

BIBLICAL PROPHECY

G. Michael Cocoris

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PREFACE

Years ago, I introduced a sermon by saying, “When I became a Christian at age 18, I did not understand anything—at all—about the Bible. I did not know Genesis was the first book and Revelation was the last. I did not know John 3:16. In fact, when I saw John 3:16 in print, I wondered why they put a colon between the 3 and the 16. I was so ignorant of the Bible that I thought the New Testament was written in the twentieth century and the Old Testament was written in the first century. When I first found out that the life of Christ was in the New Testament, I was shocked! I knew nothing about the Bible! Then, the Pastor, who led me to Christ, explained something to me that enabled me to understand the whole Bible at one time. What he did was simple, short, and sufficient to explain many of the things I encountered in Scripture.”

What that pastor did was string up a chart across the room where he was speaking during the Wednesday night prayer meeting. That dispensational chart was my introduction to biblical prophecy. I instantly understood that the next thing that was to happen in biblical prophecy was the Rapture, which would be followed by seven years of Tribulation and then the Lord would come back and set up a kingdom for a thousand years.

I spent the next four years at a Christian college that believed the same things about biblical prophecy I was taught sitting under my pastor, but although I was required to take 30 hours of Bible, I did not study prophecy in college. Because I knew I was going to attend seminary, I majored in English and minored in history and philosophy. Consequently, I graduated from college believing in the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Second Coming in the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth, but I could not have demonstrated where the Bible taught those things.

As a student at the Dallas Theological Seminary, the epicenter of dispensationalism, I was required to take a course in prophecy in my second year. In the summer between my first and second year in seminary, I heard that the second-year students had an assignment in that prophecy class to read the doctoral dissertation by Dan Fuller on the hermeneutics of dispensationalism. Thinking that I would get that assignment out of the way ahead of time, I read the dissertation in the summer before classes started in the fall. That dissertation made me doubt what I believed about biblical prophecy. At that point, I was no longer sure about the Rapture, the Tribulation, or the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth. The only thing I was sure of was that Jesus is coming back.

One of my assignments in that second-year prophecy class was to write a paper called “a Baby Thesis.” I chose to write on the thousand-year reign of Christ in Revelation 20. I wanted to determine for myself if the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth was literal or symbolic. That exercise convinced me that after Christ returns, He would set up a kingdom and reign on the earth for a thousand years. My reasons for that conclusion will be discussed in the chapter on the Millennium.

I still had questions about the Rapture. Was it before, in the middle of, or was it after the Tribulation? Again, it was that second-year prophecy class that convinced me that the Rapture would occur before the Tribulation. The first thing that happened was, based on Matthew 25:32, Dr. Walvoord’s class lectures convinced me the Tribulation could not

happen at the end of the Tribulation. I remember that day to this day. Then, studying all the arguments, pros and cons, of the various views led me to believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. I graduated from seminary knowing why I believed what I believed when I first became a Christian.

What follows is not the restatement of what I have been taught. In fact, I do not agree with some of the explanations of passages taught by my former professors. I have personally expounded the prophetic books of the Bible and examined the topics pertaining to prophecy. As a pastor, I have preached through Daniel, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and Revelation, and have done a series of messages on the Judgment Seat of Christ. I have studied Marvin Rosenthal's book *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church* and Robert Gundry's book *The Church and the Tribulation*. I also taught a course on prophecy at the Pacific International Theological Seminary.

Given all that has been written on biblical prophecy, I am not laboring under any delusion that I am going to say something different. If anything, I hope that what I have written will simplify and, thus, clarify biblical prophecy. For one thing, in several places, I have deliberately written out passage after passage rather than list references in parenthesis to demonstrate just how biblical the point is.

May the Lord use this presentation to help you think through the important subject of biblical prophecy.

G. Michael Cocoris
Santa Monica, CA

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is full of prophecy. One author says, “A conservative estimate is that fully one-fourth of the Bible concerns prophecy” (Wood. p. 12). These biblical prophecies of the future come in different forms, including covenants that promise future things, prophetic utterances from prophets, predictions in the Psalms, apocalyptic (“unveiling”) literature (Daniel and Revelation), and a major discourse by Jesus (Mt. 24-25). Biblical prophecy can be divided into two categories: fulfilled prophecies and unfulfilled prophecies.

Fulfilled Prophecies

Nineveh Both Nahum and Zephaniah predicted the fall of Nineveh. In 655 BC, when Nineveh was at its glory, Nahum predicted Nineveh’s demise. Judgment on Nineveh is decreed (Nahum 1:1-15), described (Nahum 2:1-13; see esp. 2:8-3:7), and said to be deserved (Nahum 3:1-19). Sometime between 630 and 625 BC, Zephaniah predicted the destruction of Nineveh. He predicted that the Lord would “stretch out His hand against the north, destroy Assyria, and make Nineveh a desolation, as dry as the wilderness. The herds shall lie down in her midst, every beast of the nation. Both the pelican and the bittern shall lodge on the capitals of her pillars; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be at the threshold; for He will lay bare the cedar work” (Zeph. 2:13-14). Prior to her fall, Nineveh was surrounded with a lot of water that even flowed through the city, but after her destruction, she would be as dry as the desert. The destruction and desolation of Nineveh would be so great wild animals from all over the nation would live (“lie down”) in her midst and birds would lodge and sing in the pillars of buildings. In other words, instead of being populated by people, it would be a habitation for animals and birds. Houses would be deserted. Nineveh will be destroyed and depopulated.

Nineveh was the mightiest city on earth, with walls 100 feet high and wide enough to accommodate three chariots riding abreast. Scattered around the walls were high towers that stretched an additional 100 feet in the air. A moat 150 feet wide and 60 feet deep surrounded the walls. Nineveh appeared impregnable and could withstand a twenty-year siege. Thus, prophecies of her overthrow seemed unlikely indeed. Nevertheless, Nineveh fell just like the Old Testament prophesied.

Babylon Both Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted the fall of Babylon. About 680 BC, Isaiah predicted, “Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah” (Isa. 13:19). The glory, beauty, and pride of the Babylonians will be like what God did when he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. Sometime before 580 BC, Jeremiah declared that the Lord’s plan was to destroy Babylon (Jer. 51:11). The Persian ruler Xerxes virtually destroyed it in 478 BC. The fall of Babylon is described in such ancient documents as the writings of Herodotus, Xenophon, and the Nabonidus Chronicle. These sources indicate that Babylon fell to the Persians quickly and without a major battle. The Euphrates River, which ran through the city, was diverted and the Persian soldiers used the riverbed to enter and capture the city. “By 20 BC, Strabo described it as a ‘vast desolation.’ Even the desert

wanderer (the Arab) shunned the site because it became an omen of ill fortune” (Ryrie).

Tyre Ezekiel foretold the destruction of Tyre, the capital of Phoenicia. In 586 BC, he wrote extensively about the fall of Tyre (Ezek. 26:1-21). For example, he wrote that the Lord said, “I will make you like the top of a rock; you shall be *a place for spreading nets, and you shall never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken,*’ says the Lord GOD” (Ezek. 26:14). Shortly after Ezekiel wrote, as he predicted, Nebuchadnezzar brought great destruction on Tyre with a continual attack that spanned 13 years, but he did not completely fulfill all that Ezekiel predicted. To complete fulfillment was accomplished by Alexander the Great in 332 BC. By the time he got done, all that Ezekiel had predicted was fulfilled, such as the ancient site becoming like the top of a rock (Ezek. 26:14).

Captivity Jeremiah predicted that the captivity would last for 70 years (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10-14). Jerusalem fell in 605 BC. In 538 BC, or 67 years later, Daniel read Jeremiah 25:11-12 and Jeremiah 29:10-14. It dawned on Daniel that the period of captivity was about completed. He wrote, “In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:2). Sure enough, the captivity lasted 70 years. It ended in 536 BC (Ezra 1:1-4).

Messiah Many prophecies concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ. Wood’s list includes “He was born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14), at Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), which led to a slaughter of children by Herod (Jer. 31:15). After that, He was called out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1). Later He was anointed with the Spirit (Isa. 11:2), made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zech. 9:9), was betrayed by a friend (Ps. 41:9) for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12), was spit upon and scourged (Isa. 50:6), but no bone of Him was broken (Ps. 34:20). He was given gall and vinegar to drink on the cross (Ps. 69:21). His hands and feet were pierced, His garments parted, and lots cast for His vesture (Ps. 22:16, 18). He died in the place of sinful men (Isa. 53:4-6).” (Wood, pp. 12-13; for an explanation of the 30 major fulfilled prophecies of the Messiah, see G. Michael Cocoris, *The Jewish Prophecies of the Messiah*, posted at insightsfromtheword.com).

Fulfilled prophecies include the fall of Nineveh, the fall of Babylon, the fall of Tyre, the end of Israel’s captivity, the coming of the Messiah, and more.

Unfulfilled Prophecies

The two major unfulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament are a coming judgment and a coming kingdom. The New Testament calls the coming judgment the Tribulation and the coming kingdom of the Kingdom of God. In addition, it predicts a Second Coming of Christ, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Great White Throne Judgment, etc. What follows is primarily a treatment of the unfulfilled prophecies of the Bible, but it will begin with some of the Old Testament fulfilled prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, because they also relate to unfulfilled prophecies.

Summary: The Bible contains a large number of prophecies, some of which have been fulfilled and some of which have not. What follows is primarily about unfulfilled prophecies.

BIBLICAL COVENANTS

Covenant theology is based on three theological covenants, all of which pertain to salvation. The Covenant of Works was made between God and Adam, who represented all of mankind as the head of humanity. God promised Adam life under the condition that he did not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16) and death if he disobeyed (Gen. 2:17). This arrangement is not called a covenant in Genesis, but some theologians contend that it is referred to as a covenant in Hosea 6:7, which says, “But like men [NASB: “Adam”], they transgressed the covenant” (NKJV). In 1563, Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583) mentioned a Covenant of Creation and in 1585, Dudley Fenner (c. 1558–1587) was the first to speak of a Covenant of Works. By 1590, the concept of the Covenant of Works became commonly recognized in Reformed Theology.

The Covenant of Grace promises eternal life for all people who have faith in Christ. Again, this arrangement is not called a covenant anywhere in the Bible, although the promise of a “seed” of the woman in Genesis 3:15 is said to be the inauguration of the Covenant of Grace. The biblical covenants, such as the Abrahamic Covenant, are considered administrations or even (ironically) dispensations of the Covenant of Grace. Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) and Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531) are the two most commonly cited originators of the Covenant of Grace (1520s).

The Covenant of Redemption is said to be the eternal agreement within the members of the Godhead to make the human race and atonement for their sins. Once again, there is no specific passage of Scripture that states there was a Covenant of Redemption, but Revelation 13:8 speaks of the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) and John Owen (1616-1683) are two of the earliest authors to write about the Covenant of Redemption.

Theological covenants contained truth, but the Bible doesn’t call them covenants. On the other hand, there are arrangements in the Bible that are called covenants. The Hebrew word translated “covenant” means “covenant, alliance, pledge.” It is used of an alliance or treaty between men. It is also used of an arrangement between God and man. In that sense, it is more like a pledge or promise. It is used 284 times in the Old Testament.

The Greek word translated “covenant” means either 1) will, or 2) covenant. It is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament of an agreement between two people (Josh. 9:6) and, more commonly, of the relationship entered into between God and man (Gen. 19:4-9). Barclay claims that apart from the Greek translation of the Old Testament in all normal Greek in all ages, the word translated “covenant” in Galatians 3:15 does not mean a covenant in the sense of an agreement made on equal terms, but rather, it always means “a will.” The Greek word for an agreement made on equal terms is never used in the New Testament. Therefore, Barclay insists that the supreme example of the kind of agreement described in Galatians 3 is “a will” because the conditions of a will are not made on equal terms. They are made by one person and accepted by the other, who could not alter them (Barclay on Galatians, pp. 30-32).

In the context of the New Testament, Barclay is correct. Although the Bible uses the translation “covenant,” strictly speaking, this Greek word is being used of an agreement made by one person and accepted by another, that is, a will. There is another Greek word that means an agreement made between two people, that is, a covenant (contract).

What are the biblical covenants between God and humanity that deals with promises or pledges made concerning the future?

The Noahic Covenant

The Covenant “Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, ‘And as for me, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the field with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. Thus, I establish my covenant with you: never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth’ (Gen. 9:8-11). God made an unconditional covenant with all living creatures, including humans and animals, to never again destroy all flesh on the earth with a flood.

The Sign “And God said, ‘this is the sign of the covenant which I made between Me and you and every living creature that is with you for perpetual generations: I establish My rainbow in the clouds, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud and I will remember my covenant, which is between Me and you and every creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. The rainbow shall be in the cloud and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.’ “And God said to Noah, ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth’” (Gen. 9:12-17). God established the rainbow as a sign of this unconditional (Gen. 9:8-11) and everlasting covenant (Gen. 9:16).

The Abrahamic Covenant

The Promise “Now the LORD had said to Abram: Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3). These promises are not the formal Abrahamic covenant. In a sense, these promises are to Abraham personally (“you” is used six times and “your” once). Yet, they are to the future *nation* of Israel. The first promise is, “I will make you a great nation” (Gen. 12:2) and all the rest relate to that one. Actually, these promises can be classified as individual, national, and universal (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 72).

The promises were individual. God promised to 1) bless Abram, 2) make his name widely known, 3) use him to bless others, and 4) bless his blessers and curse his cursers. Promising to make Abram a great nation involves Abram having a son.

The promise was national. A great nation means more than great numbers. Israel’s greatness was not in the production of philosophers like Greece or in great governments like Rome; it was spiritual. Out of Israel came the Ten Commandments and the Scriptures.

The promise was universal. All the families of the earth were promised spiritual blessing through Abram. God fulfilled this promise by using the line of Abram to bring the Messiah to the world. “The third promise takes on its greatest fulfillment in the fact that Jesus Christ became the means of blessing to the world” (MacDonald).

The Confirmation “Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh and the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land’” (Gen. 12:6-7a). God had promised him a land (Gen. 12:1). He came to the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:5) and he finds it inhabited (Gen. 12:6)! Is this the land? What about the people living there? Abram needs confirmation. So, the Lord appears to Abram to confirm that Canaan is the land He promised to give him. The Lord also clarified that it is to his descendants that the land is given.

A More Detailed Confirmation “And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land that you see I give you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you” (Gen. 13:14-17). God first appeared to Abram and told him to leave his country “to a land that I will show you” (Gen. 12:1). Then, the Lord said the land of Canaan is the land (Gen. 12:7), but the Lord did not tell him how much of the land. The Lord told Abram He would make him a great nation (Gen. 12:2) and that his descendants would get the land (Gen. 12:7). Now, the Lord appears to Abram for the third time and He expands on some of what he said before. God now informs Abram that 1) He is to receive the land as far as he can see in every direction. On a clear day, the Mediterranean can be seen from Mt. Nebo, which is to the east of Jordan. 2) His descendants will receive the land forever. 3) His descendants will be enumerable. The dust of the earth cannot be counted. Thus, this expression is hyperbole for a number no one can count (Leupold). That promise was given to a childless man!

The Specific Confirmation “After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not be afraid Abram, I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.’ But Abram said, ‘LORD God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ Then Abram said, ‘Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir.’ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘This one shall not be your heir but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.’ Then He brought him outside and said, ‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, so shall your descendants be. Then, He said to him, ‘I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it’” (Gen. 15:1-5, 7). God had promised to make Abram a great nation (Gen. 12:2), to give his descendants the land (Gen. 12:7), and to make his descendants as the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:16), but Abram had not had any children. God insists that Eliezer will not be Abram’s heir. Abram’s heir shall come from his “own body.” His heir would be his literal son. From this son would come a great multitude, like the stars in the sky. God had compared Abram’s descendants to the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:6). Now, He compares Abram’s descendants to the stars of the heavens (Gen. 15:5). God’s promise of rewards/blessing includes the land: God

called Abram from one land to give him another. God's promise to Abram includes *land* (Gen. 12:1, 7, 14-17).

The Covenant "And He said, 'LORD God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?' So He said to him, 'Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, turtledove, and a young pigeon.' Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two" (Gen. 15:8-10). The Chaldeans made a covenant by killing animals, dividing them into pieces, laying the pieces opposite one another and then the individuals making the covenant would pass between the pieces. The Lord prepared for such a covenant.

At this point in the passage, Abram drives away vultures (Gen. 15:11), falls asleep (Gen. 15:12), and is told that first, his descendants would be strangers, servants, and sufferers in a land that is not theirs. Furthermore, this period would last four hundred years! God would judge the nations and descendants of Abram would depart rich (Gen. 15:13-14). This prophecy was fulfilled when the children of Israel were in Egypt. Abram was also told that he would be buried at an older age and the fourth generation's descendants would return to the land (Gen. 15:15-16).

"And it came to pass when the sun went down and it was dark that behold there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram saying, 'To your descendants, I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites'" (Gen. 15:17-21). The passing through the divided animals ratified the covenant, which formalized the Lord's earlier promises (Gen. 12:1-3, 7). God alone went through, indicating that He alone contracts any obligation and thus, this is an unconditional covenant as far as man is concerned (Heb. 6:13-15). The provisions of the covenant are now given. The covenant grants the land to the descendants of Abram and gives the boundaries geographically and in terms of the nations or tribes inheriting it at the time of Abram. The geographical boundaries are from the river of Egypt to the great river. All agree that the great river is the Euphrates. For a brief period, the children of Israel occupied the territory during the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 8:65) and again in the days of Jeroboam (2 Kings 14:25). Some say these possessions were not the final fulfillment but only a token of the permanent possession in the future (Morris). Constable, however, cites Edersheim as saying that the Euphrates River has never Israel's border.

Partial Fulfillment "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly'" (Gen. 17:1-2). God promises to "make" a covenant with Abram and multiply his descendants exceedingly. God had already made the covenant earlier (see chapter 15). The Hebrew word rendered "make" signifies "to set in operation the things promised in the covenant" (Keil). This verse indicates that a son will be born to Abram and Sarai. God is powerful enough to fulfill His promise.

Genesis 17:3-22, God speaks to Abram concerning Himself (17:3-8), Abram (17:9-14), and Sarai (17:16-15) and when Abram brought up Ishmael, God speaks to that issue (17:17-22, especially 17:20).

God will make Abram a father of many nations. “Then Abram fell on his face and God talked with him saying. As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you” (Gen. 17:3-6). When Abram was in Haran, God promised to make him a great nation (Gen. 12:2). Now, He promises to make Abram a father of many nations and that kings shall come from him. As an indication of this, God changed his name from Abram, which means “exalted father” to Abraham, which means “father of a multitude.”

God will establish an everlasting covenant to be the God of Abraham and his descendants. “And I shall establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you” (Gen. 17:7). This promise no doubt applied primarily to those who are His seed according to the flesh but also encompassed the spiritual seed of Abraham who is the father of all them that believe.”

God will give Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. “Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Gen. 17:8). God had promised the land to Abraham (Gen. 13:15; 15:7, 18-21). Here He promises to give Abraham the land as an *everlasting* possession. This promise has never been fulfilled.

The sign “And God said to Abraham: ‘As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant” (Gen. 17:9-14). It At first, the wording sounds like circumcision itself is the covenant, which it is not. It is only the sign of the covenant (see “sign of the covenant” in verse 11). Every male is to be circumcised, beginning with Abraham himself. Circumcision was to be performed on the male child when he was eight days old, including those born and those bought.

Restatement of the Covenant “Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: ‘By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (Gen. 22:15-18). After Abraham obeyed the Lord in attempting to offer his son, the Lord reiterated the covenant with a few additions. God promised to 1) bless Abraham (Gen. 22:17; see 12:2), 2) multiply and bless Abraham’s descendants (Gen. 22:17; see 12:2 etc.), 3) bless all nations (Gen. 22:18; see 12:3).

In addition, 1) God swears by Himself (Gen. 22:16). 2) These promises were made because Abraham obeyed (Gen. 22:16). 3) God promises to multiply Abraham's descendants as the stars (Gen. 15:5) and as the sand on the seashore (Gen. 22:17; *cf.* "the dust of the earth" in 13:16), that is, that Abraham's descendants will be innumerable (Keil). The naked eye can count about 3,000 stars at most. The sand is impossible to count! 4) God also promises that Abraham's descendants shall possess the gates of their enemies, which indicates they would conquer their enemies and capture their cities.

Abraham's "seed" refers not only to Isaac but also to the Messiah (Gal. 3:16). Constable lists the four seeds of Abraham: the natural seed (all physical descendants of Abraham, 12:1-3, 7; et al.), the natural-spiritual seed (believing physical descendants of Abraham, Rom. 9:6, 8; Gal. 6:16), the spiritual seed (believing non-physical descendants of Abraham, Gal. 3:6-9, 29) and the ultimate seed (Jesus Christ, Gal. 3:16).

To sum up, God made an unconditional (Gen. 15:17-21), eternal covenant (Gen. 17:7-8) with Abraham that involved personal, national, and universal provisions.

To be more specific, the personal promises to Abraham include, 1) blessing (Gen. 12:2; 22:17), 2) a great name (Gen. 12:2), 3) be a blessing (Gen. 12:2), 4) land (13:15, 17), and 5) a son (Gen. 15:4; 17:1-6). The national provisions provide for Abraham's "seed" (descendants) becoming a great nation (Gen. 12:2; 15:5; 17:5-6; 22:17) and being given the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:6-7; 13:15-17; 15:17-21; 17:8). The universal possibilities are that all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). For the Abrahamic Covenant to be fulfilled, it is essential that Abraham has a *seed* (descendants), that those descendants possess the *land*, and that the world be *blessed*.

In terms of prophecy, some of the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant have been fulfilled. Abraham was blessed, had a son from whom came a nation, and Abraham's name is one of the most widely known names in the world even to this day. The nation that came from Abraham's seed occupied the promised land. Through Israel, the world has received the Scripture and the Messiah.

In the book of Galatians, Paul speaks about the fulfillment of the universal aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed. So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham' (Gal. 3:8-9). Paul is not saying that Genesis 12:3 contains the gospel as defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. The word gospel here is not being used in the technical sense but only in the general sense of good news (Toussaint). The good news was that God would bless *all* nations and since God justifies all those who trust Him (Gal. 3:6-7), so much did Genesis 12:3 foresee the justification of the Gentiles by faith.

Later in the passage, Paul adds, "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). God made a covenant with Abraham and his seed (Gen. 12:17; 13:15; 15:18; 17:7-8). The word "seed" in Hebrew and in Greek is a singular word used of a plural idea. If the singular is used collectively, how can Paul argue on the basis of the singular? The Hebrew word can be singular. In Genesis, God made it clear that the promised seed would not be fulfilled in all of Abraham's descendants but only in one, namely Isaac (Gen. 21:12; Hendriksen). Yet it was understood that a greater than Isaac would come. Furthermore, Christ fulfills the promise as head of a group (Toussaint). The covenant was to be fulfilled in Christ.

In terms of prophecy, one of the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant has not been fulfilled. The one essential element of the Abrahamic Covenant that was repeatedly emphasized was that Israel would inherit the land (Gen. 12:6-7; 13:15-17; 15:17-21; 17:8). Furthermore, when God formalized the Covenant, the one thing that was mentioned was the land (Gen. 15:17-21). Israel was to have the land “as an *everlasting* possession” (Gen. 17:8, italics added; see also 17:19). They occupied it temporarily; they have never possessed it eternally. This unfulfilled portion of the Abrahamic Covenant has led students of the Scripture to conclude that it will be fulfilled when Christ returns to establish His thousand-year reign on the earth (Rev. 20:6). That is called premillennialism, meaning Christ will return before (pre) the millennium (1000 years).

Amillennialists, those who believe there will not be a thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth, argue that the land promises in the Abrahamic Covenant were fulfilled under David and Solomon when Israel’s domain extended from the Euphrates River to the river of Egypt (1 Kings 4:21, 24). Even if that were a fulfillment of the Covenant, it did not completely fulfill it because it was not permanent.

Amillennialists also claim that the “seed” is the spiritual seed of Abraham, that is, all believers of all ages. Granted, there is a “spiritual” seed of Abraham. Paul says, “And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). Gentile believers are called “children of the promise” (Gal. 4:28). Pentecost says, “One must distinguish between the personal promises to Abraham himself, the national promises to Abraham’s seed, and the universal promises to ‘all families of the earth.’ It is not denied that the Abrahamic covenant offers universal blessings to those who are not the physical seed of Abraham, but it is affirmed that the national promises can only be fulfilled by the nation itself. Thus, the word Israel is taken in its usual, literal sense to mean the physical descendants of Abraham” (Pentecost, p. 107). The fact that there is a spiritual child does not eliminate the physical child. If a father had a biological son who did not follow in his footsteps and had an apprentice who did, he might speak of his apprentice as his “son.” His “spiritual” son would not negate the fact that he had a biological son.

Since the land promise in the Abrahamic Covenant has not been completely fulfilled, those provisions must be fulfilled in the future.

The Davidic Covenant

The covenant is recorded in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17, but it is not called the covenant in either of those passages. It is called the covenant in Psalm 89.

2 Samuel 7 “Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his **kingdom**.” He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom **forever**. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men” “But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established **forever**” (2 Sam. 7:11-16). The Lord told Nathan to tell David that instead of David building a house for Him, He would build a house for David, that is, when his days were fulfilled and he rested with

his fathers, the Lord would set up his descendants to establish his kingdom forever. As in the Abrahamic Covenant, the Hebrew word translated “seed” can either refer to a single descendent or to many descendants (Gen. 13:15; 17:8; Gal. 3:16). God told David that his successor would be Solomon (1 Chron. 22:9-10). One of David’s descendants (“he”) would build the Lord a house and the Lord would establish the throne of His kingdom with the house of David forever. The Lord says He will be a Father to David’s descendant and he will be the Lord’s son. If he commits iniquity, the Lord will discipline him by using people. Even though this future descendent of David will be disciplined, God’s mercy will not depart from him, as it did from Saul when he was removed from being king over Israel. In the meantime, David’s kingdom will be established forever.

1 Chronicles 17 “And it shall be, when your days are fulfilled, when you must go *to be* with your fathers, that I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took *it* from *him* who was before you. And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever” (1 Chron. 17:11-14). This is a repetition of what was originally given to David in 2 Samuel 7. Again, the Lord says He will establish David’s throne forever, only this time the Lord adds it will be done “in My kingdom.” The Lord is the King of Israel, even though He exercises His rule on earth through human kings.

Covenant “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.’ *Selah*” (Ps. 89:3-4). God says He has made a *covenant* with David and his seed. This covenant does not guarantee that the dynasty of David would never be interrupted (Hosea 3:4-5). In fact, it was interrupted during the exile (2 Kings 25:1-21). The point is only a descendent of David had the right to rule over Israel.

The debate over the Davidic covenant revolves around two issues: 1) the nature of the kingdom and 2) the time of the establishment of the kingdom. One option is that the Davidic kingdom is a literal kingdom on the earth that will be established at the Second Coming of Christ when Christ returns to reign over His people (Rev. 20:1-6). The other option is that the Davidic kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that exists now with Jesus sitting on the throne in heaven.

Given that David was sitting on the throne of the literal kingdom on the earth at the time he was given the covenant, the most natural way to interpret it is that one of his descendants would sit on an earthly throne forever. Gabriel announced to Mary that the Son she was about to bring forth was to be named Jesus, that he would be “called the Son of the highest; and the Lord God would give Him the throne of his father, David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom, there would be no end” (Lk. 1:31-33). Since Jesus did not set up a literal kingdom on the earth at His first coming, this awaits fulfillment at His Second Coming. That is the pre-millennial explanation.

Amillennialism contends that the kingdom promised to David is a spiritual kingdom and that Christ is now sitting on the throne of David in heaven. As will be demonstrated in the chapter on the kingdom, the kingdom in both the Old Testament and New Testament is literal. Nowhere does the New Testament say that Jesus is sitting on the throne of David now. It states that He is sitting at the right hand of the Father (see the

next two paragraphs) and that “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” (Mt. 25:31, italics added).

Jesus is not sitting on the throne of David now; He is sitting at the right hand of the Father. That alone settles this debate.

“THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, TILL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES YOUR FOOTSTOOL’? (Mt. 22:24; see also Mk. 12:36; Lk. 20:42).

“Jesus said to him, ‘It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven’ (Mt. 26:64; see also Mk. 14:62; Lk. 22:69).

“So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God” (Mk. 16:19)

“For David says concerning Him: ‘I FORESAW THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE MY FACE, FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN” (Acts 2:25).

“Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:33).

“For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND” (Acts 2:34).

“Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31).

“But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55).

“Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” (Acts 7:56).

“Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Rom. 8:34).

“Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:20).

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1).

“Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3).

“But to which of the angels has He ever said: “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, TILL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES YOUR FOOTSTOOL”? (Heb. 1:13).

“Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb. 8:1).

“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God” (Heb. 10:12).

“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).

“Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him” (1 Pet. 3:22).

The New Covenant

Jeremiah 31 is the only place in the Old Testament where the term “new covenant” appears, although there are references to it in other passages.

Jeremiah 31 “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31:31-34). This New Covenant was expressly for the house of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and the house of Judah (the Southern Kingdom). The Lord gave Israel the law at Mount Sinai, but they were not able to obey it. So, The new covenant provides for the internalization of the law in the minds and hearts of God’s people, as well as the Lord being their God. When the New Covenant is established, no one will have to teach his neighbor or brother saying, “Know the Lord,” because everyone’s sins will have been forgiven and they will know the Lord.

Jeremiah 32 “Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. They shall be My people, and I will be their God. Then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me” (Jer. 32:37-40). In this passage, the New Covenant is called an everlasting covenant. After the Babylonian captivity, God said He would restore Israel to the land where they would dwell safely, where He would be their God and they would be His people, where He would give them one heart, and they would fear Him forever. Because the fear of God will be in their heart, they will not depart from Him. Jeremiah 31 does not mention the New Covenant is an everlasting covenant. They will be restored to the land and to the Lord eternally.

Isaiah 59 “The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,’ says the LORD. As for Me, says the LORD, ‘this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants’ descendants,’ says the LORD, ‘from this time and forevermore” (Isa. 59:20-21). The Lord declares that the Redeemer will come to Zion and to those who turn from transgression. He will make a covenant with them to put His Spirit upon them, to put His words in their mouth and the mouth of their descendants forever.

Ezekiel 16:60-63 “Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed, when you receive your older and your younger

sisters; for I will give them to you for daughters, but not because of My covenant with you. And I will establish My covenant with you. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I provide you an atonement for all you have done,' and says the Lord GOD" (Ezek. 16:60-63). In spite of all of the abominations committed by the people in Jerusalem, the Lord said He would remember the covenant He made with them in the days of their youth and would establish an everlasting covenant with them. In other words, the Lord will stand by His promises in the Abrahamic Covenant and He will establish a new, everlasting covenant with His people in the future (see 11:18-20; 36: 26-28; 37:26-28; Isa. 59:21; 61:8; Jer. 31:31-34). "The New Covenant is an organic outgrowth of the Abrahamic Covenant in that it explains further the blessing aspect of that covenant" (Constable). They will know that He is the Lord, that they may remember, be ashamed, and never open their mouth any more because of their shame for He will provide an atonement concerning all that they have done.

Ezekiel 37:21-28 "Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again. They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God. David My servant *shall be* king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David *shall be* their prince forever. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore'" (Ezek. 37:21-28). The Lord told Ezekiel to tell the people that the Lord will regather them to the land, make the two divisions of Israel one nation in the land with one king, so that they would not defile themselves anymore with idols, detestable things, or any of their transgressions and He will cleanse them. They will be His people and He will be their God. David will be their king forever and they would walk in God's way. This will be an everlasting covenant of peace and the nations will know He is the Lord.

The new covenant is an eternal covenant that provides for Israel to be restored to the land with David as their king and with them being given forgiveness, God's word, and the Holy Spirit. The New Covenant includes the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant (the land) and the Davidic Covenant (a king/kingdom), plus much, much more. Some claim that the New Covenant was fulfilled with the return of the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity, but that was only a partial fulfillment at best. This covenant will not be completely fulfilled until the Second Coming of Christ.

Matthew 26 "Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the

remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Mt. 26:27-29). Jesus explains ("for") and the meaning of the cup. The New Covenant to which Jesus refers is an Old Testament covenant by that name, also known as the everlasting covenant or a covenant of peace (Jer. 31:31-34, 32:37-40; Ezek. 34:25-31, 37:26-28). McNeile points out that these words are similar to those spoken by Moses in Exodus 24:4-8 at the inauguration of the Mosaic Covenant. The Lord is inaugurating the New Covenant to replace the old Mosaic Covenant. In other words, the death of Christ is the means of establishing the New Covenant (Toussaint). Like the Abrahamic Covenant, the New Covenant is a blood covenant. The expression "the blood of the covenant," which echoes Exodus 24:8, is a reminder that a relationship with God is always dependent upon the sacrificial shedding of blood. He promised not to drink the wine of the Lord's Supper until He drinks it in his Father's kingdom, which is proof that, at this time, the kingdom is still future!

Luke 22 "Likewise, He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'" (Lk. 22:20). Luke also records that Jesus said the cup of the Lord's Supper was related to the New Covenant. In the Upper Room, Christ announced that the New Covenant was to be inaugurated through the shedding of His blood.

Hebrews 8 "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry; inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was establish on better promises. For if that first covenant has been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says, 'Behold, the days are coming says the Lord when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the days when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in my covenant and I disregarded them, says the Lord. 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. None of them shall teach his neighbor and none his brother saying 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their lawless deeds and I will remember no more'" (Heb. 8:6-12). Christ is a Mediator of a better covenant because the Mosaic Covenant was unable to enable the people to live up to it, there needed to be another covenant. Then the author quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34, which includes the fact that the New Covenant was made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, which brings up the issue of its application to anyone else.

Hebrew 10 "And the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after these days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts and in their minds and I will write them, then He adds "their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Heb. 10:15-17). This is a quotation from Jeremiah 31:33-34. Christ witnessed through Psalm 40 (Heb. 10:5-7). The Holy Spirit also witnessed through the Scripture in the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31. The New Covenant has been quoted before in Hebrews (cf. 8:8-12). This time the author divides it into two parts to emphasize the second half, namely, that God will not remember sins any longer.

There are four explanations of the New Covenant: 1) Amillennialists contend that there is one covenant, but since the church replaces Israel, the New Covenant is with the Church and completely fulfilled in the church. 2) Some premillennialists claim that there

is only one covenant and it is only with Israel (Darby). 3) Other premillennialists believe that there are two covenants, one with Israel and one with the church (Chafer; Walvoord; Ryrie). 4) Still, other premillennialists assert that there is one covenant made with Israel and the church partakes of some of its blessings of it (Scofield; William Kelly; Toussaint).

There is only one covenant and it is with Israel. It will be fully fulfilled by Israel in the future, but the church enjoys its spiritual blessing of it or participates in some of the provisions of it. The Abrahamic Covenant illustrates this concept. The covenant is with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:7). The physical descendant of Abraham will inherit the land (Gen 12:7; 13:14, 15; etc.), but the Abrahamic Covenant contained some spiritual promises (Gen 12:3) in which the church participates (Rom. 11:11-29; Gal. 3:13-14).

“This arrangement resembles one that is possible to set up in a Charitable Lead Unit Trust under the Internal Revenue Code of the United States. Suppose there was a vastly wealthy and generous philanthropist of the magnitude of Bill Gates. As he prepared his will, he bequeathed millions of dollars to various charitable causes that would benefit millions of people all over the world when he died. He also wrote into his will that when his only son reached the age of 21, he would inherit billions of dollars. When this man died, his son was only five years old, so for 16 years, he did not enter into his father’s inheritance. However, as soon as the philanthropist died, the millions of dollars he had bequeathed to charity went to work immediately—to help many people.

“This illustration shows how the church enters into the blessings of the New Covenant. When Christ established the Lord’s Supper, it was as though He notarized His will; it became official then. The will is the New Covenant. When He died, His ‘estate’ became available to those He chose to profit from it, namely: both Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus Christ. Soon many people around the world, Jews and Gentiles in the church, began to benefit from the blessings of His death. However, God’s chosen people, His son Israel, will not enter into his unique inheritance until the appointed time, namely: the Millennium. Blessings for the church began almost immediately after Christ’s death. Blessings for Israel will not begin until God’s appointed time arrives: Christ’s second coming” (Constable).

Summary: The Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants in the Old Testament were unconditional, eternal covenants made with Israel that provide for Israel to possess the land with a Davidic King (kingdom), the forgiveness of sins, the Word of God planted in the hearts and minds, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

After the exile, Israel was restored to the land, but without a king or all of the provisions of the New Covenant. If the restoration of Israel after the captivity fulfilled the Abrahamic Covenant at all, it was partial at best. In order to conclude that the church fulfills the Old Testament covenants, it would be necessary to allegorized certain aspects of the covenant, such as the land, which the Scriptures never do. Furthermore, neither Israel nor the church has ever fulfilled the demand of all three covenants that they are fulfilled eternally. Therefore, the complete fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant will not take place until the Second Coming of Christ.

