** Rev 20:4

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison **8** and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to **gather them together to battle**, whose **number is as the sand of the sea**. **9** They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And **fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them**. **10** **The devil, who deceived them, was**

cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Rev 20:7-10

God will allow Satan one more opportunity to use his evil influence on humanity as the Millennium draws to a close. God does not tell us why. As was noted in the discussion earlier on the Millennium, there will still be some people who will choose to reject Jesus during that thousand year period. Although we cannot know the actual reason for Satan's release, he will assume his typical leadership role and lead all of those that have rebelled in one final revolt against God. This is doomed to failure.

Remember that every mortal individual who enters into the Millennial Kingdom will be a believer. They will enter into an incredibly wonderful environment, with no sickness, no satanic influence, having peace and tranquility, and ruled by the perfect benevolent king, Jesus Christ. It will be simply fantastic! Over the course of the centuries, people will continue to procreate and these children will grow up in this superb environment. With all of the advantages that they will have, most will certainly choose to follow Christ, one would assume. However, each person will still be born with a sin nature and also still have the free will to choose their destiny. Anyone will have the opportunity to reject Jesus if they so desire. Some will, just as Adam and Eve did even while living in the idyllic surroundings of Eden. Pride is a terrible thing. With the re-introduction of Satan at the end of the thousand years, more will choose to join his evil empire, sadly.

As the thousand years draws to a close, Satan will gather up his followers from the four corners of the earth (and it will be a large number, unfortunately), and head on over to the capital city of Jerusalem. What a terrible idea. As soon as they all gather together around that city, God will send down fire from heaven and "devour them". This destruction will be similar to that which God sent upon Sodom. So, the rebellion will be put down very quickly by God.

That will be the end of every evil action ever perpetrated by the devil. God will cast him in the lake of fire to be with his evil underlings, the Antichrist and the False Prophet. How long will they be tormented there? It is important to understand that their punishment will last for an eternity… as does the punishment of all human beings who reject Jesus. Jesus used the example of a perpetually burning, rotten smelling, city dump just outside the walls of the city to describe the eternal place of torment. The place was called Gehenna (Place of Torment). Also known as the Valley of Hinnom, southwest of Jerusalem, where Solomon, King of Israel, built a place of worship, for the gods Chemosh and Moloch. The valley came to be regarded as a place of abomination because some of the Israelites sacrificed their children to Moloch there. In a later period, it was made into a refuse dump and perpetual fires were maintained there to prevent pestilence. Thus, in the days of Jesus, Gehenna became synonymous with hell.

Then I saw a **great white throne** and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. [12] And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in

the books. [13] The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And **they were judged, each one according to his works**. [14] Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. [15] And **anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.** Rev 20:11-15

The next scene comes after the banishment of Satan. After the first (and only) resurrection of the unrepentant sinners, they will now be brought to stand before God. There are those commentators who believe this is God the Father, others who believe this is God the Son. Exactly which person of the Godhead will judge these people may be debatable, however, there is no doubt it will be God.

God will now judge the lost. This will take place immediately after the Millennium. All those who have placed their faith in Jesus will now be with Him. They will definitely not be at this judgment. They will have stood before Jesus one thousand years earlier during the Bema Judgment. They all have passed on to heavenly glory. However, all those who have rejected Jesus will stand before God at this *Great White Throne* judgment. Their future is bleak.

The judgment will begin. More than one book will be opened during this process of judgment. It is reasonable to believe that at least one of the books is that book mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Galations…

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the **Book of the Law**." Gal 3:10

We must remember that if an individual does not have their sins forgiven by trusting in Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, he/she will have to be judged by his/her "works". It is extremely likely that God will bring out some form of documentation of each person's life – likely found in these books. Everyone who appears before this *Great White Throne* judgment is doomed to eternal torment. However, there will be degrees of punishment as suggested by the phrase… "they were judged, each one according to his works."

