

# **PROPHECY PRIMER**

**(Second Edition)**

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## Introduction

Most Bible scholars would agree that end-time prophecy is the most difficult part of the book. It is so difficult that many preachers find the task of understanding it too daunting to seriously try. My hope is that the present book will change this by giving sufficient understanding to produce confidence and encouragement to pursue even more. At the same time, I hope all who read it will remember the admonition Christ gave to His apostles: “*And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch,*” (Mk 13:37). To “watch” means, among other things, to avoid being overly committed to preconceived theories about His second coming and to be ever-ready to adapt information as it becomes available. It also means to be ever-looking for such information, especially from His word, but also from world events about us.

This book tackles such difficult issues that it almost surely contains errors, but I am hoping it will give sufficient truth to enable the watchful to identify the errors and arrive at a better understanding. Oftentimes in forthcoming chapters I may present things in matter-of-fact ways, but I have done this to avoid wearying both the reader and myself with monotonous qualifications and disclaimers. The reader should understand I am still trying to obey the commandment to watch. As a consequence, I might uncover my own deficiencies in future years and be moved to write corrective editions of this book. I have written the present edition because I am now 63 years of age, and this is old enough that a man should not be making too many assumptions about length of life, health and soundness of mind.

I am also motivated by the fact that my father, Wilford (“Sonny”) Pyles, passed on November 3, 2019. I am indebted to him much more than any man for the understanding I hope to have on this subject. He was a diligent and enthusiastic student of prophecy from his youth, but died without leaving a systematic account of his views. My original intent was that we would be coauthors of this book, but such was not to be. Given the thousands who heard him preach and honored him, many will surely ask where he would have agreed or disagreed with this book. I can confidently answer that while he may have chosen different words in certain places, or been cautious where I have been bold, or bold where I have been cautious, he would not have significantly disagreed with anything. I know there would have been absolute agreement on the vast majority of what I have written, including on questions of where to be bold and where to be cautious. I am grateful to write upon this subject that was his love and intrigue.

One regard in which my father and I were in absolute agreement is that there are severe deficiencies in all of the standard models used to interpret Revelation (i.e. premillennial, postmillennial, amillennial, preterist). These models contain elements of truth, and a proper interpretation should therefore borrow from them, but none of them satisfactorily capture the larger picture. Consequently, the interpretations presented in this book may be unconventional at points, but I think, and surely hope, that the reader will find that when such occurs, the proposed interpretations are at greater accord with the intuitive import of the scriptural passages at issue.

To be watchful means that we not make too little of things we see about us, but it also means that we not make too much. Jesus warned, *“Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them,”* (Lk 21:8). Many Christians have been premature in their predictions as to the last days. These errors largely derived from a principle underlying Paul’s statement, *“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way,”* (2Thes 2:7).

Hence, Paul claimed that even 2000 years ago the devil was trying to implement his grand plan for the world. One must bear in mind that the devil does not know the time of Christ’s second coming. This is perhaps the most closely held secret of all time. As a consequence, the devil must assume that his next opportunity may be his last, and this is what he has been doing all along. Because of this, every generation of man since the times of Christ has seen workings of the devil that were intended to implement the plan that Bible prophecy describes. Such is true of our own generation, and at various parts of this book, I will note things in our present world that correlate to biblical prophecy. This does not mean that I am making predictions. It only means I am trying to watch, and I hope the reader will do the same, seriously considering all that I say in this book, but not investing so much confidence in it as to become complacent. *“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things,”* (2Tim 2:7).

## The Double-Fulfillment Principle

Any new student of the Bible is apt to perceive many difficulties in the interpretation of its prophecies, but I think further experience will show there is mostly one difficulty that occurs in many places. This difficulty is that the Bible will commonly take two separate but related future events and it will intermingle them in one statement of prophecy. The first event will typically foreshadow the second. The Bible student may find it impossible to completely fit the prophecy to either event, but can account for everything the prophecy says if he will consider both. Another possibility is that the prophecy will only approximately fit the foreshadowing event, but will have, or potentially have, an exact fit on the second.

The double-fulfillment phenomenon is a natural consequence of the fact that the Bible is replete with typology. It is so abundant that no sensible man would claim to have comprehended it. Oftentimes the typology will involve one event being orchestrated by divine providence so as to foreshadow another. Isaac being offered on Mount Moriah foreshadowed Christ being offered on Calvary. Joseph being betrayed by his brethren foreshadowed Christ being betrayed by His own people. The Assyrian invasion of Israel foreshadows the future invasion of Israel by the antichrist. Now if the foreshadowing event is itself of such significance that God would move prophets to predict it, then those predictions might, by the nature of the case, be descriptive of both events. This tendency would of course become even stronger if God deliberately structured the prediction to cover both events. There are in fact several reasons why God might have done exactly this, and I will get to these shortly, but I will first provide examples from scripture illustrating the double-fulfillment principle.

Many of the following scriptures will be more fully examined later in this book but are offered with brief explanation for now:

*1) For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. – Mt 16:27-28*

All who heard these words of Christ died long ago, and obviously did not witness His second coming, but only a few days later, three of them would see Him transfigured on the mount in an event that was doubtlessly a prelude to His second coming (2Pet 1:16-18). We can make sense of the prophecy only if we consider two events, with the first serving to foreshadow the second. This case is a clear illustration of the phenomenon, and since it came directly from the very Author of the Bible, we should expect to find the same tendencies elsewhere in His book.

*2) When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains. – Mt 24:15-16*

Every knowledgeable Jew then believed, and with very good reason, that the abomination of desolation described by Daniel had already been fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes. In truth, Daniel spoke of at least three different abominations of desolation, but even where speaking of the one pertaining to Antiochus, too much was said to fulfill the prophecy solely in him. For example, Daniel 8:8-27 predominately apply to Antiochus, but consider the following:

*And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. – Dn 8:10-11*

*And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be. – Dn 8:19*

*And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. – Dn 8:25*

Anyone familiar with the actual history of Antiochus might charge these statements with sensationalism, yet they all become completely sensible when it is understood that the Bible is setting up Antiochus as a type of Satan and of the man of sin. If we accept the idea that the two witnesses of Revelation 11 are Moses and Elijah, then before Satan is done, he will have undertaken to put three heavenly beings to death: Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Hence, he “*cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them,*” and since one of these is the very Son of God, “*Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host,*” or as it is put in the third quote, “*he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes.*” The deaths of all three will seem victories when they in fact spell defeat; hence, “*he shall be broken without hand,*” that is, God will destroy him, not man – a thing true of both Antiochus and of the man of sin. The second quote said these things will be accomplished “*in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be,*” which refers to the time when God’s judgments against the Jews will be complete, and though the Jews had a short period of respite after the death of Antiochus, these words cannot strictly apply to any time before the very end. Thus the prophecy is very sensible, but only when we see it as intermingling two related events.