Furthermore, the New Testament recognizes that the fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New covenants is still future. When John the Baptist was born, his father, Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit prophesied, “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David. As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us” (Lk. 1:67-71). Zacharias blesses the Lord for raising up the Messiah (see “horn of David” in Ps. 132:17), as the prophets predicted, to save Israel from her enemies and from the hand of those who hate her. Being saved from enemies and the hand of those who hate clearly refers to political salvation (deliverance). “This is the ancient Messianic hope of national salvation associated with the Davidic dynasty” (Creed). Yet some commentators claim that while it is true that Israel was thinking of political salvation, this passage corrects that false notion and only refers to spiritual salvation (Geldenhuis).

There is absolutely nothing in the text or context of this passage to indicate that salvation is solely spiritual. Zacharias adds, “To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life” (Lk. 1:72-75). To deliver Israel “from the hand of our enemies” (Lk. 1:74) fulfills covenants to Abraham and David. To do so that Israel might serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness fulfills the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Ez. 36:24-27).

THE MESSIAH

According to Jesus, each of the three divisions of the Old Testament predicted the coming of the Messiah (Lk. 24:26-27, 44). Where do these divisions speak about the Messiah and what do they say about Him? A brief answer to those questions is given here. For a more detailed explanation and documentation, see G. Michael Cocoris, *The Jewish Prophecies of the Messiah*, posted at www.insightsfromtheword.com.

The Law

Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel.” In the process of pronouncing judgment on the servant, who is Satan, the Lord says the seed of the woman shall bruise his head. The seed (a descendent) of the woman is a man (“he”). To bruise the head is to deliver a fatal blow. This verse teaches that the seed of the woman, a man, will destroy Satan. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded that “the seed of the woman” is a reference to the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah will be a **Man** who will destroy Satan. Jesus was born of a woman (Gal. 4:4) and when He died, He destroyed Satan (Heb. 2:14), which He will completely do at His Second Coming (Rom. 16:20).

Genesis 22:18: “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” God told Abraham that all the nations of the world would be blessed through his “seed,” which is clearly a reference to an individual because the promised seed would not be fulfilled in all Abraham’s descendants but only in one, namely, Isaac (Gen. 21:12). Yet it was understood that a greater man than Isaac would come. This verse is teaching that a descendant of Abraham will bless the whole world. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded that the descendant of Abraham, who would bless the whole world, is the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah will be a descendant of Abraham, a **Jew**. Jesus was a descendant of Abraham (Mt. 1:1). Paul says that this prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). Paul says the blessing is that because of Christ, God would justify the Gentiles through faith (Gal. 3:8, 13-14) and they would receive the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:14).

Genesis 49:10: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.” The scepter was a symbol of a royal command. This verse is teaching that when Shiloh from Judah comes, He will reign and the people will obey Him. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded that Shiloh from Judah, who will rule and have the people obey Him, is the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah will come **from the tribe of Judah, will rule**, and the people will obey Him. The New Testament does not directly refer to this verse, but it does say Jesus was from the tribe of Judah (Mt. 1:2, 2:6; Lk. 3:26; Heb. 7:14; Rev. 5:5) and He will rule. The angel said to Mary, “Then the angel said

to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father, David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom, there will be no end’” (Lk. 1:30-33).

Numbers 24:17 Balaam says, “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.” The “star” was a common symbol for a king. The scepter was also a symbol of a king (see Gen. 49:10). This future king from Israel would conquer Moab and *all enemies*. This verse is teaching that in the distant future, a King will come from Israel, who will destroy all enemies. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded this is a reference to the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah will be a **King** from Israel who will destroy all enemies. The New Testament does not directly refer to this verse, but it does teach that Jesus will conquer all His enemies: “And every priest stands ministering daily and repeatedly offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool” (Heb. 10:11-13).

Deuteronomy 18:15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.” Two passages describe Moses as a prophet (Num. 12:8 and Deut. 34:10-12). This verse is teaching that a Prophet like Moses will come from Israel and the people will hear Him. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded this is a reference to the Messiah. Therefore, The Messiah will be a **Prophet** like Moses and the people will hear Him. Jesus is from Israel (Mt. 1:1). Peter says Jesus was the Prophet: “For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.’ And it shall be *that* every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22-23). Stephen says Jesus was the Prophet: “This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear’” (Acts 7:37).

The Prophets

Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” When God offers Ahaz a sign and he refused the offer (Isa. 7:10-12), He said to the *House of David* (Isa. 7:13), not Ahaz, that a virgin conceiving and bearing a Son named Immanuel (“God with us”) would be a sign to Israel as a nation that the nation would not be destroyed. This verse teaches that a virgin conception and birth of a son is a sign that the nation of Israel will not be destroyed. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded that this is a reference to the virgin birth of the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah will be a **virgin-born Son**. Matthew says Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled in Jesus Christ: “So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Mt. 1:22-23).

Isaiah 9:6-7 “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” A Child, a Son, called wonderful Counselor (Hebrew), mighty God, everlasting Father, and Prince of peace will sit on the throne of David forever. This verse is saying the divine Son, Who is God, will rule on the throne of David forever and when He rules, there will be peace and justice. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded this divine Son who will rule on the throne of David is the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah is the **divine Son**, who will **rule on the throne of David** forever. This verse is not referred to in the New Testament, but the angel told Mary her Son would be called “the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father, David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom, there will be no end” (Lk. 1:30-33).

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 This long passage begins a prophecy about “My Servant” and extends to Isaiah 53:12. Among many other things about the Servant, it says, “The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). “For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken” (Isa. 53:8). “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin” (Isa. 53:10). “He bore the sin of many” (Isa. 53:12). These statements indicate that the servant will die for the sins of others. Before and after the birth of Jesus, Jews applied this passage to the Messiah. In fact, ancient Jewish writings, including the Mishnah, the Talmud, the Midrashim, etc., say Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is talking about the Messiah. Christian interpreters agree. Therefore, the Messiah **will die** for the sins of others. The New Testament recognizes that the Messiah would die for sin. Paul wrote, “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve” (1 Cor. 15:3-5).

Jeremiah 23:5-6 “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. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this *is* His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” This passage is teaching that from the line of David will come a King (a man), whose name is the Lord our Righteousness (God), and He will save Israel and rule in righteousness. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters interpreted this verse as a messianic passage. Therefore, the Messiah will be a King from the line of David, whose name is the Lord our Righteousness, and He will save Israel and rule in righteousness. The New Testament declares that Jesus was both God and man (Jn. 1:1, 14).

Micah 5:2 “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.” Out of insignificant Bethlehem will come One who will rule Israel. The One from Bethlehem is from eternity; that is, He is deity. This verse is teaching One from eternity will come out of Bethlehem to rule

Israel. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters interpreted this verse as a messianic passage. Therefore, the Messiah will be from eternity and will come out of Bethlehem to rule Israel. Matthew writes, “When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born” (Mt. 2:3-4). When the wise men inquired, “Where is He who is born King of the Jews?” Herod gathered “all the chief priests and scribes” together. He wanted to know where this Jewish king was to be born. “So they said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel’” (Mt. 2:5-6). The chief priests and the scribes quoted Micah 5:2 and added a few words, which may have been taken from 2 Samuel 5:2. The chief priests and teachers of the Law understood Micah 5:2 to refer to the Messiah.

Zechariah 9:9-10 “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. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off. 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.’” Israel is invited to rejoice because their King is coming. He will be a just Person, who will bring salvation and will humbly ride on a donkey, that is, a colt. A colt was a young, untamed donkey. The King will abolish weapons of war, speak peace to the nations, and rule to the ends of the earth. These verses are teaching the King, who brings salvation and peace to the world, will come riding on a donkey. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded these verses refer to the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah, a King, who brings salvation and peace to the world, will come riding on a donkey.

Matthew says, “Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her. Loose *them* and bring *them* to Me and if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.’ All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, ‘Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey’” (Mt. 21:4-5; see also Mk. 11:1-7 and Lk. 19:29-35). The expression “tell the daughters of Zion” is from Isaiah 62:11 and the remainder of the quotation is from Zechariah 9:9.

Jesus fulfilled Zechariah 9:9 when He came the first time. He will fulfill Zechariah 9:10 when He comes again. The Messiah would come on a donkey the first time and come again a second time as a conquering King on a horse (Rev. 19:11-13). In ancient times, when a king rode into a city on a donkey, he came in peace; but when he rode in on a horse, he came to make war.

The Writings

2 Samuel 7:12-16 “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his

kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.” In 2 Samuel 7:12-16, the Lord promises David that after his departure, God would establish a Davidic kingdom. First, David’s immediate descendant, Solomon, would build a temple (“a house for My name”). Then God would establish a Davidic kingdom that would last forever. If any of David’s descendants sinned, God would correct him, but God’s mercy would not cease. Thus, David’s kingdom would be eternal. This passage teaches that the Son of David will establish an eternal kingdom. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded this is a reference to the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah will be the Son of David, who will establish an eternal kingdom.

Jesus is the Son of David. An angel said to Mary, “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father, David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom, there will be no end” (Lk. 1:31-33). Jesus Christ is the Son of David (Mt. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 20:31; 21:9, 21:15; 22:42; Mk. 10:47, 10:48; 12:35; Lk. 1:32; 3:31; 18:38, 18:39, 18:39; 20:41; Acts 13:22; Rom. 1:3). Jesus Himself made the point that the Messiah would be the Son of David. “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, ‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?’ They said to Him, ‘The Son of David’” (Mt. 22:41-42; see also Mk. 12:35).

1 Chronicles 17:11-14 “And it shall be, when your days are fulfilled, when you must go *to be* with your fathers, that I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took *it* from *him* who was before you. And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever.” This is another account of the Davidic Covenant established in 2 Samuel 7. To the promises of 2 Samuel is added, “And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever.” Ultimately, a son of David will sit on the throne forever. In other words, an eternal person will sit on the throne. This passage teaches that an eternal Son of David will establish an eternal kingdom. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters concluded that 2 Samuel 7:12-16 is a reference to the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah is the eternal Son of David, who will establish an eternal kingdom. The New Testament repeatedly says Jesus is the Son of David (see reference in the discussion of 2 Sam. 7). As the Son of David, Jesus will sit on David’s throne. Remember what the angel told Mary: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom, there will be no end” (Lk. 1:31-33).

Psalms 2:6-9 “Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for

Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.” In Psalm 2:6, God declares that He sets His King on Zion. History makes no mention of a king of Israel being anointed on Zion. So, this does not refer to David or Solomon. Moreover, this passage cannot be about David because David was never given authority over the whole earth. This passage is teaching God's King is God's Son, who will rule the world. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded these verses refer to the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah, God's King, is God's Son, who will rule the world.

In Acts, Paul says, “God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You’” (Acts 13:33). Paul is declaring that Jesus is the fulfillment of Psalm 2:7. The writer to the Hebrews points out, “For to which of the angels did he even say, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’” (Heb. 1:5a). The writer to the Hebrews says Jesus is the fulfillment of Psalm 2:7. The writer to the Hebrews also says, “So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten you’” (Heb. 5:5). The writer to the Hebrews developed the concept of Jesus being the Son-King in the earlier part of this Epistle (1:5-4:13). In this section, he develops the idea of Jesus being the Son-Priest (4:14-7:28). So here he first establishes again that Jesus is the Son.

Psalms 16:10 “For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” David declares that God will not leave him in the grave (Sheol), nor will God allow His Holy One to see corruption. For a person to die and the body not experience corruption means the person will be resurrected. David is talking both about himself (“my soul”) and about God's Holy One. The Holy One cannot be a reference to David because the Holy One will not see corruption and David did see corruption. He was not resurrected; his body decayed. This verse is teaching the Lord will resurrect His Holy One. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded this verse refers to the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah will be resurrected.

Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25-28). Then he points out that David's body is still in a tomb (Acts 2:29). Peter concludes, “Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne” (Acts 2:30). In other words, David knew God had promised him that one of his descendants, the Messiah, would sit on his throne (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 89:3-4; 132:11). Then Peter quotes Psalm 16:10 (Acts 2:31). Peter says David was prophesying the resurrection of the Messiah. He knew about the Messiah because of the Davidic covenant. In Acts 13, Paul quotes this verse. He says, “Therefore He also says in another *Psalm*: ‘You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.’ For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption, but He whom God raised up saw no corruption” (Acts 13:35-37). Paul argues that the expression “The Holy One” in Psalm 16:10 cannot refer to David, who died, was buried, and saw corruption. On the other hand, the Son of David was raised from the dead and did not see corruption, that is, the dissolution of the body.

Psalms 110:1 “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” David says God spoke to ‘My Lord.’ This verse is teaching that God told David's Lord to sit on His right hand until He made His enemies His

footstool. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded this verse refers to the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah will sit on God's right until all His enemies are put in subjection.

This verse is quoted or alluded to many times in the New Testament (Mt. 12:35-37; 22:41-45; 26:64; Mk. 14:62; 16:19; Lk. 20:41-44; 22:69; Acts 2:34-35; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:24-25; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 1:13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 3:21). Jesus used this passage to prove that the Messiah must be more than David's son (Mt. 22:41-45).

Psalms 110:4 "The LORD has sworn and will not relent, 'You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (110:4). In the context of Psalm 110, the One to whom this is addressed is the One sitting on God's right hand. This passage is teaching that the Lord told the One sitting on His right hand, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded this verse refers to the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah will be a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 110:4 twice (Heb.5:6 and 7:17). Four times, he says Melchizedek is a type of Christ (Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 7:21). As a Priest, Jesus did not offer sacrifices daily, as did the Aaronic priests. He sacrificed Himself once for all (Heb. 7:27-26, 10:10). He is the eternal High Priest (Heb. 7:24, 28) of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:13, 9:15). Like Melchizedek, the Messiah is both King and Priest (Gen. 14:18).

Proverbs 30:4 "Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What *is* His name, and what *is* His Son's name, if you know?" The context makes it clear that the subject is God. This passage teaches that God has a Son. Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded that Psalm 2:6-9 is saying God has a Son who is the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah is the Son of God. Jesus said that He was the Son of God. He said, "Do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" (Jn. 10:36). Others called Jesus the Son of God (Mk. 1:1; Jn. 1:34; 11:27; 20:31; Acts 9:20).

Daniel 9:1-27 "Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, *there shall be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it *shall be* with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined" (Dan. 9:25-26). The Hebrew word translated "weeks" means "sevens" (plural). It does not indicate seven of any one particular thing. It is like our word, "dozen." "Dozen" means "twelve." It does not mean "twelve" of any one particular thing. It could be a dozen eggs or a dozen donuts. The 70 years of captivity discussed earlier in the chapter implies "years," and "years" is the only thing that makes sense. Thus, 7 weeks is 49 years, 62 weeks is 434 years, and 69 weeks is 483 years. This passage is saying that 49 years after the command to restore Jerusalem, the streets and the walls will be rebuilt. Then 434 years after that (for a total of 483 years), the Messiah will come and be cut off, but not for Himself.

When was the command to restore Jerusalem? The traditional view is that it was the Decree of Artaxerxes, the king of Persia (Ezra 7), who, in 458 BC, issued the decree for Israel to return to the land. This fits the coming of Christ perfectly. Boutflower dates the decree in 457 BC and concludes that 483 years later is 26 AD, the year the Messiah was made manifest to Israel. Archer also dates the decree in 457 BC, but he arrives at 25 AD as the time of Christ's ministry. Wood says the Decree was in 458 BC and the 483 years ended in 26 AD because only one year elapsed between 1 BC and 1 AD.

Both ancient rabbis and Christian interpreters have concluded this passage was a prophecy concerning the arrival of the Messiah. There is simply no question that this passage refers to the Messiah. Daniel uses the very word! Moreover, this Old Testament passage gives a date for the coming of the Messiah, after which time He will be "cut off, but not for Himself," a reference to His death (the Hebrew word translated "cut off" was used of the death penalty; see Lev. 7:20; etc.). Therefore, the Messiah will arrive about 26 AD and die, but not for Himself.

A simple summary of the broad outline of what the Old Testament says about the Messiah is:

- He would be a Man, not an angel (Gen. 3:15; Heb. 2:16).
- He would be a descendent of Abraham, a Jew, not a Gentile (Gen. 22:18).
- He would be from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10).
- He would be from the family of David (2 Sam. 7:17).
- He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
- He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14).
- He would die for the sins of many nations (Isa. 52:15; 53:5-6, 53:11).
- He would die at a specified time (Dan. 9:26),
- He would be raised from the dead (Ps. 16:10).
- He would be the King, who would reign on the earth in the kingdom (Gen. 49:10).

This is a broad outline, not an exhaustive list. The Old Testament indicates that the Messiah will be a prophet (Deut. 18:15), the Son of God (Isa. 9:6-7; Ps. 2:6-9; Prov. 30:4), God (Jer. 23:5-6; Micah 5:2; Ps. 110:1), a priest (Ps. 110:4), etc. What is interesting is how often the Old Testament indicates that the Messiah would be a King.

- A King from the tribe of Judah will rule (Gen. 49:10).
- A King, who will destroy all Israel's enemies, will come out of Jacob (Num. 24:17).
- A King, who is a divine Son, will rule on the throne of David forever (Isa. 9:6-7).
- A King from the tribe of David is God (Jer. 23:5-6).
- A King, who is God, will be from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
- A King, who will bring salvation and peace to the world, will come riding on a donkey (Zech. 9:9-10).
- A King, who is the Son of David, will establish an eternal kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-16; 1 Chron. 17:11-14).
- A King, who is God's Son, will rule the world (Ps. 2:6-9).
- A King, who is David's Lord, will conquer all enemies (Ps. 110:1).

In short, a King, who will be a Man, that is, a Jew from the tribe of Judah and the family of David, and the divine Son of God will rule the world in an eternal kingdom. The fact that this King will sit on the throne of David and rule the world are indications that He is a King over a literal kingdom on this earth.

The Rabbis struggled with the biblical descriptions of a suffering Messiah, as found in Isaiah 53, and of a conquering Messiah. To resolve the problem, they posited two Messiahs: Messiah ben Joseph, who would suffer and Messiah ben David, who would conquer.

Summary: Each of the three major divisions of the Old Testament contained prophecies concerning the Messiah, many of which predicted that He will be a King.

THE KINGDOM

The kingdom of God is one of the most important concepts in the Bible. John the Baptist came preaching about the kingdom of God (Mt. 3:2). So, did Jesus (Mt. 24:17; Mk. 1:14-15) and Paul (Acts 28:31). McClain declares, “The Kingdom of God is, in a certain and important sense, the grand central theme of all Holy Scripture” (McClain, pp. 4-5). He quotes Bright, who says, “The concept of the kingdom of God involves, in a real sense, the total message of the Bible” (Bright, p. 7). McClain goes on to say that if we gave the Bible a title, it might be “The Book of the Coming Kingdom of God” (McClain, p. 5). Those assessments might be a bit of a reach, but there is no doubt that the kingdom of God is an extremely important subject in Scripture.

Given the importance of this subject, it is surprising to discover that the expression “kingdom of God” does not occur in the Old Testament. The word “kingdom” appears. Various earthly kingdoms are mentioned including the kingdom of Israel (1 Sam. 15:28; 24:20), the kingdom of Judah (the Southern Kingdom; 2 Chron. 11:17), the Babylonian kingdom (Dan. 2:37), the kingdom of Persia (2 Chron. 36:20), the Roman kingdom (Dan. 2:40), etc., but the exact expression “kingdom of God” does not appear in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, the concept is there. The Old Testament says, “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom” (Dan. 2:44) and “the kingdom shall be the Lord’s (Obadiah 1:21). It speaks of “His kingdom” (Dan. 4:3). It even refers to the kingdom without using the word “kingdom.” Such terms as “throne” and “reign” are repeatedly mentioned in the Old Testament.

The *millennial* view is that after Christ returns, the kingdom would be established on the earth and last for one thousand years. It is a future, literal kingdom on the earth. The *ecclesiastical* idea of the kingdom is that it is the church. Reformed Theology says it is the invisible church. Roman Catholicism says it is the visible hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. The *celestial* concept is that God reigns in heaven. Some say this is God’s future reign in eternity after the close of human history. “Entering the kingdom” means “going to heaven.” Others contend that it is God’s *present reign* from heaven.

Among evangelicals, some say that it is a *future* kingdom, which is, a “literal kingdom on the earth” (Pentecost). Others claim that it is a *present* kingdom, that is, it is a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of people (Alexander on Mt). Still, others make it *both*. For example, Plummer says the kingdom is not the church but the “Messianic Kingdom,” the “rule of God, whether in the human heart or in society. It exists now, but it has its full realization in eternity.”

What, then, is the kingdom of God? The Greek word translated “kingdom” means “royal rule, the territory ruled over by a king.” There is a universal kingdom in the sense that God rules over the universe. Exodus 15:18 says, “The LORD shall reign forever and ever.” Commenting on that verse, Hannah says, “God is to be praised for what He did in effecting a mighty deliverance [from Egypt], for what He was then doing in preparing the land for conquest, and for what He will do in His eternal reign.” In other words, the Lord is on the throne now, and He will reign forever and ever. There is also a Messianic kingdom to come.

The Prophecies of the Kingdom in the Old Testament

The Covenant with David

2 Samuel 7 “Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam. 7:11b-13). The Lord told Nathan to tell David that instead of David building a house for Him, He would build a house for David. After David died, the Lord said He would set up a descendent (“seed”), to establish his kingdom and use him to build a house (“temple”) for the Lord. Although not identified here, the descendent turned out to be Solomon. Beyond that, the Lord will establish the throne of that kingdom forever. Later, God’s promise to David is called a covenant (2 Sam. 23:5). Hence this is known as the Davidic Covenant.

After saying some things about David’s immediate son in verses 14-15, in verse 16, the Lord adds, “And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:16). In other words, in the meantime, David’s house, throne, and the kingdom will be established forever. Isaiah called this the “sure mercies of David” and said it was “an everlasting covenant” (Isa. 55:3).

Concerning David (Ps. 89:20), the Lord said, “My covenant shall stand firm with him. His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven.” (Ps. 89:28-29). The Psalmist goes on to explain that if one of David’s sons forsakes the Law and does not keep the commandments, the Lord will punish him, but that will not break his covenant with David (Ps. 89:30-34). The Davidic covenant will endure forever (Ps. 89:36-37).

Jeremiah 31 “Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah: ‘In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In those days Judah will be saved, And Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.’ For thus says the LORD: ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.’ And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me”’ (Jer. 33:14-22). “This does not necessarily mean there will be a descendent on the Davidic throne over a Davidic kingdom without interruption (Acts 15:16). McClain says, “Even if historically interrupted for a season, [it] will it last in a future kingdom be restored to the nation in perpetuity with no further possibility of interruption (II Sam. 7:1-16; 23:1-5; I Chron. 17:1-14)” (McClain, p. 156).

Constable details some of the interruptions. “Note that God did not promise that the rule of David’s descendants would be without interruption. The Babylonian captivity and

the present dispersion of the Jews are interruptions (cf. Rom. 9—11). Indeed, Jesus taught that the Jews would experience domination by Gentile powers during ‘the times of the Gentiles’ (Luke 21:24), namely, from the time Gentiles assumed sovereignty over Israel’s affairs (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.) until Jesus Christ restored sovereignty to Israel (i.e., when He returns to rule at His second advent). Even though the present State of Israel enjoys a limited measure of sovereignty, Gentiles still dominate its affairs, and a Davidic king is not leading it. However, the privilege of ruling over Israel as king would always belong to David’s descendants” (Constable).

The Davidic covenant establishes that there will be an eternal Davidic kingdom. Jesus is the Son of David (Mt. 1:1) through Joseph, who was a son of David (Mt. 1:20; Lk. 2:4). Jesus was repeatedly called the Son of David (Mt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9; 22:42). It is that Son of David who will set on the Davidic throne, fulfilling the Davidic covenant (Lk. 1:32). Since David’s kingdom was a literal earthly kingdom and his literal son Solomon sat on the throne of David, the Davidic covenant is promising a literal kingdom on the earth.

The Visions of Daniel

Daniel 2 In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar he had a dream. Since he did not understand the meaning of the dream, he gave all the wise men of Babylon the assignment of coming up with the dream and the interpretation. When they asked Nebuchadnezzar to give them the dream so that they could give him the interpretation, he refused and said that if they did not give him the dream and the interpretation, he would have them killed. When they couldn’t deliver that information, Nebuchadnezzar demanded their death, not just of those present but of all the wise men of Babylon. That included Daniel and his friends. Daniel and his friends prayed, and God answered.

Armed with the information and interpretation, Daniel went to see Nebuchadnezzar. He made sure Nebuchadnezzar understood that God was the source of his information and that this dealt with the latter days (Dan. 2:28). The context indicates that the latter days here extend through the Second Coming of Christ and the Millennium.

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar: “You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Dan. 2:31-35). The king had seen an image made of different metals. A stone struck the feet and grew until it filled the earth. The stone was made without hands (Dan. 2:34). Without hands being involved signifies supernatural activity. As a result of the stone striking the image, it broke into pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor (Dan. 2:35). The stone filled the earth (Dan. 2:35).

Then, Daniel explains the interpretation. “This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children

of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all; you are this head of gold” (Dan. 2:36-38). Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, “You are the head of gold” (Dan. 2:38). The head is a reference to the empire as personified in Nebuchadnezzar because later in this passage, it does not say another king but “another kingdom” (Dan. 2:39).

Daniel continues, “But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours” (Dan. 2:39a). Though not stated, this is obviously a reference to the chest and arms of silver. This second silver kingdom is later identified by name as the Medo-Persian Empire (Dan. 8:20). The two-fold division of the two arms suggests the two-fold division of Media and Persia.

Daniel adds, “then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth” (Dan. 2:39b). This kingdom can only be Greece, which succeeded Medo-Persia in history (Dan. 8:21). In his *Antiquities*, Josephus recounts this prophecy in Daniel said the brass was a reference to the Greek empire.

Daniel says, “And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others” (Dan. 2:40). Daniel does not identify the fourth kingdom, but it must be Rome, for it succeeded Greece. Regarding this kingdom, the emphasis is on strength. It was as strong as iron. When Josephus wrote of this prophecy in Daniel, he stressed the tremendous strength of this kingdom. He said that this kingdom would have dominion over all the earth on account of the nature of iron, which is stronger than that of gold, silver, or brass. The two legs represent the major geographic areas the Roman Empire: the East and the West.

Daniel goes on to say, “Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay” (Dan. 2:41-43). Thus far, the dream fits the facts of history. Beginning with verse 41, however, there is a problem. According to the context, the feet and toes represent a *form* of the fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire, that is, there is a fourth kingdom (Dan. 2:40), but there is no fifth. In other words, the ten toes are not a “fifth” kingdom. They are part of the fourth kingdom, which is the Rome Empire, but when did Rome have ten heads represented here by ten toes? When was Rome destroyed by a kingdom that then filled the earth, represented here by the stone that pulverizes the image and fills the earth? How and when is all this fulfilled?

This difficulty has driven interpreters of this passage to the conclusion that Daniel 2:37-40 is history and that Daniel 2:40-45 has not yet been fulfilled and must be, from our vantage point, prophecy not yet fulfilled. The feet and toes are called the revival of the Roman Empire. This is not a fifth kingdom; the fourth is the last. Therefore, it must be the Roman Empire revived. Mussolini said, “I believe in the resurrection of the [Roman] Empire!” His abortive attempts to resurrect it met with colossal failure for he was ahead of his, or rather God’s, time.

Daniel 2:41-43 reveals several things about the future, revived Roman Empire. For example, the “ten toes” (Dan. 2:41) are ten heads, that is, heads of governments (Dan.

7:24). The feet and toes are “part iron and part clay” (Dan. 2:41), meaning that it will be a combination of strong and weak kingdoms. It will be “partly strong and partly fragile” (Dan. 2:42). The iron and clay do not mix; they “will not adhere to one another” (Dan. 2:43).

Daniel explains, “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure” (2:44-45). Daniel says, “In the days of these kings.” Which kings? It cannot be the kings of the four kingdoms because those four kingdoms did not exist at the same time. Therefore, this is a reference to the ten toes, which must be ten kings who rule during the last generation of Gentile power. Also, other passages (Dan. 7:24; Rev. 17:12) speak specifically of ten kings in the end time.

A stone is catapulted through the air like a missile striking the statute with incredible force, crushing and demolishing it so that all traces of it disappeared. Then the stone became like a great mountain and filled the earth (Dan. 2:45). It shall not be destroyed, nor be given to another kingdom, but will endure forever (Dan. 2:44). What does all this mean? In the days of “these kings” (Dan. 2:44), that is, the ten kings of the revived Roman Empire, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom. The God of heaven setting up a kingdom is the kingdom of heaven. In other words, the kingdom of God will be established.

Commentators agree that the kingdom in verses 44 and 45 is the kingdom of God. The passage itself says that the God of heaven shall set it up and it shall never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44)! Commentators are “widely divided,” however, concerning the nature of the kingdom. Amillennialists say the kingdom is a spiritual kingdom introduced by Jesus Christ at His first coming, but there is no evidence that the first coming of Christ caused the downfall of Gentile world powers, which are very much still with us today. Premillennialists contend that the kingdom a literal kingdom that will be established by Jesus Christ at His Second Coming.

There are a number of factors that support the literal explanation. The context describes kingdoms on the earth, literal, political kingdoms. Other prophecies relating to the second advent of Christ pictured just such a devastating defeat of Gentile powers. Revelation 19:11-21, which all agree is a picture of the Second Coming of Christ, is the time when Jesus Christ assumes command as King of kings and Lord of lords. It is declared at that time, “He should smite the nations, and He should rule them with a rod of iron” (Rev. 19:15).

Daniel 7 “I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this” (7:15-16a). In Daniel chapter 7, God gave Daniel a vision of four beasts (Dan. 7:1-14). Being troubled prompted Daniel to ask what it all meant (Dan. 7:16a).

The angel’s answered. “So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: “Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever”” (7:16b-18). Four kings shall arise. Yet these

“kings” represent “kingdoms” (Dan. 7:23; also 8:21-22 where kings are named and kingdoms are meant). Thus, the beast represents both a king and a kingdom. The four kingdoms represented by the four beasts are Babylon, the Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman. That has been the interpretation for hundreds and thousands of years. Not until liberalism came along denying supernatural prophecy did anyone debate that. The saints shall receive the kingdom (Dan. 7:18). They do not take the kingdom or establish it by their might: they will receive it. In contrast to the wicked world kingdoms, the kingdom of God will last forever.

Daniel wanted more information. “Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom” (Dan. 7:19-22). Daniel wanted more information about the fourth beast.

The angel gave Daniel more information. “Thus, he said: ‘The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; he shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings. He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then, the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him. This is the end of the account’. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed; but I kept the matter in my heart” (Dan. 7:23-28). The fourth beast is the fourth kingdom, that is, Rome, that will devour the whole earth. That was true of Rome, yet it will be fulfilled to a greater degree in restored Rome (Rev. 13:8). The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise and another horn will arise (Dan. 7:24). It is the “little horn” (Dan. 7:8).

There are three possible interpretations of the little horn: 1) The fourth beast is Greece and the ten horns are ten divisions of the Grecian Empire. This is the interpretation of the liberals who wish to make Daniel history instead of prophecy. The fact that these ten kings appear in Revelation 13 and 17 long after the fall of the Grecian Empire refutes this view. 2) The fourth beast is Rome, and the ten horns are ten divisions of the Roman Empire. Christians since the first century have interpreted the fourth beast as Rome. A careful correlation of Daniel 2, 7, and 8 confirms that the fourth beast is Roman. The ten divisions, however, are a problem. The ancient Roman Empire was not divided into ten parts. 3) The fourth beast is Rome, but the ten kings have not risen yet. This part is future and demands the restoration or revival of the Roman Empire. Daniel 2 confirms this explanation. The image there has ten toes, which are destroyed at the Second Coming of

Christ. The ten horns correspond to the ten toes of the image of Daniel 2. They reign simultaneously and are subdued by the little horn of Daniel 7:8.

The angel also explains the little horn (Dan. 7:24b). The little horn shall subdue three others, shall speak pompous words against the Most High (2 Thess. 2:4), shall persecute the saints, and shall intend to change times and law. The expression “times” and “laws” refer to God’s laws of the universe, both moral and natural (Gen. 1:14; 7:21; 18:14). An attempt to change these laws will be one way in which the little horn will seek to oppose God. The word “intend” indicates he will not succeed. As an illustration of the type of change that might be tried, Leupold points to attempts made during the time of the French Revolution to establish a ten-day workweek in place of God’s seven-day week. The “little hour” is the future Antichrist.

The traditional explanation of “times and times and the dividing of times” is that it is 3½ years. This view is confirmed by Daniel 9:27, by the 42 months, or 3½ years in Revelation 11:2 and 13:5, and the 1260 days in Revelation 11:3. In other words, this is the last half of the Tribulation. The Antichrist will reign for 3½ years, that is, he will not succeed in changing the universe, but he will persecute the saint for 3½ years.

The Antichrist shall be destroyed. “The court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever” (Dan. 7:26), that is, the little horn shall be destroyed. Christ will do this at His second coming.

Then the kingdom of God shall be established (Dan. 7:27). This is not heaven, but the reign of Christ on earth. This is not a spiritual kingdom. It is the literal kingdom of Christ for 1000 years. Revelation 11 indicates that the kingdom is a literal kingdom. It says “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). The kingdoms of this world will be “transferred” to the Lord (Mounce on Rev.), which indicates that the kingdom is literal, not spiritual.

Daniel 9 Daniel 9 reveals God’s plan for Israel. Gabriel says, “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. 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. 9:25-27). To clearly understand what Gabriel is saying, three issues need to be clarified. First, the beginning of the program for Israel is from “the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:25a). The traditional view is that the program began with the Decree of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7). So, according to Gabriel, God’s future program for Israel began in 458 BC.

Second, the total program consists of 70 “weeks (7 weeks + 62 weeks + 1 week = 70 weeks). We normally think of a week as seven days, but the word “week” in this passage does not refer to seven days. The Hebrew word “weeks,” means “sevens,” (pl), without specifying seven what. It is like the word “dozen,” which means twelve, without

specifying twelve what. The 70 years of captivity discussed earlier in the chapter implies “years” and “years” is the only explanation that fits what is described in Daniel 9:25-27. So the total program last 490 years (70 x 7 = 490).

Third, the program is divided into three parts: 1) seven weeks (49 years), 2) sixty-two weeks (434 years), one week (7 years). Phase 1 of this program is the restoring and rebuilding of Jerusalem (not just the wall, the city), which will take 49 years (409 BC). Phase 2 is the coming of the Messiah, which is 434 years *after* the rebuilding of Jerusalem. In other words, from the start date (458 BC) until the coming of the Messiah will be 483 years, that is, somewhere around 25 or 26 AD. In other words, this passage gives a date for the coming of the Messiah and it fits perfectly with Jesus coming to begin His ministry.

At this point, there is a gap between phase 2 and phase 3. After the arrival of the Messiah, He is cut off. The Hebrew word rendered “cut off” means “to destroy, to kill” (cf. Gen 9:11). It was used of the death penalty (Lev. 7:20; etc.). Thus, there is a gap between the time Messiah comes and when He dies, not for Himself. Furthermore, before the next phase begins, the people of the prince who shall come will destroy the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, which all agree is the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Then, after 69 weeks (483 years) plus a gap of undetermined duration, phase 3 begins and lasts for one week (7 years). At the beginning of this seven-year period, the prince that shall come will make a covenant for one week (7 years) and in the middle of those 7 years (3½ years), he will stop the sacrifice and offerings in the Temple in Jerusalem. Gabriel calls this an abomination that makes desolate. In other words, the prince that shall come is the Antichrist, who will make a covenant with Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation that will last for seven years. This interpretation is confirmed by what Jesus taught in Matthew 24:15-21.

Day of the Lord

We think of the Lord’s Day as the day God’s children visit God’s house. The Old Testament speaks of the Day of the Lord, but instead of God’s children going to visit Him, the Lord comes to visit. The “Day of the Lord” is an important concept in the prophetic books of the Old Testament. It is the *subject* of two Old Testament books (Joel; Zephaniah) and appears in 13 of the 16 prophetic books. The expression the Day of the Lord signifies a *special* day. Sunday is called the Lord’s day; of the seven days of the week, it is the special day. The Day of the Lord is the day the Lord *directly* intervenes in human affairs with either judgment (Joel 1:15; Zeph. 1:14-16) or blessing (Zeph. 3:11-20). It will be a special day, not an ordinary day.

A Future Judgment “‘I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land,’ says the LORD. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, and the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land,’ says the LORD” (Zeph. 1:2-3). The Lord says He will consume (NASB: “completely remove”) everything from the face of the *land*. The Hebrew word translated “land” means “ground, land, earth, the whole inhabited earth” (BDB; see “earth” in the NASB; NIV; ESV; see also 2 Pet. 3:10-12). The coming worldwide judgment consists of the Lord consuming (removing) people and animals from the earth, birds from the air, and fish from the sea. The Lord will remove “stumbling blocks” (Hebrew: stumbling-block, something overthrown, decay, ruin”). The

only thing left on the earth will be “ruins” (NASB; ESV: “rubble”), which is probably a reference to previous destructions.