Here are a few other verses that point to degrees of punishment for the wicked:

- Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore **ye shall receive the greater damnation**. Matt 23:14
- Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. James 3:1
- "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. **48** But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. Luke 12:47-48
- "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth

and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. Matt 11:21-22

Although one may argue that the verses above do not specifically address this issue of varying degrees of punishment in hell, they do strongly suggest that this will be the case. Most importantly, one never wants to have to care whether there are differing degrees in hell. God forbid, that you find out for yourself, in person!

Everyone who will be present at this last judgment will not be found in the Book of Life. Therefore, at the conclusion of each person's appearance before God, they will be cast into the lake of fire. This is obviously an extremely terrible ending. However, no one ever born has to experience this eternal judgment. No one reading this right now has to ever face this terrible torment. One must only remember to come to Jesus in faith. Just think about my favorite verse of all,

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Then, consider accepting this belief in Jesus as true by faith. Remember the first section of this treatise. The evidence for the truth of the Bible is overwhelming! It is, at the very least, worthy of your acceptance by faith. Then, God will give you greater understanding and assurance after you turn to Him in faith. I have seen that happen many, many times.

Chapter 21: The New Jerusalem

Now I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also **there was no more sea**. Rev 21:1

Clearly, John was given a vision of an entirely new heaven and earth. There is some debate over whether this new heaven and earth is an entirely new creation (out of nothing) or whether it is a major remolding of the current entities. Most prophecy scholars believe that it will be the latter. Regardless of the answer to that question, the final form of the heaven and earth as described in this chapter is markedly different than what they previously had been. Some scholars also suggest that the heaven spoken of here is the "first" heaven, i.e. the atmospheric "heaven" surrounding the earth. This is in contradistinction to the second "heaven" (the stellar portion of our universe), and the third heaven (the abode of God, His current throne and the angels). Frankly, no one can know for sure just how much of the three heavens God will re-fashion either… but, it may well be all three.

Note just how different the earth and its surrounding area will be compared to the present order of things. Even in this first verse we see a major change. There will be no more sea on this newly fashioned earth. Now, the world is made up of about 67% ocean/sea water, 3% fresh water and only 30% land. Obviously, the new earth will be quite different based only on that one, very large, change. But, there will be many other differences as we shall see.

Jesus spoke of this change from the old earth and heaven to the new when He taught about these end-times… Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Matt 24:35

Peter added some additional information…
The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. **11** Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives **12** as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. **13** But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 2 Peter 3:10-13

Frankly, virtually every believer cannot help but look forward to the time that they will enter into their eternal life in heaven, especially after being clothed with their glorified body. This body will come at the Rapture. The time when the believer will enter into eternity in the New Heaven and New Earth will come right after the conclusion of the Millennial Kingdom on earth…
But **our citizenship is in heaven**. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, **the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body**. Phil 3:20-21
Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an **inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you**, **5** who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:3-5
Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. **17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all**. **18** So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. **For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal**. 2 Cor 4:16-18

John next was witness to the New Jerusalem…
Then I, John, saw **the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven** from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, **the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them**, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. **4** **And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."** Rev 21:2-4

John next witnesses another incredible sight. He sees God lowering down the Holy City of New Jerusalem that Jesus has prepared for His Bride. The verse says that this city looks like a

bride prepared for her husband… and that is a beautiful picture of beauty. J. Vernon McGee says in his commentary on this topic that he has never seen an ugly bride. They all look beautiful on their wedding day. They are beautifully attired and glow with a seemingly God-given radiance. They are ready to join together with their husband.

The only difference here is that it is the bridegroom who has spent the time and energy preparing the eternal and incredibly beautiful home for His bride, and He will proudly present it at this time. Jesus spoke of this coming day when He walked this earth two thousand years ago. He told His followers…

I am going there to prepare a place for you. **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. **4** You know the way to the place where I am going." John 14:2-4

A voice from heaven announces this event. God will now live in his holy city, the New Jerusalem. God will bring with Him the blessed hope of this eternal city. There will be no more sorrow, crying, death, tears. Gone will be the terrible emotional problems of anxiety, schizophrenia, manic-depression, etc. There will be no more sickness, accidental tragedies, or pain. Everything will be beautiful forevermore because of our glorified bodies and God's supernatural care.

Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." **6** And He said to me, "It is done! **I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.** I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. **7** **He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.** Rev 21:5-7

Jesus then remarked that He had made everything *new*… there would never be any of the old things and the problems associated with them. Jesus then turned to His beloved apostle, John, and told him to carefully record all that he was seeing. Jesus wanted to make sure that everyone in the centuries to come would know about the bright future that was in store for those who would choose to follow and place their trust in Him (i.e. Jesus).

But the cowardly, **unbelieving**, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Rev 21:8

Jesus continued on and reminded John also to write what was waiting for those who turned away from the invitation of Jesus… the cowards, murderers, rapists, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, liars, **those without faith**, abominable and all other unrepentant sinners. They too would have eternal life to be sure… but, it would be an eternal life in constant torment. They would have their own portion of the lake of fire.

As Jesus stated that "it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into **the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."** Mark 9:43-44

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." [10] And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me **the great city**, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, [11] **having the glory of God**. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. [12] Also she had a great and high wall with **twelve gates**, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the **names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel**: [13] three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. [14] Now the wall of the city had **twelve foundations,** and on them were the **names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb**.
[15] And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. [16] The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. [17] Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.
[18] **The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass**.
[19] **The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones**: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, [20] the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. [21] The **twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl**. And **the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass**. Rev 21:9-21

One can see from the description above that this city of God, the New Jerusalem, will be incredibly beautiful… and massive in size! Its land area will be almost one-half the size of the United States! There will be gates that honor the tribes of God's "chosen people", Israel. The foundations of the walls of the city will honor the twelve apostles (presumably the original, minus Judas, but with Matthias). The entire city will be fit for God Himself! The streets will be made of pure gold… like transparent glass!!! The walls of the city will be constructed out of beautiful precious stones. These stones are listed below:

1. Jasper – diamond-like in appearance
2. Sapphire – a brilliant blue stone
3. Chalcedony – sky blue in color, with colored stripes
4. Emerald – bright green
5. Sardonyx – red and white striped stone
6. Sardius – a red quartz stone
7. Chrysolite – transparent gold
8. Beryl – various colors
9. Topaz – yellow-green
10. Chrysoprase – gold-green

11. Jacinth – today would probably be called a zircon
12. Amethyst – purple

[22] But **I saw no temple in it**, for **the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple**. [23] The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for **the glory of God illuminated it**. **The Lamb is its light**. [24] And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. [25] Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (**there shall be no night there**). [26] And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. [27] But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Rev 21:22-27

God will provide the illumination for the city Himself. There will be no temple within the city. There will be no need to worship within a temple because the actual Lord God Almighty and the Lamb of God, Jesus the Messiah will be there instead! Apparently, New Jerusalem will be awash with the light from God. God's glory will literally light the city, day and night. In fact, one would expect the whole idea of "night" to drift away from the minds of the saints living there in time. All the saints from all the nations of the world will walk in the light of the New Jerusalem.

As has already been noted, there will be nothing tainted by sin that will persist past the conclusion of the Millennial Kingdom. Satan, the Antichrist, the False Prophet, all of the demons, and all of the unrepentant people of the entire history of the world will be confined to hell at this time… and forevermore. Only those written in the Lamb's Book of Life will be there… and those names were written in that gloriously important book from before the beginning of the world!

Chapter 22: Heaven and Jesus, the Alpha and Omega

And he showed me a **pure river of water of life**, clear as crystal, **proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.** [2] In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was **the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.** Rev 22:1-2

John continues to gain more information about this future glorious city. There will be no oceans as was noted in the last chapter. However, there will be a beautiful, crystal pure river of life coursing through the center of the city. Its origin will be the throne of God! Certainly, this river reminds us of the provider of our eternal life… the source will always be God and the Lamb.

The second verse of this final chapter tells us about the tree of life. It will be in a central location, located right in the *middle of the street* proceeding from God's throne. John MacArthur says that this is better translated "in the middle of its path" (the river's path). Whatever the exact relationship of the river and tree, the tree will have twelve different fruits and bear them each month. The comment that the leaves of the tree were for the *healing* of the nations is probably

better translated *health* of the nations. In other words, both the fruit and the leaves will somehow be used by God for the enrichment of the saints' and angels' eternal existence. Exactly how that will happen is as yet a mystery. Christians will find out all these details one day!