*3) The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn. – Isa 61:1-2*

This passage served as the primary subject in the first recorded sermon of Christ (Lk 4:16-29). He said of it, “*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*” (vs 21). However, He did not quote the part about it being “*the day of vengeance of our God,*” nor did He quote other things

that would follow in the same chapter. All know that these other things will be accomplished at His *second* coming. Hence, we have one prophecy embracing both comings of Christ. All agree that the two comings of Christ are related events, but they are also separate events.

*4) And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. – 2Sam 7:12-16*

This was where God denied David's wish to build Him a temple, but God promised it would be built in the days of David's son. Now it is a well-known fact that David's son Solomon did build a magnificent temple, yet this prophecy says too much for Solomon in certain places, and can only pertain to the eternal spiritual house to be built by Jesus Christ.

*5) Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. – Isa 7:14-16*

This is one of the most famous prophecies of Jesus Christ, yet the latter part of the prophecy has no apparent application to Him; rather, these words were fulfilled in a child of Isaiah himself named Mahershalalhashbaz, yet this child obviously was not born of a virgin. We can fully account for all of the prophecy only if we consider both men.

*6) Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth. – Zech 4:7-10*

This is a prophecy of the construction of the second temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a governor of the Jews. Yet nearly all expositors agree that it is ultimately a prophecy of Christ, who would build a spiritual house. The plummet stone (i.e. "plumb bob") is portrayed as having seven eyes because it is exact, thus indicating that Christ would build the perfect temple.

*7) Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee; When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. The Lord of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. – Zech 9:12-16*

This prophecy had preliminary fulfillment in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, a wicked king over the Seleucid Kingdom. This kingdom derived from the Grecian empire of Alexander the Great. Antiochus was one of the greatest persecutors the Jews ever had, and he is used in the Bible as a type of the antichrist. The Jews were blessed with great valor against Antiochus and were able to defeat his forces against overwhelming odds, upon which the Jews gained their independence until being subjugated again by the Romans. The above is a prophecy of their valor in the struggle against the Greeks, yet the prophecy goes well beyond what then happened. The reason is that those events were used to foreshadow the second coming of Christ. At that time, the Jews will once again be blessed with great valor, though then “*the Lord shall be seen over them*” literally and visibly, and “*the Lord God shall blow the trumpet,*” referring to what the New Testament calls the “last trump,” upon which the dead will be raised. Also, the Lord “*shall go with whirlwinds of the south,*” referring to the direction from which He will come to Israel according to other verses in the Bible. Finally, “*their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land,*” referring to the final glorification of His saints. Hence, we can account for all parts of this prophecy only when we consider two different but related events.

*8) Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. – Jer 31:15-16*

This prophecy has Rachel weeping for the loss of her children who have been scattered, persecuted and killed by various world powers over the ages, yet in the explanation of Matthew 2:18, she is weeping specifically for the infants lost at Bethlehem in Herod’s attempt to destroy Christ. The applicability of the prophecy to the latter can also be seen in the fact that Rachel died and was buried in the very place where Christ was born. Also, she died giving birth to Benjamin, who she named “Benoni,” meaning son of sorrow, but after her death, Jacob changed the name to “Benjamin,” meaning the son of the right hand. Even so, Christ would be for a very



short time the Son of Sorrow, but is now the Son at the right hand of God. So a complete understanding of the prophecy requires knowledge of multiple events.

*9) Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. – Ezek 28:12-15*

In Ezekiel 26-28 we have a prophecy of the fall of the ancient city of Tyre along with its pompous king. The prophecy would be remarkably fulfilled years later when Tyre was attacked by Nebuchadnezzar and then by Alexander; however, this is yet another case where complete sense cannot be made of the prophecy with strict focus on those past events. These verses are also referring to Satan, whose fall was foreshadowed by the fall of the king of Tyre. The prophecy has both a preliminary and primary fulfillment.

*10) And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew 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 great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call. For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. – Joel 2:28-3:2*

Peter applied this prophecy to the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16), yet it plainly embraces an era extending to the end of the world. The outpouring of the Spirit on the Jewish remnant at Pentecost foreshadows a greater and more general outpouring that will take place immediately before Christ returns (Zech 12:10, Isa 11:1)

This list of ten is not complete, but I have taken scriptures from multiple prophets in both Old and New Testaments to show that the phenomenon is prevalent in the Bible. Failure to recognize this fact has been a formidable source of error. Bible students have attempted to force

fulfillment on one event, oftentimes becoming very imaginative and coercive in the process, when two different but related events were actually in view. The prophecy will be an exact fit when both are considered, but will not exactly fit the first and foreshadowing event, and sometimes will not even fit the second event when considered by itself.

Failure to achieve fit under intuitive interpretation has then led many to retreat to very non-intuitive alternatives, even to the extent of replacing their hermeneutic for the entire Bible. Others have strained to fulfill prophecies in past events by putting meanings on scriptural statements that are far-removed from what first impression would suggest. These also rely too much on uninspired historical sources that are few in number and that are not everywhere credible. Then, after resorting to such extremities, they are still left with a system having glaring deficiencies. While no rule of interpretation avoids all difficulties, I believe recognition and respect for the double-fulfillment phenomenon does as much to resolve difficulties as any other measure. The literalists commonly quote their rule: "If the literal sense makes sense, then seek no other sense." This is a good rule but it is no magic bullet. The reason is that all men follow it automatically and instinctively anyway. Whether preterists, premillennialists, amillennialists, postmillennialists or whatever, all of them would have opted for simple, intuitive interpretations of difficult and controversial passages had this yielded results they deemed sensible, but there is no way to sensibly fulfill a prophecy in one event when it was actually designed to embrace two.