Zephaniah 1:2-3 could be hyperbole, but according to other passages, such a devastating judgment will one day take place. “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. 30:7). “At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, *Even* to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book” (Dan. 12:1). “A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning *clouds* spread over the mountains. A people *come*, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any *such* after them, even for many successive generations” (Joel 2:2). “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” (Mt. 24:21). Zephaniah 1:2-3 is describing a worldwide judgment that has not yet taken place (see Zeph. 3:8; Isa. 24:1-6, 24:19-23).

A Historical Judgment Instead of continuing the description of a worldwide judgment, beginning with verse 4, Zephaniah describes the judgment on Judah (see Zeph. 1:4-6). Then he says, “Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD; for the day of the LORD *is* at hand, for the LORD has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests. And it shall be, in the day of the LORD’s sacrifice, that I will punish the princes and the king’s children, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. In the same day I will punish all those who leap over the threshold, who fill their masters’ houses with violence and deceit” (Zeph. 1:7-9). This is Zephaniah’s first reference to the Day of the Lord. He mentions the Day of the Lord, using such expressions as “the Day of the Lord,” “that day” and “that time,” etc., 24 times. The Day of the Lord is mentioned many times in the Old Testament (Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 13:9; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 2:11, 2:31, 3:14; Amos 5:18, 5:20; Obadiah 1:15; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5).

In this passage, the reason (“for”) for the silent before the Lord is the Day of the Lord is imminent. It will be a day of God’s judgment. When God judges, no one will be able to accuse Him of injustice. Zephaniah pictures the Day of the Lord as a sacrifice to which He has invited guests. The Day the Lord slaughters Judah like a sacrifice, it will be to punish the princes, the king’s children (future rulers), and all who wear foreign apparel. Adopting foreign dress indicated adopting foreign practices, even idolatry. Leaping over the threshold is a reference to rushing into people’s houses to steal. At any rate, here the Day of the Lord is the day of *judgment*.

This passage describes the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem in 586 BC (Zeph. 1:4). Zephaniah says the Day of the Lord is at hand (Zeph. 1:7) and indicates what He will do on that day (Zeph. 1:7-8), which will obviously take more than one day. Yet the next verse (Zeph. 1:8) says, “in the same day,” and verse 9 indicates there is still more He will do. Needless to say, the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem took more than a day of 24-hours. At the same time, the fact that it is called a “day” indicates that it is a period of relatively short duration.

A Typical Judgment Since Zephaniah begins with a future, worldwide judgment and immediately moves to a historic judgment, the historical judgment is a type of the future judgment. “All this shall be fulfilled in the Day of Judgment and all other fulfillments are earnest of the final Judgment” (Barnes). “These words not only introduce the particular

judgment that would be pronounced upon Judah (v. 4), but they also speak of the final judgment that will usher in the kingdom of God on earth (see Rev. 19)” (*The NKJV Study Bible*).

The Day of the Lord may be historical in the sense that what is said about it has already been fulfilled in history (Joel 1:15; Zech. 1:4-17). It may be typical, meaning the historical fulfillment was a type of a future fulfillment (*cf.* “at hand” in Joel 2:1 with sun, etc. in Joel 2:10; *cf.* Zeph. 1:2-3 and 1:18 with Zeph. 1:4-17). It may also be purely prophetic about events that will take place during the Tribulation (Zech. 1:2-3) or the future Messianic era.

Ryrie says, “The day of the Lord, the major theme of this prophecy, involves God’s special intervention in the affairs of human history. Three facets of the day of the Lord are discernible: (1) the historical, God’s intervention in the affairs of Israel (Zeph. 1:14-18; Joel 1:15) and heathen nations (Isa. 13:6; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 30:3); (2) the illustrative, whereby in the historical incident represents a partial fulfillment of the eschatological Day of the Lord (Joel: 2:1-11; Isa. 13:6-13); (3) the eschatological. This eschatological “day” includes the time of the Great Tribulation (Isa. 2:12-19; 4:1), the second coming of Christ (Joel 2:30-32), and the Millennium (Isa. 4:2, 12; 19:23-25; Jer. 30:7-9)” (*Ryrie Study Bible*, in the introduction to Joel).

A Day of Blessing The book of Zephaniah talks about the Day of the Lord, which is a day of judgment, but that is not the complete picture. Some of the Judgments mentioned in Zephaniah have already taken place; some mentioned are still future, but that is not the entire story. The Day of the Lord includes blessing as well as judgment and the blessing mention in Zephaniah is still future. If you want to know what is in store for the future of planet earth, consider Zephaniah 3, which is about the Day of the Lord (Zeph. 3:11). Zephaniah 3:8-20 tells the whole story.

“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. In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds in which you transgress against Me; for then I will take away from your midst those who rejoice in your pride, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain. I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed *their* flocks and lie down, and no one shall make *them* afraid. Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all *your* heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, *is* in your midst; you shall see disaster no more” (Zeph. 3:9-15). The King will be in His kingdom.

Thus, the Day of the Lord is a dark day of judgment, followed by a bright day of God’s blessing. McClain points out that for the ancient Jews, the ordinary day began at sunset and extended to the next sunset (Lev. 23:32), consisting of a period of darkness followed by a period of light. Likewise, the Day of the Lord is a period composed of both darkness and light and the sequence is the same: first, the night and, then, the light of the rising sun (McClain, p. 178).

The Prophecies of the Prophets

The prophets prophesied events that have not yet happened. They used expressions such as “Day of the Lord,” “that day,” “the latter days,” “at that time,” or just describe events that have never occurred. An examination of those prophecies indicates that they predicted a worldwide judgment and the reign of the Messiah, which is called a kingdom (Dan. 7:13-14), the kingdom of the Lord (Obad. 21); in other words, the kingdom of God. In their words, here is what the prophets said. This list is not exhaustive.

Isaiah: Judgment “For the day of the LORD of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up and it shall be brought low” (Isa. 2:12). “In a sudden transition, Isaiah jumps forward to the judgments of the day of the LORD which will precede Christ’s reign” (MacDonald).

“Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty” (Isa. 13:6). In this verse, the Day of the Lord is primarily a judgment on Babylon, but it is ultimately on the whole world (Isa. 13:11). “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” (Isa. 13:9). The Day of the Lord is a day of the wrath of God (see also Isa. 34:1-2). “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” (Isa. 13:11). The Lord says He will punish the world, “not merely the land of Babylon” for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity.

Isaiah: Kingdom “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it” (Isa. 2:2). “The expression ‘the last days’ (‘the end of the days’), which does not occur anywhere else in Isaiah, is always used in an eschatological sense. It never refers to the course of history immediately following the time being, but invariably indicates the furthest point in the history of this life—the point which lies on the outermost limits of the speaker’s horizon” (Delitzsch). “He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isa. 2:4). When that time comes, people will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, because there will be no more war. People will live in peace.

“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, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears. But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist” (Isa. 11:1-5). When the Rod from the stem of Jesse (Isa. 11:1), the Messiah, comes, the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him (Isa. 11:2) and He shall rule in righteousness (Isa. 11:4-5). Moreover, “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned

child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:6-9). At that time, there will be tranquility, peace, and the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth. "Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise" (Isa. 60:18). "Israel will be safe and secure in her land, in contrast to her former vulnerable and insecure condition. Zion's defense will be the salvation that God provides. Her gates will be so full of praise (i.e., people who praise) that potential enemies cannot enter" (Constable).

Jeremiah: Judgment "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. 30:7). "A coming period of time would be the worst 'Jacob' (Israel) had ever experienced, or would ever experience. This anticipates the Tribulation, in which Israelites will suffer more greatly than they ever have or ever will" (Constable).

Jeremiah: Kingdom "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah: In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In those days Judah will be saved, And Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." For thus says the LORD: "David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually" (Jer. 33:14-18). Clearly, this is a description of the Messiah. He is the Lord our righteousness.

Ezekiel: Judgment Because no past historical events match the prophecy in Ezekiel 38-39, many commentators have concluded it awaits a future fulfillment. There is a debate as to exactly when in the future it will be fulfilled, but many have concluded it will be during the Tribulation, just prior to the Second Coming of Christ.

Ezekiel: Kingdom "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'When I have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and am hallowed in them in the sight of the Gentiles, then they will dwell in their own land which I gave to My servant Jacob. and they will dwell safely there, build houses, and plant vineyards; yes, they will dwell securely, when I execute judgments on all those around them who despise them. Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God" (Ezek. 28:25-26). The Lord says that when He restores Israel to the land, they will dwell safely there, build houses, plant vineyards, and dwell securely, and they shall know that He is the Lord their God. "After the Babylonian Captivity, some Israelites returned to live in the Promised Land, but they did not live there in safety. In fact, the Jews have never yet lived safely in their own land. Fulfillment awaits the return of Jesus Christ and His millennial kingdom" (Constable).

Ezekiel 40-48 predicts a restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem and a reinstatement of the sacrificial system, which has never been fulfilled. While some interpreters insist that these chapters are to be taken literally, there is nothing in the passage to suggest that it is not to be taken at face value.

Daniel: Judgment "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, *even* to that time. And at that time your people shall be

delivered, everyone who is found written in the book” (Dan. 12:1). “At that time” refers to Daniel 11:40, which talks about the time of the end and Daniel 11:40-45 talks about the Antichrist. Jesus quotes this verse and calls it the Great Tribulation (Mt. 24:21).

Daniel: Kingdom “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.” (Dan. 7:13-14). Jewish and Christian interpreters have interpreted the Son of Man as the Messiah. Christ called Himself “the Son of Man” (Mt. 24:29-31; 25-31). The Son of Man is given the kingdom, which will never be destroyed.

Hosea: Judgment “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 3:5). The expression “the latter days” indicates the Day of the Lord. Israel will return and seek the Lord and David, that is, the Davidic ruler of the future. Other passages make it clear that this “David” is actually a descendant of David (see Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16).

Joel: Judgment “Proclaim this among the nations: ‘Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, ‘I *am* strong. Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD. Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness *is* great.’ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the Day of the Lord *is* near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness” (Joel 3:9-15). The Lord commands that a call to prepare for war be issued among the nations. Their armies are to wake up and show up. Earlier the Lord had said He would “gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat” (Joel 3:2). Now He issues the call for them to come to the battle (Joel 3:9). Farm implements, the implements of peace, are to be changed into weapons of war (Joel 3:10). Again, the nations are called to wake up and show up (Joel 3:10-11). After saying that they were being assembled for judgment (Joel 3:12), the Lord orders the judgment. The judgment is compared to harvesting grain with a sickle and to treading grapes in a vat (Joel 3:13). The darkening of the heavenly bodies (Joel 3:15) serves as a sign of the approaching Day of the Lord (Joel 3:14). “This scene of divine warfare corresponds to the battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation (cf. Rev. 14:14-20; 16:16; 19:11-21)” (Constable). Ryrie says that Joel 3:9-14 is “a description of the campaign of Armageddon (Rev. 16:14).”

Joel: Kingdom “And it will come to pass in that day *that* the mountains shall drip with new wine, the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; a fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD and water the valley of Acacias. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, because of violence *against* the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall abide forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation” (Joel 3:18-20). In the context of Joel, “that day” is the Day of the Lord” (Joel 3:14) and in this verse that includes the future kingdom. In the kingdom, the mountains will drip with new wine, the

hill will flow with milk, and water will flood all the brooks in Judah. Similar imagery of a fountain flowing out of the Lord's house, the Jerusalem Temple, is employed elsewhere (Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech. 14:8). In short, "the land of Israel would become fruitful and well-watered" (MacDonald). Because of their violent treatment of Israel, including shedding innocent blood, Israel's enemies, represented here by Egypt and Edom, will be a desolate wilderness. In contrast to Egypt and Edom, Judah and Jerusalem will exist forever.

Amos: Judgment "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! For what good is the day of the Lord to you? The Day of the Lord will be darkness, and not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him." (Amos 5:18-19). The inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom desired the Day of the Lord. Their concept of the Day of the Lord was that the Lord would defeat their enemies and establish them permanently in the land. In other words, they were thinking about the *future* Day of the Lord. Amos responds by asking them what good the Day of the Lord is to them; they have forgotten that the Day of the Lord will first be darkness and not light. It will be like a man fleeing from a lion only to be met by a bear. Escaping the bear, he enters his house, a place of safety, only to be bitten by a poisonous snake.

Amos: Kingdom Amos had proclaimed that the people would be taken captive and would be taken from the land. (cf. Amos 5:27; 7:11, 7:17; 9:9). Now God promises to restore the people to the land. He says, "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. 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). Returned Israel will rebuild the cities and restore the land. Furthermore, *this* restoration will not be temporary; it will be permanent. For God goes on to say, Israel will be planted, never to be uprooted again.

These promises were not fulfilled in the return of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, because Israel was uprooted again after that. Nor is the realization of these verses in the church. Some want to make Israel the church. They say the possession of Edom (9:12) is the reception of the Gentiles into the church. The people in this passage, according to them, are Christians and the blessings described here are the spiritual blessings we enjoy today, but that is to make what is physical, spiritual and what is literal, figurative. These predictions are to be taken at face value; God will one day permanently restore Israel to the land. This prophecy will be fulfilled as written when Jesus Christ returns and sets up His kingdom on the earth.

Obadiah: Judgment "The day of the LORD upon all nations is near. As you have done, it will be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head. For as you drank on My holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink continually; yes, they shall drink, and swallow, and they shall be as though they had never been" (Obad. 15-16). Obadiah was the first to use the expression, "The Day of the Lord" (Keil). It is obvious from this passage that it is a day of judgment. In that *all* nations will be judged, it is a future judgment. The judgment on Edom, the subject of the book of Obadiah, foreshadowed future events. Keil says, "Obadiah regarded Edom as a type of the nations that had risen up in hostility to the Lord and his people." Edom illustrates God's judgment on all nations. Obadiah indicates that the principle of judgment will be retribution. He says that as they have done, it shall be done unto them.

Obadiah: Kingdom “The South shall possess the mountains of Esau, and the Lowland shall possess Philistia. They shall possess the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria. Benjamin *shall possess* Gilead. And the captives of this host of the children of Israel *shall possess the land* of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the South. Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD’s” (Obad. 19-21). Obadiah is describing Israel possessing a large geographical area and says when that happens, “the kingdom shall be the Lord’s” (Obad. 21).

Micah: Judgment “Hear, all you peoples! Listen, O earth, and all that is in it! Let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple. For behold, the LORD is coming out of His place; He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place” (Micah 1:2-4). Micah summons all the people *of the earth* to listen to the Lord’s indictment. What everyone is to hear is that the Lord is coming out of His place to tread the high places of the earth, that is, the mountains. When the Lord comes in judgment, stepping on high places, the mountains will melt like wax before fire and the valleys will split like water poured from a high place. The similes, “like wax” and “like water,” express the complete dissolution of mountains and valleys (see Keil). Jerusalem and Samaria were on “high places;” they were elevated capitals of Judah and Israel; but “high places” were also sites of idolatrous worship. Thus, this may imply that God would “crush pagan worship” (Constable).

Micah: Kingdom “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days *that* the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off. They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Micah 4:1-3). Micah 4:1-3 is almost identical to Isaiah 2:2-4. The phrase “the latter days” (“last days” in the KJV; NASB; NIV) refers the future Day of the Lord. In the kingdom, many nations will come to Jerusalem to be taught the ways of the Lord so they can walk in the paths the Lord; The Word of the Lord will come out of Jerusalem. The Lord (the Messiah) will be the teacher. “Imagine for a moment, if you will, Washington, London, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, and others proceeding to Jerusalem to learn the will of God! Could these things apply to our day? No, they will and must take place in the era of the personal and visible reign of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the throne of His father David” (Feinberg, cited by Constable).

Habakkuk: Judgment “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14). The statement is made in the context of describing judgment on Babylon. Modifying words from Isaiah, Habakkuk 2:14 says the reason Babylon is to be destroyed is so the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will fill the earth (Isa. 11:9). “As the waters cover the sea” is an expression denoting “overflowing abundance” (Keil; see also Rev. 11:15).

Zephaniah: Judgment “I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land,’ says the LORD. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the

heavens, the fish of the sea, and the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land,' says the LORD" (Zeph. 1:2-3). As was explained earlier when describing the Day of the Lord, "land" should be translated "earth" (see "earth in the NASB; NIV; ESV). Zephaniah 1:2-3 describes a worldwide judgment that has not yet taken place.

"That day *is* a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers" (Zeph. 1:15-16). Note: The Day of the Lord will be a day of God's wrath. Granted, in this passage, the Day of the Lord concerns judgment on the sins of Judah (Zeph. 1:17), but the past examples of the Day of the Lord foreshadow the future Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is also called "the day of trouble." The Hebrew word translated "trouble" means "straits, distress, trouble" (Strong # 6869: "tribulation"). So, the Day of the Lord is a day God's wrath and a day of tribulation.

"Before the decree is issued, *or* the day passes like chaff, before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you!" (Zeph. 2:2). Again, the Day of the Lord is described as a day of God's anger and it is a day of God's anger against Judah, but, in this case, the next verse says, "Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger" (Zeph. 2:3). Zephaniah called on the 'humble *of the earth*' to seek the Lord, which is a clear indication that the Day of the Lord is the day of God's anger that will come upon the whole earth.

Zephaniah: Kingdom "The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, *is* in your midst; you shall see disaster no more" (Zeph. 3:9-15). As was explained earlier, when discussing the Day of the Lord, this passage will be fulfilled in the kingdom.

Haggai: Judgment "For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it *is* a little while). I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land (2:6) and I will shake all nations'" (Haggai 2:6-7a). Instead of shaking Mount Sinai (referred to in Haggai 2:5; Ex. 19:18), the Lord will shake the sky, the solid ground, the sea, and all sovereign nations, that is, the universe. The phrase "it is a little while" means it will happen in the immediate future. Shortly, God will shake the earth. Shaking the earth probably refers to an earthquake (see Constable). God will not only shake the earth; He will shake the nations. Apparently, there was an immediate fulfillment (see "a little while"). At the same time, given what is described (the shaking of the *heaven* and *all* nations), there must also be a future fulfillment. At the end of the book, Haggai says God will shake heaven and earth (Haggai 2:21) and adds, "I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms" (Haggai 2:22). Hebrews says this is still future (Heb. 12:26). It is another way of speaking of the Day of the Lord (*NKJV Study Bible*). This will occur when Christ returns to the earth (*Ryrie Study Bible*; Constable, who cites Joel 3:16; Mt. 24:29-30).

Haggai: Kingdom "I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them; The horses and their riders shall come down, everyone by the sword of his brother" (Haggai 2:22). The language here is reminiscent of the destruction of the Gentile world powers represented in the great image of Daniel 2:44-45. The point is that the worldwide

Messianic kingdom will replace the Gentile nations (Dan. 2:34-35; 44-45). In other words, the God who has all power and might and who is over all the kingdoms of this world displaced the inhabitants of the land so that He could give it to the descendants of Abraham forever.

“‘In that day,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel,’ says the LORD and will make you like a signet *ring*” (Haggai 2:23). That day is the day of the collapse of the kingdoms of this world. It is an eschatological term. It points to a yet-future fulfillment in the Messianic Age. In the day the Lord shakes the universe and overthrows the Gentile nations, He will “take” Zerubbabel. What is predictable will not take place until the overthrow of the governments of the world and, therefore, could not take place in Zerubbabel’s lifetime (Keil). Zerubbabel is called the Lord’s servant. When referring to a single person, this title is especially used of David and “the servant of the Lord” in Isaiah 40-45.

As a son of Shealtiel, Zerubbabel was a descendant of the family of David (Keil). The identification of Zerubbabel’s father is the key to understanding what is going on in this passage. Zerubbabel will be more than a governor of Judah; he will be heir to the throne of his predecessor David because he will have a universal reign. God will annihilate the thrones and the power bases of the kingdoms of the nations and Zerubbabel (the Messiah) will be the King.

If that is the case, why is not the word “king” used? Haggai could not propagate the idea of a new king in the context of the Persian Empire. The term “king” is not used, but it is clearly implied. The key here is the expression “in that day.” In the day God destroys the Gentile nations, in the Day of the Lord, God will establish His kingdom with His King. The fulfillment culminates in Jesus Christ, the Son of David and the descendant of Zerubbabel (Mt. 1:12; Lk. 3:27).

Zechariah: Judgment “Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. 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, from east to west, *making* a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee *through* My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus, the LORD my God will come, *and* all the saints with You. It shall come to pass in that day *that* there will be no light; the lights will diminish. It shall be one day which is known to the LORD; neither day nor night. but at evening time it shall happen *that* it will be light” (Zech. 14:3-7). In the Day of the Lord, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, creating a very large valley. The split in the Mount of Olives will create a valley reaching all the way to Azal, which will provide a way of escape for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus, the Lord, Zechariah’s God, will come with all His saints. This will happen at the end of the Tribulation.

Zechariah: Kingdom “And in that day it shall be *that* living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur. And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be; “The LORD *is* one,” and His name one” (Zech. 14:8-9). “In that day” is the Day of the Lord, which here includes the kingdom. In the kingdom, living

water will flow from Jerusalem east to the Dead Sea and west to the Mediterranean. In that day, the Lord will be King over the whole earth, the only King.

Malachi: Judgment “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” says the LORD of hosts, that will leave them neither root nor branch” (Malachi 4:1). The coming day is “the Day of the Lord,” which here is a day of judgment. The Lord compares the Day of the Lord to a fiery furnace in which all of the proud and the wicked will be burned up like stubble. So completely is the destruction that neither root nor branch will be left.

Malachi: Kingdom “But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves” (Malachi 4:2). In contrast to the wicked (“but;” see verse 1), those who fear the Lord will experience the rising of the sun of righteousness. Some expositors understand the “sun of righteousness” as a messianic title, but the New Testament never refers to Jesus Christ as “the sun of righteousness.” Ryrie says righteousness rising like the sun is a reference to righteousness spreading throughout the entire earth in the coming kingdom. Those who fear the Lord will experience healing. The sun can blister, but it can also bless. The sun rays are pictured as “wings” of a bird flying over the earth. Those who fear the Lord should go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. This is a picture of the “joy and freedom that the righteous will enjoy in that day (cf. Isa. 65:17-25; Hos. 14:4-7; Amos 9:13-15; Zeph. 3:19-20)” (Constable).

To sum up the kingdom in the Old Testament: The covenant with David, the visions of Daniel, the Day of the Lord, and the prophecies of the prophets, predict the coming Kingdom of God preceded by a period of unprecedented judgment on the whole world.

The Old Testament clearly teaches: 1) the Messiah will die and yet be a King, 2) the Messiah will judge the whole world, 3) after He judges the world, He will establish an earthly kingdom. The Old Testament, however, did not answer all the questions. In fact, what it said provoked several perplexing problems. How do you reconcile the Messiah dying and yet and reigning? As was pointed out, ancient rabbis tried to solve this problem by saying that there were two messiahs: Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David.

In addition, how do you reconcile the conflicting time designations? In some passages, the coming of the kingdom is near at hand (Haggai 2:6-9; Isa. 29:17-18). In other passages, the kingdom is in the far distant in the future after a lapse of “many days” (Dan. 10:12-14; Hosea 3:4-5) and in the “last days” (Isa. 2:2). Yet there is a “set time” (Ps. 102:12-13, 16-22; Habakkuk 2:14, see 2:1-3). The kingdom will not come “until” after the complete devastation of the land of Palestine (Isa. 6:11-12; 32:13-18), after a period of worldwide dispersion of the nation of Israel (Amos 9:8-10), after a prolonged period when Israel be without a king, prince, or sacrifice (Hosea 3:4-5), after a long succession of four world empires culminating in the world dictator whose persecution will mark the end of Jewish suffering (Dan. 7:17- 27), and after the resurrection of the godly Israelites (Dan. 12:1-3). No wonder the question of “how long” is asked (Isa. 6:8-11; Ps. 74:9-10; 89:27-46).

Peter speaks about the experience of the Old Testament prophets. He says, “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what or what manner of time the spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the

glories that would follow” (1 Pet. 1:10-11). They “inquired and searched diligently.” If there is a difference between these two Greek words, it is that the first implies prayer (Heb. 12:17) and the second implies study (Jn. 5:39; 7:52). The Spirit of Christ, that is, the Holy Spirit, who was in the prophets, testified beforehand concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. Is this “glories” not a reference to the kingdom (1 Pet. 5:1; Mt. 24:30, 25:31)? The prophets sought to know “what or what manner of time” this would take place. Most English versions and the majority of the commentators take these phrases to mean a single question, namely the question of time. The issue of time is the problem stressed in the context. (see Dan. 12:4, 9, 13). They inquired into the precise date of the Messiah’s coming. They longed to be part of the Messianic era.

Old Testament prophets grappled with the prophecies concerning the Messiah and His kingdom. Christian theologians also wrestle with these Old Testament prophecies. Their issue is, how are these prophecies to be interpreted? The grammatical-historical method interprets passages based on the meaning of words in the historical situation in which they were written. It interprets words according to their normal meaning, their everyday usage. This is called the literal method of interpretation, but it allows for symbols, figures of speech, similes, and metaphors. Figurative expressions have a literal meaning. The King is spoken of as a “rod” and a “branch,” but He is a literal person, a descendant of Jesse (Isa. 11:1). The other method is called the “spiritual method” because it “spiritualizes” the text. Promises given to Israel are said to be fulfilled by the church.

The names “literal” and “spiritual” are misleading. When people hear “literal,” they assume it does not allow for figures of speech. The name “spiritual” sounds more appealing. Different names are needed. Cravens explains, “*Literal is opposed not to spiritual but to figurative; spiritual is in antithesis on the one hand to material, on the other to carnal (in a bad sense).... Prophecies are to be normally interpreted (i.e. according to the received laws of language).*” Craven adds that spiritualizing involves some secret meaning and that these two methods of interpretation should be called normal and mystical (E. R. Craven, in Lang’s *Commentary on Revelation*, italics his, cited by McClain, p. 144).

T. F. Torrance, Professor of Dogmatics of the University of Edinburgh, wrote, “The historical particularity of Israel covenanted with God persist throughout the Christian era. God has not cut off His ancient people (Rom. 11:1ff.); for the covenant with Israel as God’s people remains in force, and cannot be ‘spiritualized’ and turned into some form alien to the stubborn historicity of its nature without calling in question the whole historical foundation of God’s revelation in the Old Testament and New Testament” (Torrance, cited by McClain, p. 463).

Every indication is that the judgments prophesied in the Old Testament are literal. Literal historical judgments prefigure the worldwide judgment to come. Likewise, all the indications are that the kingdom of God is a literal, earthly kingdom. As David’s kingdom was an earthly kingdom, so shall the Davidic kingdom in the future be on the earth. As Daniel’s visions were of earthly kingdoms, so the kingdom from the God of heaven will replace them as kingdoms on the earth (Dan. 2:44; 7:21-22).

The Preaching of the Kingdom in the New Testament

In the Gospels

In the first century, the Jews were *expecting* this Messianic Age, a kingdom. In fact, the idea of some kind of a Messianic Age was “in the air” throughout the civilized world (McNeile on Mt. 3). The evidence for the expectation of a coming universal king is “abundant” (Plummer on Mt. 3). Barclay records some of the statements of ancient authors and adds, the “world was in an eagerness of expectation” (Barclay on Mt. 3). Ladd says, “It is quite true that the Old Testament prophets look forward primarily to the earthly aspect of the kingdom. Basing their interpretation upon such prophecies, the Jewish people expected the kingdom of an outward, political, earthly sort” (Ladd, p. 127). As the New Testament opens, the Jews were expecting a *future* kingdom on the *earth*.

In a day when Israel was expecting the Messiah to come and establish a Messianic age, Jesus is *presented* as the Messiah. Because of their expectation. The Jews would automatically assume that if He is the Messiah, He is the coming King of Israel. Furthermore, John the Baptist told them to prepare to receive the Messiah by telling them to repent (Mt. 3:2). Jesus told them the same thing, saying the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe it (Mk. 1:14-15). In other words, they were telling the nation of Israel to accept the Messiah.

John the Baptist (Mt. 3:1-2), Jesus (Mt. 4:17), the apostles (Mt. 10:5-7) announced that the kingdom of God was at hand. John the Baptist said that Jesus was the Son of God (Jn. 1:34) and Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). Andrew told Peter he had found the Messiah (Jn. 1:41). Philip told Nathaniel that he had found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote (Jn. 1:45). Nathaniel said that Jesus was the Son of God, the King of Israel (Jn. 1:49).

One of the first things Jesus did was cleanse the Temple, declaring that they made His Father’s house a house of merchandise (Jn. 2:16). When He did that, the Jews immediately ask, “What sign do You show us, since You do these things (Jn. 1:18). They understood that He was exercising the authority of the Messiah. Barclay says, “They acknowledged the act of Jesus to be the act of one who by the very act claimed to be the Messiah. The Jewish authorities understood the claim, but they were not satisfied; they wanted a sign. Jews request a sign (1 Cor. 1:22)!”

The purpose of His miracles was to prove that He was the Messiah, the Son of God (Jn. 20:31). John the Baptist did not do any miracles (Jn. 10:41), but Jesus performed many miracles (Mt. 4:23-24; 8:16; 9:25; 12:15; 15:30), to prove that He was the Messiah. The Greek word translated “miracles” means “sign.” For example, Jesus healed the blind, which was a sign of the Messiah (Isa. 35:5). A blind called Him the Son of David, a messianic title (Lk. 18:38). The genuineness of the miracles was acknowledged (Jn. 11:47-48). When He sent out the twelve, He gave them the power to work miracles (Mt. 10:1-8). When He sent out the seventy, He did the same thing (Lk. 10:1, 8-9).

After the apostles returned from preaching to Israel that the kingdom of God was at hand, Jesus asked them, “Who do men say that I the Son of Man am?” (Mt. 16:13). Clearly, He was asking if they now accepted that He was the Messiah. The title “the Son of Man” is taken from Daniel’s prophecy of the Messiah in His kingdom (Dan. 7:13- 14). Liddon says, “There is absolutely no room for doubt either His direct reference to the vision in Daniel or His claim which the titles Son of Man was intended to assert”

(Liddon, cited by McClain, p. 326). In other words, Jesus was “asking for a report as to the attitude of Israel toward Him as the legal Messiah of Old Testament prophecy” (McClain, p. 326). Peter understood that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God (Mt. 16:15- 16).

The kingdom of God in the Gospels is the same one that was predicted in the Old Testament. McClain lists the arguments for such a conclusion (McClain, pp. 276-303). Here is a brief summary of what he says. 1) The absence of any formal definition of the kingdom in its initial announcement indicates that they were expected to know what kingdom was meant (Mt. 3:1-2; 4:17; Mk. 1:14-15). If Christ had entertained a novel concept of the kingdom of God, a definition would have been necessary. His message cannot be explained apart from the OT. 2) The Lord never intimated that His concept of the kingdom differed in any aspect or degree from that which was presented by the OT prophets. 3) The terms “kingdom of heaven” and “Son of Man” in preaching the kingdom acquired significance solely in relation to the OT prophetic concept. These terms come from the book of Daniel, where their association with the messianic kingdom is so obvious it cannot be fairly denied (Dan. 2:44; 7:13- 14). In light of the OT context, the phrase “kingdom of heaven” does not refer to a kingdom located in heaven as opposed to the earth but to the coming to earth of the kingdom, which is heavenly in its origin and character. 4) The Lord appealed to the OT prophets in support of His legal claims and message of the kingdom (Lk. 4:18-21). After His resurrection, Christ spent 40 days instructing His disciples “concerning Himself” (Lk. 24:27, 44) and “things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Thus, “the king and His kingdom [are] brought together as one central theme of the Old Testament prophecy, upon which our Lord rested His legal claims as the King of God’s kingdom on the earth” (McClain, p. 281). 5) The Gospels connect the kingdom proclaimed by the Lord with the Kingdom of OT prophecy (Lk. 1:17 with Mal. 3:1; Lk. 1:32-33, 33; 2:25- 33; Mt. 4:12- 17 cf. Isa. 9:1-2; see bridegroom in Mt. 9:14-17; Mk. 2:18-22; Lk. 5:33 to 19 39, which has to do with the relationship of God to Israel in the days of the coming kingdom; see Isa. 61 and 62; Hosea 2:19-20; 3:4-5; Jesus assumes for Himself a place of the bridegroom). 6) Events attending the appearance of the messianic King indicate an identity between the kingdom preached in the Gospels and that of the OT prophecy (Micah 5:2). 7) The Lord’s message of the kingdom contains all the essential aspects of the OT prophesied kingdom: the spiritual element, the moral element, the social element, the ecclesiastical element, the political element, and the physical elements. If the kingdom announced by the Lord had been exclusively a “spiritual kingdom, the rule of God in the heart,” it would have had no special significance whatsoever to Israel because such a rule of God had always been recognized among the people of God (Ps. 37:31).

This view takes the material in both Testaments at its normal or face value. Those holding this view of the kingdom of God include George N. H. Peters; A. J. Gordon; J. H. Brooks; David Baron; C. I. Scofield; G. Campbell Morgan; Sir Robert Anderson; Lewis Sperry Chafer; Wilbur M. Smith; John F. Walvoord; Charles L. Fienberg; H. C. Theissen; Alvin McClain (McClain, pp. 275- 276). Many others could be added to McCain’s list.

The following are some of the key references to the kingdom in the Gospels.

Matthew 3:2 John the Baptist preached, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 3:2b). John could say that the kingdom was “at hand” because Jesus, the King, had arrived. The proclamation of the kingdom was inseparably connected with its King.

Swete, the author of the Greek commentary on Matthew, points out, “with the king is bounded up the kingdom” (Swete; see also Toussaint, a Greek professor). Berkhof, an amillennialist, said, “In the preaching of Jesus, the kingdom of God and the person of the Messiah go hand-in-hand. The two are inseparable corollaries” (Berkhof, cited by McCain, p. 304). “The kingdom was at hand “because it was being offered to Israel in the person of the Messiah” (*NKJV Study Bible*). The Greek word translated at hand” means “near,” not here, which indicates that the kingdom was still future.

Matthew 4:17 Jesus preached, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 4:17). Again, it is near, not here. It is significant that Jesus did not explain what He meant by “the kingdom of heaven.” When He used that expression, the people who heard Him thought that He meant a future kingdom on the earth. Since neither John nor Jesus gave a definition of the kingdom, *it is safe to assume that what they meant by it was what the Jews of their day understood and were expecting by the term*, namely, the earthly kingdom God had promised the Jews in the Old Testament. Statements Jesus made confirm that an earthly kingdom was what He had in mind.

Matthew 5:5 Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Mt. 5:5). This statement is significant for two reasons. In the first place, it indicates that the inheritance is in the future and it also says that what is inherited is the earth.

Matthew 6:10 Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10). To pray that the kingdom will come indicates that it is not now present but is in the future.

Matthew 8:11 Jesus plainly proclaimed that the kingdom was a future kingdom on the earth. “And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 8:11). Here, it is obviously future and on the earth.

Matthew 10:9 When Jesus sent out the Seventy, He told them, “Heal the sick and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Mt. 10:9). Commentators point out that they were to say the kingdom is “near,” not “here.” For example, Geldenhuys points out that Jesus commenced His public ministry with an announcement that the kingdom of God was at hand (Mt. 4:17). Now, at the end of His public ministry, He sends the seventy with the same message, namely, that the kingdom of God is at hand. Notice, he says “at hand, not “here.” Morris says, “The kingdom is *near*” (Morris, italics his).

Matthew 11:12 “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force” (Mt. 11:12). This is a reference to the violent opposition of the message about the kingdom. During the brief period from the time John the Baptist commenced his ministry until the moment Christ spoke these words, the kingdom of heaven was violently opposed, as seen in the arrest of John and “more ominously foreshadowed in the growing official opposition to Jesus himself” (France).

Matthew 12:28 “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Mt. 12:28; see also Lk. 11:20). Jesus did not say the kingdom of God was “in” you. He says it is “upon” you. In his commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Creed concedes, “The kingdom is not yet come.” He adds that, nevertheless, it is operative when Jesus acts.

Matthew 16:27-28 Jesus said, “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I

say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” (Mt. 16:27-28). The Lord explains that He will come again, not as a sufferer, but as a judge to *reward* disciples according to their works. To taste death is a metaphor for dying, which restricts what is promised to a single generation (Alexander). Thus, this statement sounds as if Jesus is saying the Second Coming would occur before some listening to Him died. This has been interpreted to be a reference to 1) the Transfiguration (Walvoord; Toussaint), 2) the resurrection (Tasker), 3) ascension (see France), 4) Pentecost (McNeile; Barclay), 5) the destruction of Jerusalem (Trench), and 6) a mistake (see Plummer; Barclay). Which of these is correct?

Note there is a chapter break here. Chapter divisions were not put in by the original authors. Chapter 20 records the Transfiguration, which was a revelation of the glory of the deity of Jesus Christ (Pentecost). The apostle John, one of the eyewitnesses of the Transfiguration, said, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father” (Jn. 1:14). Pentecost says, “The Transfiguration, then, was a revelation of the essential glory that belongs to Christ and one day will be revealed to the world. This, then, was the fulfillment of a prophecy that Christ had made the preceding week.” John says the apostles saw His glory (Jn. 1:14). Peter said the same thing (2 Pet. 1:16).

Matthew 26:29; Lk. 22:18 At the end of His life, He said, “But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” (Mt. 26:29). “For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Lk. 22:18). Clearly, Jesus indicates here that the kingdom is *still* future.