It is very likely no coincidence that there was another tree of life in the Garden of Eden. Recall that God did not allow Adam and Eve to eat of that tree after their fall (sin) because that would have resulted in their living forever… in a fallen state of being. After that first sin, God had other plans for the redemption of man. These plans certainly did not involve partaking of the tree of life at that time.

And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." Gen 3:22

Now, however, in the New Jerusalem, it will be time for all men and women to eat of the fruit of the tree of life. There will be no more curse, ever…

And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. [4] **They shall see His face**, and His name shall be on their foreheads. [5] There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. [6] Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." Rev 22:3-6

Although in the Old Testament it is frequently noted that humans cannot safely look upon God, apparently with the new glorified body that believers will possess in eternity, that will no longer be the case. Along with the above statement in The Revelation, Jesus told the "pure in heart" that they would someday see God…

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Matt 5:8

Men, women, and angels will serve the Holy Trinity forever in a variety of capacities. Those people who have been saved to eternal life through the blood of Jesus will be sons and servants of God. In some fashion, saints will be marked as God's possession… the Bible says that His name will on their foreheads. Wonderfully, there is no doubt that God will be our Father, forever. In fact, we shall finally be able to see the face of God! Apparently, because of the saints new glorified bodies and the perfection of the New Heavens and Earth… with never any possibility of sin entering the universe as it exists after that time, God will allow people to see His face. This was never possible up until that time. The angel then repeated the statement that the glory of God would provide all the light necessary for the city.

All those who live in the Heavenly Jerusalem will be co-heirs with Jesus. Therefore, they will co-reign with Him forever and ever. Paul was well aware of this when he wrote his letter to the Romans and when he wrote his good young friend Timothy…

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. [17] Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and **co-heirs with Christ**, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Romans 8:16-17
If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, **we will also reign with him**.
2 Tim 2:11-12

Jesus told His children that they will be His co-heirs and that they will reign with Him while in heaven. What are some of the things that the saints of God will experience?

- We will have fellowship with the Lord Jesus. John 14:3
- We will sing praises of worship. Rev. 19:1
- We will have rest from our toil and worry and pain – never again will we experience things of this nature. Rev. 21:2-4
- We will have increased knowledge (and probably higher intelligence). 1 Cor. 13:12
- We will live in a world that is perfect in every way. Rev. 21:1-4, 27
- We will want for nothing. Rev. 21:6
- We will experience a life of glory. Col. 3:4
- We will work with and for Jesus to accomplish His eternal plans – this will be very intriguing, indeed. Romans 8:16-17 and 2 Tim. 2:11-12
- We will have immortal, glorified bodies that will be able to do amazing things. Some of these things were seen while Jesus walked the earth after His resurrection. Other dimensions may well be experienced. Phil. 3:20-21

And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. [7] "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." Rev 22:6-7

Jesus always made it plain that His return was imminent. He never told the world when He would come again, only that His coming was certain and that it could happen at any time. When He does come, it will happen very *quickly*. J. Vernon McGee says that Jesus is telling John and the readers of this great book that His return will happen *rapidly*. This same word is used in verses 12 and 20. The point is that every Christian should be watching expectantly for His return, for this "blessed hope". In fact, Jesus promises a blessing upon those who take the prophecies of this book to heart and live like they believe them! This is a similar blessing to that given at the beginning of this book.

[8] Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. [9] Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." Rev. 22:8-9

For the second time during John's amazing vision, he was so overwhelmed at the scene in front of him that he fell to his knees to worship at the feet of the messenger angel who was bringing him this information from Jesus. Once again, John was quickly admonished. John was reminded that only God should ever be worshipped.