All of this raises the crucial question: Why did God write prophecy this way? While we need not answer this question to validate the relevance of the phenomenon, there are nonetheless several plausible explanations:

- 1) To give corroboration to long-term prophets. – If a man were called to the business of prophesying things a thousand years into the future, then for the next thousand years, people would have no way of knowing whether they should heed him. God takes care of this problem by bringing about a preliminary fulfillment of the prophecy to endorse the prophet.
- 2) To make the prophecy difficult to interpret. – The reason the Bible is difficult to understand is because God has deliberately made it such. This is abundantly confirmed by the following passages, which are but a sample on this subject:

*And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their*

*eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. – Mt 13:10-17*

*But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. – 1Cor 1:27-29*

*But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. – 1Cor 2:7*

*And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. – 2Thes 2:11-12*

God has made the Bible difficult even for His own children so that they must labor for the precious reward of understanding it. Indeed, God has not made any form of knowledge cheap, much less knowledge of Himself.

3) To dupe the allies of Satan, and possibly Satan himself, into dismissing the prophecy as already past. This possibility is one that Christians should take very seriously. Preterism is the doctrine that tends to say Biblical prophecies are already fulfilled, and some preterists have been so extreme as to say that even the resurrection is past. Preterism is potentially dangerous because there is enough truth in it to make it very credible, but when it is carried to such extremes as to negate Christ's command to be ever watchful of His coming, then it may justifiably be called "heresy." Many Christians have been caught up in it, and I think that in so doing, they may have unwittingly stuck their foot in a trap intended for wicked men and devils. Surely, all have asked how these wicked characters could be bent on carrying through with a plan whose defeat has already been revealed by God, particularly when He has even revealed much about His strategy for defeating it. One possible answer is that many of these wicked characters might tend to be preteristic about the prophecies. If so, then they think, or will think, these prophecies have already been fulfilled and no longer pose a threat. When God commanded Ezekiel to prophesy of the pending fall of Israel, the prophet despairingly replied, "*Ah Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?*" (Ezek 20:49). That is, the prophet knew his hearers would find creative ways to dismiss his prophecy, thus sealing their own doom.

The Bible teaches that carnal man is hopelessly prejudicial, and this is why he will not receive the things of the Spirit of God (1Cor 2:14). This means that if carnal man is given a molehill of evidence supporting what he *wants* to believe, and if this is placed in the shadow of a mountain

of evidence to refute it, then carnal man will proudly perch atop his molehill every time. Devils might very well have the same tendencies. So if it is in the interest of carnal men and devils to believe these prophecies are already fulfilled, then it is a safe bet this is exactly what they will do, and neither this book nor any other will persuade them otherwise. God knows this, and it could be that by means of such, "*He taketh the wise in their own craftiness,*" (1Cor 3:19).

## The Olivet Discourse

One of the most important prophecies in all the Bible is the so-called “Olivet Discourse” where Jesus gave the most lengthy of His prophecies outside the book of Revelation. The prophecy is of such importance that it is recorded in three places in scripture: Matthew 24 & 25, Mark 13 and Luke 21. The prophecy was prompted by an event earlier in the day where the disciples beheld the temple with great admiration, but Jesus was unimpressed, saying the time would come in which it would be completely torn down. The disciples responded by asking, “*Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*” (Mt 24:3). In the answer that followed, all three parts of this question seemed to have been addressed; however, the Savior said late in His reply, “*This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled,*” (vs 34). This single statement has done as much to motivate the doctrine of preterism as any other part of the Bible. Notwithstanding a mountain of evidence to the contrary, preterists insist that the prophecy must have been fully and finally fulfilled in those past times, and this they say mostly happened at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

In reply to all this, the position of the preterists may be summarily dismissed by noting that Jesus at an earlier point told His disciples, “*There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom*” (Mt 16:28), yet this did not mean that His actual second coming occurred in their lifetimes. The prophecy was actually fulfilled on the mount of transfiguration. Of the three who accompanied Him there, two were dead even before AD 70, and perhaps all of the disciples were dead except for John. The actual meaning was that three of them would see an event that *prefigured* and *certified* His second coming, and this is very near to the meaning in Matthew 24:34.

Further, to say that a thing will be fulfilled does not necessarily mean it will be *finally* fulfilled, as has already been shown in the chapter on double fulfillment. Add to this the fact that the expression “*this generation*” does not necessarily mean the apostles’ generation but could mean the generation that beholds the numerous signs the Savior had just given. The meaning would then be that the same generation that beheld these signs would also behold His coming, or that the signs would precede the signified event by less than a lifespan. This explanation would be right in principle even if wrong about the Savior’s actual intents. Jesus elsewhere said those days would be shortened for the elect’s sake (Mt 24:22), and much of Revelation transpires over a period of merely 3.5 years.

The Bible is also replete with evidence that the apostles did not interpret the Olivet Discourse the same as preterists. Nowhere did they apply this prophecy to AD 70, and indeed, scarcely did they ever make clearly identifiable references to this event, much less give it the momentous role it plays in preterism. On the other hand, the apostle’s repeatedly alluded to the Olivet Discourse when speaking of the end of time and the return of Christ. Consider the following:

1) Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse that His coming would occur with the sound of a trumpet:

*And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. – Mt 24:30-31*

This is the only time in the Bible where Jesus associated a trumpet with His return. Now observe what the apostles said about the trumpet:

*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. – 1Cor 15:51-52*

*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. – 1Thes 4:15-18*

*And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. – Rev 10:5-7*

If these three scriptures are referring to Christ's statement about the trumpet, there can be no doubt that both Paul and John believed the Olivet Discourse pertained to the end of time. Further, observe that Paul claimed to be conveying the word of the Lord in 1Thessalonians 4:15-18, suggesting that he based his claims on something Jesus Himself taught. Since Jesus never associated a trumpet with His return anywhere other than in the Olivet Discourse, it seems very likely that Paul had this discourse in mind when he penned his words.