Thus, in Matthew, the kingdom is a future, literal kingdom on the earth. Commenting on Matthew 16:19, Plummer says, “In this gospel, kingdom seems always to mean that which the Son of Man is to begin at the Second Advent, which is regarded as near.” Some, however, claim that the kingdom of God is a present, spiritual kingdom in the hearts of people. Ladd, for example, says that Jesus announced a new order divine government in the spiritual realm as having come near (Mt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7) and as having arrived (Mt. 12:28; Lk. 11:20). In a footnote, he explains that “having arrived” means “The kingdom of God has just reached you” without the full experience of all the kingdom is to involve. The kingdom as the reign of God *fully realized* in human relationships is in the future, but the kingdom as the reign of God to be realized in personal experience has come to men now in the person and mission of Christ. So the kingdom is yet to come, but its power has already come.” He concludes, “The word (“arrived”) *does* mean that in some sense or other, the kingdom *has arrived*” (Ladd, p. 125). But John the Baptist and Jesus said that the kingdom was near, not here.

To prove that the kingdom is spiritual and present, some point to what Jesus said in Luke, “The kingdom of God is within you” (Lk. 17:21). Jesus is not, however, saying that the kingdom is a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of His hearers. This was spoken to the Pharisees (Lk. 17:20)! If the kingdom here is the spiritual kingdom in the hearts of the people, it is in the hearts of the enemies of Christ! Furthermore, Jesus speaks of people entering the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of God entering people (Major; Mason; Wright cited by Toussaint). Roberts claims that the Greek word translated “within” in Luke 17:21 means “in your control” or “in your possession” (Roberts, cited by Toussaint). Whether or not it would come was in the control of Israel (Toussaint). It is present in the sense that the King is present.

In the Book of Acts

Acts 1:3 Between His resurrection and ascension, Jesus spoke: “things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). In the book of Acts, the kingdom of God is a future (see comment on Acts 1:6; 14:22) kingdom on the earth (see comments on Acts 1:6). As James Orr pointed out, although the kingdom occupied a large place in apostolic preaching and teaching, in the book of Acts, it is present only as an “eschatological possibility” (Orr, cited by McClain, p. 390).

Acts 1:6 The disciples asked if He was going to “at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Their use of the word “restore” indicates that they were thinking about the kind of kingdom that existed in the Old Testament (McClain, p. 393). They were expecting Christ to set up a still *future* kingdom on the *earth*, not a spiritual kingdom in their hearts. They were not mistaken. That is obvious for three reasons: 1) They had listened to Jesus teach about the kingdom of God for three years. 2) They had just listened to Him again speak about the kingdom of God during the forty days since His resurrection (Acts 1:3). 3) Jesus did not correct them; He confirmed that what they were thinking about the kingdom was correct, it was just that they did not understand that this was not the time (Acts 1:7). Note carefully, at this time, *the kingdom is still future*.

“If their ideas of the kingdom had been totally wrong, certainly this was the time for Christ to have set them right, not only for their sakes but for ours also who would read the inspired record.... If the throne of David was now to be transferred from earth to heaven; if the glorious utterance of the prophets are only ‘beautiful dreams’ never to be realized in the reign of the Messiah in a kingdom on earth where all war and disease and injustice shall have been abolished; if the sickly cast of Platonic dualism is now to be thrown over great areas of the Old Testament predictions in which the brightest aspirations of humanity are divinely validated— how simple it would have been for our Lord Jesus Christ to have set the apostles right in a single utterance. But there is no record of such an utterance at this critical point” (McClain, p. 394).

Acts 8:12 Philip “preached the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 8:12). In the book of Acts, the kingdom of God is a future (see comment on Acts 14:22) kingdom on the earth (see comments on Acts 1:6). There is no reason to think that this verse means anything different than the clear statements in Acts.

Acts 14:22 In Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, Paul preached, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). This verse is not talking about the Tribulation. It is talking about tribulations (plural), which are a fact of life. The kingdom was to be entered into *in the future*. In Acts, “nowhere do the preachers ever assert that the kingdom has been established” (McClain, p. 425).

Acts 19:8 At Ephesus, Paul “went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8). This is another indication that throughout the book of Acts, the things concerning the kingdom of God was constantly preached. That does not mean that the kingdom had already been established no more than continually preaching the resurrection of the dead means it had already taken place (McClain, p. 426).

Acts 20:25 Paul he told the elders at Ephesus, “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more” (Acts 20:25). In the book of Acts, the kingdom of God is a future (see comment on Acts

14:22) kingdom on the earth (see comments on Acts 1:6). Is there anything in this verse that would give the expression “the kingdom of God” another meaning? No!

Acts 28:23 At Rome, Paul “explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening” (Acts 28:23). In the book of Acts, the kingdom of God is a future (see comment on Acts 14:22) kingdom on the earth (see comments on Acts 1:6).

Acts 28:30 “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:30-31). In the book of Acts, the kingdom of God is a future (see comment on Acts 14:22) kingdom on the earth (see comments on Acts 1:6).

In the Epistles

Romans 14:17 Paul says, “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). Believers should not want their good, that is, their freedom in amoral areas, spoken of as evil (Rom. 14:16) because of the kingdom of God. To say the same thing another way, the kingdom of God should make them not want their freedom in amoral areas be spoken of as evil. The critical issues in God’s kingdom are not external things like food and drink (Rom. 14:2, 5), but spiritual realities like righteousness, which does what is “right,” and peace, which seeks harmony, and joy that comes from the Holy Spirit. Those who understand that they will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10, 12) to determine their place in the future kingdom on the earth would not opt for the temporal and temporary joy of satisfying their selfish desires with meat and drink over the joy of the Holy Spirit when they sacrifice themselves for others. They would choose to seek to do what is right and seek to do what will produce peace so that they can experience the joy the Holy Spirit gives now and so that they can give a good account of themselves later.

“In the future kingdom, these things [meat and drink] will be of no consequence. Therefore, since the Church is to reign in that Kingdom, its members should not judge or grieve one another with such matters here and now (cf. vs. 13-21). All disputes of this nature should be left for the ‘judgment seat of Christ’ which will inaugurate His kingdom upon the earth (vs. 10)” (McClain, p. 434).

1 Corinthians 4:20 Paul told the Corinthians, “The kingdom of God is not in word but in power” (1 Cor. 4:20). Most commentators say the kingdom of God here is the rule of God presently in the hearts of believers (Godet; Barnes; JFB; *NKJV Study Bible*, etc.). In the context of 1 Corinthians 4, Paul has referred to the future Messianic kingdom (1 Cor. 4:8). All other references to the kingdom of God in 1 Corinthians are about the future kingdom (1 Cor. 6:10; 15:24; 15:50). Therefore, the kingdom here is the future Messianic kingdom (Meyer, cited by Godet). Rewards in the future kingdom are not based on words but on deeds. The future messianic kingdom “is characterized by ‘power’ (*dunamis*) rather than boastful talk.... To interpret I Corinthians 4:20 as a present kingdom of the saints would make Paul contradict what is already written in verses five and eight” (McClain, p. 435).

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul also wrote to the Corinthians, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves,

nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9- 10). In this passage, the kingdom of God is future (“will”). The expression “*inherit* the kingdom of God” indicates the kingdom of God is future.

1 Corinthians 15:24 Paul said, “Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power” (1 Cor. 15:24). Jesus will put an end to all rule by others after the millennium (Rev. 20:7-10). Then, He will deliver the kingdom He has ruled over for one thousand years to the Father.

1 Corinthians 15:50 Paul indicates “that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Cor. 15:50). Again, the expression “inherit the kingdom of God” indicates the kingdom of God is future. There is no doubt that this verse refers to the future. It is after the resurrection!

Galatians 5:21 Paul wrote to the Galatians: “Just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). This is the same thing Paul told the Corinthians (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Again, the expression “inherit the kingdom of God” indicates the kingdom of God is future (see future tense).

Ephesians 5:5 Paul told the Ephesians, “For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph. 5:5). This is the same thing Paul told the Corinthians (1 Cor. 6:9-10) and the Galatians (Gal. 5:21). Again, the expression “inherit the kingdom of God” indicates the kingdom of God is future.

Colossians 1:13 Paul says the Father translates believers “into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13). Does this verse refer to a spiritual kingdom that exists now or to a literal kingdom in the future? Are believers *de facto* (factual), or are they *de jure* (legal) in the kingdom? Believers are legal heirs of God’s kingdom, but the kingdom is not yet a factual reality on the earth. Other books written by Paul about the same time he wrote Colossians indicate that believers are “citizens of heaven” (Phil. 3:20) and “seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6), but believers are not literally in heaven now, nor are they actually seated in heavenly places. Furthermore, verse 12 says believers are qualified to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints. An inheritance is a legal benefit that someone presently owns but they do not possess at present. They will possess that inheritance in with future (see 1 Pet. 1:4, which speaks of obtaining an inheritance). Thus, the kingdom in this verse is the future, earthly, Davidic kingdom.

McClain points out that believers are seated in heavenly places, although they are not yet *de facto* seated in the heavenlies. “The thing is so certain that God can speak of it as already done. In the same sense, we have been (aorist tense) transferred *judicially* into the kingdom of our Lord even before its establishment. Being what He is, God ‘callethe things that are not as though they were’ (Rom. 4:17, ASV).” (McClain, pp. 435-436, italics his). According to Toussaint, this is the same as saying that our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 4:20).

Colossians 4:11 Paul also wrote to the Colossians, “These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me” (Col. 4:11). The expression “workers *for* the kingdom of God” does not mean the kingdom is present and in light of other references to the kingdom, it is reasonable to take this as a reference to a future kingdom. They were workers “for” the future kingdom in the sense that they were telling people that they had to be born again to

enter the kingdom (Jn. 3:5) and they had to live a righteous life to inherit the kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9).

1 Thessalonians 2:12 Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “Walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12). In the Greek text, kingdom and glory are united together with one article (Milligan; Hiebert). “The God of all grace ... called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (1 Pet. 5:10). Alford says this is the kingdom that the Lord will establish at His coming.

2 Thessalonians 1:5 Paul also told the Thessalonians “*which is* manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer” (2 Thess. 1:5). Paul’s reference to the kingdom in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 indicates that when he talked to them about the kingdom, it was future. “Compare the words of Christ in Luke 20:35 where some are ‘counted worthy’ of the *future* resurrection from among the dead. The Greek verb is the same” (McClain, p. 436, italics his).

2 Timothy 4:1 Paul told Timothy, “I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:1). The kingdom will be established at the coming of Christ, which indicates that the kingdom is future.

2 Timothy 4:18 Paul also told Timothy, “The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen!” (2 Tim. 4:18). Being preserved for the kingdom indicates the kingdom is still future. The expression “heavenly kingdom” is “not a synonym for heaven, but rather indicates that the long-awaited messianic kingdom will be “heavenly” in origin and character as contrasted with earthly kingdoms” (McClain, p. 433).

Hebrews 1:8 The writer to the Hebrews wrote: “But to the Son *He* says: “Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your Kingdom” (Heb. 1:8). The Son sits on His throne when He returns. In the meantime, He is sitting on the right hand of God.

Hebrews 12:28 The writer to the Hebrews also said, “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28). This verse does not say we *have received* a kingdom. It refers to a kingdom *we will be receiving* in the future. In light of the fact that we will be receiving this kingdom in the future, we should live accordingly now. “It is not unusual for Scripture, on behalf of believers, to assert *ownership* regarding certain blessings even before they are *possessed* in Christian experience” (McClain, page 436, italics his).

James 2:5 James wrote, “Listen, my beloved brethren: has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” (Jas. 2:5). To be an heir of the kingdom indicates that the kingdom lies in the future.

2 Peter 1:11 Peter wrote: “For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:11). Peter indicates the kingdom is in the future (“will”). The future kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

In Revelation

Revelation 1:9 John wrote: “I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:9). In the book of Revelation, “kingdom” is a reference to a future kingdom (see Rev. 12:10).

Revelation 11:15 John said, “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). The seventh trumpet is the announcement that the Lord will take over the kingdoms of this world and reign forever. The kingdoms of this world will be “transferred” to the Lord (Mounce on Rev.), which indicates that the kingdom is literal, not spiritual. It also indicates that the kingdom is future.

Revelation 12:10 John also said, “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” (Rev. 12:10). To say that the kingdom has come at this point indicates that it is future from our point of view.

To sum up the kingdom in the New Testament: The Gospels, the book of Acts, the epistles, and the book of Revelation each speak of the future Kingdom of God on the earth.

The Postponement of the Kingdom in the Gospels

When Jesus came, He offered Himself as the Messiah, the King of Israel. In so doing, He offered Israel the kingdom. When they rejected Him as their King, He postponed the kingdom until later.

The Offer of the Kingdom

Jesus presented Himself to Israel as the Christ, the Messiah of OT prophecy, but that title had no meaning apart from the prophetic Kingdom over which the Messiah was to rule as King. The kingdom was the messianic kingdom promised in the Old Testament (2 Sam. 7:12; Isa. 4:4-6; Jer. 33:14-16; Dan. 2:44; 7:25-27; Joel 3:12-18; Zeph. 3:8-14; Mal. 3:1-5; 4:1-6), a future, literal kingdom on the earth (Mt. 5:5; 6:10; 8:11; 20:17-28; 26:29; Lk. 21:31; Acts 1:6). The presentation of Christ Israel as the Messiah demanded a decision (repent, believe). No room was left for neutrality (Mt. 12:30). This decision was to be made by Israel as a nation.

The Rejection of the Kingdom

The message of the kingdom met opposition from the very beginning (Jn. 2:13-25; 5:16). Opposition toward the Lord grew steadily to a definitive crisis. In Matthew 12, Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath and the Pharisees began to plot how they might destroy Him (Mt. 12:13-14). Then, He healed a demon-possessed, blind mute (Mt. 12:22). When the people ask, “Could this be the Son of David?” (Mt. 12:23), that is, the Messiah-King, if the Pharisees said, “Yes,” they would have to admit He was the Messiah, but they had already decided to kill Him (Mt. 12:14). If they said, “No,” they

had to explain how He performed an obvious miracle. Rather than admit He was the Messiah, the Pharisees said He cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons (Mt 12:24). Jesus had worked those miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12:28). So, to attribute what He did to demons, was to reject the witness of the Holy Spirit. They blasphemed the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12:31). That was unforgivable (Mt. 12:32), because a person cannot be saved apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. In His discourse immediately following the charge of blasphemy, Jesus uses the term “generation” four times in asserting the responsibility for His rejection (Mt. 12:39, 41, 42, 45). The immediate establishment of the kingdom on earth was contingent upon the attitude of Israel toward her King. The Pharisees, who initially rejected Jesus as the Messiah (Mt. 12:13-14), eventually convinced the people to do the same (Mt. 27:20).

Jesus was rejected as *king* (Mt. 12:23; see 27:22; 15:12-13). He came to His own and His own received Him not (Jn. 1:11). Feinberg writes, “He came to His land, His throne, and His kingdom (Jn. 1:11), and He offered Himself as King (Mt. 21:1-5) and was rejected in His kingly offer (Jn. 18:37; 19:14-15)” (Feinberg, p. 186).

The Postponement of the Kingdom

Matthew 11:14 Jesus said, “If you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come” (Mt. 11:14). He is saying that John fulfills the prophecy of Malachi *if* Israel responds correctly. Wiersbe says if the people received John’s witness and excepted Jesus as the Messiah, John would have fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi, but they did not, so, Malachi 4:5 will be fulfilled literally when Elijah comes as one of the two witnesses spoken of in Revelation 11 (Wiersbe on Mt. 11:14).

Matthew 13 When Israel rejected Jesus as the Messiah-king (Mt. 12:23-24), He immediately began to speak in parables about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 13:11). The Greek word translated “mystery” means “that which is known to the initiated, mystery, secret doctrine.” In the New Testament, it is used of the counsels of God that were once hidden and are now revealed (A-S). Paul defines a mystery as that “which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints” (Col. 1:26). It is a “sacred secret.” It is a secret that is concealed until it is revealed (Alexander on Mt. 13).

What does the expression “the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven” mean? If the Old Testament revealed the future Davidic kingdom on the earth, what aspect of the kingdom is Jesus now revealing that has been kept secret until now?

Some theologians say that “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” means Jesus is *correcting their concept* of the kingdom. They thought the kingdom was literal, but the kingdom is spiritual. According to this view, there is no literal kingdom. This explanation completely disregards the Old Testament prophecies. Moreover, in this passage, Jesus said that the disciples were blessed because they did understand (Mt. 13:16) and, at the end of Jesus’ life, they had the same idea of an earthly Messianic kingdom (Lk. 24:21; Acts 1:6; see Toussaint).

A second interpretation of “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” is that Jesus is giving a *new form* of the kingdom, namely, Christendom (Scofield; Chafer; Walvoord; Pentecost; Ryrie; Gaebelien; Barnhouse; Kelly; English; Feinberg; Pettingill). There will be an earthly Messianic kingdom in the future, as revealed in the Old Testament, but before it arrives, there is a spiritual form of the kingdom that is not the church because it

includes both believers and unbelievers. There are problems with this position. For one thing, Jesus speaks of the mysteries of the kingdom, that is, *unrevealed truth about the kingdom, not the kingdom in mystery form* (Toussaint). Also, the proponents of this position believe that the mystery form of the kingdom consists of believers and unbelievers, but the kingdom of heaven is composed of only believers (Mt. 5:20; 6:33; 7:21; 11:11; 18:3).

A third possibility is that the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13 is the earthly Messianic kingdom and the mystery is *the time of its appearance*. As Toussaint explains, Jesus is “giving new revelation concerning the kingdom promised to the Jews.... The truth relates to the *time* of the establishment of the kingdom, the preparation for it and other such material which had never before been revealed” (Toussaint, italics added). He also says, “The parables of Matthew 13 reveal new truth involving the preparation for the establishment of the kingdom during the time of postponement which was not predicted in Daniel’s 70 weeks or other Old Testament prophecies.” He argues that this view is in agreement with the Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom and is consistent with the New Testament concept of mystery. Commenting on Matthew 16:19, Plummer says, “In this gospel, kingdom seems always to mean that which the Son of Man is to begin at the Second Advent, which is regarded as near.”

It is obvious from what Jesus taught in the parables of Matthew 13 that the kingdom was no longer “near.” It would be postponed. To the multitude (Mt. 13:2, 10), Jesus taught four parables. The Parable of the Sower (Mt. 13:3-9) explains that the problem in the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah (King) was not the Sower (Jesus), not the seed (the Word of the kingdom, Mt. 13:19), but the hearts of the hearers (Mt. 13:19-23). This parable is key to the parables given in this chapter. Jesus said if you understood this parable, you would understand all of the parables (Mk. 4:13). The key to the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:24-30) is the crops. The crops are the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the wicked one (Mt. 13:38). Jesus is not going to establish the kingdom now, but during the interim, He will sow sons of the kingdom (Mt. 13:38). Also, during the interim, the devil will sow his sons (Mt. 13:38). The two will co-exist. Later a separation judgment will come *at the end of the age* (Mt. 13:39, 40). The parable of the mustard seed (Mt. 13:31-32) teaches that Jesus will sow sons of the kingdom (Mt. 13:38) and the growth will be phenomenal. The parable of leaven (Mt. 13:33) teaches that Satan will sow sons of the wicked one (Mt. 13:38) and the growth will permeate the world.

To the disciples, Jesus gave other parables (Mt. 13:36). The parable of the treasure (Mt. 13:44) indicates that Jesus gives all to gain believers and the parable of the pearls (Mt. 13:45-46) indicates that Jesus gives all to purchase us. The parable of the dragnet (Mt. 13:47-50) again indicates that the wicked will coexist with the righteous until the end of the age. *At the end of the age* (Mt. 13:49), the wicked will be separated.

Matthew 21:33-46 “Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his

inheritance.’ So they took him and cast *him* out of the vineyard and killed *him*. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers? They said to Him, ‘He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease *his* vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.’ “Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder. Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.”

The landowner represents God and the vineyard represents Israel. The hedge, the winepress, and the tower are indications of the care God gave to Israel. The servants represent the messengers God sent to Israel (Toussaint). God sent Moses with the Law, David with songs of forgiveness and praise, Solomon with wisdom, and the prophets with prophecies of hope. The point of vineyard parables is usually about fruit, but here it is the loyalty of the workers. Israel beat, killed, and stoned the prophets. Jeremiah was beaten (Jer. 20:1-2), Isaiah was killed (Heb. 11:37), and Zechariah was stoned (2 Chron. 24:20-21). Israel not only rejected the prophets, but they also did it repeatedly.

Considering what the tenants had done to the landowner's servants, it would be expected that he would retaliate in anger. Instead, he responds patiently and graciously. Finally, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to Israel. Israel's response to the Son was that they wanted to kill Him. This is a case where not all the details of a parable have meaning. First, they cast him out of the vineyard. Then, they killed him. Jesus was crucified outside the city (Jn. 19:17, 20; Heb. 8:12-13). As a final insult, the body was cast out unburied. The landowner did two things. First, he destroyed the wicked tenants, who killed his servants and his son. Secondly, he leased the vineyard to those who would produce fruit. If you owned a rental house and the tenants did not pay the rent and they trashed the house, you would evict them and get new tenants.

Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22 (Mt. 21:42). In the Targums, Psalm 118:22 is applied to the Messiah (McNeile). Jesus is the cornerstone (Plummer). The Jewish leaders rejected the stone that became God's cornerstone for His building!

The “nation” is not the Gentiles (Walvoord; France), but the church (1 Pet. 2:9-10; Rom. 10:19). Jesus is saying that the privilege of entering the kingdom would be taken from Israel and given to the church, but that does not mean that Israel will be excluded from the kingdom forever, because as Paul asserts in Romans 11:26-27, Israel will be restored in the future (Toussaint).

The cornerstone becomes a stumbling stone and the stumbling stone becomes a destructive stone (cf. Dan. 2:44). Some stumble over the stone, but “far more terrible” (McNeile), the stone falls on some who are grind to powder. They will be “pulverized” (Wiersbe). At His Second Coming, Jesus will become a smiting stone of destruction (Walvoord; Toussaint).

This parable illustrates the results of the rejection of Jesus by Israel. As a result of the rejection by Israel, the church received the privileges of the kingdom (Rom. 11:25-36). Note: “The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the

fruits of it” (Mt. 21:43). Jesus is announcing the postponement of the realization of the hope of the kingdom until some future day (Pentecost).

Luke 19:11-28 “Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore, He said: ‘A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So, he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’ But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’ And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.” Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’ Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’ Then another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ And he said to him, ‘Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’ And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.’ But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’ For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.’ But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.’ When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem” (Lk.19:11-28). The fact that the disciples entertained high hopes for the immediate appearance of the kingdom (Creed) prompted Jesus to give a warning to them in the form of a parable. The fact that they were wrong about the kingdom coming immediately demonstrates that the kingdom is a future, literal kingdom on the earth, not some present, spiritual kingdom in the hearts of people.

A nobleman goes to a distant sovereign to obtain royal authority to govern over the province in which he resides (Godet; Plummer). The country to which the noblemen journey was far away, which means that some time would elapse before he would return as king (Creed). This is a reference to Jesus, who will leave and, after a period of time, return as king. This new timeframe is the mystery of the kingdom (Mt. 13:11).

In the absence of the noblemen, ten of his servants (not slaves, Morris) are to do business with the one minas apiece, which he has given them until he returns. A minas was a Greek coin worth a hundred drachmas (one drachmas was a labor’s wage for one day). In other words, each servant received an amount of money equal to three months’ wages for a laboring man. The citizens refuse to have the nobleman tell them what to do. The servants represent the disciples; the citizens represent the Jews (Plummer).

When the nobleman (Lk. 19:12), who is now a king, returns, he judges what each of three different types of people has done in his absence. The first servant used his one minas to earn ten minas. He earned 1000%! The Lord rewarded him by giving him more work to do. The reward for faithful work is more work! The second servant did not earn as much, only 500%! He is not commended for being a good servant. He is not told he

did well. But he is not rebuked. Nevertheless, he is given authority over five cities. Instead of investing the money the third servant was given, he hid it in a handkerchief! The Greek word translated “austere” means “stringent, harsh to the taste” (A-S). It is used figuratively of being strict or severe. This servant’s heart was not right toward his master. He saw his master as demanding and unfair. He had no love for his master. In fact, he feared his master and dreaded to displease him (Wiersbe). The master instructed those standing by to take the mina from the fearful servant and give it to the most faithful servant.

Jesus abruptly reverts to the disloyal citizens mentioned in Luke 19:14 (Creed). They are now called His enemies and He has them destroyed. Notice the *faithful servants* receive rewards, the *wicked servant* does not receive any reward, and the *enemies* are destroyed. This is a reference to the Great White Throne Judgment of unbelievers who experienced the second death (Rev. 20:11-15). Having warned them concerning their misconception about an immediate appearance of the kingdom, Jesus now proceeds to Jerusalem. The kingdom will not come immediately; it is postponed.

The kingdom will be delayed. During the delay, invest. Plummer says, “The main lesson of the parable is the long period of Christ’s absence, during which there will be abundant time for both service and rebellion. There is not to be, as the disciples fancied, an immediate triumph and joy for all; but first a long period of probation and then triumph and joy only for those only who earned them, and in exact proportion to their merits.” Godet says the ruling idea of the parable is that the time of probation between the departure and the return of the Lord is necessary to prepare for the position of everyone in the state of things following the Parousia.”

To sum up the postponement of the kingdom in the Gospels: After having presented the kingdom (Mt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7) and having it rejected, Jesus postponed the kingdom until He returns as King (Mt. 25:31; Rev. 19:16).

Ryrie states, “Because the King was rejected, the Messianic, Davidic kingdom was (from a human viewpoint) postponed. Though He never ceases to be King and, of course, is King today as always, Christ is never designated as King of the church.... Though Christ is a King today, He does not rule as King. This awaits His second coming. Then the Davidic kingdom will be realized (Matt. 25:31; Rev. 19:15; 20)” (Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 259).

Feinberg argues that Christ seated at the right hand of God is an indication of the postponement of the kingdom. He says, “Moreover, other Scriptures confirm the validity of the postponement of the kingdom.... To the Hebrews who were expecting a king on David’s throne, yet had rejected Him in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the sacred writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, emphasized the session of Christ at God’s right hand (1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:20). With every mention, the writer points out Christ as seated elsewhere than on His earthly Davidic throne” (Feinberg, p. 188).

The postponement of the kingdom is like a church picnic. All are invited, weather permitting. If it rained on that day of the picnic, the picnic would be postponed until the next Saturday. In other words, the invitation was conditional. Likewise, the offer of the kingdom was conditional and when the condition was not met, the kingdom was postponed.

After Israel rejected Jesus as the Messiah/King, which means they rejected the kingdom and it was postponed, Jesus began to instruct the disciples concerning the

necessity of His death and resurrection (Mt. 16:21). The disciples did not understand that Jesus was going to die, even after they were plainly told. Peter did not get it (Mt. 16:23). The disciples not only didn't understand they were afraid to ask Him about it (Mk. 9:32), probably because of the earlier review that Peter had received. Luke says that Jesus told them to let his words sink "deep into your ears," but they didn't understand because it was hidden from them so that they did not receive it and were afraid to ask him about it (Lk. 9:45). The same thing is recorded in Luke 18:31-34. On top of that, they didn't understand the resurrection even after the crucifixion (Jn. 20:9)!

Nevertheless, the Lord assured the disciples that His impending death did not mean the abandonment of the kingdom and explicitly indicates that the establishment of the kingdom will be connected with the Second Coming of the King (Mt. 16:27, the first explicit reference to the Second Coming in the Gospels, which is also associated with the coming kingdom). He even goes so far as to say that some of them would not taste death until they saw the Son of Man coming into his kingdom (Mt. 16:28), a promise that was fulfilled in the Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-8). Trench says, "Nearly all the early expositors, the fathers, and the medieval interpreters, find in the glory of the Transfiguration the fulfillment of the promise (Trench, cited by McClain, p. 336).

The teaching that the kingdom was postponed provokes the question, "What would have happened if Israel had accepted Jesus as the Messiah-King?" McClain answers, "This is like asking what would happen if Adam had not sinned. These are speculative questions to which the Christian interpreter need not attempt the final answer" (McClain, p. 333).

The Perception of the Kingdom in Church History

The First Century Wood says there is general agreement among scholars that the early church held that Christ would rule over a literal earthly kingdom for 1000 years. No church author of the first two centuries is known to have disagreed with that view. In the first century, Papias held this view and said so did the apostles Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, and Matthew. It was also held in the first century by Aristo, John the Presbyter, Barnabas, Hermas, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Papias (see Wood, p. 35).

The Second Century In the second century, Justin Martyr held this view and said it was the view of all Christians who were orthodox. It was also held in the second century by Pothinus, Melito, Hegisippus, Tatian, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus (see Wood, p. 35). Hannah agrees and lists some of the documentation. He says Justin Martyr (*First Apology*, 52) and Tertullian (*Against Marcion* 3.24.3) were premillennial (Hannah, p. 307). To that list could be added Diognetus (Diognetus 10:2), Papias (Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.* 5.33), Polycarp (Polycarp *Phil.* 5), Barnabas (*Barnabas* 15:4-5), 2 Clement (2 *Clem.* 5), Montanism, Justin (Justin, *Dial.* 81:4), and Irenaeus (Hannah, p. 307).

The Third Century In the third century, it was held by Cyprian, Nepos, Commodian, Victorinus, Methodius, and Lactantius (see Wood, 35-36), but in the third century, the allegorical method of interpretation, based on Platonic philosophical roots, was developed in Alexandria. Rather than accepting the plain meaning of Scripture, the allegorical method of interpretation sees a meaning different than the normal meaning of the words. For example, in Gregory the Great's exposition of the book of Job, Job's three

friends denote heretics, his seven sons, the 12 apostles, his 7000 sheep, God's faithful people, and his 3000 camels deprived Gentiles.

The allegorizing method of interpreting Scripture is clearly evident in Clement in Alexandria. Origen was worse than Clement: "No doctrine was safe from his use of the allegorical method, even the doctrine of the resurrection. His method subverted the plain meaning of Scripture by a principle of interpretation so subjective that the interpreter could make what he willed from the written revelation. It was natural that one who opposed the literal interpretation of Scripture in other realms should do the same in regard to the millennium" (Walvoord, pp. 44-45).

Hannah says that Origen [185-254] appears to have been the first to spiritualize the "future kingdom" as a "literal earthly reign" of Christ (Hannah, p. 311). In his commentary on Matthew 10:14, the kingdom is not a geographic concept so much as it is a spiritualized realm in the hearts of God's people. Hannah adds that Origen heaped scorn on the concept of millennialism (Hannah, p. 311).

Gonzalez makes the observation that "The scheme of history that Eusebius [264-340] developed led him to set aside a fundamental theme of early Christian preaching: the coming Kingdom of God. Although Eusebius does not go as far as to say so explicitly, in reading his works one receives the impression that now, with Constantine and his successors, the plan of God has been fulfilled. Beyond the present political order, all that Christians are to hope for is their own personal transference into the heavenly kingdom. Since the time of Constantine, and due in part to the work of Eusebius and of many others of similar theological orientation, there was a tendency to set aside or to postpone the hope of the early church, that its Lord would return in the clouds to establish a Kingdom of peace and justice. At later times, many groups that rekindled that hope were branded as heretics and subversives, and condemned as such" (Gonzalez, vol. 1, p. 134).

As a result of allegorical interpretation, premillennialism began to decline. Walvoord explains, "Dionysius, who was Bishop of Alexandria in the latter part of the third century, is noted for his controversy resulting from the teachings of Nepos, an ardent premillennialist, who as bishop had taught and written with such effectiveness that whole churches were withdrawing in protest against the spiritualization of Origen. Eusebius, who gives the account (Eusebius, *Eccl Hist.* 24), describes a three-day conference held by Dionysius in which the matter was thoroughly discussed with the result that the schism was healed. Nepos had died some time previous to the conference" (Walvoord, p. 45).

Other factors contributed to the rejection of premillennialism. For example, Hannah says, "Premillennialism may have suffered a loss of respectability in the Catholic church when radical, reform-minded groups, such as the Montanists, adopted it. When the church condemned Montanism for its alleged excesses, it sought to distance itself from any affinity with its teaching so as to safeguard the purity of doctrine" (Hannah, p. 307). Walvoord observes, "It is clear that the rising tide of amillennialism comes almost entirely from the Alexandrian school—in particular, from Clement, Origen, and Dionysius, all from this locality. Accompanying this change in the church was the corresponding political change under Constantine, which became effective in the fourth century" (Walvoord, p. 45).

Augustine With the coming of Augustine, a new day and a new chapter in the history of millennialism was written" (Walvoord, p. 45). He was the first to systematize a

nonliteral view of the millennium (Wood, p. 36). Rosenthal says at first, he was convinced that the thousand-year kingdom would be between the first and second advents of Christ. He became disillusioned, however, because the description of the kingdom in the Bible did not fit the world in which he lived. Therefore, he decided that the kingdom could not be literal; if it were to occur between the first and second coming of Christ, it must be a spiritual kingdom. He decided the kingdom of God was “in the hearts” of faithful man, not in an actual literal kingdom on earth. Augustine used Origen’s allegorizing method. “Last days were no longer the last days; Israel was no longer Israel; Jerusalem was no longer Jerusalem; the house of David was no longer the House of David: a thousand years did not mean a thousand years.” By allegorizing the Scriptures, the church became the new Israel (Rosenthal, pp. 49-50). In his book *The City of God*, Augustine taught that the visible church was the kingdom of God on earth (Wood, p. 37).

The Middle Ages The Roman Catholic Church accepted Augustine’s view and it became the dominant position for centuries, nevertheless, there were groups that continued to hold to premillennialism, including the Paulicians (7th century), the Albigenses (12th century), and the Waldenses (13th century; Wood, p. 37).

The Modern Era The Anabaptists were premillennial and so were many of the Westminster divines (Dollar, p. 74).

In 1878, the first prophetic conference in America was held at the Church of the Holy Trinity (Protestant Episcopal) in New York City. The purpose of the conference was to proclaim the pre-millennial coming of Christ. Pastors from a number of different denominational churches attended, including Protestant Episcopal, Episcopal Reformed, Dutch Reformed, Reformed, United Presbyterian, Presbyterians, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Baptist, and Methodist. Signers of the invitation to come to the conference included: W. R. Nicholson (Bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church), Joseph A. Seiss (Lutheran commentator on the book of Revelation), W. E. Blackstone (Methodist author of *Jesus Is Coming*), James H. Brookes (Presbyterian), A. J. Gordon (Baptist), etc. (Gaebelein, *The History of the Scofield Reference Bible*, pp. 32-34; see Dollar, pp. 28-41 for details). *The New York Tribune* published the addresses of the conference in an extra edition. In 1879, they were later published in a book entitled *Pre-Millennial Essays of The Prophetic Conference* (Dollar, p. 28).

At that conference, Prof. H. Lummis delivered a message entitled “The Kingdom and the Church.” He argued that the church was not the kingdom. The word “building” in Matthew 16 is never used of the kingdom. The expressions “advancing the kingdom” and the “extension of the kingdom” are unscriptural. We are “heirs” of the kingdom, but we are never called heirs of the church. In the Gospels, to “enter the kingdom” is found ten times, one half of them being future and the rest are definite, with “not one case occurring in which anyone is mentioned as having the kingdom of God” (Lummis, cited by Dollar, p. 33).

Another speaker at the conference, Nathaniel West, pointed out that the pre-millennial view can be seen in the apologists such as Tatian, Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, Tertullian and many more. He claimed that the men of the Nicene age were millennialists (Dollar, pp. 36-37; see page 37 ff. for more modern references).

Other premillennialists include Bonar, Delitzsch, Increase Mather, Cotton Mather, John Wesley, and A. M. Toplady him him him him him him him him him him

(Dollar, p. 74). To that list could be added Bengel, Alford, Lange, Meyer, Fausset, Ryle, Tregelles, Lightfoot, and Darby (Wood, p. 38).

To sum up the concept of the kingdom in church history: During the first two centuries and into the third century, the early church believed in the future, literal kingdom on the earth and although the acceptance of the allegorical method of interpretation changed that, many in church history from many denominations have believed in the future, literal kingdom on the earth after the Second Coming of Christ.

Summary: The prophecies of the kingdom in the Old Testament, the preaching of the kingdom in the New Testament, and the perception of the kingdom among many in church history concerned a literal, still future kingdom on the earth, which was presented, rejected, and postponed until Christ returns.

THE TRIBULATION

What has been demonstrated so far in this study of biblical prophecy is that the Old Testament predicts the coming of the Messiah and the coming judgment of God, followed by the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth. The kingdom of God is not only prophesied in the Old Testament, it was preached in the New Testament by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles, but because it was rejected by the nation of Israel, it has been postponed. The coming kingdom of God is one of the major subjects, if not *the* major subject, of biblical prophecy.

The New Testament clearly outlines unfulfilled biblical prophecy and adds details not mentioned in the Old Testament. Jesus outlines things to come. He says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man **coming** in the clouds of heaven **with** power and **great glory**” (Mt. 24:29-30). After speaking about a number of other subjects, Jesus picks up where He left off in Matthew 24:30, saying, “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” (Mt. 25:31). The outline of future things is unmistakable. After a period of tribulation (Mt. 24:29), Jesus comes with great glory (Mt. 24:30) and when He comes in His glory, He will sit on the throne of His glory, that is, He will establish the kingdom (Mt. 25:31). Notice, tribulation (verse **29**), Second Coming (verse **30**), kingdom (verse **31**). Just remember those *three* verses are in two different chapters.