10 And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.
11 He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." Rev. 22:10-11

As this book was the last book of the New Testament to be written and the last prophecy that was given to mankind in the Bible, it is not at all surprising that the prophecies presented to John were to be broadcast to the world, so to speak. In other words, as opposed to what Daniel was told to do with some of his end-time prophecies ("The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but **seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future**." Dan 8:26), John was told to make these prophecies known to all who would listen so that they could learn from them. The reason for this change was that the time was now imminent for the Second Coming of Christ. That was certainly not the case in Daniel's day… Jesus had yet to have His First Advent in Daniel's lifetime!

When the end does come, the state that people find themselves will really never change. Everyone has had plenty of opportunities to turn to Jesus Christ. Unless there were serious mental/emotional problems, which God will allow for, everyone is expected to use their God-given free will to choose or reject Jesus. Once the end comes, and here Jesus is speaking of the end of days (i.e. the New Heaven and New Earth), people will always continue in the state that they find themselves. If one is filthy and unjust, one will remain that way… if one is saved and therefore righteous before God, of course, one will always stay that way.

"And behold, **I am coming quickly**, and **My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.** 13 **I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last**." 14 **Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.** 15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. Rev 22:8-15

In the verses above, Jesus reminds His followers of many important truths. He does this primarily to encourage them as they wait, sometimes impatiently, for His return. He tells us that He will bring His reward with Him and give it to all those who have turned to Him in faith. He will also reward His children based on their good works… works that they do for His name's sake. Jesus has existed from eternity past, and He will exist for eternity future. Jesus has always been; He is an uncreated Being. This is only true of the Living God.

All those, and only those, who trust in Jesus will be rewarded with eternal life in heaven. Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. John 14:6

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. **I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."** [17] And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. **Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.** [18] For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;** [19] **and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life**, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. [20] He who testifies to these things says, **"Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!** [21] **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.** Rev 22:16-21

These final words of Jesus in the Holy Bible are very beautiful and poignant. Jesus is asking for all to come to Him for salvation. Everyone and anyone who thirsts for truth and righteousness need only to turn to Jesus for their answer to all of life's perplexing questions and problems.

Jesus then finishes with the warning to those reading the words of this prophecy to never add or subtract from them in any way. They are far too important to change. In fact, anyone who dares to alter this book will face eternal death!

Jesus then ends with the comforting words… "Surely I am coming quickly." I am sure that all those that read those words will echo the sentiments of the Apostle John when he said, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

The Amillennial Interpretation of The Revelation

The preceding commentary on this great apocalyptic book of the Bible has used the premillennial, pretribulational viewpoint of the end-times. As has been discussed in detail in Section 2, there are many fine theologians who disagree with this approach. The most common view, if not the most popular, is that of the amillennialist. A brief review of their interpretation of this vision to John the Apostle will be now presented. Although there is no agreed upon consensus among amillennialists as to the best method of interpretation of The Revelation of Jesus Christ, the basic concept is that John is being shown the events that will come in the future of the world from his time on down to the Second Coming of Christ. Of course, all with this view believe that the world is currently in the Millennium. It, of course, will last for more than one thousand years as the Millennium just represents a "very long time." There is a difference of opinion as to what is meant by the description of the Tribulation period in The Revelation. Some think that there actually will be a specific seven year period of great Tribulation just before the Second Coming. Others think that the chapters of this book are describing the tribulation that humanity has experienced *since the time of Christ*. Many with this view see the various chapters of this book as different aspects of the history of the world over these last two thousand years. For example, Riddlebarger notes that chapters 12 and 20 "describe the same events from different perspectives." (Amillennialism, p. 201) There is a consensus belief among the adherents of amillennialism that Chapters 20 is a recapitulation of Chapter 19. They believe that the war mentioned in both chapters is the War of Armageddon. The statement in Chapter 20, that Satan is being bound for a thousand years, simply means that he has been limited in power since Christ's victory on the cross. Finally, the co-regency of Christ and His saints that is described in Chapter 20 (They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years Rev 20:4) relates to the present time… *not to a future Millennial Kingdom on eart*h. Amillennialists believe that these verses should be interpreted as saying that these saints are currently in heaven with Christ, reigning with Him… as yet, without the gift of their future glorified bodies. All the verses in the Bible (e.g. in The Revelation, Isaiah, Ezekiel, etc.) that describe a future Kingdom are referring to the final, eternal heaven and earth.