2) In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus compared His coming to that of a thief:

*But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. – Mt 24:43*

Consider how Paul and Peter used this same analogy:

*But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. – 1Thes 5:1-2*

*But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. – 2Pet 3:7-13*

The first scripture is a continuation of Paul's comments in the fourth chapter where he described the resurrection and the translation of the final day saints. It plainly refers to the end of time. As for Peter's statement, it must also pertain to the end for multiple reasons: First, it describes the destruction of the heavens and earth by fire, and this destruction is placed on the same order as the destruction of the flood in the days of Noah (vss 5-7). Since one was literal, we should expect the other to be literal also. Since one was universal, the same should be true of the other. Second, the events described are to occur after a prolonged period of time – sufficiently long that scoffers will dismiss them on this basis (vss 3,4). Yet Peter's book is thought to have been written only about four years prior to A.D. 70. Further, Peter suggested that thousands of years could elapse before the fulfillment of these things (vs 8). Third, Peter applied this prophecy to a time he called *the last days* (vs 3), clearly suggesting that he was not in the last days. Fourth, God's longsuffering for the world did not come to an end in A.D. 70, as will be the case in the times described by Peter. Fifth, the times contemplated by the prophecy lead to the New Heavens and Earth. Some say the New Heavens and Earth are literal. Others say these are allegorical descriptions of the church. AD 70 was too early for one and too late for the other.

So both Paul and Peter compared Christ's second coming to that of a thief, which is exactly how Christ Himself described it in the Olivet Discourse.

3) Jesus claimed in the Olivet Discourse that His coming would be with clouds:

*And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the*

*powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. – Lk 21:25-28*

To this we may add that Jesus ascended into a cloud, and it was claimed He would return in like manner (Acts 1:9-11). Further, His glorification on the mount of transfiguration was a prelude to His visible return (Mt 16:28, 2Pet 1:16-18), and the Bible states that He was transfigured in a cloud (Mt 17:5, Mk 9:7, Lk 9:34).

Upon two occasions, the apostles also associated His second coming with clouds:

*Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. – 1Thes 4:17*

*Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. – Rev 1:7*

The first of these scriptures obviously pertains to the final coming of Christ, and the second scripture almost surely does the same inasmuch as it is about His *visible* return. There is no better theory than that the apostles took this idea about clouds from the Olivet Discourse, but this would mean they took the prophecy to pertain to the final, visible coming of Christ.

4) Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse that His coming would be accompanied by angels:

*And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. – Mk 13:26,27*

Once again, an apostle described the second coming in the same terms:

*And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. – 2Thes 1:7-10*

This text must describe the final coming of Christ. It was addressed to a Gentile church. Since Gentiles generally were not being persecuted by Jews, the vengeance under consideration could not be the destruction of Jerusalem. The text also describes Christ as being *revealed* from heaven along with His angels. This did not occur in A.D. 70. Further, the text describes a time in which everlasting destruction is administered to the wicked, and in which the saints are glorified. This being the case, if the assertions of this text regarding angels were motivated by the Olivet Discourse, this shows that Paul interpreted the discourse as pertaining to the last days.



Observe also that the Olivet Discourse has Christ gathering His elect not only from earth but also from heaven. This did not happen at A.D. 70, nor could it be fulfilled at any time other than the end of the world.

5) In the Olivet Discourse, Christ compared the times of His coming to the times of Noah:

*But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. – Mt 24:37-42*

There is but one place in the scriptures where an apostle compared the days of Christ's coming to the days of Noah:

*Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. – 2Pet 3:3-7*

None could reasonably question that this statement pertains to the end of the world. Under no stretch of any sane imagination could it apply to A.D. 70. If Peter inferred this correlation between the end of the world and the days of Noah from the Olivet Discourse, then this says he understood the Olivet Discourse as pertaining to the end of the world.

6) Christ said in the Olivet Discourse that the days of tribulation prior to His coming would be analogous to travail upon a woman:

*For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows (The word in the original imports the pains of a woman in travail). – Mk 13:8*

Compare this with what Paul said:

*For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. – 1Thes 5:3*

Again, the words of Paul must apply to the end of time, as is made evident by considering the context. The common analogy of a woman in travail adds yet more evidence that Paul interpreted the Olivet Discourse as applying to the times of the resurrection, the general destruction of the wicked, etc.

While the Olivet Discourse doubtlessly had applicability to the events of A.D. 70, all evidence says the apostles saw the emphasis of that prophecy as being the final, personal, visible, resurrecting, wicked-destroying, world-ending coming of Jesus Christ.

The Olivet Discourse was a speech by the Author of the Bible and it therefore contains the same patterns seen *all over the Bible*; namely, the prophecy intermingles two related but separate future events, with the first event serving to foreshadow the second.

## The Conversion of the Jews

The scriptures are so replete with prophecies saying the Jews will be turned to Christ in the last days that it should not be necessary to defend such a claim. Notwithstanding, I will begin here by offering answers to those who are in objection, then follow this with scriptural proof that such a conversion will actually take place, presenting also key details that will accompany the event.

There are some who say a Jewish conversion cannot take place simply because there are no true Jews left in the world today. The claim is that they have been assimilated into the other peoples of the world and have lost their identity. The first problem with this argument is that even in biblical times the Jews were intermarrying other races, and Jesus Himself had Gentile women in His genealogy, yet neither He nor other Jews of His times were ever characterized as being mongrelized. When mixed marriages took place, there were rules dictating whether the children were Jews or non-Jews. They were not viewed as half of one and half of the other. The genealogy of Jesus indicates that God's rule was to classify the child the same as the father. Also, if Jewish identity were to be lost through assimilation, then surely there would have been some prophecy predicting this or even warning of it. There is nothing of the kind. Add to this the fact that God has resolutely sworn to preserve them as a race:

*Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the Lord; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord. – Jer 31:35-37*

The next objection says that terms like “Jew” and “Israel” have been redefined. This is commonly called “replacement theology,” and is believed not only by many Christians but also by Moslems. While this idea has respectable basis in truth, it is oftentimes carried to dubious extremes. Its proponents commonly switch between old and new definitions in very convenient and self-gratifying ways. A typical rule is that if something bad is being said about “Jews,” then this means the old natural Jews, but if something good is being said, the new definition applies wherein, of course, the proponent is the Jew. Indeed, some will switch between old and new definitions within the very same narrative. Romans 9-11 is a prime example where this is commonly done. There is no denial that the New Testament presents us with the concept of a “spiritual Jew” who might actually be a Gentile by nature, but such occurrences are not as common as is claimed, and nowhere is this concept presented in such a way as to imply the extinction of the Jewish race. Indeed, quite the opposite is true.