The New Testament reveals coming events not revealed in the Old Testament, such as the Rapture, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the eternal state. Focusing primarily on the New Testament, the major events of unfulfilled biblical prophecy will be explained, starting with the Tribulation.

The Bible repeatedly speaks about the Tribulation. The Old Testament speaks about the Day of the Lord, which is a day of divine judgment (Zeph.1:2-3) and the time of Jacob’s trouble, which will be like none other (Jer. 30:7). Jesus describes the Tribulation (Mt. 24:4 -29). The book of Revelation says three series of judgments (seals, trumpets, and bowls) will be released of the earth just before the Second Coming of Christ.

The Length of the Tribulation

Seven Years Daniel 9 indicates that the Tribulation will be seven years long. “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). For an explanation of this passage, see “The Visions of Daniel” above. The “one week” in this verse is seven years. At the beginning of this seven-year period, the prince that shall come will make a covenant for 7 years and in the middle of those 7 years (3½ years later), he will stop the sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem. This interpretation is confirmed by what Jesus taught in Matthew 24:15-21.

Three and One-Half Years In other words, the Tribulation is divided into two parts and the second part is called the Great Tribulation (Mt. 24:21). The book of Revelation refers to this 3½ year period several times (Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5).

The Activities During the Tribulation

The Antichrist Again and again, the Book of Daniel refers to a coming Antichrist. In Daniel 7, he is called the “little horn.” (Dan. 7:8, 20-21, 24-26). From that chapter, it is evident that he will 1) conquer three kings, 2) speak against the Most High, 3) spoil the saints, 4) attempt to change times and laws, 5) reign 3½ years, and 6) be destroyed. In Daniel 9, he is called “the prince that shall come” (Dan. 9:27). That reference indicates that he will 1) confirm a covenant with Israel for seven years; 2) break that covenant after 3½ years; 3) cause the daily sacrifice to cease; and 4) do something called the “Abomination of Desolation.” In Daniel 11, he is called the willful king (see “the latter days” in Dan. 10:14 and the description of the Great Tribulation in Dan. 12:1). Both Jerome and Luther regarded Daniel as having a typical reference to Antichrist and Keil says it is a direct reference to the Antichrist.

Daniel 11 describes the character of the Antichrist. He will be self-willed (Dan. 11:36a), self-exalting (Dan. 11:36b-37), and self-worshipping (Dan. 11:38-39). It also details his career (Dan. 11:40-45). The backdrop of Daniel 11:40-45 is that the Antichrist, as head of the revived Roman Empire, will make a covenant with Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27).

The Antichrist will be attacked by the King of the South (Dan. 11:40a). The King of the South includes Egypt and other nations (Dan. 11:43; Ezek. 38-39). He will also be attacked by the king of the North (Dan. 11:40b). The King of the north includes at least Syria and if Ezekiel 38 and 39 are parallel passages, others as well (Ezek. 38:15). Many have concluded that the king of the north includes Russia.

The Antichrist will counterattack (Dan. 11:40c), because he made a covenant to protect Israel. Campbell says, “An alliance formed by the king of the south (probably Egypt and allies) and the king of the north (probably Russia) will challenge that protective treaty by a simultaneous invasion of the land of Israel” (Campbell, p. 133). Thus, responding to Israel’s cry for assistance, the Antichrist will invade Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia (Dan. 11:43). He will go through them to Palestine. Then he will enter Palestine (Dan. 11:41). It is possible that this is near Megiddo (Rev. 16:16) in the middle of the Tribulation. Many countries shall be overthrown (Dan. 11:42-44), but Edom, Moab, and Ammon (modern Jordan), shall escape, that is, not be invaded (Dan. 11:41).

The Antichrist will establish his headquarters in Jerusalem (Dan. 11:45a). Walvoord adds, “Actually the struggle goes on without cessation right up to the day of the second advent of Christ, as brought out in Zechariah 14:1-4.” Then the Antichrist will come to his end (Dan. 11:45), a reference to the Coming of Christ (see Rev. 19:11-21).

To sum up, the Antichrist will be a self-absorbed egotist totally opposed to God and involved in war. He will be a man of sin and a man of war. He is Anti-Christ, Anti-God, and Anti-Jewish. He promises to protect Israel but ends up persecuting Israel.

The 144,000 Servants In the book of Revelation, the Tribulation begins with the seal judgments of Revelation 6. Revelation 7 is a flashback to the beginning of the Tribulation, which is obvious from the fact that it says, “Do not harm the earth, the sea,

or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads” (Rev. 7: 3). The seal marks those who belong to God and are protected by God from the destruction that will fall on others (Morris). The number of sealed servants is 144,000, twelve thousand coming from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 7:4-8).

The question is, “Who are the 144,000?” Many commentators, assuming that this is figurative language, conclude that the 144,000 are the church, but if Revelation 7:1-8 is to be taken at face value, these 144,000 sealed servants are from the twelve tribes of Israel. So, they are *Jewish* converts who are serving God. In contrast to the 144,000, the next paragraph speaks of a great multitude no man can number from “all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues” (Rev. 7:9). The two paragraphs being in juxtaposition certainly support the conclusion that the first group is Jewish and the second consists of Gentiles.

The great multitude consists of saved people from all over the world standing before the throne of God and the Lamb, indicating that they are in heaven (Rev. 7:9-10). They are said to have come out of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 7:13-14). The fact that the 144,000 are in contrast to the great multitude and the 144,000 are protected from the destruction that is coming by being sealed, at least, implies that the great multitude was *not* protected. After all, they are in heaven, not still on earth. They are martyrs.

To sum up, Revelation 7 contains two different groups. The first consists of sealed Jewish servants on the earth and the second of Gentile martyrs in heaven. The juxtaposition of the two implies a relationship. Since the first group is called servants, the implication is that they were the ones who led the great multitude to Christ. That is not explicitly stated; it is a deduction. In Revelation 14:4, the 144,000 are called the first fruits. They are the first fruits of the Tribulation, who lead multitudes to Christ (see Mt.24:14).

The Two Witnesses Revelation 11 says that God will give power to two witnesses who will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days (Rev. 11:3-4), that is, 3½ years, which is, no doubt, the last half of the Tribulation, called the Great Tribulation. They have the authority and power to destroy anyone who wants to destroy them (Rev. 11:5). They also have authority and power over the earth (Rev. 11:6). Who are the two witnesses? Some make them symbols of the church (Swete; Mounce). Others say that they are Moses and Elijah (Smith), Enoch and Elijah (Govett), or simply two prophets who will appear during the Tribulation (Walvoord). They come in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah and ascend to heaven like Enoch and Elijah, but they are two other individuals who will appear in the Tribulation.

When the two witnesses are killed, their dead bodies lie in the street of Jerusalem and the entire population of the world will see their bodies for 3½ days (Rev. 11:7-9). Since the two witnesses tormented those who dwell on the earth with plagues such as drought and turning rivers to blood when they see their dead bodies lying in the street of Jerusalem, they will throw a party (Rev. 11:10). After the 3½ days, however, God resurrects the two witnesses and fear falls on all those who sold them (Rev. 11:11). Then the two witnesses ascend to heaven (11:12-13).

The Nature of the Tribulation

Jesus In Matthew 24:4-14, Jesus describes the end of the age. He says it will be a period (see “beginning” in Mt 24:8 and “end” in Mt. 24:14) characterized by false Christs

(Mt. 24:4-5), as well as war (Mt. 24:6-7). There will be the reality and the rumor of war. This period Jesus is describing will also be characterized by natural disasters (Mt. 24:7). There will be empty cupboards, epidemics, and earthquakes. Persecutions will also take place (Mt. 24:9-10). There will be tormentors from without and traitors from within. In the midst of the chosen ones, there will be found the successor of Judas, who will betray the disciples as he betrayed the Lord. There will be a general spiritual decline (Mt. 24:11-13). It is sad that at any time there would be any false prophets; during this period, it will be doubly sad, for there will be many. Their chilling and killing doctrine will take its toll. As deception increases, devotion will decrease. This period that Jesus describes in Matthew 24 is called the Tribulation Period (Mt. 24:29).

Revelation The book of Revelation says the Tribulation is a period of divine judgment, consisting of seal judgments, trumpet judgments, and bowl judgments. The riddle of Revelation is the relationship of the three series of judgments to each other and to the Tribulation. Here is an edited summary of the various views from *The Riddle of Revelation* by G. Michael Cocoris (posted on insightsfromtheword.com).

1. The seal judgments are in the first half of the Tribulation. Pentecost says, “These seals, then, are but the beginning of God’s judgments upon the earth.... They fall upon the earth in the first portion of the tribulation” (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, pp. 360-361). “The trumpets began in the middle of the tribulation and depicts events during the entire second half of the tribulation. The bowl judgments cover a brief period at the end of the tribulation just prior to the second coming of Christ” (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 363; Johnson, Constable, McGee, and Criswell also hold this view).

| Seals | Trumpets Bowls |

This arrangement ignores the fact that all three series of judgments end at the coming of Christ (*cf.* Mt. 24:29 with Rev. 6:13-14, 11:15, 16:17).

2. The seal and trumpet judgments are in the first half of the Tribulation. One version of this approach provides for a strict continuous chronology throughout the book. It says that the seal and the trumpet judgments occur in the first half of the Tribulation (Rev. 4:1-11:19) and that the middle of the Tribulation occurs when Satan is cast out of heaven (Rev. 12:1-17). The bowl judgments are in the second half of the Tribulation (Rev. 13:1-18:24). Not all forms of this interpretation divide the book that way, but all variations place the seal and trumpets judgments in the first half of the Tribulation. Clarence Larkin puts the middle of Daniel’s 70th week between Revelation 11:19 and 12:1 (Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, 1919, pp. 14-15). David Cooper has the seals and the trumpets in the first half of the Tribulation. He begins the second half of the Tribulation at Revelation 16:1 (Cooper, *An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, p. 16). Tim La Haye and Tom Ice place the middle of the Tribulation between Revelation 14:20 and 15:1. The seal and the trumpet judgments, as well as the prophecy in Revelation 12:1-14:20, take place in the first half of the Tribulation. Warren Wiersbe says, “The trumpet judgments are released during the last half of the Tribulation and the bowl judgments during the last half” (Wiersbe, *Be Victorious*, p. 73).

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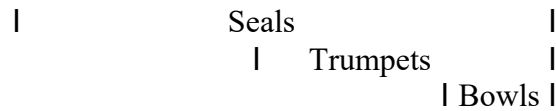
This arrangement ignores the fact that all three series of judgments end at the coming of Christ (*cf.* Mt. 24:29 with Rev. 6:13-14; 11:15; 16:17). Alford notes that any system of interpretation that requires the sixth seal to belong to any other time than the great day of the Lord “stands thereby self-condemned” (Alford, vol. IV, p. 249).

3. The seals and trumpet judgments are in the last half of the Tribulation. Some claim the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments are all in the last half of the Tribulation. This is a recapitulation approach to the book. Walvoord says, “There is some evidence, however, that the events pictured in the seals, trumpets, and vials are instead a concentrated prophecy of the latter half of this week, i.e., a period of three and one-half years, designated as a time of wrath and the great tribulation, and constituting the introduction to the second coming of Christ. Evidence for this is presented as the exposition unfolds. (Walvoord, p. 123).

| | Seals Trumpets Bowls |

The advantage of this arrangement is that it acknowledges the fact that all three series of judgments extend to the end of the Tribulation. It does not account for the expression “the beginning of sorrows” in Matthew 24:8 and the fact that there are only four horsemen in Revelation 6.

4. The seal judgments cover both halves of the Tribulation. Some insist the seal judgments are an overview of the entire Tribulation. The trumpet judgments cover the second half and the bowl judgments occur at the very end of the Tribulation.



The support for this view is: 1) Each series of judgments ends at the Second Coming of Christ (*cf.* Mt. 24:29 with Rev. 6:13-14; 11:15; 16:17). 2) Revelation 6:14 says, “Every mountain and island was moved out of its place” and, while Revelation 16:20 inverts the order, the fact that it is the same event indicates that the time here is parallel with Revelation 6:14, namely the close of the Tribulation. Mark Bailey says, “The seals that begin in Revelation 6 parallel the events of Matthew 24:4-8 and 24:9-14 taking you all the way through the Tribulation. When you open that last seal, it’s the next ‘seven,’ which comes back and picks up near the mid-point of the Tribulation. The trumpets take you from there to the end, which is the return of the Lord at the end. The Germans call this structure ‘the drag to the end’ in which you have an overview that culminates at the end; then you have a return of a portion of that which culminates at the end. And then, like the bowls, you have it emphasizing what’s poured out at the end” (Bailey, p. 71). This arrangement solves the last piece of the riddle of Revelation.

This list of views is not exhaustive. According to C. I. Scofield, Matthew 24:4-14 has a double interpretation: 1) the present age and 2) the 70th week of Daniel. Matthew 24:15 introduces the Great Tribulation, which is the last 3½ years of the Tribulation (note on Mt. 24:3). In the book of Revelation, the Great Tribulation is described in Revelation 11-18 (note on Revelation 7:14). Lewis Sperry Chafer holds that Matthew 24:4-8 describes the present church age, which takes place before the beginning of the 70th week of

Daniel. Matthew 24:9-26 describes the Great Tribulation (Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. v, pp. 120-121). He says, “The seals, the trumpets, the vials, and the woes are progressive aspects of divine judgments falling upon Gentile peoples punitively—not upon either Jews or Christians” (Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. iv, p. 343).

The Purpose of the Tribulation

Israel The Tribulation is described as a time of “Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7). Wood says one of the purposes of the Tribulation is to prepare Israel to receive her Messiah and he says Zechariah 13:9 indicates that will happen (Wood, p. 57).

The World The Tribulation is a time of judgment on the whole world (Rev. 3:10).

Summary: During the seven-year Tribulation/judgment just prior to the Second Coming of Christ, the Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel, break it, and be defeated, the 144,000 Jewish servants will lead people to the Lord from all over the world, and two witnesses will prophesy, be killed, be resurrected, and ascend to heaven. The Tribulation will see the rise of the anti-Christ and the fall of the wrath of God.

THE SECOND COMING

Thus far in this explanation of biblical prophecy, it has been demonstrated that there is coming a kingdom that begins with a period of a thousand years. The book of Revelation that Jesus comes returns (Rev. 19:11-16) before the Millennium (Rev. 20:1-3). The Bible repeatedly declares that Jesus Christ is coming a second time. Several passages describe what that will be like.

As He Departed

“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 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 1:9-11). The angels announced that Jesus would return in the same manner as they saw Him ascend. He will come in the clouds (Mt. 24:30). They saw Him leave in power and glory and in power and glory, He will come back. “The ascension, on the one hand, demonstrated the truth of His claims to be the Messianic King; and the promise of the second Advent, on the other hand, reaffirmed the reality and certainty of the future establishment of His Kingdom” (McClain, p. 396).

All Will See Him

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

“The Second Coming of Christ will be the most spectacular, sensational, stupendous event in all of the history of the universe. Anything TV, Hollywood, or Disney World has ever done will be like striking a match as compared to a bolt of lightning. There will be darkness, dramatic, and total darkness (Mt. 24:29). The darkness will be followed by a bright, brilliant light (Mt. 24:30).

“Remember a thunderstorm in the midst of a summer night? There were thick, dark, black clouds. The wind was blowing and howling. There was an eerie feeling in the air. Then, all of a sudden, there was a clap of thunder and a bolt of lightning. The sky, for a split second, lit up like noonday. That is a small glimpse of what it will be like. In total darkness, there will be the bright shining glory of the coming of Christ.

“The problem is that all of this sounds sudden, but evidently, it will be gradual. Matthew 24:30 says, “All the tribes of the earth will see Him.” That has led some to the conclusion that His coming will extend over many hours. If He descends gradually, then as the earth rotates, the entire world would be able to see Him as He approaches” (taken

from G. Michael Cocoris, *Relating Doctrine to Daily Life*, which is posted at www.insightsfromtheword.com).

“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen” (Rev. 1:7). In one of his visions, Daniel saw “the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven” (Dan. 7:13). In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus said, “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” (Mt. 24:30). Here, John points out that glory and dominion belong to Christ (1:6) and immediately says He will come with clouds, meaning, as Jesus Himself said, with glory.

At this event, all will see Him, including those who pierced Him, a reference to Israel, and all, that is, all the people on the earth, will mourn. This is taken from Zechariah 12:10. These people are mourning for themselves because of the consequences of His coming.

On the Mount of Olives

“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, from east to west, *making* a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south” (14:4). In the Day of the Lord, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, creating a very large valley. How can the Lord’s feet stand on the Mount of Olives? “The Lord will ‘split’ this mountain in two (with an earthquake, v. 5), ‘so that half’ of it will fall away ‘toward the north,’ and ‘the other half toward the south,’ leaving a large east-west valley down the middle (cf. Rev. 16:18-19)” (Constable).

Summary: When Jesus returns, He will descend from heaven in such a way that the entire population of the planet sees Him and He will land on the Mount of Olives, which will split in two.

THE MILLENNIUM

The word “millennium” comes from two Latin words, *milus*, meaning “thousand” and *annum* meaning “years.” Hence, millennium means a thousand years. The Bible teaches that when Christ comes again (Rev. 19:11-16), He will rule on the earth for a thousand years (Rev, 20:4). The millennium is the kingdom. Revelation 12:10 says that when Christ returns, the kingdom has come. Revelation 19:16 says when He comes, He has written on His thigh that He is the King of kings. The great debate over the Millennium in Revelation 20 is whether it is literal or figurative.

Figurative

A number of arguments have been used to say that the Millennium in Revelation 20 is figurative. The one used a great deal is that the symbolism of the book is opposed to a literal understanding of the thousand years and, therefore, the thousand years are “a long period of time, a great epoch in human history” (Swete, p. 260).

Baker’s New Testament sums up the main argument for the figurative meaning of the thousand years. “Numerous theologians espouse a literal explanation of exactly one thousand years as the interval between Jesus’ return to earth and the end of time. But there are objections to this view. First, the word *millennium*, derived from the Latin words *mille* (thousand) and *annus* (year), occurs six times in this chapter and nowhere else in any other New Testament eschatological teachings (vv. 20:2-3, 20:4-5, 20:6-7). In his eschatological discourse (Matt. 24), Jesus says nothing about a thousand-year reign with the saints on this earth. In their respective epistles, Paul and Peter mention no millennial interim reign of Christ on earth. Next, the New Testament teaches but one return of Christ and not two. Third, the first mention of a thousand-year period (v. 20:2) is ‘the devil’s millennium’ extending from Satan’s stay in the Abyss until he is consigned to the lake of fire forever. Fourth, a literal interpretation of this number in a book of symbolism and especially in this chapter filled with symbols, is indeed a considerable obstacle. And last, one thousand is ten to the third power and denotes fullness. It is, therefore, more in line with the tone and tenor of Revelation to interpret the term metaphorically?”

Literal

Note carefully what the passage actually says, “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 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). In the first place, John says, “He saw.” This is a vision. What did he “see” in the vision?

An Angel In this vision, the first character to be introduced is an angel. This one has a key in one hand and a chain in the other. The key is to the bottomless pit. Having the key is equal to saying that the angel has the authority to open and close the bottomless pit and having the chain is equal to having the authority to bind and loose. It is like a policeman who has a pair of handcuffs and the keys to the jail. He has the authority to bind or loose and to open and close.

The Dragon The second character in this drama is a dragon, which is a symbol of Satan. All four titles used of Satan in Revelation (12:9) are repeated this verse, namely, dragon, serpent, devil, and Satan. Satan has been behind the revolt of the beast and the False Prophet from the very beginning (13:2, 4), but he has “escaped justice” until now (Swete).

The Bottomless Pit Satan is flung into the bottomless pit. He was cast out of heaven (12:9), and now he is cast out of the earth. The bottomless pit is sealed to prevent escape (Swete).

The Thousand Years Satan is sealed in the abyss for a thousand years. A thousand years is mentioned six times in this passage (20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). Soon after I became a Christian, I was taught the thousand years were literal. For the next five years, I believed that, but I could not have proven that from the Bible. Between my first and second year of seminary, I read something that made me doubt the literalness of the thousand years. During my second year in seminary, I had to write a thesis on prophecy. I choose to write on the thousand-year issue. Doing that convinced me that the thousand years are literal. Here is why I believe that.

Granted, the thousand years are in a vision. What John *saw* was an angel, a dragon, a chain, and a bottomless pit. Now think. No one can *see* a thousand years. Therefore, the thousand years is not part of the vision and the fact that is a vision does not necessitate that the thousand years be figurative.

Moreover, this passage contains a vision in symbols and *interpretation*. The thousand years is mentioned in the interpretation, not the vision (see Rev. 20:2 and especially Rev. 20:6).

Furthermore, all the other numbers designating time in the book of Revelation are literal. Therefore, the thousand years are literal.

Besides, if the thousand years are not literal, how long is it? If it is figurative, what is the symbolic significance of a thousand years? It cannot be a reference to eternity because the expression for eternity is “forever and ever” (for example, see Rev. 20:10).

Finally, the idea that the return of Christ would be followed by a period of a literal thousand years (called “Premillennialism”) is not new. It was a “very common” view, “very widespread and very popular” in the early church (Barclay). Papias (d. 155), Justin Martyr (d. 165), Irenaeus (d. 202), and Tertullian (160-220) held that view (Walvoord, p. 282; for a longer list, see Pentecost, pp. 374-375).

If that is the case, what happened? Some taught a millennium of bodily luxury upon the earth (Nepos in Egypt). They made a “kind of Mohammedan heaven out of the Millennium” (Barclay). To that, writers such as Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome reacted. Origen and others introduced allegorical interpretation. Augustine “spiritualized the whole idea, virtually dealing the Millennium a death blow (Barclay).

Summary: The Thousand years in Revelation 20 is literal, not figurative.

Believers in a millennium should not be embarrassed to say they believe Jesus will establish a thousand years of peace, righteousness, and prosperity on the earth. After all, hasn't that been the dream of some philosophers and the goal of some politicians for thousands of years? In the words of McClain, "We know that *some* physical diseases have been conquered, *some* wars have been prevented, *some* hazards to life and safety have been eliminated, *some* years have been added to the brief span of human life, *some* social and political evils have been corrected. If this is so, why then should there not be an age when *all* wars will be stopped, *all* disease cured, *all* injustices of government rooted out, and a *full* measure of years added to human life? Why should there not be an age in which all such unrealistic and worthwhile dreams of humanity will, at last, come true on earth? If there be a God in heaven and if life which He created in the earth is worthwhile, and not something evil *per se*, then there might be in history some worthy consummation of its long and arduous course" (McClain, p. 530, italics his).

THE RAPTURE

The word “rapture” does not appear in the Bible. It comes from the Latin word *rapere*, which means “rapid.” In the Latin translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:7, it was used to translate the Greek expression “caught up.” Thus, while the English word “rapture” does not appear in the English translation of the Bible, the event is definitely there.

Paul says, “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. 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. 4:16-17).

The question concerning the Rapture is, “When will it take place?” Will it be before the Tribulation, sometime during the Tribulation, or after the Tribulation? In one sense, the answer is determined by the interpretation of a few passages of Scripture, such as 1 Thessalonians 5:9, which states, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation (deliverance) through our Lord Jesus Christ” and Revelation 3:10, where the Lord says, “I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world.” Actually, it is not quite that simple; the time of the Rapture is a complex problem involving a number of issues.

For example, when does the wrath of 1 Thessalonians 5:9 begin? What is the meaning of the phrase “keep you from” in Revelation 3:10? That is only the beginning. Other passages and topics are involved, including 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8, the explanation of the last trumpet, the Day of the Lord, cosmic disturbances, the resurrection, the judgments, “the end,” etc.

There are four basic views as to when the Rapture occur. The following is a brief examination of each position. All of the pertinent passages and topics concerning the Rapture will be addressed under at least one of the four possibilities.

Pre-Tribulation Rapture

Background The origin of modern version of Pre-Tribulation Rapture can be traced to John Darby and the Plymouth Brethren in 1830. Advocates of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture include Arno C. Gaebelin, Harry Ironside, James Gray, R. A. Torrey, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Charles Feinberg, John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, Dwight Pentecost, and many more.

Deliverance from Wrath The most detailed description of the Rapture in the Bible is in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Immediately after the discussion of the Rapture in chapter 4, Paul discusses the *time* issue beginning in chapter 5. He says, “But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you” (5:1). “For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night” (5:2). “For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. Then sudden destruction comes upon them. And they shall not escape” (Thess. 5:1-3). The Greek phrase in verse 1 translated “but concerning” (often translated “now concerning”) is used elsewhere by Paul to denote “a new and contrasting subject” (Ryrie, p. 175, who cites 1 Cor. 7:1, 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,

16:12; 1 Thess. 4:9, 13; see also 5:4). The new and contracting subject is the times (the general period of time) and the seasons (a fixed period of time) pertaining to the Rapture. They already knew two things: 1) the Day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night; that is, unexpectedly (1 Thess. 5:2) and 2) when people say, “peace and safety” sudden destruction will come upon them (1 Thess. 5:3).

In other words, the Thessalonians knew that before the Rapture, when people were saying “peace and safety,” the Day of the Lord will come upon them as a thief in the night (see also 2 Pet. 3:10), bringing sudden destruction upon them as labor pains upon a pregnant woman and they could not escape. Furthermore, the Day of the Lord not only brings sudden destruction, it brings wrath (1 Thess. 5:9; Isa. 13:9), but Paul says, “God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation (Greek: “deliverance”) through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:9).

Clearly, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9 is teaching that since believers are *delivered* from the Day of the Lord, the day of wrath, the Rapture takes place *before* the Day of the Lord's wrath. So, the question becomes, “When does the Day of the Lord's wrath begin?” This passage says it will be during a time when people are saying “peace and safety” and it will be like a pregnant woman having labor pains. The “peace and safety” is either before the Tribulation or at the beginning of the Tribulation when the Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27) and the labor pains are at the beginning of the Tribulation.

“Peace and safety” must be describing a time before the Tribulation or at the beginning of the Tribulation because at the beginning of the Tribulation peace is taken “from the earth” (Rev. 6:4). The Tribulation starts with war (Rev. 6:4; Mt. 24:6-8) and it gets worse from there to the point that the last half of the Tribulation will be “great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Mt. 24:21). The Day of the Lord wrath comes with sudden destruction like the suddenness of a pregnant woman having birth pains (1 Thess. 5:3). Jesus said the beginning of the Tribulation is “the beginning of sorrows (Mt. 24:8). The Greek word translated “sorrows” means “birth-pangs, travail-pain” and is used figuratively of extreme suffering (A-S).

Therefore, 1 Thessalonians 5 indicates that since believers are delivered from the Day of the Lord's wrath and the Day of the Lord's wrath is at the beginning of the Tribulation, the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation.

Revelation 6 also indicates that the wrath of God starts at the beginning of the Tribulation. In Revelation 6, the sixth seal reveals the wrath of God “has come” (Rev. 6:17). Does that mean that the wrath of God comes prior to the sixth seal, at the point of the sixth seal, or, as some say, after the sixth seal?

1. The seals of Revelation 6 start at the beginning of the Tribulation. (This is really not debated.) The proof that the seals of Revelation 6 are the beginning of the Tribulation is the correlation between the first four seals and Matthew 24:4-8. According to Matthew 24, the first four characteristics of the Tribulation (Mt. 24:15, 21, 29) are “the beginning of sorrows” (Mt. 24:8). In other words, these four characteristics are at the beginning of the Tribulation (Mt. 24:29). Therefore, since the first four characteristics of the Tribulation in Matthew 24 correspond perfectly with the first four seals of Revelation 6, the seals are at the beginning of the Tribulation.

Matthew	Revelation
False Christ (24:4-5)	Antichrist revealed (6:2)
War (24:6)	War released (6:3-4)
Famines (24:7a)	Famine results (6:5-6)
Pestilence and Earthquakes (24:7b-8)	Death reigns (6:7-8)

2. The seals of Revelation 6 are God’s judgments. The introduction to the seals in Revelation 6 begins with God sitting on the throne (Rev. 4:2). “The ‘throne’ of Revelation 4:2, like the throne of Revelation 20:11, speaks of judgment; God as judge sits upon the throne” (McClain, p. 469). Therefore, the *seals are judgments that come from the throne of God*. Another proof that the seals are judgments is that they include war, famine, pestilence, and war, which are methods of God’s judgment (war: Lev. 26:21-28; Ezek. 14:21; famine: Deut. 11:17; Ezek. 4:16-17; and pestilence: Num. 11:33; 16:46).

3. The seals of Revelation 6 are God’s wrath. When the sixth seal is opened, people say, “For the great day of His wrath has come” (Rev. 6:17). Does that mean that the wrath of God began at the point of the sixth seal or did the wrath of God begin with the first seal? In the Greek text, the word “come” is in the aorist tense. The meaning of that in this passage is greatly debated. Rosenthal contends that it indicates the future. While the aorist can indicate the future, that is not its normal meaning. For that to be the case, there must be compelling evidence in the context.

The context of Revelation 6:19 indicates that “has come” is past, not future. The word “come” ties the first four seal judgments with the wrath that has come in verse 17, which means the wrath in Revelation 6:17 goes all the way back to the first seal. Notice, when each of the first four seals is open, one of the living creatures says, “Come and see” (6:1, 3, 5, 7). Then, in *response* to the four seal judgments, martyrs ask how much longer will it be before God judges those who dwell on the earth (Rev. 6:9-11) and in *response* to the first four seals, the unsaved say the great day of God’s wrath has come. In other words, the structure of the chapter indicates that there are four seal judgments followed by the *response* of martyrs and then the *response* of unbelievers. It is in *response* to the four seal judgments that the unbelievers say the wrath of God has come.

Conclusion: Since the seal judgments begin at the start of the Tribulation and the wrath of God begins with the first seal, the wrath of God begins at the start of the Tribulation, not in the middle of the Tribulation, nor after the middle of the Tribulation. Therefore, since the church will not go through the wrath of God (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9), the church will not go through the seven-year Tribulation.

To illustrate, God once judged a whole city—Sodom. He rained fire and brimstone from heaven like He will do again during the Tribulation. Before He poured out His judgment on Sodom, He pulled out His children, Abraham and Lot. Likewise, before God pours out judgment again, this time on the whole world, He will pull out His own—all of His own (1 Thess. 5:5).

The Removal of the Restrainer “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us as though the day of Christ had come” (2 Thess. 2:1-2). In the Greek text, there is one article uniting “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” and “our gathering together to Him.” This seems to be

a summary statement of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Paul is speaking to them about the Rapture. He tells them not to be disturbed, thinking the day of Christ has come.

There is a textual problem with the phrase “the day of Christ.” The critical text reads, “the Day of the Lord.” If the Day of the Lord is the correct reading, the believers at Thessalonica thought that the Tribulation had come. The majority of manuscripts, however, contain the phrase “the day of Christ.” What is the meaning of “the day of Christ?” Some students of the Scripture contend that the day of Christ is another term, at least in this passage, for the Day of the Lord (Clarence E. Mason Jr., “The Day of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 125, no. 500, Oct.-Dec. 1968, pp. 352-359, esp. p. 359). Others contend that where “the day of Christ” and similar expressions, such as “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ,” “the day of Jesus Christ,” and “the Day of the Lord Jesus,” appears elsewhere in the New Testament, they refer to the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 1:10; 2:16).

Thus, the believers at Thessalonica were disturbed because they thought they had received some communication, even from Paul, that indicated they had missed the Rapture (“the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him”) and the Judgment Seat of Christ (“the day of Christ”), meaning they were in the Tribulation.

The first thing Paul tells them is “Let no one deceive you by any means for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first” (2 Thess. 2:3a). The Greek word translated “falling away” means “defection, apostasy, revolt.” Outside the Bible, it was used of political defection, but in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, and in the New Testament, it always means a religious revolt (Milligan; see Acts 21:21, the only other place this word appears in the New Testament). This verse is not talking about a general apostasy. In the Greek text, the article “the” occurs before “falling away.” Verse 5 indicates that the Thessalonians knew about which apostasy Paul was speaking; we do not. All that can be said is that it seems to be connected with the man of sin and, therefore, occurs during the Tribulation. What is clear is that the Tribulation has not started because the apostasy has not come.

The second thing Paul says must happen before the Tribulation can begin is that the man of sin must be revealed. He says, “and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 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. 2:3b-4). The man of sin is commonly called the Antichrist. He will be revealed, at least to discerning people, when he makes a covenant with Israel. That will signal the start of the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27). Paul reminds them, “Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?” (2:5).

The third thing Paul says is “And now you know **what** is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only who now restrains will do so until **He** is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed” (2:6-8a). The Restrainer must be removed before the lawless one will be revealed. What or who is the Restrainer? Verse 6 says, “what is restraining” (in Greek, “what” is neuter) and verse 7 says, “he who now restrains ... until he is taken out of the way” (in Greek, “he” is a masculine pronoun). So, the Restrainer is both a power and a person, but beyond that, who is the Restrainer?

Answers range from the apostle Paul to Satan. One of the most common is that the Restrainer is the Roman government and the Roman emperor. Those who hold to this

view contend that the Roman Empire held back evil by its advanced system of laws. The problem with this position is that the Roman Empire collapsed, was removed so to speak, and the Antichrist was not revealed.

Another possibility is that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit. He fits the description of both neuter and masculine. In Greek, the word “spirit” is neuter, but the Holy Spirit is referred to by the masculine pronoun “He.” (For example, Jn. 14:17). Also, the Restrainer must restrain the Antichrist, who is energized by Satan. Therefore, the Restrainer must be more powerful than Satan himself. Not even Michael the archangel was that powerful (Jude 9). Only God qualifies and He is here in the person of the Holy Spirit. So, the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit.

How can it be said that the Holy Spirit is removed? People will be saved during the Tribulation and that can only happen if the Holy Spirit is not here. The Holy Spirit was “here” in the Old Testament and people got saved. Yet Jesus said the Holy Spirit would “come” at Pentecost (Jn. 16:13). The Holy Spirit “came” at Pentecost to baptize believers into the body of Christ (Acts 1:5; 11:15-16; 1 Cor. 12:13). He will be removed, then, in the sense that He will no longer be baptizing people into the body of Christ, yet He will still be here in the sense of doing His regenerating work. If what is being removed is the Holy Spirit in His baptismal work, when the Holy Spirit is removed, the body of Christ, the church (Eph. 1:22-23) goes with Him.

To sum up, Paul tells believers at Thessalonica to not be disturbed by being deceived into thinking they are in the Tribulation because the Tribulation cannot start until there is a defection from the faith and the Man of Sin is revealed and he cannot be revealed until the Restrainer is removed. Since the Antichrist will be revealed at the beginning of the Tribulation, the removal of the restrainer is before the Rapture, “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him” (2 Thess. 2:1).

Kept from the Hour In the letter to the church at Philadelphia, Jesus said, “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” (Rev. 3:10). This verse speaks of a trial that will “come upon the whole world.” As commentators point out, this is the Tribulation, “the ‘troubled times, which precede the Parousia’” (Swete), “the tribulations, which are prophesied later in the book” (Hatch, cited by Smith), “the period of testing and tribulation that precedes the establishment of the eternal kingdom” (Mounce).

The way Revelation 3:10 is translated, it seems as if Jesus is saying that because they have kept His command to persevere, He will keep them from the Tribulation. Is perseverance the requirement for being kept from the Tribulation? No. “Because you have kept my command to persevere” should be connected with the last part of verse 9. The correct translation reads: “Indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you because you have kept My command to persevere.” So, the passage is saying, “I will make them come” (Rev. 3:9) and ... I will *also* keep you from the hour of trial” (Rev. 3:10). The presence of the word “also” supports this explanation of the passage (for a detailed explanation and defense of this translation, see Niemelä, pp. 14-39).

The promise is that believers will be kept *from* the hour of trial. The Greek word rendered “from” (*ek*) means “from, out of, away from.” According to Bauer’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* translated by Arndt and Gingrich, the recognized

authority on the meaning of Greek words, the Greek word “from” (ek), means “from, out of, away from.” Its first meaning is used “to denote separation from.” [For example, John 20:1 says, “the stone had been taken away (ἀίρω) from (ἐκ) the tomb.” The stone was removed from outside the tomb; it did not emerge from within the tomb.] More specifically, under that meaning is listed a subcategory, “situations and circumstances out of which someone is brought,” and Revelation 3:10 is listed there and it is said to mean to “keep from” (Arndt and Gingrich, p. 234).

Some say that “from” should be translated “through” (Swete, who thinks they will be kept, that is, preserved “in any trial;” Mounce), but “through” or “in” is most assuredly *not* the normal way to translate “from” (ἐκ) and there are Greek words that normally mean “through” (διὰ) and “in” (ἐν). Pollock points out that of the over 890 times the Greek word ἐκ is used in the New Testament, only once is it translated “thought” and in that verse, Galatians 3:8, it means “by” (A. J. Pollock, *Will the Church Go Through the Great Tribulation?* p. 11, cited by Stanton, p. 49). Furthermore, it is simply not true that Tribulation saints going “through” the Tribulation will be preserved. Many of them will be killed (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:7,14; 13:7).