Summary (Chapters 19-22):

The last four chapters of The Revelation take the reader from the victory of Jesus and His saints at Armageddon all the way through to the New Heavens and New Earth. Chapter 19 begins with the angels in heaven praising Jesus for His righteous judgments handed out onto the unrepentant sinners and the satanic forces of the earth. The marriage and marriage supper of the Lamb to His Bride, the Church, are also celebrated. After that rejoicing, Jesus gets on with the business of taking back His earth from Satan. He comes back with His saints and makes quick and easy work of defeating Satan and the Antichrist at Armageddon.

Satan is then chained for a thousand years in the *abyss* so he will not be able to adversely influence those on the earth during the Millennial Kingdom. In fact, that Kingdom will now have begun. Saved mortals and immortals will enter into this Kingdom. A brief mention of the Millennium is made (much more is written about this Kingdom age in many other books of the Bible). After almost a thousand years, Satan will be released from the *abyss*. He will try one more rebellion with the relative few mortals who choose to reject Christ at that time. Jesus will put down this insurrection immediately, and Satan and his demons will be sent to an everlasting hell. The unrepentant sinners of all ages will then face Jesus at the Great White Throne Judgment. They will all be found guilty, and, with varying sentences, they will be sent to an eternity in a devil's hell.

The final two chapters describe the wonder and beauty of the New Heaven and New Earth. John sees the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven in all of its glory. The joy and peace of heaven is described, as is the incredible beauty of the New Jerusalem. Details about the appearance of the city and the throne room of heaven are given. The many splendors of living with Jesus for eternity in this heaven are listed as the vision given to John comes to an end. Then Jesus reminds all those who will read and study this prophecy, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Surely I come quickly." Yes Jesus, come quickly.

Conclusion:

That concludes the commentary on Zechariah and The Revelation of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament prophet, Zechariah, certainly was given much prophetic insight on what was in store for Israel and the Jewish people as the last days approached. Of course, much more specific detail was added when Jesus gave His revelation to His good friend, John the Apostle, some 600 years later.

The main point of including both of these commentaries in this section on end-time prophecy was to show that God has always had a unique plan from eternity past regarding how He was going to bring in the Kingdom. Isaiah, David, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Jeremiah and many more prophets of old were also made aware of the ultimate fate of Israel and all the other nations of the world. Zechariah is a particularly good example of an Old Testament prophetic book of the end-times. Of course, the Holy Trinity has had the entire plan of our ultimate fate determined before they even created time and our universe.

The prophet Zechariah was given knowledge concerning the eventually re-gathering of Israel…….

The Apostle John was shown very important aspects of the future Kingdom. Not only that but he was given a vision of the ultimate fate of mankind……I

As has just been shown, there is coming a time of Great Tribulation. If those who believe that the Church will be raptured out of this Tribulation are correct, Christians will be in heaven during that terrible time of judgment. On the other hand, if God does see fit to allow His Church to go through some or all of this time of Tribulation, every Christian alive during that time must be ready to depend on Jesus to help him/her through. God, of course, will be faithful to do just that. It is true that no one can be absolutely certain about the timing of the Rapture. However, for the many reasons mentioned earlier in Section 2, in my opinion the Church will experience a pretribulation Rapture.

The final important point to be emphasized is that all people who choose Christ as their Savior will one day enter heaven. From that day forward, they will spend an eternity of bliss in the glorious New Heaven and New Earth with the Lord… there will be no pain, no worry, no sickness, no tears, no anger, no accidents, no boredom… only a perfect existence provided by our wonderful Jesus… nothing but eternal joy and peace! Praise God!

Final Thoughts:

The main reason for writing this book was because it is my belief that we are now living in the last days, not long before Jesus Christ comes to rapture the Church home to be with Him in heaven. As I have said before, no one can know when that day will come. I seriously doubt if we can come within twenty to thirty years of predicting His date of return. However, Jesus has told His followers that they can gain an understanding of the general time of His Second Coming by simply being alert to the many signs that God has given us in His Holy Bible. When these signs begin to occur in ever-increasing frequency, the time will be near. As we have seen, there are literally dozens of end-time signs that were foretold in the Bible thousands of years ago that have come to fruition in the past sixty years. Amazingly, only a few, if any, of the fifty signs presented here could have honestly been said to have occurred prior to 1948.