For example, consider the following text, which is a favorite to replacement theology:

*For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. – Rom 2:28-29*

If anyone thinks the intent here was to abolish the Jew/Gentile distinction, then let them consider that the apostle continued to make this distinction in the very next verse and throughout the next chapter. In the ninth chapter of the same book, he defined “Israelites” as being: his kinsmen according to the flesh; those to whom the Law was given; the descendants of the fathers and those of whom Christ came according to the flesh. The narrative covering Romans 9-11 continued to make the Jew/Gentile distinction throughout. His powerful imagery of the good and wild olive branches (11:16-24) had its very basis in the distinction. He also clearly implied that the distinction will pertain till the end of time:

*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. – Rom 11:25-31*

The distinction between Jew and Gentile is made in the book of Revelation itself. In the 11th chapter we have mention of a temple and of the city of Jerusalem – both Jewish entities. We also have mention of Gentiles (vs 2). Obviously, if the term “Gentile” is relevant, then so is the term “Jew.” Even if “Jew” is sometimes used metaphorically in the Bible, seldom is this true of “Gentile,” so when the Bible draws contrast between Jew and Gentile, metaphor is not intended. In the 12th chapter of Revelation, we have imagery involving a woman who is obviously a symbol of Christianized Jews. Though some have claimed her to be a picture of the general church, this is surely amiss since she gave birth to a man child “*who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne,*” (vs 5). None would question that the man child is Christ, but the church is not Christ’s mother. It is His virgin bride. These are two very different things. The church did not give birth to Christ; rather, Christ gave birth to the church. The woman is clearly Jewish.

In proof of the claim that the elect Jews will one day be converted to Christ, the verse quoted above should be sufficient. It said, “*blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved.*” So God is presently harvesting an elect people among the Gentiles, but when this is done, He will take away the blindness of the Jews and they will be converted. Jesus implied the same:

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. – Mt 23:37-39*

Christ is clearly speaking to the occupants of the worldly Jerusalem, the same city that rejected Him and would crucify Him in short time. He said that very city would not see Him again until it acknowledged and praised Him for His true identity. That city will surely see Him again since “every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him” (Rev 1:7); therefore, it surely follows that the same city, or the elect within it, will be converted to Christ before He comes. I need not present any further proof to a reasonable mind, but will do so in search of accompanying details.

In Deuteronomy 30, after prophesying that the Jews would be dispersed over the entire world for their rebellion, God promised to restore them to their land, gathering them from the utmost extremities of the earth, and after doing such, He further promised:

*And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. – Deut 30:6-7*

An important feature of this prophecy is that it has Israel receiving circumcision of heart *after* being gathered out of the nations. Those who dismiss modern Israel as having no biblical significance on account of its unbelief have evidently not considered this passage. The order cannot be dismissed as coincidental because it occurs elsewhere, including in Ezekiel:

*Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. – Ezek 36:22-27*

So we have God bringing about a change of heart in Israel after they are gathered back to their land. Ezekiel will reaffirm this pattern in his 37th chapter in the vision of the dry bones. Here the nation is resurrected, but in two stages. In the first stage, the bones are brought together and

covered with flesh, but the bodies remained dead, denoting the spiritual state of the nation when first gathered, but in the second stage, the wind, representing the Spirit, blows across the bodies and quickens them to life.

The same order is observed in Jeremiah:

*Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. – Jer 32:37-40*

Further proof of the future conversion of the Jews can be found in Zechariah 12:

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. – Zech 12:9-10*

This remarkable prophecy sees both the crucifixion of Christ at His first coming and the conversion of the Jews to Him before His second. This prophecy also adds another important detail, namely, that the Jews will be turned to Christ while the nation is under threat of a formidable, latter-day invader. This detail is asserted in other scriptures, including the following verses in Zephaniah:

*Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent. – Zeph 3:8-9*

Turning the people to a “pure language” means to turn them to a true and sincere religious profession. Zephaniah and Zechariah both claimed this will occur in conjunction with the gathering and destruction of all heathen nations. Further corroboration is in Joel:

*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew 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 great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call. – Joel 2:28-32*

These verses will be fulfilled over an era of time that commenced on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21) when the Spirit was poured out on the Jewish remnant making up the initial church. The era will end with the second coming of Christ and the destruction of the world, but this will be preceded by yet another outpouring of the Spirit upon the Jewish people, or what Zechariah called a pouring out of “*the spirit of grace and of supplications*,” and this outpouring will be more extensive than the one before. In the next few verses, Joel corroborates Zechariah’s claim that this will take place in a time of trouble when invaders would enter the land:

*For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. – Joel 3:1-2*

These two gatherings of the Jews unto Christ were also prophesied by Isaiah. The first gathering was of the remnant in the times of Christ and His apostles. This was considered in Isaiah:

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land. – Isa 10:20-23*

Paul applied this prophecy to the Christian Jews of his own times (Rom 9:27-28). This gathering produced only a remnant because of a “*consumption*” decreed upon the land, meaning that the land would be destroyed and desolated before the gathering could take much effect. When Paul quoted this text, he paraphrased, saying, “*For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth*,” (Rom 9:28). The meaning is the same, or that the gathering would produce only a remnant because of the time being cut short. However, Isaiah spoke in his next chapter of a second gathering that would be more extensive:

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall*

*assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. – Isa 11:11-12*

We can add to all these verses several Old Testament prophecies that the Jews will be converted to “David” their king in the latter days (Isa 55:3-13, Jer 33:14-26, Ezek 34:23-24, 37:24-25, Hos 3:4-5). Nearly all Bible scholars agree that “David” in these verses is an alternate name for Christ. Notice in particular:

*For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days. – Hos 3:4-5*

This text describes both the present state of things and things that are to come. It says that the children of Israel will abide many days without a king and without a sacrifice, suggesting they will be without a priest too, yet, curiously, they will also be without an image. In old times when the Jews were punished, it was nearly always on account of images; however, here they are void of images but still deprived. This is referring to the span of time from Jesus Christ to the present day. While the Jews have not been worshipping idols over this period, they have nonetheless been under the punishment of God because of their rejection of the Messiah. They have since been without a king or priest on earth because their true King and Priest is in Heaven. Still, the text says they will be turned to “David” in the latter days.