Furthermore, the combination “keep from” is only used in one other place in the New Testament and there, as in Revelation 3, it is spoken by Jesus and recorded by John. Jesus says, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (Jn. 17:15). He is praying for complete deliverance from the evil one, for, “complete exemption” (Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, p. 170). He is praying that believers will not fall into the clutches of Satan at all, not that they be seized and then delivered (Stanton, fn., p. 49).

This complete deliverance is not through the trial, or in the trial. It is not even from the trial. It is from the *hour* of the trial, that is, the period of time (Walvoord; Smith). Ryrie illustrates the point by saying if he, as a teacher, told the class that all A students would be kept from the exam, they would not know whether or not they should come to class on the day of the test or not. He could mean that he would give them the exam and also give them a sheet with the answers on it. On the other hand, if he said that all A students would be kept from the hour of the test, they would know that they did not have to come to class. They would be exempt from the time of the exam (Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 484-85).

Since Revelation 3:10 says the church will be delivered from the Tribulation that occurs just before the Second Coming, it teaches that the Rapture will take place before the Tribulation. This does not apply to just one local church. All seven letters in Revelation 2-3 end by saying, “Hear what the Spirit says to the churches,” which is also added to the end of this letter (Rev. 3:13).

The Church in Revelation 4-18 In the book of Revelation, the word “church” (singular) appears seven times and the word “churches” (plural) occurs twelve times. Eighteen of the nineteen are in chapters 1-3. The ninetieth occurrence is in Revelation 22, which says, “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” (Rev. 22:16). If the church is in the Tribulation on the earth, why is it not mention *during* the Tribulation in Revelation 6-18? This is not an argument *from* silence; it is an argument *about* silence!

Furthermore, the church is in heaven, as indicated by the twenty-four elders. The identity of the twenty-four elders has been greatly debated. They have been taken to be

angels, Israel, and the church. Who are the twenty-four elders? In Revelation 4, John describes a scene in heaven. “And behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. 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. 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. 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. 4:2b-5). The occupant of the throne is not identified in these verses, but later, John says the One who “sat on the throne (Rev. 4:2) is the “Lord God Almighty” (Rev. 4:8), that is, God the Father.

Around the throne of God are twenty-four thrones occupied by twenty-four elders, who are clothed in white robes and wear gold crowns. The description of the elders eliminates angels because angels are never said to wear white robes, have gold crowns on their heads, and sit on thrones. The description also eliminates the possibility of the elders being Israel because neither in the Old Testament nor the New Testament is Israel ever promised thrones or crowns.

So, who are the twenty-four elders? They are clothed in white (Rev. 4:4). The church at Sardis was told that *overcomers* would be “clothed in white garments” (Rev. 3:5), and the church at Laodicea was counseled to buy “white garments” (Rev. 3:18), and now the elders in heaven are clothed in white robes (the Greek word translated “robes” in Rev. 4:4 is the same one rendered “garments” in Rev. 3:5, 18). The elders wear *crowns* of gold on their heads (Rev. 4:4). Again, members of the church are told they will receive crowns (Rev. 2:10; 3:11). Crowns are only promised to the church (Smith). Moreover, in Revelation, except for Christ, the twenty-four elders are the only ones who wear gold crowns (Smith). There are two Greek words for crowns, one for a sovereign (diadem) and the other for a victor (stephanos). The latter one is used in Revelation 2:10, 3:11, and here. In this case, however, the ones wearing the crown sit on thrones.

Thus, the twenty-four elders are overcomers from the church who will rule on the earth (Rev. 5:10). That does not mean that only 24 will rule. The twenty-four elders represent the overcomers as the elders represented the church at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 (Smith). “It is evident, too, that the elders are a representative group. Twenty-four would come far short of being a sufficient number to come out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation” (Smith, p. 116). The number twenty-four is probably an allusion to 1 Chronicles 24, where there were twenty-four courses of priests (Smith). As the twenty-four orders of priests were represented of the thousands of priests, so the twenty-four elders here represent the overcomers from the church.

The combination of white robes, gold crowns, and throne-sitting is enough to prove that the twenty-four elders represent overcomers from the church, but there is more. In chapter 5, John says, “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. 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, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth’” (Rev. 5:9-10). In the Greek text, the living creatures are neuter and the elders are masculine and “each” is masculine. Therefore, what follows “each” in verse 8 through 10 is a reference

to the elders (Smith). The elders have a harp and a bowl of incense, which is symbolic of the prayers of the saints (Ps. 141:2). “They” sing a new song, saying Jesus is worthy to open the scroll, because He was slain, redeemed “us,” and made “us” to reign on the earth. Who are the “they,” who sing a new song? The English translation sounds as if both the four living creatures and the elder sing. The Greek text, however, indicates that only the elders sing at this point.

There is a textual problem with “redeemed *us*” in Revelation 5:9. The TR, MT, and Sinaiticus (Ⲛ) contain the word “us” (ἡμᾶς), but the Critical Text omits the word “us.” According to the apparatus in the Critical Text, the word “us” is in *every manuscript*, except Alexandrinus (A)! There are 24 manuscripts of Revelation 5. The word “us” is in 23 of them. The textual evidence is overwhelming in favor of “us.” In his *Greek New Testament According to the Family 35*, Pickering asked, “Why do you suppose that the NU [Critical Text] follows a single MS of demonstrably inferior quality in Revelation (objectively so) against virtually all others (perhaps six scattered curses have ‘our’ for ‘us’) plus lat, syr, bo? And why do the editors of modern versions follow their lead? There is simply no doubt that the correct reading of Revelation 5:9 is “us,” which means that the twenty-four elders are singing about their redemption. The fact that the twenty-four elders sing about their redemption eliminates the possibility that the twenty-four elders are angels; angels are not redeemed.

There is also a textual problem with “made *us* kings and priests” ... and *we* shall reign on the earth” in verse 10. The TR reads “us” and “we,” but the MT and the Critical Text read “made *them*” ... “And *they* will reign.” (Thus, the NASB supplies “men” in verse 9 and translates verse 10 “made them” and “they will reign;” NIV supplies “persons” in verse 9 and translates verse 10 “made them” ... “and they will reign;” ESV supplies “people” in verse 9 and translates verse 10 “made them” ... “and they shall reign”). The fact that in Revelation 1:5, John says that Jesus “has made us kings and priests” supports the reading of “us” and “we” in Revelation 5:10.

The reading of the critical text of Revelation 5:10 (“us” and “we”) would not change the identity of the twenty-four elders. McClain says, “As Hengstemberg pointed out long ago, the elders speak of *themselves with* the redeemed in verse 9, whereas in verse 10 they speak objectively of the church *as its representatives*, which they are in chapter 4 and 5” (McClain, italics in his quotation). John Niemela, who takes the critical reading of verse 10, suggests there is an antiphony in verses 9 and 10, so that the twenty-four elders are singing in verse 9 and they are being responded to in verse 10 (<https://www.pretrib.org/articles/dr-john-niemela/message/revelation-5-the-twenty-four-elders-and-the-rapture/watch>).

McClain says, “It is an impressive fact that, in the long and bewildering history of attempts to interpret the symbols of the Apocalypse, there is hardly any instant of greater unanimity than with reference to that of the twenty-four elders. Among the well-known commentators to regard these elders as representative of the church are Alford, Barnes, Benson, Binney, Carpenter, Clarke, Clemance, Book, Crafer, Crosby, Dusterdieck, Fausset, Giedlestone, Godet, Gray, Henry, Holden, Kuyper, Milligan, Plummer, Robertson, Scott, Sheppard, Simcox, Smith, Swete, Weider. [To that list could be added Walvoord, Pentecost, Ryrie, etc.] Vincent says, ‘The twenty-four elders are usually taken to represent the one Church of Christ.’ And Hengstemberg declares, ‘That the elders are representative of the church, there can be no question.’ The commentators named

represent many eschatological viewpoints. They are not writing in support of any pretribulation school of thought. As a matter of fact, they are in sharp disagreement with one another about much in the book of Revelation.... Yet in spite of the disagreements, they are united in the opinion that the twenty-four elders of chapters 4 and 5, enthroned in heaven, do represent the true Church of God!" (McClain, p. 471).

The picture presented of the twenty-four elders indicates that they are redeemed and *rewarded* (they have "crowns" and said on "thrones;" see Walvoord, p. 118). The fact that they had been rewarded indicates that the Judgment Seat of Christ has already taken place, which means that the Rapture has already taken place. In addition, their place in Revelation (chapters 4 and 5) indicates they were raptured *before the Tribulation*, which starts in chapter 6.

Imminence The word "imminence" means "pending." The concept is that something *may* happen shortly or it *may* not. It is pending. In contrast, "soon" means "shortly, before long," it *must* happen. The New Testament does not teach the "soon" coming of Christ; it teaches the "imminent" coming of Christ. He *could* return to rapture believers any minute, but He may not. It is not necessarily soon, but it is pending. It could take place at any time. If the Rapture is imminent, it is before the Tribulation. If the Rapture is during or after the Tribulation, the Rapture could not be at any time because other events would have to occur first. Therefore, if it is imminent, it is before any event in the Tribulation.

James 5:8 says, "The coming of the Lord is at hand." Mitton says, "James clearly believed, as others of his time did, that the coming of Christ was imminent. Since then, there was not long to wait; his plea for patience is greatly reinforced." Moo states, "The early Christians' conviction that the *parousia* was 'near' or 'imminent' meant that they fully believed that it *could* transpire within a very short period of time—not that it *had* to." If this verse is not teaching an any-moment Rapture, it loses its punch. Believers could be bitter for a while and when they see that they are in the Tribulation, they could repent before the Lord returns.

James 5:9 says, "Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!" This vividly portrays the "nearness" of the judgment (Mitton; Alford). "To reinforce his warning, James reminds his readers again that this judgment is imminent" (Moo).

Philippians 4:5 says, "The Lord is at hand." The Greek word rendered "at hand" means "near" and could mean near in terms of space or near in terms of time. In other words, this could mean the Lord is near in the sense that His personal presence is close to us or it could mean His return is imminent. The latter possibility is the view taken by most commentators. James 5:8 proves that it is correct. It says, "the *coming* of the Lord is at hand."

Other New Testament verses can be added to this list. Romans 13:12 says, "the day is at hand" and 1 Peter 4:7 declares, "the end of all things is at hand." It speaks of believers eagerly waiting for the Lord (1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; Titus 2:13) and of the Lord coming "quickly" (Heb. 10:37; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20). Commenting on the statement in Revelation, Barclay says, "As John saw it, the coming of Christ would take place at any moment."

Paul personally expected the Rapture to occur in his lifetime. Twice in 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul uses the first personal pronoun, "we," to talk about those who are alive at the coming of Christ (1 Thess. 4:15, 17). "For this, *we* say to you (Paul, Silvanus,

and Timothy; see 1 Thess. 1:1) by the word of the Lord, that *we* who are alive and remain (he just used “we” to refer to himself, Silvanus, and Timothy) until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 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. 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, italics added). Paul’s use of the personal pronoun “we” implies, yea demands that Paul expected that he, Silvanus, and Timothy would personally be alive at the return of Christ. Many commentators concur.

Lightfoot says, “The apostles certainly do believe as though there was a reasonable expectation for the Lord’s appearing in their own time. They used modes of expression that cannot otherwise be explained. Such is the use of the plural here.” Alford states, “Then beyond question, he himself expected to be alive together with a majority of those to whom he was writing at the Lord’s coming. Commenting on the use of the plural, Milligan says, “There can be no doubt that the passage naturally suggests that they expected so to survive...and we must not allow the fact that they were mistaken in this belief to deprive their words of their proper meaning.” Frame states that by using the word “we,” “Paul thus betrays the expectation that he and his contemporary Christians will still remain alive until Christ comes.” These four well-respected, scholarly commentators were not defending the pretribulation Rapture; they were simply expounding the text. Paul expected to be alive because he believed in the imminent return of Christ for His saints. That does not mean that Christ *had* to come back during Paul’s lifetime, but that He *could* come back at any moment, which means He could have come back during Paul’s lifetime.

In his second epistle, Peter brings up the fact that scoffers were saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation” (2 Pet. 3:4). That was a problem only because believers were expecting the Lord to come in their lifetime.

Revelation 22:7 says, “Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” The Greek translated “quickly” is the adverb form of the word rendered “shortly” in the previous verse. The thought here is that Christ will come suddenly (Smith) or that Christ’s coming is pending (Walvoord), that is, that His coming is imminent (Smith; Morris). “As John saw it, the coming of Christ would take place at any moment” (Barclay). This is a warning to be alert (Walvoord).

Revelation 22:12 says, “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.” Walvoord makes an interesting connection, “When the One who exists from eternity states, ‘Behold, I come quickly,’ it means that from the divine point of view, end-time events are impending.” When He arrives, Christ will reward everyone based on his works. This is a reference to the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10-11; Walvoord).

Revelation 22:17 says, “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.” Notice who issues the invitation to come to Christ. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit and the bride is the church (Walvoord; Smith; Mounce). In light of the fact that Jesus said He is coming quickly (Rev. 22:7; shortly), the church invites people to come to Christ now! Jesus is coming; therefore, come to Jesus. Then John says, “Even so,

come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20b). The book of Revelation ends with the Holy Spirit, the church, and the apostle John anticipating Jesus coming quickly. John clearly invites Jesus to come—now! Does that not indicate imminence? If anything had to be fulfilled before Jesus could come, how could John end with inviting Jesus to come? To say the same thing another way, if something had to be fulfilled, John would have ended by saying something like, “Now you know to look for the Antichrist.”

If the Rapture is imminent, nothing has to happen before the Rapture. Therefore, the Rapture is before the Tribulation. Walvoord says, “If the Scripture presents the coming of the Lord for His church as imminent by so much, they also declare it as occurring before the predicted period of the tribulation” (Walvoord, p. 82).

Olivet Discourse The “Olivet Discourse” is a two-chapter (Mt. 24-25) explanation of prophecy delivered by Jesus. Along with the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation, the Olivet Discourse is one of the most important passages on prophecy in the entire Bible. It has been said, “No passages are more important” (Cooper, p. 4).

As Jesus and the disciples left the Temple, the disciples commented on the magnificence of the Temple buildings, Jesus responded by saying the Temple will be destroyed. Then, they walked from the Temple through the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives. Once on the Mount of Olives, which overlooked the Temple, the disciples asked questions about the time and the sign (Mt. 24:1-3). Jesus answers the question about time last, beginning with verse 32.

1. Tribulation. Jesus describes a period that has a beginning (Mt. 24:8) and an end (Mt. 24:14). This period will be characterized by 1) false Christ (Mt. 24:4-5), 2), war (Mt. 24:6-7a), 3) famines (Mt. 24:7b), 4) pestilences (Mt. 24:7c), 5) earthquakes (Mt. 24:7d), 6) persecution (Mt. 24:9-13), and 7) the worldwide preaching of the gospel (Mt. 24:14). Jesus calls this the Tribulation (Mt. 24:29).

2. The Abomination of Desolation. Then Jesus draws a conclusion (“therefore” in verse 15). The conclusion is that during the period Jesus described (the Tribulation), the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet will occur. According to Daniel 9, the Abomination of Desolation occurs *in the middle* of a seven-year period (Dan. 9:27). Notice, *this is a flashback*. The Tribulation ends in verse 14 and verse 15 is a flashback to the middle of the Tribulation. For those living when the Abomination of Desolation takes place, Jesus gives two commands. The first is to flee without taking anything with them (Mt. 24:15-20). The second command is to not be deceived by messianic claims (Mt. 24:23-28).

3. The Second Coming. “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Mt. 24:29-31).

To sum up: The end will consist of a Tribulation in the middle of which is an Abomination of Desolation that begins the Great Tribulation and immediately after that, the Lord will return to the earth.

4. The Time. At this point in the passage, Jesus addresses the time issue (Mt. 24:3). Alexander remarks, “Having answered the question as to the *signs* of His return in judgment, He now answers that as to time.”

First, Jesus talks about what *can* be known. “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. So, you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near; at the doors!” Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Mt. 24:32-35). Because fig trees produce new leaves late in the spring, the presence of leaves indicates summer is near. So those living at the time all these things begin to occur should be able to read the signs of the time. “When the signs of the end appear, the coming of the Son of Man is very near” (Toussaint). The generation that is alive at the time these events take place will not pass away until all these things happen. Heaven and earth will be replaced with a new heaven and a new earth, but the word of Jesus Christ is eternal. Jesus’ word can be totally trusted.

The point is those living during the Tribulation before the Second Coming of Christ can know from the general conditions that the time is near and they will live to see it take place. In other words, those who see the Abomination of Desolation will also see the Second Coming of Christ.

Second, Jesus talks about what *cannot* be known. “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Mt. 24:36). In the Greek text, verse 36 begins with a construction that should be translated “now concerning” (περι), instead of “but.” It introduces a new subject (22:31; Mk. 12:26; 13:32; Acts 21:25; 1 Cor 7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12; 1 Thess. 4:9, 13; 5:1). At this point, it is obvious that the Lord is abruptly saying something different. He just said there are signs that people at the time *can and should know* (Mt. 24:33). Now, His says *no one knows* the “day and hour.” The issue of “not knowing” is repeatedly emphasized in Matthew 24:36-44 (see 24:36; 24:39; 24:42; 24:43; 24:44) and beyond (24:50; 25:13). In addition, the change from the plural “those days” in verse 29 to the singular “that day” in verse 36 implies a change of subject.

The question is, “The day and hour of what?” There are two answers. One answer is that the day and the hour is a reference to the Second Coming. The argument for that explanation is: 1) The context of the passage is talking about the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation (Mt. 24:37). 2) The illustration of the flood indicates that the people were taken in judgment (Mt. 24:38-39; so Walvoord; Pentecost; Toussaint).

The other answer is that the hour and the day is a reference to the Rapture, which will be before the Tribulation. *This is another flashback* (see the comments on 24:15 above). There are a number of indications that is the correct interpretation. For example, the context indicates that this is *not* a reference to the end of the Tribulation. The end of the Tribulation is so bad that unless those days be shortened, no one would be saved (Mt. 24:22). Yet Matthew 24:38 indicates that what is being talked about here is the activities of ordinary life (France).

“But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark and did not know until the flood came and **took** them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two *men* will

be in the field: one will be **taken** and the other left. *Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left*” (Mt. 24:37-41). In the days of Noah, people did not know when the flood was to come. Likewise, people will not know when the coming of the Son of Man will be. The Lord explains (“for”) how the days *before* the flood are like the days preceding the coming of the Son of Man, people were carrying on with life as usual. They are eating, drinking, and getting married! This is a description of family life. Men working in the field signifies nothing more than the normal course of life. Women grinding at a mill is as ordinary as men working in a field. Tasker points out that cultivating the fields (Mt. 24:40), grinding corn at the mill (Mt. 24:41), and enjoying fellowship as well as marrying and giving in marriage are “usual occupations.” In the days before the flood, people were preoccupied with their *ordinary activities* totally unaware of the beginning of the flood.

What is being described here is in stark contrast to what will be happening at the end of the Tribulation (Mt. 24:21-22). Just before the Rapture, life will be relatively “normal.” It is just before the Rapture that people will be saying peace and safety (1 Thess. 5:3). That is why for them, the Lord will come as a thief in the night (Mt. 24:43; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). On the other hand, just before the Second Coming, things will be so bad that unless those days be shortened, no flesh would survive (Mt. 24:21-22).

Another indication of the Rapture is that the Greek word translated “taken” in Matthew 24:40 and 41 concerning the flood is different than the one translated “took” in verse 39 concerning men in the field and women at the mill. The one used in verses 40 and 41 means “to take to or with oneself” (A-S), “to take into close association, take (to oneself), take with/along” (BDAG; see also 1:20-21; 2:13, 14, 20, 21; 17:1). It is used of the Rapture in John 14:3. Lane says that the word for “took” (αἶρω) in the previous verse [Mt. 24:39] suggests taking away with violence as was the case with the flood, but Christ drops that word here and says that by His coming, one should be taken away with Him as a friend takes a companion (Lane, p. 313). France points out that it implies “to take someone to be with you, and, therefore, here points to salvation rather than the destruction of the one “taken.” He says, “two different words appear for the action of taking,

Even Gundry, who takes this passage to be referring to a post-tribulation rapture, argues that the details of it prove that it is the Rapture. He says, “Two different words appear for the action of taking, αἶρω (v. 39) and παραλαμβάνω (vv. 40, 41). The same word could easily have been employed had an exact parallel between the two takings been intended. Instead, we have the employment of another word, which only two days later describes the rapture (John 14:3). The example of the Deluge illustrates not so much the judgmental character of the Parousia as its unexpectedness so far as the wicked are concerned” (Gundry, p. 138).

Pre-Tribulationists, who say that Matthew 24:37-41 does not refer to the Rapture, point out that the parallel passage in Luke 17:34-36 concludes with the apostles asking the Lord, “Where, Lord?” and the Lord says, “Wherever the body is, the eagles will be gathered together” (Lk. 17:37). Based on Luke 17:37, they conclude that the ones taken are taken to judgment and, therefore, Matthew 24:37-41 is talking about the Second Coming rather than the Rapture.

Geldenhuis, who believes Luke 17:37 is referring to unbelievers at the Second Coming of Christ, says, “In replying to the inquisitive question as to where the

unredeemed will be left, the Savior gives no direct answer, but in what is probably a well-known Palestinian proverb points out that where there is spiritual decay judgment will follow relentlessly and assuredly.” Notice that he interprets the question to mean where the unbelievers are *left* for judgment.

Hart, who believes Matthew 24:37-41 refers to the Rapture, says, “Without excluding a possible allusion to judgment, a better suggestion is that the disciples meant, ‘Where are You to be revealed, Lord?’ This understanding of Luke 17:37 fits the parallel passage in Matt 24:28, where the proverbial saying applies exclusively to the Parousia (24:29–31). Marshall believes that Luke 17:37 refers back to v 23 (“Men will tell you, ‘There He is!’ or ‘Here He is!’), not the immediately preceding context. Verse 37 acts as a climax for the whole sermon and appears to summarize the broad central theme of Christ’s return. As such, the proverbial saying about the vultures expresses the truth that ‘the world unmistakably will know...where the Son of Man returns.’ While the idea of judgment may be included in the disciples’ question of Luke 17:37, the verse and its context do not confirm unequivocally that the one who is taken is taken in judgment” (Hart, pp. 63-64).

Interpreting Matthew 24:36-41 as the Rapture is not essential to the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. In fact, most Pre-Tribulationists do not believe that the Olivet Discourse is talking about the Rapture, including Charles C. Ryrie, E. Schuyler English, J. Dwight Pentecost, Renald Showers, Gerald B. Stanton, Stanley D. Toussaint, John F. Walvoord, etc. They interpret the ones taken as those taken to judgment. Among the few Pre-Tribulationists who do think that Olivet Discourse speaks about the Rapture are J. F. Strombeck, Zane Hodges, Ray C. Stedman, Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Dave Hunt, etc.

Other Indications Many other arguments are used to support a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Walvoord lists fifty (John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, pp.191-199).

To sum up: the evidence for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is deliverance from wrath (the Tribulation), removal of the Restrainer, promise that the church will be kept from the *time* of the Tribulation, absence of the word “church” in Revelation 4-19, the invitation at the end of Revelation, the doctrine of imminence, and the Olivet Discourse.

If the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is not true, then instead of the Lord being at hand (Phil. 4:5), He is at least 3½ to 7 years away. Instead of looking for Christ coming from heaven (Phil. 3:20), we should be looking for the Antichrist signing a treaty on earth (Dan. 9:27). Instead of looking for the appearance of our great God (Titus 2:13), we should be looking for the Abomination of Desolation.

In John 13, Jesus told the disciples that He was about to leave (Jn. 13:33) and He told Peter that he would deny Him three times (Jn. 13:38). It is unfortunate that there is a chapter break at this point because, in the original, the next statement is Jesus saying, “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” (Jn. 14:1-3). They were no doubt disturbed by what Jesus told them, but Jesus told them not to be troubled because of what they knew about the future, namely that He was going to prepare a place for them and come back for them with the implication that He would take them to that place He had prepared for them.

Mid-Tribulation Rapture

Mid-Tribulation Rapture is the view that the Rapture will take place in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation. Its “principal expositor” is Norman B. Harrison” (Walvoord, p. 171), who presents the case for Mid-Tribulation Rapture in his book *The End: Rethinking the Revelation*. Others holding this view include J. Oliver Buswell, Gleason Archer, and Harold J. Ockenga. It has not been widely embraced; only a small minority of expositors have held to this position and Walvoord suggests that will be the case in the future (Walvoord, p. 189).

According to the Mid-Tribulation view: 1) The Rapture takes place at the last trumpet (1 Cor. 15:52) 2) The last trumpet in the book of Revelation is the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15). 3) The last trumpet is in the middle of the Tribulation, which is the beginning the Great Tribulation and the wrath of God (see Rosenthal, p. 57). Thus, the two decisive issues in the Mid-Tribulation position are 1) the identification of the trumpet in 1 Corinthians 15:52 with the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:15 and 2) the insistence that the seventh trumpet is in the middle of the Tribulation.

The Seventh Trumpet not the Rapture Trumpet In 1 Thessalonians 4, when Paul describes the Rapture, he speaks of “the trumpet of God” and the dead being raised (1 Thess. 4:16). In 1 Corinthians 15, he says, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall 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” (1 Cor. 15:51-52). Thus, at the Rapture, “the trumpet of God” is sounded and it is called the last trumpet.

In the book of Revelation, John describes a series of seven trumpet judgments. He writes, “Then the seventh angel sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven saying, ‘the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever!’” (Rev. 11:15). At first, the identification of the last trumpet in 1 Corinthians 15:52 with the last trumpet (the seventh trumpet) in Revelation seems appropriate, but after only a little reflection, it is apparent that the two are not identical—at all. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in 57 AD. John wrote Revelation around 95 AD. Paul was definitely not thinking about the seventh trumpet of Revelation when he penned 1 Corinthians 15:52. He could not have. Revelation had not been written yet. In fact, it would not be written for another 38 years! Perhaps, it could be argued that the Holy Spirit had the connection in mind (Harrison, p. 75), and Paul was not aware of it, but in light of what else is known about the comparison, that is highly unlikely, if not impossible.

For example, the “last trumpet” of the Rapture in 1 Corinthians 15:52 is called the “trumpet of God” in 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Thus, the “last” trumpet connected with the Rapture is the trumpet of God, but the trumpet in Revelation 11:15 is the trumpet of an angel. Furthermore, the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians is a signal for the church to meet the Lord in the air and the seventh trumpet in Revelation is a symbol of judgment on the earth during the Tribulation.

The “most damaging fact” against Mid-Tribulation Rapture, the one that “alone spells the doom of Mid-Tribulationism” (Walvoord, p. 184-185) is that the seventh trumpet in Revelation is not the last trumpet! At (or after) the coming of Christ, the elect will be gathered “with a great sound of a trumpet” (Mt. 24:31). So, there will be a “last trumpet” at the Rapture and a trumpet blast to gather the elect at the beginning of the kingdom. In

other words, “last” does not always mean “last in time.” School children know that “the last bell for one hour may be followed by a first bell for the next hour” (Walvoord, p. 185).

If the last trumpet in 1 Corinthians 15 is not the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11, what is it? If there is a trumpet after the Second Coming, why does Paul call the trumpet at the Rapture the last trumpet? The word “last” can mean “last in a point of time” or “last in a sequence” (Harrison, p. 75; Pentecost, p. 189). If the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15 is the “last in a point of time,” it is simply the last trumpet of the church calling the church on earth to meet the Lord in the air. There are no more trumpets *for the church* after that.

On the other hand, if the last trumpet in 1 Corinthian is the “last in a series,” it is possibly an allusion to the Roman military. When a Roman camp was about to break a trumpet was sounded. The first blast meant, “Strike tents and prepare to depart.” The second meant “Fall into line” and when what was called “the last trump” was sounded, it meant “March away” (Ironsides, p. 529).

The Seventh Trumpet is not in the Middle of the Tribulation Harrison claims that the seven seals and the first six trumpets are related to the first half of the Tribulation. He says, “The Day of Wrath has only now come (Rev. 11:18). This means that nothing that proceeds in the Seals and Trumpets can rightfully be regarded as wrath” (Harrison, p. 119). In other words, the seventh trumpet is in the middle of the Tribulation and is the beginning of the Great Tribulation and the wrath of God. Walvoord says it is not too much to say that Mid-Tribulation depends on the theory that the seventh trumpet of Revelation begins the Great Tribulation, which is in the middle of the Tribulation (Walvoord, pp. 172-173).

The problem with Harrison’s view is that according to the sixth seal, “the great day of His wrath has come” (Rev. 6:17). He interprets the sixth seal “as reaching to the day of Wrath” (Harrison, p. 120). Pardon the pun, but that is indeed a stretch. The text says that it “*has* come,” meaning that it came before the time of the sixth seal (see the discussion of Revelation 6:17 under Pre-Tribulationism above). In addition, Revelation 7:14 is the only specific reference to “the Great Tribulation” in the entire book of Revelation and it is between the seals and the trumpets, indicating that the Great Tribulation begins somewhere in the seal judgments. Pointing to Revelation 6:17 and Revelation 11:18, both of which say that God’s Wrath “has come,” Pentecost concludes that “neither the seals nor the trumpets can be divorced from the divine program associated with the pouring out of wrath upon on the earth” (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 184).

The fatal blow to Mid-Tribulationism is that it places the seventh trumpet in the middle of the Tribulation, but the seventh trumpet is not in the middle of the Tribulation; it is at the end of the Tribulation (see the discussion of the nature of the Tribulation in the chapter on Tribulation above). The seventh trumpet is clearly at the end of the Tribulation because when it is sounded, “the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ” (Rev, 11:15). That happens at the end of the Tribulation not in the middle of the Tribulation.

Pre-Wrath Rapture

Background The Pre-Wrath view is that the Rapture will take place before the wrath of God is poured out, which will be sometime during the second half of the Tribulation. In 1986, a Christian businessman named Bob Van Kampen began talking to Marvin Rosenthal, the Director of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, about the timing of the Rapture. Van Kampen had questions about Pre-Tribulation Rapture; Rosenthal had been committed to it for 35 years. For the next several years, they spent a great deal of time discussing the timing of the Rapture.

In 1990, Rosenthal wrote the book, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*. That launched the Pre-Wrath position. Rosenthal acknowledges that Bob Van Kampen planted the seed of the book in his mind. Rosenthal said to Bob, “Without you, there would have been no book” (Rosenthal, p. xiv; for the complete story, see pp. 17-36). In 1992, Van Kampen, the originator and first advocate of Pre-Wrath Rapture (Showers, p. 7) wrote *The Sign*. In 2001, Renald Showers, a long-time friend of Van Kampen and Rosenthal, wrote *The Pre-Wrath Rapture View, an Examination and Critique*. It is a definitive answer to the Pre-Wrath view.

The Name The name “Pre-Wrath Rapture” it is unfortunate. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture view, the Mid-Tribulation Rapture explanation, and virtually all versions of the Post-Tribulation Rapture position teach that the church will not go through the wrath of God. Therefore, they are all pre-wrath! (They differ on when the wrath of God begins. Is the wrath of God poured out at the beginning, in the middle, or sometime later during the Tribulation?) Tom Ice has dubbed the Pre-Wrath Rapture position the Three-quarter Tribulation Rapture, but the advocates of that view would say that title is not accurate, because all they are claiming is that the Rapture takes place “some time” after the middle of the Tribulation and before the end of the 70th week (the Tribulation). Since Pre-Wrath Rapture is the name by which the position is known, that name will be used here.

An Explanation The 70th week of Daniel 9 consists of seven years, commonly called the Tribulation. Rosenthal says the word “tribulation” is never used of the entire seven years. So, he calls it the 70th week of Daniel. He divides the 70th week into three parts: 1) The first half of the 70th week of Daniel 9, which lasts 3½ years, 2) The Great Tribulation (Mt. 24:21) begins in the middle of the 70th week but will be cut short and, therefore, will not last 3½ years. 3) The Day of the Lord begins after the Great Tribulation and last until the end of the 70th week.

According to the Pre-Wrath interpretation of the 70th week, the order of events are as follows. 1) The first half of the 70th week consists of the beginning of birth pains (Mt. 24:4-8), which are the first four seals (Rev. 6:1-8). 2). The Great Tribulation (Mt. 24:21) begins in the middle of the 70th week with the breaking of the fifth seal (Rev. 6:9-11) and will be cut short with the cosmic disturbances of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-14) sometime between the middle and the end of the 70th week. 3) The church will be raptured between the sixth and seventh seals. Since the Day of the Lord is the day of God’s wrath and the church will not go through the wrath of God, the church will not go through the Day of the Lord. 4) The Day of the Lord begins with the breaking of the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1).

70th Week (3½ yrs.) → Great Trib. (shorten) → Rapture → Day of the Lord (wrath)

The Pre-Wrath explanation contains many distinctive interpretations of Scripture, but the two most critical are: 1) The Great Tribulation will be shortened (Mt. 24:22). Rosenthal says, “The shortening of the Great Tribulation to less than 3½ years is one of the most important truths to be grasped if the chronology of the end times events is to be understood” (Rosenthal, p. 111). 2) The Day of the Lord does not start at the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel 9, but after the close of the Great Tribulation. Rosenthal says the Day of the Lord is the watershed issue (Rosenthal, p. 140). He concedes, “If the 70th week is the Tribulation period, or ‘the time of wrath’ and God’s people are exempt from ‘wrath,’ the matter is settled” (Rosenthal, p. 106). In other words, if the entire Tribulation is the day of wrath, the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is correct.

The Shortening of the Great Tribulation Jesus says, “There will be Great Tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days be shortened, no flesh will be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Mt. 24:21-22). The Greek word translated “shortened” means “to cut off, amputate,” hence, “to curtail, shortened” (A-S), “mutilate, curtail,” figuratively, “shortened” (A-G). It is only used twice in the New Testament (Mt. 24:22; Mk. 13:20). The Pre-Wrath view correctly says that the 70th week of Daniel lasted for seven years and that the Great Tribulation begins in the middle of the 70th week of Daniel, which all other explanations of the Tribulation say means the Great Tribulation lasts for 3½ years. What is unique to the Pre-Wrath interpretation is that the Great Tribulation will be cut shorter than the 3½ years. If that interpretation of the Great Tribulation is not correct, the Pre-Wrath interpretation collapses.

Daniel 12:1 says there is coming “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” Jesus says, “There will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Mt. 24:21). In other words, Jesus says the unprecedented time is the Great Tribulation. He also teaches that the Great Tribulation will begin in the middle of the Tribulation (Mt. 24:15). In Daniel 12, when the question is asked, “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?” the answer is it will last for “time, times, and half a time” (Dan. 12:7), that is, 3½ years. In short, *the Great Tribulation begins in the middle of the Tribulation and will last for 3½ years. That is confirmed repeatedly in the book of Revelation (Rev. 12:6, 12-17; 13:5)*. The Great Tribulation will not be cut shorter *than* 3½ years; It will be cut short *to* 3½ years.

In Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20, “shortened” is in the aorist tense, which expresses past time unless otherwise indicated in the context (Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 193). In other words, *in the past*, God “determined to *cut it off* [the Great Tribulation] at a specific time rather than let it continue indefinitely.... In the past, God sovereignly set a specific time for the Great Tribulation to end” (Showers, p. 29).

When in the past did God determine to shorten the Great Tribulation? After giving six reasons why the Pre-Wrath view is wrong concerning the shortening of the Great Tribulation (Showers, pp. 20-30), Showers says, “When Christ spoke of the Great Tribulation being shortened, He did not mean that it will be cut shorter than the three and one-half years already prophesied before His statement. The tense of the Greek verb translated ‘shortened’ and Mark 13:20 recorded of Christ’s statement indicates that He meant that God cut the Great Tribulation short *in eternity past* when He determined that it would last for a fixed time of three and one-half years” (Showers, pp. 30-31, italics)

added). In Matthew 24:22, a second Greek verb translated “shortened” is in the future tense, “but that does not nullify this conclusion. That verb simply indicates that in the future God will actually cause to happen what He determined in eternity past and prophesied in the Old Testament” (Showers, p. 31).

The Beginning of the Day of the Lord The Pre-Wrath of view is that the church will not go through the wrath of God, which is poured out during the Day of the Lord. So, the critical issue is when does the Day of the Lord (God’s wrath) begin. The Pre-Wrath view argues: 1) The first four seals of Revelation 6 are not the wrath of God; they are the wrath of man. 2) The fifth seal begins the Great Tribulation in the middle of the 70th week (the Tribulation), but it will not last 3½ years because it will be shortened. 3) The sixth seal introduces the cosmic disturbances which *precede* the Day of the Lord. 4) The Rapture is between the sixth and seventh seals. 7) The seventh seal is the beginning of the Day of the Lord (Rosenthal, pp. 137-153, especially the chart on p. 147).