Time was spent in the first portion of this book to demonstrate the absolute confidence that a Christian can have that God's prophecies will come true. The Bible is a wonderfully true and accurate book by our Creator telling His children how to live and giving them a *blessed hope* for the future. God gave us many and varied proofs for the truthfulness of His Word… many of these were presented in that first section. Therefore, we can be sure that Jesus will come again… and soon.

Although it was not a part of my original plan for this book, I then went into significant detail to explain the varying ways people, over time, have interpreted the Holy Scriptures. Surprisingly, there are significant differences of opinion on the topic of eschatology, in particular. The varying systems of theology were outlined in Section 2. The different ways of interpreting the Millennial Kingdom and the Second Coming were also presented and discussed.

No one really should be dogmatic that their method of biblical interpretation is the best. However, I did give the reasons why the last two sections of this book looked at end-time events with a dispensational, premillennial, and pretribulational Rapture approach.

The fairly esoteric discussion of Section 2 was followed by a more intriguing and interesting look at fifty modern day events that give great hope that Christ will soon return. I did not start out thinking that I would arrive at this large amount of end-time signs when I began writing on that topic. It just turned out that there are far more signs of the likely soon coming Rapture than I had previously thought. Of course, that is fantastic if one is a Christian!

The last third of this treatise was concerned with a detailed explanation of two important prophetic books in the Bible. Zechariah was chosen to represent the Old Testament view of eschatology as well as to demonstrate to the reader just how clearly the Bible spoke of these latter day events long before even the First Advent of Jesus. Of course, a comprehensive exegesis of The Revelation of Jesus Christ concluded this book. John's vision was the quintessential prophecy concerning the Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom and beyond.

My hope is that through the study of this book the reader will have gained the following:

- an increased faith in God and His Holy Word
- A greater and more personal *blessed hope* for the future Rapture of the Church
- More understanding of recent world events relating to the prophecies of the end-times
- A greater ability to appreciate the many end-time prophecies in the Bible as current events unfold
- A closer walk with Jesus

One final point needs to be repeated. Although there are several differing views of exactly how the Second Coming of Jesus will actually be manifested, all conservative, Bible believing theologians agree, that in the future, Jesus will come again and adorn all those who have accepted Him as Savior and Lord with their glorified bodies. He will then live with, as He reigns over, these saints for an eternity in the New Heaven and the New Earth. That is definitely the *blessed hope* of the future!

Bibliography

Benware, Paul, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, Chicago, Moody Publishing, 2006, 421 pp.

Bible Explorer 4.0, WORDsearch, 2006

Feinberg, Charles, *Premillennialism or Amillennialism,1961*

Hagee, John, *Jerusalem Countdown*, Lake Mary, Frontline, 2006, 263 pp.

Harrison, Norman, *The End: Re-thinking The Revelation*, Minneapolis, Harrison Service, 1941.

Hitchcock, Mark, *The Amazing Claims of Bible Prophecy*, Eugene, Harvest House, 2010, 237 pp.

Hoekema, Anthony, *The Bible and the Future*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing, 1979, 343 pp.

Jeffrey, Grant, *Armageddon, Appointment with Destiny*, Toronto, Frontier Research Publications, 1997, 311 pp.

Jeffrey, Grant, *Apocalypse*, NY, Bantam Books, 1994, 406 pp.

Jeffrey, Grant, *The Next World War*, Colorado Springs, Waterbrook Press, 2006, 210 pp.

Jeffrey, Grant, *The New Temple and the Second Coming*, Colorado Springs, Waterbrook Press, 2007, 204 pp.

Jeffrey, Grant, *Prince of Darkness*, NY, Bantam Books, 1995, 355 pp.

Jeffrey, Grant, *Triumphant Return*, Toronto, Frontline Research 2001, 281 pp.