Paul viewed himself as being a sign and symbol of the future conversion of the Jews. He said he was “*born out of due time*” (1Cor 15:8) or as an abortive. His meaning was that his proper place was not with the apostles of long ago, but with those rebellious, unbelieving Jews of the latter days who would be the special objects of God’s grace, but that he was cast from the womb early and given grace to serve as a sign for those who would follow. As he said elsewhere, “*Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting,*” (1Tim 1:16). Accordingly, when he sought to show that God had not cast His people away, he adduced only himself as the proof (Rom 11:1), even though he might have included many others. He viewed himself as being the sign of hope to the unbelieving Jews, yet, ironically, they likely hated him more than any Christian of his times.

Jesus said, “*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come,*” (Mt 24:14). The gospel started in Jerusalem and has spread across the earth, generally travelling in a westward direction. It will end where it started, back at Jerusalem, and the conversion of the Jews will then be as “*life from the dead*” (Rom 11:15). This will be true in a spiritual sense, but I think in a bodily sense also. When the elect Jews are converted, the resurrection will be very nigh.



## Jeremiah's Prophecy of the 70 Years

In this chapter I will consider Jeremiah's prophecy that the Jews would be under the oppression of the Babylonians for 70 years. While this prophecy has already been fulfilled, its analysis will require background information that will prove important for understanding the futuristic prophecies to be considered later. Jeremiah's prophecy was famous to believing Jews and was stated or cited in several places in the Bible, including these verses:

*And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. – Jer 25:11-12*

*For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. – Jer 29:10-11*

Daniel's famous prophecies in his ninth chapter were prompted by consideration of these very texts. This chapter begins with the words:

*In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.- Dn 9:1-2*

The prophecy is stated again in 2Chronicles but in a way that suggests a different interpretation:

*And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years. – 2Chron 36:19-21*

Bible students have not all agreed on how to reconcile these prophecies with the actual chronology. There is disagreement as to where the 70-year interval began and ended. Much of this disagreement derives from differences between the last prophecy quoted above and those quoted before it. Also, some believe the interval was only approximate whereas others insist that it was exact. I hope to address all of these questions in what follows.

The chronology of the ancient world is made difficult by the fact that ancient man, notwithstanding his brilliance in other ways, did not typically have a precise and unified way of dating. Many used regnal dating wherein a time was identified by the year of a king's reign. Different countries with different kings could consequently identify the same date in different ways. Ambiguities were also caused when a king would be succeeded by another in the midst of a year. Would that particular year be counted to the first king or to the second? Add to this the complications created by the fact that ancient man commonly used lunar calendars wherein months were dictated by cycles of the moon. Only with advanced mathematics and modern astronomy can we equate these calendars with the solar calendar we use today. But even here we must allow for the fact that the ancient recorder might not have possessed such knowledge, so that events such as new moons or full moons were identified by imprecise visual inspection rather than by the precise mathematics we use now. These factors not only make it difficult to place ancient events on our modern calendar, but can even cause complications when computing or reconciling spans of time between events separated by long periods.

Happily, there are instances where ancient men documented events by the positions of astronomical bodies or by astronomical events such as eclipses. With modern astronomy and math, we can identify when these events took place on our own calendar, provided of course that sufficient information was given. Better yet, there are instances where such astronomical information was given along with the regnal date upon which it occurred. This enables us to identify a point of intersection between our own calendar and the one used by the recorder.

For reasons of both science and superstition, the ancient Babylonians were zealous astronomers and astrologers, and they routinely made astronomical observations and recorded them on clay cuneiform tablets. Many such tablets are extant today. These tablets are commonly held in repositories where they are identified by an assigned serial number. One of the most important is held at the British Museum and is identified as BM 38462. This tablet records astronomical observations corresponding to January 8, 587 BC and claims such date to be in the 17th year of Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonian calendar began in the spring, so Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year would have commenced a few months later. This tablet implies that his first year was in 604 BC. Another tablet, VAT 4956, implies Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year occurred in 568 BC, and yet another, BM 32234, puts his 32nd year at 573 BC. All these tablets are consistent with 604 BC being the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

However, it must be understood that 604 BC was Nebuchadnezzar's first year *by Babylonian reckoning*. He actually came to power in 605 BC when he succeeded Nabopolassar his father. The Babylonians would have counted 605 BC as being the last year of Nabopolassar and 604 BC as being the first year of Nebuchadnezzar. Scholars generally agree that under Bible reckoning 605 BC is counted as the first year.

The most common interpretation of Jeremiah's prophecy takes the starting date to be when the Babylonians made their initial invasion of Israel and carried away some of the Jews as captives.

Scriptures imply this first invasion took place in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (Jer 25, Dn 1:1-2:1), which we have shown to have occurred in 605 BC. This would be the first of three incursions that Nebuchadnezzar would make against the land. The first invasion did not render the land desolate. Nebuchadnezzar only subjugated it and took some as captive.

The terminal point of the 70-years is then taken to be the decree of the Persian king, Cyrus, under which the Jews were liberated to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Scriptures state that this occurred in the first year of Cyrus' reign (Ezra 1:1), though the clear meaning is the first year of his reign *over Babylon*, because he had surely reigned over Persia many years before. Historians widely agree that Babylon fell to Cyrus in 539 BC, and if we accept the date previously given for Nebuchadnezzar, 539 BC cannot be far in error. This would suggest that Cyrus' first year over Babylon was 538 BC, which is in fact the commonly accepted date among secular historians. However, the span from 605 BC to 538 BC is only 67 years, or three short of what Jeremiah's prophecy predicted.