In the first place, the Day of the Lord (the day of God’s wrath) begins with the first seal, not the seventh seal (see the discussion of the seals and Revelation 6:17 under Pre-Tribulation view above). Another proof that the Day of the Lord starts before the seventh seal is that, as Rosenthal concedes, the Day of the Lord is God’s judgment of nations (Rosenthal, p. 180). The Day of the Lord is the day of God’s wrath *on the entire world* (see God’s wrath on “all the earth” in Zeph. 3:8). Since the Day of the Lord is God’s judgment on the world and the Tribulation begins with God’s judgment on the world (Rev. 6:10), the Day of the Lord begins before the seventh seal.

In the second place, the cosmic disturbances are *at the end of the Tribulation* (cf. Mt. 24:29 with Rev. 6:13-14; 11:15; 16:17; see the arrangement of the seals, trumpets, and bowls judgments in the discussion of the Tribulation above).

The concept is that the cosmic disturbances *preceding* the Day of the Lord is essential to the Pre-Wrath view. So, the question needs to be asked, “What does the Scripture say about cosmic disturbances?”

Rosenthal lists six passages concerning cosmic disturbances (Rosenthal, p. 150; Isa. 13:10; Ezek. 32:7-8; Joel 2:31; Mt. 24:29; Mk. 13:24-25; Lk. 21:25) and in his discussion, he also mentions Joel 3:14-15 and Joel 2:11 (Rosenthal, p. 148). The passages in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are all referring to the same event, which is immediately before the Second Coming of Christ. The Matthew passage says, “*Immediately* after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, the moon shall not give its light, the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Mt. 24:29-30, italics added). Mark says, “in those days, *after* the tribulation (Mk. 13:24: italics added) and Luke mentions the cosmic disturbances and says, “*then* they will see the Son of Man coming” (Lk. 21:27, italics added). Because the passages in the Gospels describe the same event in Revelation 6:12-13 (Rosenthal, p. 152), the words “immediately, after, and then” in the Gospels demonstrate that the cosmic disturbances mentioned in Revelation occur at the Second Coming of Christ, and, therefore, the Pre-Wrath notion that they occur before the end of the Tribulation is wrong. The appearances of cosmic disturbances in the Tribulation do not prove the Pre-Wrath theory; they disprove it.

What does the Old Testament say about cosmic disturbances? When Isaiah 13:9-10

says, “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. 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,” it is referring to a judgment on **Babylon** (Isa. 13:1), which has already taken place. Likewise, when Ezekiel 32:7-8 says, “When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, and bring darkness upon your land,” says the Lord GOD,” it is talking about judgment on **Pharaoh** (Ezek. 32:1-2), which has already occurred. In the process of pronouncing judgment on **Israel**, Amos writes, ““And it shall come to pass in that day,” says the Lord God, ‘That I will make the **sun** go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight”” (Amos 8:9). Amos is not the only OT prophet that uses the expression “the Day of the Lord,” in speaking about judgment on Israel. When Joel 2:10-11 says, “The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the **sun and moon grow dark**, and the **stars diminish their brightness**,” it is discussing “the Day of the Lord,” which “is coming, for it is at hand” (Joel 2:1, 11). In that case, it is a judgment on Israel that has been fulfilled but is a type of a future Day of the Lord.

The Old Testament says cosmic disturbances accompanied God’s judgments in the past. What about the future?

Isaiah says, “**All the host of heaven shall be dissolved**, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; all their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, and as fruit falling from a fig tree” (Isa. 34:4). This verse is talking about a judgment on all the nations of the world that will take place during the Tribulation.

Joel says, “And I will show **wonders in the heavens** and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. 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 2:30-31). This passage is talking about a future event (see Mt. 24:29-31; Mk. 13:24-27; Lk. 21:25-28). “These are probably descriptions of how these heavenly bodies will look (the language of appearance), not what will become of them, in view of other similar descriptions (e.g., vv. 2, 10; 3:15; Jer. 4:23-24; Ezek. 32:6-8; Amos 5:18-20; 8:9; Zeph. 1:15; Rev. 6:12-13)” (Constable). Chisholm says, “The turning of the moon to blood refers in a poetic way to its being darkened (cf. the parallel line. The sun will be turned to darkness, and Joel 2:10; 3:15). Of all the passages in the Bible that mention cosmic disturbances, this is the only one that says they occur *before* the Day of the Lord.

Joel also says, “**Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the Day of the Lord is near** in the valley of decision. The **sun and moon will grow dark**, and the **stars will diminish** their brightness” (Joel 3:14-15). “These verses (3:12-13) plainly indicate that the judgment mentioned in this chapter will actually take the form of divine warfare against Israel’s enemies. So, the event described here should be equated with Armageddon (cf. Rev. 14:14-20; 16:16; 19:11-21) rather than the judgment of the nations prophesied in Mat. 25:31-46” (Chisholm).

Zechariah says, “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, from east to west, *making* a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee *through* My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake

in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, *and* all the saints with You. It shall come to pass in that day *that* there will be **no light**; the lights will diminish. It shall be one day which is known to the LORD; neither day nor night. but at evening time it shall happen *that* it will be light. And in that day it shall be *that* living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur. And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be; ‘The LORD *is* one,’ and His name one” (Zech. 14:4-9). Zechariah is talking about the Day of the Lord (Zech. 14:1). The Day of the Lord includes the kingdom (see “in that day” in verse 8 and “the Lord shall be King over all the earth” in verse 9). Constable says, “Bear in mind that this ‘day’ is an extended period of time, not just a 12-hour or 24-hour period. Here, just the end of the Tribulation is in view—the entirety of which the prophets spoke of as ‘the Day of the Lord—along with the Millennium.” Unger says, “‘In the day’ is the day of the Lord, which here includes the kingdom (Unger, pp. 189-90). “This verse (14:9) refers to Christ’s millennial kingdom (cf. Ps. 2; Dan. 2:44-45; 7:27; Matt. 6:9-10)” (Constable).

The Old Testament says that cosmic disturbances will accompany God’s judgment in the future. As far as the Rapture question is concerned, the only passage in the Old Testament that is pertinent is Joel 2:30- 31, which says the cosmic disturbances come *before* the Day of the Lord. It is also the only Old Testament passage that speaks about cosmic disturbances and the Day of the Lord that calls the Day of the Lord “great and awesome.” In addition, it is the only Old Testament passage that speaks about the moon being turned to blood, which is said to occur at the end of the Tribulation (Rev. 6:12).

Notice, the Day of the Lord can be a very long period of time; it includes the Millennium. It can also describe a short period of time. The opening words of the Bible indicates that it uses the word “day” in a variety of ways. Genesis says, “And God saw the light that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light day and the darkness He called night. So, the evening and the morning were the first day” (Gen. 1:4-5). God called the *light* day and the darkness night. Then, He called the *evening and the morning* day. The word “day” in this passage is used of daylight, that is the hours between sunrise and sunset and it is used of a 24-hour day. “Later in this passage, the word “day” is used of a period longer than 24 hours. Genesis 2:4 says, “This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created in the day that the Lord made the earth and the heavens.” So, the term “day” in the Bible can mean 1) daylight, 2) 24 hours, 3) A period of time longer than 24 hours. Likewise, the Day of the Lord is used of an extended period of time and of a short period of time, perhaps 24 hours.

As has been pointed out, the expression “Day of the Lord” is used of the entire seven-year Tribulation. The “great and awesome Day of the Lord” is a short period just prior to the Second Coming of Christ.

Rosenthal says, “Cosmic disturbance precedes the Day of the Lord” (Rosenthal, p. 152), but Paul taught that the Day of the Lord would come as a thief in the night when people are saying there is peace and safety in the world (1 Thess. 5:2-3).

Post-Tribulation Rapture

The Post-Tribulation Rapture view is that the church will pass through the Tribulation at the end of which the Rapture will occur, but there are variations.

Authors Walvoord summarizes the various views of the Post-Tribulation view proposed in recent years (John F. Walvoord, "Post-Tribulationism Today: Part I, The Rise of Post-Tribulation Interpretation," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 132:525, Jan. 1975, pp. 16-25). Alexander Reese (*The Approaching Advent of Christ*, 1937) makes "appearing," "the day," "the end," and "revelation" technical terms and relates the Rapture to the Second Coming. He also claims that the resurrection of the church occurs at the same time as the resurrection of Revelation 20. J. Barton Payne (*The Imminent Appearing of Christ*, 1962) identifies the Tribulation with the contemporary problems of Christianity. Few have followed Payne. George Ladd (*The Blessed Hope*, 1956) considers the Great Tribulation still future. Christ's return cannot be any day; it will only follow the years required to fulfill prophecies relating to the Tribulation. Robert H. Gundry (*The Church and the Tribulation*, 1973) has developed new arguments for Post-Tribulation Rapture. Gundry's assessment is that Reese's book "has long been out of date, not to mention its embarrassingly bombastic style" and Ladd's book "gained neither the volume of press nor the exegetical backing which were given to pre-tribulationism" (Gundry, p. 9).

Church History It is often argued that the church has historically held the Post-Tribulation position and that the Pre-Tribulation view is a new doctrine, beginning with J. N. Derby about 1830 (for example, see Gundry, pp. 172-188). In the first place, Scripture determines doctrine, not tradition. Be that as it may, as Walvoord points out, "The early church believed in a coming time of trouble, in the imminent coming of the Lord, and in the millennium to follow" (Walvoord, p. 137). He concludes that while the early church did not teach twentieth-century Pre-Tribulation, nor did it clearly teach modern Post-Tribulation, adding, "It is, therefore, a problem which must be settled based on exegesis of the Scripture rather than by polling the early fathers" (Walvoord, p. 139).

Deliverance from Wrath Gundry argues that the Greek particle that connects 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, which he says is $\delta\epsilon$, does not prove "the beginning of a new thought." (Gundry, p. 105). Therefore, "the Parousia/rapture will mark the beginning of the Day of the Lord, ... the rapture will follow the tribulation" (Gundry, p. 106). Gundry has misrepresented the Greek text and, therefore, has misinterpreted the passage. In the Greek text, 1 Thessalonians 5:1 begins with $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\ \delta\epsilon$ (not just $\delta\epsilon$) and, as was explained under the discussion of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture that construction is used by Paul elsewhere to denote a new and contrasting subject. The new subject is the *time* of the Rapture. The passage is teaching that since believers are delivered from the Day of the Lord's wrath and the Day of the Lord's wrath is at the beginning of the Tribulation, the Rapture occurs *before* the Tribulation (for details, see the discussion under Pre-Tribulation Rapture above).

Removal of the Restrainer Gundry agrees with Pre-Tribulationists that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit (Gundry, pp. 125-128), but he interprets "until he is taken out of the way" to mean "become out of the middle" and says it "does not demand removal from the world" (Gundry, p. 127). In other words, "The restrainer is standing in the middle, i.e., between the *person* of the Antichrist and the *revelation* of the Antichrist," and he must "become out of the middle" (Gundry, p. 127, italics his).

A. T. Robertson renders it "taken out of the way" as "removed." Baker's New Testament commentary, which takes the restrainer to be law and order, says, "in spite of objections that have been advanced," "taken out of the way" is probably a good English

equivalent of the Greek idiom” (see “until he is taken out of the way” in the NASB and “till he is taken out of the way” in the NIV).

Paul uses this expression in 1 Corinthians 5:2 of a sexually immoral man he wants “taken away” from them by physical death (by “the destruction of the flesh,” 1 Cor. 5:5), which would certainly be removal from this world. If 2 Thessalonians 2 is talking about the Holy Spirit and His removal out of the world, the Pre-tribulation Rapture explanation makes the most sense because it explains how the Holy Spirit can be taken out of the world during His work of baptizing people into the body of Christ, but not in His work of regeneration (see the discussion of this passage under Pre-Tribulation Rapture above).

Kept from the Hour Gundry claims that in dangerous situations, the Greek word translated “keep” in “I will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world” (Rev. 3:10), means “guard” (Gundry, p. 58). He is assuming that the church is in the Tribulation and, therefore, it needs guarding, but if the point is that the church is being kept from the Tribulation, “keep” is the appropriate translation. The Greek word translated “keep” may mean “guard” in some other places, but translations render it “keep” in Revelation 3:10 (KJV; NKJV; RV; RSV; ASV; NASB; NIV; ESV; ISV; LEB; LITV; MKJV; GNB; Williams; Douay; Young’s literal translation).

Gundry also argues that the preposition “from” (ek) means “out from within” (Gundry, p. 55). In other words, the church will be protected in the Tribulation, but the combination “keep from” is used in only one other place in the New Testament, where Jesus says, “I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one” (Jn. 17:15). He is praying for complete deliverance from the evil one not a protection in the evil one. Thus, the promise is to be from the hour of the trial, that is, the period of time. Furthermore, it is simply not true that the Tribulation saints will be protected. They will be persecuted and martyred (Rev. 6:9-19; 7:9, 13, 14; 13:15; 14:13; 16:6; 18:24; 24:4).

Revelation 3:10 was explained in the discussion of Pre-Tribulationism, but here is what Ryrie said in his review of Gundry’s book. “The conclusion [of Gundry] is that the phrase τηρήσω ἐκ της ὥρας means emergence from within the hour or protection issuing in emission. Simply stated, this means that the church will go through the tribulation and emerge from it at its close at the second coming but will be kept in the meantime from the testing of that time. This conclusion is arrived at by examining other possible meanings of ἐκ and choosing ‘out from within’ as the correct one here; by stating that τηρέω means ‘guard’; and that thus the phrase means protection issuing in emission. Again the temptation to dismember a phrase has caught the author in an exegetical fault. For those for whom the almost tedious discussion of various shades of meaning of these and related words is unhelpful, if not meaningless, they should simply look up τηρέω ἐκ in the lexicon where the specific use in Revelation 3:10 is said to mean ‘protect someone from someone or something.’ The ‘something’ from which believers are promised protection is the ‘hour’ of worldwide trial which is coming. Apparently, recognizing the force of the total phrase (‘kept from the hour’) the author [Gundry] suggests two ways to ‘undercut the stress on the term hour’ (p. 59). One is to make the usual distinction between the events of the tribulation years and the time itself. The believer, we are told, will be present during the time but will be delivered from the experiences of that time and in this way he is kept from the hour. The other suggestion is that the hour of testing is not the entire seventieth week of Daniel (which the author considers to be yet future) but only the

very last crisis at the close of the tribulation. This is consistent with his view of the Day of the Lord, but no outline of the sequence of judgments of the Revelation can confine the 'hour of testing which shall come upon the whole earth' to the 'last crisis.' It does not seem that pretribulationist exegesis is the one guilty of non sequitur" (Ryrie, pp. 176,177).

For a detailed discussion of Revelation 3:10, see "The Rapture in Revelation 3:10" by Jeffrey Townsend at <https://www.pre-trib.org/articles/dr-thomas-ice/message/the-rapture-in-revelation-3-10/read>.

The Church in Revelation 4-18 In the book of Revelation, the church is mentioned as being the on earth before (chapters 1-3) and after (Rev. 22:16) the Tribulation, but it is not mentioned on earth during the Tribulation. Rather, during the Tribulation, the church is represented in heaven as twenty-four elders. Gundry says, "Possibly the twenty-four elders stand for the church. But then, 'elders' may merely denote twenty-four brings, human or celestial, who, quite apart from representation of the whole church as present, have official responsibility for leading the heavenly worship of God, a function we know they perform (4:9-11; 5:8-12)" (Gundry, p. 70).

The identity of the twenty-four elders as a representation of the church in heaven during the Tribulation is determined by what the text says about them. The twenty-four elders are clothed in white (Rev. 4:4) and the church at Sardis was told the overcomers would be clothed in white garments (Rev. 3:5). The twenty-four elders wear crowns of gold (Rev. 4:4) and members of the church are told they will receive crowns (Rev. 2:10; 3:11). Neither angels nor Israel are ever said to wear white robes and gold crowns.

Denial of Imminence Post-Tribulationist dismiss the doctrine of imminence by saying that the announcement of events such as the death of Peter (Jn. 21:18-19), the detention of Paul (Acts 23:11), and the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk. 21:20-24) make imminence impossible. Despite those apparent difficulties, many commentators who were not Pre-Tribulationist have concluded that the New Testament teaches imminence (see the discussion of imminence under the topic of Pre-Tribulationism above). If believers in the first century could preach and believe in the any-moment Rapture, certainly all believers who lived after the first century could also.

Post-Tribulationists who reject the doctrine of imminence say that the passages in the New Testament that Pre-Tribulationist use to support the doctrine of imminence are teaching nothing more than expectance (Gundry, p. 30). Those passages are not just saying expect; they are saying be ready, implying imminence (*cf.* Mt. 24:42 with Mt. 24:44).

Through Tribulation It is also argued that the New Testament teaches that the church will go through tribulations. Paul said, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Granted, the New Testament teaches that believers experience tribulations (plural) in this life, but it also speaks about a Tribulation, during which the wrath of God is poured out on the earth. As has been pointed out, believers will be delivered from the wrath to come, which means they will not go through the Tribulation.

To avoid the conclusion that believers experience the wrath of God, some Post-Tribulationists say that the church will experience the wrath of Satan (Gundy, p. 49) or men (Ockenga; see Walvoord, p. 141), but not God. It is like the children of Israel going through the plagues of Egypt but not experiencing them. While the plagues on Egypt were of such a nature that they may have fallen on the Egyptians and not the children of

Israel, the judgments of the Tribulation will not be like that. The judgments of the Tribulation include earthquakes, stars falling from heaven, war, and pestilence, which by their very nature are not “suitable for discriminatory judgment” (Walvoord, p. 142). Believers are promised that they will be delivered from the *day* of wrath, that is, the time during which wrath will be poured out upon the earth (Rev. 3:10; Walvoord, p. 142).

The Last Trumpet Like Mid-Tribulationists, the Post-Tribulationists use the reference to the last trumpet in 1 Corinthians 15:52 to support their position. The difference between the Mid-Tribulationists and the Post-Tribulationists is that the Post-Tribulationists claim that the last trumpet is at the end of the Tribulation instead of the middle of the Tribulation. The seventh trumpet is the end of the Tribulation (Reese, p. 73). Identifying the last trumpet with the seventh seal has been answered (see Mid-Tribulation above).

The Resurrection Citing passages from the Old Testament and the New Testament, Post-Tribulationists point out that the Scripture teaches the resurrection is at the end of the Tribulation just before the kingdom and, therefore, the Rapture is at the end of the Tribulation. For example, from the Old Testament, both Reeves and Gundry cite Isaiah 25:8, 26:19, and Daniel 12:1-3, 13.

Daniel 12 teaches that *after the Tribulation* (Dan. 12:1), the Old Testament saints will be raised from the dead (Dan. 12:2). Paul taught that *at the Rapture*, “the dead *in Christ* will rise” (1 Thess. 4:16, italics added). In light of these facts, there are two possibilities: 1) There is one resurrection at the end of the Tribulation, which means that the Rapture is at the end of the Tribulation. 2) There are two resurrections, one at the beginning of the Tribulation and the other at the end. Since the Old Testament saints are never described by the phrase “in Christ,” the expression “the dead in Christ will rise” (1 Thess. 4:16) includes only the church (Walvoord, p. 154) and, therefore, the resurrection at the end of the Tribulation does not prove a Post-Tribulation Rapture for the church.

Both Reeves and Gundry cite Luke 14:14-15, Luke 20:34-36, and John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11: 24, where Jesus spoke of the resurrection on the last day, which they interpreted to mean at the end of the Tribulation. Pentecost responds, “all apply to God’s program for Israel. If it be shown that this resurrection does take place at the second advent, it does not prove posttribulation rapturism, unless the church must be resurrected at the same point of time” (Pentecost, p. 200).

Reese says 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 “will settle the whole controversy” because it refers to Isaiah 28:5, which means Paul synchronizes the resurrection with the inauguration of the theocratic Kingdom (Reese, pp. 43-44). Pentecost points out that “Reese’s error is in supposing all the righteous dead must be raised at the same time. (Pentecost, p. 201).

Revelation 20:4-6 says, “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” (20:4-6). Ladd says that this is the only explicit statement of Post-Tribulationism in the Bible

and goes so far as to say that with the exception of this one passage, he will grant that the Scripture nowhere explicitly states that the church will go through the Great Tribulation (Ladd, p. 165).

So, what does this passage say? 1). John saw that judgment was committed to those sitting on the throne (Rev. 20:4a). This is a reference to the twenty-four elders who represent the church (Walvoord). Christ told the Apostles that they would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:29). Paul said that the saints would judge the world and angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3). 2) John saw martyred Tribulation saints who were resurrected will be raised to reign (Revelation 20:4b). The expression “they lived” implies that they were resurrected. 3). The rest of the dead, that is, the wicked dead (Smith), will be raised after the Millennium (Rev. 20:6, 12).

What is the first resurrection? It cannot be first in a temporal sequence since God has already resurrected Jesus Christ (Constable). Christ’s resurrection was the first fruits (1 Cor. 15:20). At the time of Christ’s resurrection, a “token number” of Old Testament saints were raised (Mt. 27:52-53) as part of the first fruits (Walvoord). Church saints will be raised at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16), which is before the Tribulation and the Old Testament saints will be raised at the end of the Tribulation (Dan. 12:1). Therefore, the “first resurrection” is not an event, but an “order of resurrection including all the righteous who are raised from the dead before the millennial kingdom begins.” They are “first” in contrast to the wicked dead, who will be raised after the millennium (Walvoord; Smith). As Constable points out, “Other names for this “first” resurrection are the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15), the resurrection from among the dead (Luke 20:34–36), the resurrection of life (John 5:29), and the resurrection to everlasting life (Dan. 12:2).”

Matthew 24:31 Jesus 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. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the **Son of Man** coming on the **clouds** of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His **angels** with a great sound of a **trumpet**, and they will gather together His **elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Mt. 24:29-31)

Paul wrote, “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. 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. 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).

The Post-Tribulation argument is that since both passages speak of the same things: 1) Jesus, 2) believers, 3) angels, 4) trumpets, 5) clouds, they are both describing the same event. Matthew 24 says this event is the Second Coming of Christ immediately after the Tribulation (Mt. 24:29-30,) and 1 Thessalonians 4 describes the Rapture. Therefore, since these events are the same, the Rapture is after the Tribulation.

Granted, there are some similarities between Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4, but there are also differences. Similarities do not prove sameness. Differences demonstrate that similarities are not conclusive proof of sameness. The differences demonstrate that two different events are being described.

In Matthew, the Son of Man *comes on* the clouds; in 1 Thessalonians, believers are *in them*. In Matthew, the *angels* gather the elect; in 1 Thessalonians, the archangel, who is not mentioned in Matthew 24, speaks (see the voice of the archangel); he does not do anything. In Matthew, *nothing* is said about a resurrection; in 1 Thessalonians, the resurrection is the *central point*. In Matthew, the elect (Jews; see the next paragraph) are gathered *after* Christ's arrival to earth; in 1 Thessalonians, believers are gathered *in the air* (the implication in Jn. 14:1-3 is that they are then taken to heaven). This last comparison alone is sufficient to demonstrate that two entirely different events are being described.

Matthew 24 mentions the elect; 1 Thessalonians 4 does not. Who are the elect in Matthew 24:31? In Isaiah 65:7-16, there is a sharp contrast between the believing Jewish remnant and unbelieving Israelites. God calls the believing remnant "mine elect" (Isa. 65:9). In the future, the elect remnant of Jews will be greatly blessed on the earth (Isa. 65:17-25). In Matthew 24, Jesus is speaking about the Jews, which is evident by His references to such things as the holy place (Mt. 24:15), the Sabbath (Mt. 24:20), and the Messiah (Mt. 24:23-24) during the Tribulation (Mt. 24:29). In that context, Jesus uses the word "elect" three times (Mt. 24:22, 24, 31). In other words, the elect in Matthew 24:31 is a reference to believing Jews during the Tribulation.

Matthew 24 says angels will "gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Jesus is using the language of Deuteronomy 30:4-5, which says, "If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord will gather you and from there He will bring you. And the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed and you shall possess it." In other words, Jesus is talking about the regathering of Israel after His Second Coming.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum says, "The Matthew passage is a rather simple summary of all that the prophets had to say about the second facet of Israel's final restoration. Its purpose was to make clear that the worldwide regathering predicted by the prophets will be fulfilled only after the second coming" (Fruchtenbaum, cited by Ice).

Showers points out how this is a description of the regathering of Israel rather than the Rapture. "First, because of Israel's persistent rebellion against God, He declared that He would scatter the Jews 'into all the winds' (Ezek. 5:10, 12) or 'toward all winds' (Ezek. 17:21). In Zechariah 2:6, God stated that He did scatter them abroad 'as four winds of the heavens.' ... God did scatter the Jews all over the world. Next, God also declared that in the future, Israel would be gathered from the east, west, north, and south, 'from the ends of the earth' (Isa. 43:5-7). We should note that in the context of this promise, God called Israel His 'chosen' (vv. 10, 20)... Just as Jesus indicated that the gathering of His elect from the four directions of the world will take place in conjunction with 'a great trumpet' (literal translation of the Greek text of Mt. 24:21), so Isaiah 27:13 teaches that the scattered children of Israel will be gathered to their homeland in conjunction with the blowing of 'a great trumpet' (literal translation of the Hebrew). Gerhard Friedrich wrote that in that future eschatological day 'a great horn shall be blown (Is. 27:13)' and the exiled will be brought back by that signal. Again he asserted that in conjunction with the blowing of the great trumpet of Isaiah 27:13, 'There follows the gathering of Israel and the return of the dispersed to Zion.' It is significant to note that Isaiah 27:13, which foretells this future regathering of Israel, is the only specific reference in the Old Testament to a 'great' trumpet. Although Isaiah 11:11-12 does not

refer to a great trumpet, it is parallel to Isaiah 27:13 because it refers to the same regathering of Israel. In its context, this passage indicates that when the Messiah (a root of Jesse, vv. 1, 10) comes to rule and transform the world as an 'ensign' (a banner), He will gather together the scattered remnant of His people Israel 'from the four corners of the earth' (Showers, cited by Ice).

To sum up, Matthew 24:31 is a reference to the regathering of Israel after the Second Coming of Christ and 1 Thessalonians 4 describes the Rapture of the church. According to Matthew 24:31, angels will *gather* the elect (Israel) together. According to 1 Thessalonians, the Rapture is the simultaneous resurrection of the dead saints and the *catching up* of living saints together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:15-17). Jesus will receive them *to Himself* (Jn. 14:3).

The cleansing of the Temple illustrates that similarity does not determine sameness. John says, "After this, He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days. Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and **Jesus** went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the **temple** those who **sold oxen and sheep and doves**, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and **overturned the tables**. And **He said** to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (Jn. 2:12-16).

Matthew states, "Then **Jesus** went into the **temple** of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and **overturned the tables** of the money changers and the seats of those who **sold doves**. And **He said** to them, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a 'DEN OF THIEVES'" (Mt. 21:12-13).

Mark puts it this way, "So they came to Jerusalem. Then **Jesus** went into the **temple** and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple and **overturned the tables** of the money changers and the seats of those who **sold doves**. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, **saying** to them, 'Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS'? But you have made it a 'DEN OF THIEVES'" (Mk. 11:15-17).

Luke records, "Then **He** went into the **temple** and began to drive out those who bought and **sold** in it, **saying** to them, 'It is written, 'MY HOUSE IS A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a 'DEN OF THIEVES'" (Lk. 19:45-48).

Since the Gospel of John and the synoptic Gospels speak of the same things: 1) Jesus, 2) Temple, 3) selling doves, 4) overturned the tables, 5) Jesus spoke, they are describing the same event. Therefore, since the two accounts describe the same event, Jesus only cleansed the Temple once.

Granted, there are some similarities between the Gospel of John and the synoptic Gospel's account of the cleansing of the Temple, but there are also differences. John clearly places the cleansing of the Temple *at the beginning* of Jesus' ministry. He says the first miracle was turning water into wine at Cana and "after this," Jesus went to Capernaum, where He stayed "a few days." Then he says that since the Passover was at hand, Jesus went to Jerusalem, where He cleansed the Temple (John 2:11-14). The synoptic Gospels place the cleansing of the Temple in the week before the crucifixion.

Aside from their being nearly three years apart, there are differences in the two events. In the first cleansing, Temple officials confronted Jesus immediately (Jn. 2:18), whereas, in the second cleansing, the chief priests and scribes confronted Him the following day (Mt. 21:17–23). In the first event, Jesus made a whip of cords with which to drive out the sellers, but there is no mention of a whip in the second cleansing. Therefore, Jesus cleansed the Temple twice.

Similarities do not prove sameness. Differences demonstrate that similarities are not conclusive proof of sameness. The differences demonstrate that two different events are being described.

The End In the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus says “At the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them into bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barns’” (Mt. 13:30). Gundry says that the week represents the Rapture, which is a postscript to the law (Gundry, p. 142). The order of events in this parable does not fit either the Pre-Tribulation or the Post-Tribulation Rapture. The tares are gathered first. As Pentecost observes, “The purpose of Matthew 13 is not to divulge the history of the church, but the history of the kingdom in its mystery form. The time is not that of the church—from Pentecost to the rapture—but the entire age from the rejection of Christ to His coming reception” (Pentecost, p. 202).

The Impossibility of a Post-Tribulation Rapture Based on the scenario given by the Lord, the Post-Tribulation position is not possible. Jesus said, “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. 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. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt. 25:31-34). Post-Tribulation teaches that the Rapture takes place at the end of the Tribulation. In other words, according to that view, the saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air and together, they returned to the air, but the picture painted by the Lord is that He would separate the saints and sinners *after* He returned to the earth. Hence, the Post-tribulation position is not possible because, according to it, the separation of the sheep and the goats takes place *after* the Lord returns to the earth.

Post-Tribulationism poses a problem for Post-Tribulationist who are also Pre-Millennial, namely, who will remain in earthly bodies to populate the millennial kingdom. If, as Post-Tribulation must say, the Rapture takes place at the end of the Tribulation, then all the saints have glorified bodies and, therefore, there would be no one left with an earthly body to enter the millennium. In addressing this problem, Gundry says, “We are therefore forced to put the judgment of nations after the millennium. For if it were to be placed beforehand, none of the wicked (goats) could enter the millennium” (Gundry, pp. 166-167). In his review of Gundry’s book, Ryrie says, “This is strange exegesis for a premillennialist (which Dr. Gundry is), for the Scripture is quite plain as to the time of the judgment as being ‘when the Son of man shall come in his glory’ and when He shall ‘sit upon the throne of his glory’ (Matt. 25:31). His understanding of this verse is that there is a gap within it of the thousand years of the millennium so that the judgment of the sheep and goats comes after the millennium.

“But where will believers in earthly bodies come from to populate the millennial kingdom? The author has two suggestions: either the judgment of believers will not take

place until the seventy-five days after the second coming (Dan. 12:12) which presumably would allow for some to believe after the posttribulational rapture and then be judged during those seventy-five days and enter the kingdom in earthly bodies (p. 164), or he thinks that the 144,000 will continue as sealed believers during the entire tribulation and then turn to Christ at the second coming and be those who populate the millennial earth (p. 82). Apparently, he does not explain how they can be on earth during all this time and sing ‘a new song before the throne, and before the four living ones, and the elders’ (Rev. 14:3). In summary: perhaps the clearest thing said about this question is the admission that posttribulationalism is ‘forced’ into their possible answers” (Ryrie, p. 78).

“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” (Jn. 14:2-3). The expression “My Father’s house” is a reference to heaven (Barclay; Morris). The Greek word translated “mansions” means “abode, station.” It was used of a station on a road where travelers found refreshments. The fact that there will be *many* such places is an indication that there will be room for all. The most natural way to understand “If I go to prepare a place for you, I will *come again*, and receive you to Myself, is not a reference to Pentecost or a believer’s death, as some supposed, but a reference to His Second Coming.

These statements leave the impression that Jesus would come back while the apostles were still alive. The passage also seems to imply that since He went to prepare a place for *them*, He would take *them* to that *place*. John Gill (1697-1771), a British Baptist pastor, theologian, and staunch Calvinist, who lived more than half a century before Darby, said John 14:2 means, “I will take you up with me to heaven; I will receive you into glory.” Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910), who also lived more than half a century before Darby, wrote Jesus takes “those for whom He had prepared the place to the place which He had prepared for them.” This scenario eliminates Post-Tribulationism, which has Jesus meeting believers in the air and *returning to the earth*.

Gundry argues that the Greek word translated “mansion” means “abode or an abiding place” and the remainder of the Upper Room Discourse indicates that it is a “spiritual abode in Christ rather than a material structure in heaven” (Gundry, p. 154). He then points to John 14:23, where Jesus said if anyone loves Him and keeps His word, He and the Father would make their abode with them (Gundry, p. 154). That interpretation is nonsense, a word that means “makes no sense.” Jesus said He was going to “prepare a *place* for you” (He said that twice), not have an abiding relationship with them!

Summary: The various views of the Rapture place it either at the beginning of the Tribulation, the middle of the Tribulation, somewhere between the middle and the end of the Tribulation, or the end of the Tribulation.

Pre-Tribulationism, Mid-Tribulationism, Pre-Wrath, and virtually all views of Post-Tribulationism teach that the church will *not* go through the Day of the Lord, which is the wrath of God. If the Day of the Lord begins at the start of the Tribulation, the Rapture is Pre-Tribulational.

Gundry’s book is more of an attack on Pre-Tribulationism than it is an exposition of his view of Post-Tribulationism.

Ryrie says Gundry's system of Post-Tribulationism forces either the exegesis or the system and that it is not easy to explain it, because it is not systematized (Ryrie, pp. 178-179). Here is Ryrie's summary of "some of the salient features" (Ryrie, p. 179).

"The seventieth week of Daniel is yet future, and the church will be on earth during that period (p. 49). The **144,000** will be a group of unsaved people who will be supernaturally protected from dying during that period so that they accept the Lord when He comes at the second coming and be those who populate the millennial kingdom (p. 82). The **twenty-four elders** are twenty-four beings who lead the worship of God in heaven (p. 70). On the earth, the church will not suffer the penal judgments of God but will endure persecution from other quarters (p. 51). She will be looking for the Lord's return though it will not be imminent and yet it will be in some sense imminent since the days will be shortened and no one will be able to predict with certainty the time of Christ's return (p. 42). The **Day of the Lord** will not begin with the tribulation or any part of it (p. 95), and yet it may begin before Armageddon because there may be a **peaceful lull** at that point (p. 92), which lull will fit somehow into the sequence of seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments which will find somewhat concurrent fulfillment (p. 75). The promise of Revelation 3:10 will be fulfilled when the church emerges from within the tribulation at its end. Then the Lord comes for His saints, meeting them in the air and continuing to descend with them to the earth (p. 159). There will be no formal judgment of living Israel at this point, but only a purging out of the rebels as the Lord brings them toward the promised land through heathen countries (p. 168). The so-called judgment of living Gentiles (**the sheep and the goats**) does not take place at the second coming at all, but after the millennium (p. 166). Believers will not be judged until after the millennium though they will receive their crowns of rewards at the second coming (Ryrie, p. 169, bold added).

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

The New Testament says a great deal about the fact that all believers must appear before a future Judgment Seat of Christ, but the phrase “Judgment Seat of Christ” only appears a few times. To thoroughly understand the subject, passages speaking about rewards, crowns, ruling in the kingdom, being an overcomer, and receiving an inheritance must also be examined. The following is an edited portion of “How God Treats His Children” by G. Michael Cocoris.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

The Greek word translated “judgment seat” (bema) means “a raised place, a platform reached by steps.” It appears twelve times in the New Testament (Mt. 27:19; Jn. 19:13; Acts 7:5, 12:21; 18:12, 16, 17; 25:6, 10, 17; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:19), but only two of those passages refer to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Romans 14:10 In Romans 14, Paul discusses the relationship between strong and weak believers. He begins by telling the strong to receive the weak (Rom. 14:1). The strong were those who believed that they could eat anything that was received with thanksgiving (1 Tim. 4:4-5). The weak were vegetarians (Rom. 14:2). Paul tells the strong not to despise the weak and the weak not to judge the strong (Rom. 14:3). Love dictates that believers receive each other and not judge one another concerning doubtful, debatable things. Believers are not to judge one another concerning doubtful things because each believer is accountable to his master (Rom. 14:4). After bringing up another debatable issue, the observance of days (Rom. 14:5-9), Paul asks, “Why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother?” (Rom. 14:10a). These two questions are addressed to two groups mentioned earlier: the strong and the weak. “Show contempt” is the translation of the same Greek word rendered “despise” in verse 3. Paul is asking, “Why do the weak judge the strong and why do the strong show contempt for the weak?”

Paul explains, “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10b). In other words, believers are accountable to their master, Christ, and they shall appear before Him. He is their sole judge. If that is the case, why judge or condemn? It is inappropriate for us to judge or despise another concerning doubtful things. We all must stand before Christ. He is Lord, not us.

Paul affirms this truth by quoting Scripture, “For it is written: As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God” (Rom. 14:11). This is a quote from Isaiah 45:23, where Isaiah is proclaiming the universal nature of God’s judgment. God will judge all men. Paul is applying the universal truth to believers.

Paul concludes, “Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way” (Rom. 14:13). Because God is the judge, we should not judge others, especially concerning doubtful things.

To sum up, Romans 14:1-11: believers should not judge one another concerning doubtful things because all believers belong to the Lord and are accountable to Him. All

believers must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The issue is not heaven or hell, but the nature of the judgment is that believers must *give an account of all that they do* (Rom. 14:12). The food they eat and the days they observe.