Jeffrey, Grant, *War on Terror*, Toronto, Frontier Research, 2002, 236 pp.

Jeremiah, David, *What in the World is Going On?*, Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 2008, 257 pp.

Josephus, Flavius, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Grand Rapids, Baker House. 1964. Book 557 pp.

Ladd, George, *The Blessed Hope*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing, 1956, 157 pp.

LaHaye, *Charting the End Times*, Eugene, Harvest House, 2001. 141 pp.

LaHaye, Tim, *Revelation Unveiled*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing, 1999, 378 pp.

Lemann, Augustin, *Jesus Before the Sanhedrin*, translated by Julius Magath, NL#0239683, Library of Congress #15-24973, 1886.

Lewis, C.S., *Mere Christianity*, NY, MacMillan Publishing, 1952, 190 pp.

Liberty Bible Commentary, KJV, Jerry Falwell, ex. editor, Lynchburg, Old Time Gospel Hour, 1983, 2721 pp.

Lindsey, Hal, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, NY, Bantam, 1970, 180 pp.

Lindsey, Hal, *There's A New World Coming*, Irvine, Harvest House, 1973, 308 pp.

Lindsey, Hal, *The Rapture*, NY, Bantam Books, 1983, 211 pp.

MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Bible Commentary*, Nashville, Nelson Publishing, 2005, 2040 pp.

MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1995, 2389 pp.

McDowell, Josh, *A Ready Defense*, Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1993, 495 pp.

McDowell, Josh, *New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, Nashville, Nelson Pub., 1999, 756 pp.

McGee, J. Vernon, *Through the Bible*, Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1983, Vol. 3-5.

Myers, Philip, *General History for Colleges and High Schools*, Boston, Ginn and Co.,1889.

NIV Study Bible, Kenneth Barker, gen. editor, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1984.

Pentecost, Dwight, *Things to Come*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing, 633 pp.1958,

Riddleberger, Kim, *A Case for Amillennialism*, Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2003, 271 pp.

Rosenberg, Joel, *Epicenter*, Wheaton, Tyndale House, 2006, 312 pp.

Rosenthal, Marvin, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*, Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1990, 317 pp.

Ryrie, Charles, *Dispensationalism*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1995, 224 pp.

Ryrie, Charles, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, Dubuque, ECS Ministries, 2005, 138 pp.

Saucy, Robert, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing, 1993, 336 pp.

Showers, Renald, *There Really is a Difference*, Bellmar, 1993, p. 133.

Thayer, Joseph, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Peabody, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2007, 725 pp.

Urquhart, John, *The Wonders of Prophecy*, Harrisburg, Christian Alliance Publishing, 1925.

Walvoord, John, *The Millennial Kingdom*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing, 1959, 373 pp.

Walvoord, John, *The Rapture Question*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing, 1979, 304 pp.

Walvoord, John, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1989, 350 pp.

Wilmington, Harold, *The King is Coming*, Wheaton, Tyndale House, 1981, 329 pp.

Wilmington, Harold, *That Manuscript From Outerspace*, Lynchburgh, Old-Time Gospel Hour 1987, 154 pp.

Wilmington, Harold, Wilmington's Guide to the Bible, Vol 1&2, Wheaton, Tyndale House, 1988.

http://clark.wscal.edu/briefhistorycovtheol.php

http://www.cellscience.com/shdss2.html (characteristics of schizophrenia)

http://www.christianchallenge.org/hebraic-foundations/HF045-2.html

http://www.ligonier.org/ (R.C. Sproul audio lectures on the end-times, preterism, the Millennial Kingdom, available for download)

http://www.eadshome.com/QuotesoftheFounders.htm]

http://www.eadshome.com/Sciencequotes.htm

http://www.endtimes.org/progressive_dispensationalism.html

http://www.talkjesus.com/lounge/22490-bible-quotes-famous-people.html

http://www.the-highway.com/amila_Hoekema.html#Rev_20:1-6

note: both the King James Version and the New International Versions of the Holy Bible were used and quoted throughout this book.