The likely resolution to this problem is to accept the account of Daniel over the common opinions of modern historians. Daniel claimed that the Medes and Persians were allied in the taking of Babylon, and that a Median king named "Darius" reigned over it immediately after the invasion, though evidently for only a few years, after which he was succeeded by Cyrus. Daniel claimed that Darius was 62 years old as of the conquest (5:31), so his reign over Babylon was likely cut short by death. Darius was almost surely a vassal to Cyrus, but was the king to whom Daniel was personally answerable, so Daniel recognized him as king over Babylon even though Cyrus was the ultimate authority. The important point for present purposes is that the first year of Cyrus as *sole* regent over Babylon was not the year following the invasion, but was actually a few years later, which would allow the 70-year period prophesied by Jeremiah. This theory is corroborated by the fact that in Daniel 9:1-2 it is strongly suggested that the 70-year period was ongoing in the first year of Darius the Mede but near an end.

Modern historians are apt to reject this explanation because they claim that Darius the Mede is a mere myth and that he never existed. They arrive at this conclusion by following the account of Herodotus, a Greek historian, who claimed that the Persians actually subjugated the Medes before conquering Babylon. Herodotus claimed that one named Astyages was the defeated king of the Medes and that the dynasty ended with him, thus leaving no room for the asserted Darius. However, the account of Herodotus so severely clashes with the Bible that even unbelievers should be moved to doubt him. The Bible repeatedly represents the Medes as being allied with the Persians and as being participants with them in the taking of Babylon (Dn 5:28, 6:8, 8:20, 9:1, Est 1:19, Isa 13:17, Jer 51:11). The Bible is commonly considered as a single witness whereas it is in fact a compilation of multiple witnesses, most of whom had no way of knowing that their writings would eventually be combined in a single book and expected to agree with one another. When properly viewed, the scriptures provide four independent witnesses casting doubt on the testimony of Herodotus.

Those who choose Herodotus over the Bible also invariably reject the account of another ancient Greek historian named Xenophon, whose own account remarkably aligns with the Bible.

Xenophon claimed that the Medes and Persians were close allies; that Astyages was actually the maternal grandfather of Cyrus; that Astyages was succeeded by his son, Cyaxeres II; that Cyrus married Cyaxeres' daughter (who was his first cousin), and that Cyaxeres and Cyrus were allied in the Babylonian invasion. Further, Xenophon even relates how that Cyaxeres had a greater role in the beginning, but was gradually eclipsed by Cyrus in process of time, which accords with Daniel's vision of the two-horned ram in his eighth chapter. Of course we know in retrospect that Cyrus would soon be recognized as one of the greatest kings in history, as was also prophesied by Isaiah, who exactly called his name over 100 years before Cyrus was born (Isa 44:29-45:1). Furthermore, Xenophon said that Cyrus gave Cyaxeres a palace in Babylon. Now all these claims of Xenophon are in remarkable corroboration of the Bible, especially the book of Daniel, provided that we accept the idea that who Xenophon called "Cyaxeres" is the same with who Daniel called "Darius the Mede." "Darius" was likely a regal name like "Caesar."

While Xenophon's account is commonly dismissed as fictitious by modern historians, one must wonder how much of this derives from anti-Bible bias. Validation of Daniel would be an unbeliever's worst nightmare. They have no recourse but to discredit him, and discredit anyone who would corroborate him. Bias against the Bible is also suggested by the fact that the same historians who choose to believe Herodotus when he contradicts the Bible also choose to reject him when he corroborates it. Herodotus' account of Cyrus' birth does much to reinforce the Bible in its use of him as a type of Christ, but this part of Herodotus is dismissed as a myth.

This first interpretation of Jeremiah's prophecy is therefore quite credible and allows for an exact fulfillment of the 70-year interval. It is somewhat weakened by the fact that we cannot exactly place the endpoint of the interval by information outside the Bible. The information at our disposal only says that an exact 70-year interval is a real possibility, and that 70-years would be very nearly true even in the worst case. But there is a greater problem in that the interpretation seems to clash with the claim of 2Chronicles 36:19-21 that the 70-year period refers to a time of total desolation in the land, and a time when the land rested, thus recovering 70 neglected seven-year Sabbaths. The first interpretation begins the 70-year interval too early for this. The land was not rendered desolate by the first Babylonian invasion.

This problem has then given rise to a second interpretation that says the 70-year interval began with the destruction of the first temple and ended with the construction of the second. This interpretation produces significantly different results from the other, placing the 70-year interval nearly 20 years later in time. According to 2Kings 25:8, the first temple was destroyed in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, 5th month and 7th day. This would put the event in 586 BC. According to Ezra 6:15, the second temple was completed in the 6th year of Darius, on the 3rd day of Adar. This corresponds to 516 BC. Hence, there was a span of 70 years between these events. This interpretation not only accommodates 2Chronicles 36:19-21 but also accords with Zechariah 1:12, which viewed the 70-year period as still ongoing as late as the 2nd year of

Darius. But the second interpretation does not align so well with the original statements of Jeremiah wherein the 70-year period referred to the time when the Jews would be under the oppression of Babylon kings and would end with the return of the Jews to their land. The second interpretation seems to start and end the interval too late for this.

So which interpretation is correct? I believe the answer to be that *both* of them are. No quandary will appear in the eyes of experienced Bible students. It is a common thing for Bible prophecies to be fulfilled at more than one time and in more than one way. There should be no surprise in the fact that the providence of God orders events so as to give multiple corroboration to His word. Both interpretations are correct; both were intended, and I believe an actual 70-year interval applied in both cases.

## **Important Historical Facts about Alexander and Antiochus of the Greeks**

A significant amount of Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled in the era of the Grecian Empire and its derivative kingdoms. This is especially true of chapters 8-11. Zechariah also prophesied of this era in his ninth chapter. Since all these prophesied events took place in the so-called "silent years," or the period between the close of the Old Testament and the start of the New, we must consult uninspired sources to learn of the history that then took place. Primary sources are the two books of the Maccabees (which are included in some Bibles) and the writings of the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus. Since these writings corroborate the prophecies that had gone before by Daniel and Zachariah, and because a wicked king who lived in this era is thought by many Bible scholars to foreshadow the antichrist, I will present a brief summary of the period here.

Alexander the Great was born in 356 BC and inherited the throne of Macedonia (i.e. northern Greece) in 336 BC after the assassination of his father, Phillip. Most of the remaining 13 years of his life would be spent in an extraordinary military campaign in which he would conquer an empire extending from Greece to India and southward to Egypt. His military genius is legendary. His relatively small army was unstoppable, and did upon several occasions defeat armies of vastly greater size. This was especially true of his battles against the Persians, who were then a great empire with a great military. Under Alexander, the Greeks displaced the Persians as the greatest power in that part of the world, if not in all the world. All this was prophesied by Daniel in his vision of the two-horned ram and the one-horned goat (ch 8).