We are commanded to judge false doctrine (2 Cor. 11:4) and the difference between good and evil (1 Cor. 6:2-4). We are not to judge other believers concerning doubtful things. In Paul's day, the debatable items he had in mind were food and festivals, diet and days. In our day, it goes from A to Z. The modern list includes alcohol, bingo, cosmetics, dancing, eating pork, football on Sunday, going to movies, Halloween, insurance, jeans, kissing, lodges, newspapers on Sunday, opera, pants, rock music, smoking, TV, wine, x-rated movies, and zippers instead of buttons. Paul teaches that were not to judge one another in amoral issues. We are to know that we all have to give an account of ourselves to the Lord.

Second Corinthians 5:10 In 2 Corinthians 5, after Paul speaks of always being confident of being in heaven (2 Cor. 5:1-8), he says because he was confident he will be with the Lord, he made it his aim, whether present in the body or out of the body, to be well-pleasing to the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9). He adds, "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). In other words, the reason for aiming to please Him (2 Cor. 5:9) is not only because we will be with Him (2 Cor. 5:8), but also because all believers will stand before Him at the Judgment Seat to receive the things done in their life, according to what they did, whether what they did was good or bad.

Several words in verse 10 need to be explained. The Greek word translated "appear" means "to make visible, clear, known, manifest." Here it could refer to nothing more than an appearance like appearing in court before a judge. Or it could mean we must stand revealed in our true character. Hughes says, "To be made manifest means not just to appear, but to be laid bare, stripped of every outward facade of respectability, and openly revealed in full and true reality of one's character. All our hypocrisies and concealments, all our secret, intimate sins of thought and deed, will be open to the scrutiny of Christ."

Wow! Is Hughes reading something into this passage that is not there? Will our *thoughts*, as well as our deeds, be on display? Jesus said, "Every idle word men may speak, they will give an account of it in the day of judgment" (Mt. 12:36). That passage *may* be restricted to unbelievers, but Jesus told His *disciples*, "For there is nothing covered, that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops" (Lk. 12:1-3). James says the words of believers will be judged (Jas. 3:1). Paul says, "Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. 4:5). The "counsels of the hearts" refers to motives. The Lord's judgment will consider all the facts, including motives. The writer to the Hebrews says, "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom *we* [believers] must give an account" (Heb. 4:13, italics added). All believers must give an account to the all-seeing, all-knowing God. Paul says that everything believers do in their bodies (in their life) will be taken into consideration, both good and bad. In his book on rewards, Wall says, "Every thought,

every word, every deed, and every motive will one day be evaluated by Jesus” (Wall, p. 12).

Some Greek manuscripts read “bad” (*kakos* in the *Textus Receptus* and Majority Text) and some say “worthless” (*phaulon* in the Critical Text). Modern translations take *kakos* (bad; see “good or bad” in the NASB; NIV; ESV). No standard translation takes *phaulon* (worthless). Here is the way *kakos* is translated in the New Testament: “wicked men” (Mt. 21:41), “evil servant” (Mt. 24:48), “what evil has he done? (Mt. 27:23; Mk. 15:14), “out of the heart of men, proceeds evil thoughts” (Mk. 7:21), during his lifetime, Lazarus received “evil things” (Lk. 16:25) to name only a few.

The word Greek translated “received” means “to receive back, to get what is one’s own, to get an equivalent, to get one’s due.” Plummer says, ‘done’ is in the aorist tense, meaning the whole life of the individual is viewed as a unit. He adds that “good or bad” is in the neuter, indicating not acts done one by one, but our actions as a group are being considered” (Hughes, fn., p. 181). The believer’s entire life will be evaluated to determine what each believer will receive.

Thus, Paul declared that all believers will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ so that they may receive their due of all they did in their lifetime whether it was good or bad. Based on that, he concludes, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11a). The “terror of the Lord” is the fear of standing before the Lord and having one’s life “exposed and estimated” (Plummer). Barclay says, “This does not describe the fear of a dog, who waits for a whipping, or the fear of a cowed and beaten child. It is that reverence that keeps even a thoughtless man from desecrating a holy place. It is that fear which keeps a man from doing things which would break the heart of someone whom he loves.”

The reality of giving an account to the Lord motivated Paul to “persuade men.” Paul is speaking of the need to convince the Corinthian Christians of his sincerity and integrity (Plummer). The second half of verse 11 explains, “We persuade men, “but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences” (2 Cor. 5:11b). The Greek word that is translated “well known” here (twice) is the same word that was rendered “appear” in verse 10. It means “to make visible.” Paul is saying as he has been open to God’s view; he hopes he is open to their view (2 Cor. 4:2). Hodge explains, “Although misunderstood and defamed by others, he trusted that the Corinthian Christians as a body had an inward conviction of his integrity.”

To sum up 2 Corinthians 5:1-11: believers should make it their aim to be well-pleasing to the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9) because they are confident that they will be with the Lord and because they will stand before Him at the Judgment Seat to receive the things done in their life, according to what they did, whether what they did was good or bad. The reality of giving an account to the Lord should also motivate believers to persuade others they have sincerity and integrity.

Colossians 3:23-25 As in many other passages, Colossians 3:23-25 does not mention the Judgment Seat of Christ by name, but it discusses it. Paul told the slaves at Colosse, “Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23-24). The inheritance is usually explained as heaven (Eadie), but if inheritance is heaven, heaven is gained by works! The inheritance is a reward (see “reward consisting of inheritance” in the NASB margin; “an inheritance from the Lord as a reward” in the

NIV; “inheritance as your reward” in the ESV; compensation “consisting of the inheritance” in JFB; “just recompense consisting in the inheritance” in the *Expositors Greek NT*; and “inheritance... as a reward” in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*; see also Constable).

On the other hand, “He who does wrong will be repaid for the wrong which he has done; and there is no partiality” (Col. 3:25). The Greek word rendered “wrong” means “to do wrong, act wickedly, or criminally.” Paul used this word to describe the crime of Onesimus (Phlm. 18). The Greek word translated “repaid” means “to receive back” (it is the same word that appears in 2 Cor. 5:10). The question is, “When does this take place?” It is possible that Paul is describing the law of sowing and reaping in this life. On the other hand, the Greek word translated “repaid” is used of the Judgment Seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10. Bruce suggests that this implies that while the sowing is now, the reaping is at the Judgment Seat of Christ and says that it is difficult to understand how believers will be required for wrongdoing at the Judgment, but it is accord with biblical teaching. He adds that this is by no means to be contemplated lightly.

So the two passages that mention the Judgment Seat of Christ by name (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10) combined with Colossians 3:25 indicate that at the Judgment Seat of Christ, believers will give an account of all that they do (Rom. 14:10) and will be rewarded for the good things they do in life, and will be repaid for the “bad/evil” (2 Cor. 5:10), “wrong” (Col. 3:25) things they have done. Everything, including motives, will be evaluated (2 Cor. 5:10). To sum up, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, believers will give an account, be revealed, rewarded, and repaid.

These verses raise questions about the nature of a reward and the nature of repayment, but they do not supply the answers. What is good? What is bad/evil? What is the reward? What is the repayment? To answer those questions, several other biblical concepts need to be explored.

I do not know all that is involved in this process because, as far as I can determine, the New Testament does not answer all the questions. Based on what I do know, it seems to me that what the New Testament is probably saying is that all we do will be evaluated. Everything will be taken into consideration, and based on our final “grade,” we will be rewarded. Suppose in class you received As, Bs, and a few Fs. The final grade will take all you did into consideration, the As and the Fs. That final grade would be a B. That B, not the As or the Fs, would be your reward in heaven. In the meantime, what we do know for certain is that all believers will give an account of all they have done. Act accordingly.

Rewards

Passages with the Word The Greek word rendered “reward” means “wages, reward.” Wall says it carries the idea of payment for a job one is hired to do (Mt. 20:8), as well as honor for a job well done, possibly with some sacrifice (Lk. 6:23; Wall, p. 79). Referring to Luke 14:12-14, Lutzer says, “Christ did not shy away from calling rewards ‘repayments’” (Lutzer, p. 91).

From what is said about rewards, it is apparent that motives are an issue. If the motivation is to be *seen of others*, the reward is being seen of others; no reward will be received from the Lord (Mt. 6:1, 5; 6:2; see Col. 3:23-24, where doing things heartily as

unto the Lord receives a reward from the Lord). Loving others who will love you back does not get a reward (Mt. 5:46), but loving your enemies, doing good, and lending, *not hoping for anything in return* will get rewarded (Lk. 6:35). It is important that what is done for the Lord be done *willingly* (1 Cor. 9:17) as unto the Lord (Col. 3:24). Assuming the motives are right, those who work for the Lord will be rewarded according to their labor (1 Cor. 3:8). Even a small service, such as giving a cup of water (Mt. 10:42; Mk. 9:41), will be rewarded and a “great” reward is given to those who are persecuted for Christ’s sake (Mt. 5:12; Lk. 6:23).

The reference to rewards in 2 John 8 needs to be more carefully considered. It says, “Look to yourselves that you do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward” (2 Jn. 8). The unmistakable point of this statement in this context (verse 7) is that if these believers did not guard against the deceivers, they would lose their reward, not their salvation. So, they are first to look to themselves that “we do not lose those things we work for.” John regarded himself as a co-laborer of them; their loss would be shared by him. The statement certainly seems to indicate that they would lose that for which they had labored. What was it for which they had mutually labored? It was at least their spiritual maturity. John and others have labored to bring believers to spiritual maturity (Col. 1:28-29). They had labored to that end (Phil. 2:12). Paul expresses concern lest the Galatians do not reach spiritual maturity (Gal. 4:19) and he had labored in vain (Gal. 4:11). John expresses the same fear. Furthermore, John adds that they should look to themselves that “we may have a full reward.” If they did not effectively resist the false teaching of the false teachers, neither they nor John would receive the *full reward* they would otherwise obtain (Phil. 4:17).

“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” (Rev. 3:11). “We should not think that the loss of rewards means that Christ takes away from us something we once had. As Woodrow Kroll says, ‘We are not stripped of the rewards as an erring soldier is stripped of his stripes’” (Lutzer, p. 63).

One of the references to rewards (Rev. 22:12) seems to suggest that the Judgment Seat of Christ will take place immediately after the Lord comes. If that is the case, the Judgment Seat of Christ will take place immediately after the Rapture.

Passage without the Word Passages that refer to rewards without using the term indicate what is included in rewards. In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul spoke about being judged by the Lord (1 Cor. 4:4). He said that at that time, the Lord will “bring to light the hidden things of darkness and revealed the councils of the heart. Then each one’s praise will come from God” (1 Cor. 4:5). One of the rewards is praise from the Lord. It is hearing Him say, “Well done” (Mt. 25:21; Lk. 19:17). Those whose faith passed the test of painful trials will receive “praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:7; another indication that the Judgment Seat of Christ takes place immediately after the Rapture). One of the rewards is being honored by the Lord.

Teaching about being rewarded in the kingdom, Jesus spoke of a servant being told, “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” (Mt. 25:21). He also spoke of a servant being told, “Well *done*, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities” (Lk. 19:17). These references indicate that in the kingdom, one of the rewards is joy and another is being given the rule over one or more cities. Jesus said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust

destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Mt. 6:19-20). These three rewards are pleasure (joy), power (ruling), and possessions (treasure). In other words, instead of seeking pleasure, power, and possessions on the earth, seek first the kingdom of God here and you will receive *eternal* pleasure, power and possessions of in heaven.

The joy experienced by believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be like the joy experienced by college students at graduation. “Some have greater joy because of greater rewards, but all the graduates rejoice in the fact that they have graduated and they also rejoice in the honors given to their friends” (Wall, p. 61).

We are tempted with pleasure, possessions, and power. For example, Eve was tempted by pleasure (she saw it was good for food, Gen. 3:6), possessions (she saw it was pleasant to the eye, Gen. 3:6), and power (she saw would make a wise, Gen. 3:6). Satan tempted Jesus with pleasure (make these stones turned to bread, Mt. 4:3), power (throw yourself down and the angels will deliver you, Mt. 4:5) and possessions (I will give you the kingdoms of this world, Mt. 4:8-9). John warned about the temptation of pleasure (the lust of the flesh, 1 Jn. 2:16), possessions (the lust of the eye, 1 Jn. 2:16) and power (the pride of life, 1 Jn. 2:16). In the Mosaic Law, the Lord said that kings should not multiply themselves wives (pleasure), silver and gold (possessions), or power (horses; Deut. 17:14-20).

To sum up: Faithful Believers will be rewarded with praise, pleasure, possessions, and power.

Some object that being motivated by rewards is selfish. Being motivated by the hope of reward is not selfishness; it is self-interest. Whatever it is, Jesus commanded us to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven (Mt. 6:20; Lk. 6:35). In the final analysis, it’s not selfishness; it is a command! Men in the Scripture were motivated by a reward.

Abraham: “By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith, he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God” (Heb. 11:8-10).

Moses: “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward” (Heb. 11:24-26).

Paul: “But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:27).

The rewards are praise, pleasure (joy), power (ruling), and possessions (treasure). In other words, instead of seeking praise, pleasure, power, and possessions on the earth, seek first the kingdom of God here and you will receive *eternal* praise, pleasure, power, and possessions of in heaven.

Some react to the subject of rewards with an attitude of being content with “a little shack in heaven.” Those with such an attitude of the ones who are spending their energy to build a mansion on earth.

Crowns

In the New Testament, two Greek words are translated “crown:” *diadem* and *stephanos*. The *diadem* was a royal crown; it only appears three times in the New Testament and in all three cases, it refers to Jesus (Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 19:12). Believers do not receive the *diadem*. Believers are crowned with a *stephanos*.

The Crown of Life James says, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those that love Him” (Jas. 1:12). The Greek word translated “temptation” means either “trial” or “temptation.” In this verse, it should be rendered “trial” (see Jas. 1:2-11), because trials are endured; temptations are to be resisted, not endured. Furthermore, the only other place in the New Testament a crown of life is mentioned in Revelation 2:10 and there it is granted for enduring a trial, not resisting temptation. Therefore, the point of James 1:12 is that when believers endure a trial, they have demonstrated that they genuinely love Jesus Christ and, thus, they will receive a crown of life at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Crown of Righteousness Paul says, “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 crown of righteousness is not a crown consisting of righteousness. It is a crown that is a reward for righteous living. “That Day” is a reference to the Lord’s return and/or the Judgment Seat of Christ (see 2 Tim. 4:1). The crown of righteousness is available to all who love the Lord’s appearing. Those who love the Lord’s appearance purify themselves. The apostle John says, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 Jn. 3:2-3). Hence, loving His appearing motivates righteous living and results in a crown of righteousness in recognition of that.

The Crown of Rejoicing Paul says, “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown or rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy” (1 Thess. 2:19-20). Paul is telling the Thessalonians that his crown of rejoicing when Christ returns are those he has led to Christ. That would be his boasting, his joy, and his reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. No wonder he had a desire to return to see to it that they grew spiritually. They were his future reward. Notice, this suggests that the Judgment Seat of Christ occurs when Christ returns,

The Crown of Glory Peter tells elders that if they tend the flock with the right attitude, motive, and manner “and when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Pet. 5:4). The Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, will reward undershepherds when He returns. The elder’s reward, which they receive, not now but later and not by men but by God, will be eternal, not perishable.

The passages that speak about crowns indicate that rewards are given for exercising self-control, enduring trials, living righteously, and ministering to others.

An Imperishable Crown Paul says, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown” (1 Cor. 9:24-25b). Paul exhorts the

Corinthians to run in their spiritual lives in such a way as to win the prize, a crown that will not perish. To do that, they must be temperate in all things. “Temperate” means to exercise self-control. The one who runs must have self-control, not just in one area, but in all things. Using himself as an example of what a winner must do, Paul states, “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus, I fight; not as one who beats the air, but I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:27). The Greek word translated “discipline” was used of severe self-discipline and the one rendered “subjection” means “to lead about like a slave.” Paul makes certain that he controlled his body instead of it controlling him. The reason he put himself through this discipline was that he not be disqualified. He is not talking about his salvation; he is speaking of his service. Paul is not expressing worry about losing his salvation; he fears losing his crown, his reward for service.

Ruling in the Kingdom

Luke 19 In Luke 19, Jesus told a parable about a wealthy man who left on a trip. Before his departure, he gave a mina (worth about four months’ wages) to ten servants and told them to engage in business until he returned. When he returned, he asked for an accountant. The first to report had earned ten times what he had received. He was told, “Well done, good servant; because you been faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.” The second to report had earned five times what he was given. Like the first, he was told, “Well done, good servant because you been faithful in a very little, have authority over five cities” (see Lk. 19:12-19). The servants who believed what their master told them and did what they were told to do were rewarded with administrative responsibility. They rule in the kingdom.

Second Timothy 2 Paul talks about the possibility of reigning with Christ: “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him” (2 Tim. 2:12). Paul is talking about experiencing suffering (2 Tim. 2:10, where Paul uses the same Greek word for “endure”). Hence, here, endurance is about bearing the affliction that is heaped upon believers because of their relationship to Christ. If believers endure suffering for Christ in the present, they will reign with Christ in His future kingdom. This is not the first time Paul has mentioned or alluded to reward in this book (see “find mercy from the Lord in that day” in 1:18, “crowned” in 2:5, “first to partake of the crops” in 2:6, and “obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” in 2:10).

Revelation 3 In Revelation 3:21, Jesus says, “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.”

To sum up, Believers who faithfully serve the Lord will receive imperishable crowns and will rule in the kingdom.

Again, this way of speaking about rewards (crowns and ruling) reveals the requirements for rewards and the nature of rewards. As we have seen, the requirements include: doing whatever you do as unto the Lord (Col. 3: 23-25), not loving others who will love you back (Mt. 5:46), but loving your enemies, doing good, and lending, *not hoping for anything in return* will get rewarded (Lk. 6:35). Even a small service, such as giving a cup of water (Mt. 10:42; Mk. 9:41), will be rewarded and a “great” reward is

given to those who are persecuted for Christ's sake (Mt. 5:12; Lk. 6:23). To that list can be added, enduring trials (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10), righteous living (2 Tim. 4:8), ministering to others (1 Thess. 2:19-20; 1 Pet. 5:4), exercising self-control (1 Cor. 9:24-25b), and enduring suffering (suffering (2 Tim. 2:10, 12). As we have seen, the nature of rewards includes praise, pleasure, power (authority), and possessions. To that list can be added, being crowned and ruling with the Lord, which is the same as power.

Inheritance

The concept of inheritance is simple. Upon death, people leave their possessions as an inheritance to others. An heir is one who receives as an inheritance the possessions of someone who has died. Of course, it can be a bit more complex. A father with three children can leave his property to all three divided equally, or he can leave 50% of his property to one and 25% of his property to each of the two others. Then there is the possibility that he could leave 50% of his property to each of two of his children and "disinherit" the third child. So, the question is, "When the Bible talks about God the Father giving His children an inheritance, exactly what does that mean?" Does He give the same inheritance to all of His children? Or do some of His children get more of an inheritance than others?

In the Old Testament All Israelites received land in Canaan as an inheritance (Deut. 19:14; 25:19; 26:1; Ps. 105:10-11). Some Israelites, however, received a double inheritance (Deut. 21:15-17). Some inherited their land because of obedience (1 Chron. 28:8). Caleb inherited his land because he fully followed the Lord (Num. 14:24). So, in the Old Testament, all of God's children got an inheritance, but some of God's children got more of an inheritance than others.

In the New Testament All believers are heirs solely because of their faith in Christ. To say the same thing another way, all who have trusted Jesus Christ become children of God (Jn. 1:12), and all of God's children are heirs (Gal. 3:29; 4:7). Paul says, "And if children—heirs of God" (Rom. 8:17a). Sonship implies heirship. Their inheritance includes an expectation of eternal life (Titus 3:4-7). "All believers will inherit an eternal home in heaven, glorified bodies, eternal relationship with God that allows them to enter freely into the throne room of God. All believers enjoy the blessings of living forever in the new heavens and new earth, and all believers inherit the blessing of being with their beloved loved ones in eternity—all simply by faith" (Wall, p. 81).

Some believers have an additional inheritance because they did something beyond simply trusting Christ. After saying that all children of God are heirs, Paul adds, "and joint-heirs with Christ if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified together" (Rom. 8:17b). There are obviously two different heirships in this verse: the simple heir and the joint-heir. That is indicated not only by the fact that one is the heir of God and the other is the joint heir of Christ but also by the fact that the requirement to be an heir is simply to be a son, but the condition of joint heirship is suffering.

Commentaries agree. Murray says there is no sharing in Christ's glory unless there is sharing in his suffering (Murray, p. 299). Bruce says suffering is the indispensable prelude to glory (Bruce, p. 159; see also Godet). Martin Lloyd-Jones says, "There is it teaching in the Scripture which suggests that there may be a variation in the amount of

the inheritance dependent upon our conduct and behavior” (Lloyd-Jones, *The Sons of God: Exposition of Romans 8:5-17*, p. 40).

Christian slaves are told to obey their masters, knowing that from the Lord, they will receive the “reward of the inheritance” (Col. 3:23-24). In that sense, the believer’s inheritance is a reward in heaven, not heaven itself.

What must believers do to receive an additional inheritance? The meek shall inherit the earth (Mt. 5:5), that is, the meek, “those who do not demand their own rights, will have a special place of rule in the kingdom” (Wall, p. 83). The righteous, who help the needy, will inherit the kingdom (Mt. 25:34). Believers who are *rich* in faith are heirs of the kingdom (Jas. 2:5). Those who bless others will inherit a blessing (1 Pet. 3:9). Believers who suffer for Christ will be a joint-heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Those who heed what they have heard (Heb. 2:1) will inherit “eschatological salvation” (Heb. 1:14). Those who have faith and patience inherit the promises (Heb. 6:12, 14). The overcomer will inherit all things (Rev. 21:7).

To sum up the concept of inheritance: while all believers have an inheritance, faithful believers have an additional inheritance.

This concept reveals what things qualify the doer for additional rewards. Those things include not just having faith, but being rich in faith (Jas. 2:5), being obedient (Heb. 2:1; 1:14), being patient (Heb. 6:12, 14), overcoming (Rev. 21:7), being meek (Mt. 5:5), helping the needy (Mt. 2:34), blessing others (1 Pt. 3:9), and suffering for Christ (Rom. 8:17). This concept also indicates what the reward will be. This “additional” inheritance includes inheriting the earth (Mt. 5:5), the kingdom (Mt. 25:24, Jas. 2:5; Heb. 1:14; 6:12, 14), a blessing (1 Pet. 3:9), joint-heirship with Christ (Rom. 8:17), and all things (Rev. 21:7). These things seem to suggest some kind of ruling with Christ in the kingdom.

Summary: At the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Lord rewards faithful believers, as the study of the New Testament concepts of Judgment Seat of Christ, rewards, crowns, ruling in the kingdom, and inheritance demonstrates.

Those who grow in grace in this life will be rewarded in the next life. Peter writes, “But also for this very reason: giving all diligence; add to your faith virtue, faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:5-11). In short, believers who grow will be rewarded in the kingdom. They will have an *abundant* entrance into the kingdom.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

The Bible speaks of many judgments. The two main ones are the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgment. What does the Bible say about the Great White Throne Judgment? This is an edited version of my commentary on Revelation.

The Great White Throne

The Judge “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it. (Rev. 20:11a). Earlier in this chapter, “thrones” (plural) were seen (Rev. 20:4). Now, a single throne appears. There is only one throne because there is only one Judge (Swete). The throne is, no doubt, great in size, but, perhaps, it is called great because of the great issues involved (Smith) or the “grandeur of its authority” (Mounce). The color of the throne depicts the “absolute purity” (Swete) of the supreme Judge; it reflects the presence of the glory of God (Mounce). It symbolizes the “unapproachable purity of God” (Barclay).

The Judge on the Throne is not identified. Some say that the Judge is God (Smith; Mounce; Morris), but based on John 5:22, it is reasonable to assume that the Judge is Jesus Christ (Walvoord; Wiersbe). If Christ is the One on the throne, in this passage, He is called God (see Rev. 20:12).

The Universe “from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them” (20:11b). The fleeing away of the heaven and the earth is possibly the destruction of the present heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1). That has been called the “most natural interpretation” (Walvoord; see also Mounce). The universe may flee, but there is no place for it to go (Ps. 139:7). It is completely destroyed (Morris).

The Great Throng

The Throng “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God” (Rev. 20:12a). The dead are the wicked dead (Smith). The expression “small and great” indicates that the people before the throne are from all walks of life and all levels of greatness (Walvoord). It is an inclusive term, indicating that none will be missing (Smith). No one is so important as to be immune and no one is so unimportant for judgment to be inappropriate (Mounce).

The Judgment “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” (Rev. 20:12b). There are two kinds of books. The Book of Life contains the names of all who have trusted Jesus Christ for eternal life (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5, 17:8; Walvoord). It is also called the Lamb’s Book of Life (Rev. 13:8; 21:27). It is a roll of the citizens of the New Jerusalem (Swete). It has been suggested that it is called the Book of Life because it contains the names of those who have a part in the first resurrection (Smith). Perhaps, but it is, no doubt, called the Book of Life because it consists of the name of those who have the gift of divine eternal life. It contains the names of those to whom God has given eternal life (Morris).

The second classification of books is simply called “books.” The books contain a record of all the deeds of all the people who come before the Judge (Swete; Walvoord). Works will not determine eternal destiny. Belief or unbelief determines eternal destination (Jn. 3:16). The author of this book wrote another book that bears his name to clarify that issue (Jn. 20:30-31). The works of the unsaved determine the degree of punishment (Walvoord). The judgment will not be arbitrary. It will be based on written evidence (Swete). God is just; even the wicked will be judged according to their works (Smith). There are degrees of punishment in hell (Mt. 11:20-24). Barclay suggests that throughout our lives, we write our own destiny. Everyone is the author of his or her own story.

The Certainty of Appearance “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” (Rev. 20:13). The accidents of death will not prevent any of the dead from appearing before the Judge” (Swete). The resurrection of the dead from the sea demonstrates that all the dead will be raised regardless of the condition of their bodies (Walvoord). It also shows that no one will escape resurrection and judgment (Mounce). None will be overlooked (Morris).

At the Great White Throne Judgment, there will be a Judge, but no jury, no prosecutor, no defense attorney, and no appeal. Is that fair? In our judicial systems, a person convicted of a crime is entitled to appeal and maybe even be granted a re-trial. That judicial procedure is based on the assumption that a court may have made a mistake. God is just, and He does not make mistakes. The decree of punishment indicates that God is just. There will be no need for an appeal. So, all decisions will be final.

The Great Tragedy

Death and Hades “Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Rev. 20:14). Death is the physical fact and hell is the spiritual consequence (Swete). Death, the last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), is destroyed (Mounce). Hell is the temporary residence of unbelievers after death and the lake of fire is their permanent residence like the county jail is the temporary resident of a criminal and the federal penitentiary is their permanent residence.

The Unregenerate “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15). This judgment determines eternal destiny. The lake of fire was prepared for the devil and his angels (Mt. 24:41). Those whose names are not written in the book of life “share their fate” (Mounce). For a more specific list of those who will be in the lake of fire, see Revelation 21:8.

According to Revelation 20:10, the lake of fire will last forever and ever. The severity of the punishment demonstrates the seriousness of the crime. If you know the punishment, you know the seriousness of the crime: \$10 fine, \$500 fine, 30 days in jail, 10 years in jail, life in prison, execution. That means eternal separation from God is an indication of the most serious crime that can be committed, namely, not trusting Jesus Christ. Besides, if you trust Jesus Christ, you will not be judged (Jn. 5:24).

Summary: The last judgment consists of all unsaved people being judged according to their works to determine the degree of punishment in the eternal lake of fire.

THE ETERNAL STATE

In his commentary on Revelation, William Barclay says that there is an “unquenchable immortal longings in the soul of man.” He goes on to say that, however, much people in this world have, it is not enough to keep them longing for more. He adds that people instinctively feel “the need to be changed, the inadequacy of life as it is, the desperate need of what can only be called a new creation.”

We will experience this new creation in eternity. What will that eternal state be like? Earlier, John wrote that “the earth and the heaven fled away” from the presence of God (20:11), preparing the way for this vision (Swete).

The Place

The New Earth “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (Rev. 21:1a). Isaiah (Isa. 65:17, 66:22) and Peter (2 Pet. 3:13) both mention the new heaven and the new earth. The first heaven and the first earth shall pass away, that is, the present world will be destroyed (Mt. 24:35; Mk.13:31; Lk. 16:17, 21:33; 2 Pet. 3:10). A new heaven and new earth will replace the old. The Greek word translated “new” means “new in kind,” not just another (Sweet; Wiersbe). John is not looking for a new edition of the same, but nothing less than a complete transformation of all things (Morris).

“Also there was no more sea” (Rev. 21:1b). In the new earth, there will be no more seas, but that does not mean that there will be no more water (Wiersbe). The earth will have rivers (Rev. 22:2). For the ancients, the sea was not a highway linking shore to shore. It was spoken of separation and isolation. For John, who was exiled on the island of Patmos, the sea separated him from the churches of Asia (Swete).

Barclay points out that the ancient peoples hated the sea. Even though they voyaged long and far, they feared the sea. They did not possess the compass, and, therefore, as far as possible, they coasted along the shores. He says, “There is an old story of a man who was weary of battling with the sea. He put an oar on his shoulder and set out with the intention of journeying inland until he reached people who knew so little of the sea that they asked him what strange thing he carried on his shoulder.”

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” (Rev. 21:2). The new earth has a new metropolis, not another Babylon, but a greater Jerusalem (Swete), one that comes down out of heaven (Rev. 3:12).

The fact that the New Jerusalem is coming down from heaven indicates that it was created prior to this event. Jesus said that He would go to prepare a place for believers (Jn. 14:2). This is a city “whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

The New Jerusalem is prepared as a bride. Although the figure of bride is used in the New Testament of the church, Walvoord argues that the description of it in the remainder of this chapter indicates that the “saints of all ages are involved” (also Smith). Abraham looked for a city (Heb. 11:10, 16).

In the context of the book of Revelation, there is an obvious contract between two cities. One is called a harlot (Rev. 17:5, 18) and the other a bride (Rev. 21:2). It has been suggested that Revelation could be called *A Tale of Two Cities*, with the sub-title of, *The Harlot and the Bride* (Beasley-Murray, cited by Mounce).

The consummation of Christian hope is social (Hunter, cited by Mounce); it is a community, a city. Barclay says that Jews, until this day, pray this prayer in their synagogue: “And to Jerusalem, thy city returns with compassion, and dwell therein as thou hast promised; and rebuilt her speedily in our days, a structure everlasting; and the throne of David speedily establish there. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the builder of Jerusalem.”

The Promise

God's Presence “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’” (21:3). The great voice denotes that this is important and authoritative (Walvoord), “importance and urgency” (Smith). The New Jerusalem will be the Tabernacle of God. In the Old Testament, God dwelt in the Holiest of Holies of the Tabernacle. The New Jerusalem will house the new Tabernacle.

God will not only dwell in the new Tabernacle in the New Jerusalem, He will dwell with His people, indicating fellowship with the saints. He will fellowship with His people and, at the same time, be their God (Lev. 26:11-12; Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 37:12; Song of Salomon 6:3).

The Former Things “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” (21:4). God shall wipe away every tear (singular). Evidently, the tears are not the ones shed in heaven because of personal failure but the ones shed on earth because of suffering for Christ’s sake. The emphasis is on the comfort of God, not the sorrow of the saints (Walvoord). All sources of pain, including sorrow, crying, and death will pass away.

All Things “Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new’” (21:5). The speaker, of course, is God (Swete). This is a reversal of the curse (Morris).

The present system of heaven and earth emphasizes God’s separateness. The new heaven and the new earth will be characterized by God’s nearness. One commentator goes so far as to say that after the New Jerusalem descends, there “appears to be no difference between heaven and earth” (Morris).

The People

God instructs John to write, “And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’ And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End’” (21:5-6a). Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Here the Alpha and the Omega is God, the Father. In Revelation 22:13, it is

Jesus Christ (Swete). God is also the source and the end of all life (Swete; Mounce). He is the Originator and Completer of all things (Morris).

Barclay says, “*Alpha* is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and *omega* the last. Here John goes on to amplify this statement. God is the *beginning* and the *end*. The word for *beginning* is *arche*, and does not simply mean first in point of time, as something is in the first place of a series. It means first in the sense of the *source* and origin of all things. It means that God is the source and the origin from which all things draw their being; it means that all things have their beginning, their birth, their creation, their origin, their coming into being in and through God. The word for *end* is *telos*, and does not simply mean the end in point of time, the last thing in a series. It means the *goal*, the consummation, that in which things come to their completion and their end. John is saying that all life begins in God and ends in God.” See Romans 11:36.

The Thirsty “I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts” (21:6b). The water of life is eternal life (Jn. 4:14) and it is freely given. In other words, the *gift* of God is eternal life (Rom. 6:23). In an arid climate, such as Palestine, a spring of cool water represented “refreshment and satisfaction” (Mounce). The point, however, is that the water of eternal life is given to those who thirst. Unless people feel their thirst, they will not seek satisfaction (Morris).

The Overcomer “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (21:7). There is a difference between the thirsty individual who receives the gift of eternal life and the overcomer. The mention of the overcomer here “carries the reader back” (Swete) to the letters to the seven churches. In Revelation 2 and 3, the overcomer is the faithful believer. Those who endure will reign with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12), but not all will reign (Lk. 19:11-27).

Mounce summarizes what Revelation says about the inheritance of the overcomer. “It is the overcomer who is to inherit these blessings of the eternal state. In the letters to the seven churches, we learned that the overcomer will eat of the tree of life (Rev. 2:7), not be hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:11), be given hidden manna and a white stone (Rev. 2:17), receive power over the nations (Rev. 2:26), not have his name blotted from the book of life (3:5), be a pillar in the temple of God (Rev. 3:12), and sit with Christ on his throne (Rev. 3:21). All this is the inheritance of those who remain constant in their faith during the period of final testing.”

The Unbelieving In “sharp contrast” to the heritage of the conquerors is the doom of the unbelieving (Swete). “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). Who are the cowardly? They are unregenerate because this verse says that they are unbelieving and that they end up in the lake of fire. The unbelieving are those who did not trust Christ (Barclay). As Morris says, the sense is not that these are those who are “not to be trusted,” that is, those who in the testing time gave way, but those who lack all faith. The reason some unbelievers do not come to Christ, especially during a period of persecution, is they are cowards.

Various explanations have been given of the abominable, including people “whose very natures have been saturated with the abominations, which they practiced in their lifetime” (Swete), those who joined in the detestable and ritual of emperor worship (Mounce). Actually, the term is general and it is not defined with precision. It covers

defilement of various kinds, although it probably refers to the practice of heathen religions (Morris). Barclay says, “The polluted are those who allowed themselves to be stained, contaminated, infected, and finally saturated, impregnated, dyed-through and through with the evil of the world.”

The murderers may refer to those who committed acts of homicide under the tyranny of the beast (13:15; Mounce). Although all homicide is covered by the word, here a special reference is to persecutors (Morris).

The sexually immoral are those who practice sexual immorality (Mounce). There may be a reference to idol worship (Morris).

The sorcerers are those who were involved in the magical arts (Mounce). This term may also have “contain a side glance at such practices as making the image of the beast (13:15)” (Morris).

Idolatry had become the major vice of paganism (Mounce). Barclay puts it like this, “The idolaters are those who worshipped the idols and the false gods of whom the world was full.”

Liars are those who lie! Barclay expands on that by saying that they are “those who are guilty of untruth, insincerity, the falsehood of speech, and the silence which is also a lie.”

All unbelievers will have their “part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (21:8). Wiersbe points out that all the characteristics in verse 8 are true of the beast followers (17:4, 6, 18:3, 9, 19:2). Don’t join that crowd.

Summary: God is going to create a New Jerusalem on a new earth and dwell there with the thirsty and the overcomers, but the unbelieving will not be there.

CONCLUSION

The Bible is full of prophecy, some of which pertain to nations in ancient times. The Old Testament also predicted the coming of the Messiah, who would die and yet reign as King over nations on the earth. Some of the prophecies concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in the first coming of Jesus Christ, but many of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah have yet to be fulfilled.

The Old Testament, the Olivet Discourse, and the book of Revelation outline those future unfulfilled prophecies the same way. According to the Old Testament, God will pour out His judgment upon the world. Then, He will establish the Messianic Kingdom of God on the earth. That kingdom will be universal and eternal. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus said there would be a period of unparalleled Tribulation in the world (Mt. 24:21-26). Then, immediately after the Tribulation, the Son of Man would return (Mt. 24:29-30) to establish His kingdom over nations (Mt. 25:31-34), which will be forever (Mt. 25:41, 46). The book of Revelation contains the same sequence. First, there will be a period of divine judgment on the world (Rev. 4-18). Immediately after the Tribulation, Christ will return to establish His kingdom on the earth (Rev. 19- 20). The reign of Christ will extend into the eternal kingdom of God, the new heavens and earth (Rev. 21-22, especially 22:3-5).

The New Testament also teaches that the church will be Raptured before the seven-year Tribulation, which is the Day of the Lord's wrath. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

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