Alexander's eastward advance ended in India in 326 BC, and though he intended to go even further, his weary soldiers were not supportive, so the army turned and journeyed back to the west. Alexander became ill while in Babylon and died there in 323 BC at 33 years of age. Reasons for his illness have been the subject of much speculation, and some even think he was poisoned. There was dissent in his army, caused mostly by Alexander's growing acceptance of other races and cultures, especially of the Persians. Some dissent was also caused by Alexander's expanding ego in which he increasingly viewed himself as a deity.

In his Antiquities of the Jews (Ch 8, Secs 3-5), Flavius Josephus claimed that when Alexander was on his southern expedition in which he would ultimately take Egypt, he besieged Tyre on the Mediterranean Sea coast north of Israel. This siege, along with an earlier siege by Babylon, had been prophesied with remarkable detail in Ezekiel 26-28. While besieging the city, Alexander demanded that Jerusalem supply his army. The high priest, whose name was Jaddua, refused Alexander, claiming that it would be in violation of a treaty they had with Darius, the Persian king. This infuriated Alexander and led all to assume that Jerusalem would soon be attacked also. The city, being terrified at the prospects of such, fervently prayed for deliverance. Thereafter, the high priest had a dream wherein he was instructed by God not to resist Alexander when he came, but to leave open the gates and to adorn the city so as to greet him, and to have

the inhabitants of the city meet him in a procession, being dressed in white, and with the priests being at the head of the procession in their priestly garb.

When Alexander arrived to the outskirts of the city and saw the procession approaching him, he went out to meet them, but without military escort. This led some of his companions to speculate that he was out of his right mind, but Alexander later explained that he himself had experienced a dream some time earlier wherein he was approached by such a procession, even dressed as Jews then were, and that it was revealed to him in the dream that he would conquer the Persians by the power of their God. After this encounter with the procession, Alexander went into Jerusalem, wanting to offer sacrifice to God, whereupon the priests did the service in his behalf in accordance to protocol. Josephus then related how that Alexander was shown the book of Daniel, and its prophecy that the Greeks would defeat the Persians (Ch 8). This so impressed Alexander that he asked what favors he could show the Jews, upon which they requested that they could continue to serve their God in accordance to His Law, and they requested that the same rights be extended to the Jews who were yet at Babylon. Alexander granted their request, and also promised that if any of them would choose to serve in his army, he would grant the same privileges, upon which several Jews chose to join.

This testimony of Flavius Josephus is a real thorn in the heel of infidel historians, because they are hell-bent on their position that Daniel was written much later than Bible scholars have always claimed. In truth it was written over 500 years before Christ, but infidels claim it was written after 165 BC. The reason is their belief that it would be utterly impossible for any man to have accurately prophesied all the things Daniel did, especially in chapters 8-11, so they say the book must have been written after the fact. But if Alexander actually read the book, as Josephus claimed, then it must have been written before all the prophecies at issue. These same historians will, of course, claim that the Josephus account is fabulous, but anyone could have predicted this. Their position is monotonously predictable: Before any of the evidence is considered, all that contradicts the Bible is fact and all that corroborates it is fiction.

Ezekiel mentioned Daniel in three places (14:14, 14:20, 28:3), but Ezekiel clearly predated all of Daniel's prophecies. Indeed, the two men were near contemporaries. So the infidels must either make the incredible claim that Ezekiel is misdated also, or else they must say that the book of Daniel is a forgery. If they claim the latter, then they will run into real problems with the Dead Sea scrolls. Eight different manuscripts of Daniel were found among them, some being complete. The oldest of these dated to around 125 BC. Now this was early enough that the Jews would have known them to be forgeries, if this is in fact what they are, but when we see the Jews in possession of at least eight copies, this is clear indication that they highly honored them as factual. Furthermore, putting Daniel at 165 BC will still leave infidels with the problem of explaining how Daniel got so lucky as to predict the destruction of Jerusalem at AD 70 (9:26). Then, after they have dismissed Daniel, they will have to manufacture another set of lies about Zechariah, because the prophecies of his ninth chapter are clearly about Alexander and the Greeks, and are quite consistent with what Josephus said.

When Alexander died in 323 BC, he had no clear successor, and this led to his great empire being divided among four of his generals. This too had been prophesied in Daniel's vision (8:8). Of these four kingdoms, the ones to the south and north became of greatest consequence to the Jews. The southern kingdom, that consisted primarily of Egypt, would be ruled by the Ptolemies until the times of Augustus Caesar of Rome. The last of the Ptolemies was the famous Cleopatra. The northern kingdom was ruled by the Seleucids. This kingdom consisted primarily of what we now call the Middle East, and Israel also was under its dominion.

These two kingdoms made numerous attempts to gain control of each other. This they tried to do by war, treaty and marriage, though with limited success. The 11th chapter of Daniel prophesies these attempts in great detail and in the order they would occur in the royal successions on both sides. The chapter has more prophecies in it than any other chapter of the Bible.

In the succession of Seleucid kings, there emerged in 175 BC a wicked ruler known as Antiochus Epiphanes. Though little known to history, he is of huge importance to the Bible because Daniel prophesied of him at length in his 11th chapter, and most Bible scholars believe he is presented by inspiration as a powerful type of the antichrist.

Antiochus actually had no right to the throne. His brother Seleucus reigned before him, but was then assassinated, upon which the throne should have gone to his son Demetrius. But the Roman Empire had risen to great enough power by that time that it could impose its will on the Seleucids, and the Romans were ensuring their compliance by keeping political hostages at Rome. Demetrius was such a hostage when his father was murdered. This sufficiently delayed the process of succession that Antiochus craftily managed to usurp him. The Romans would have ordinarily disallowed this, but they were preoccupied with war at the time, and Antiochus was also clever enough to appease them. All this was prophesied by Daniel (11:21).

Around 169 BC, Antiochus attacked Egypt and conquered nearly all of it except for Alexandria. In 168 BC Antiochus headed back to Egypt to finish his conquest, but the Romans sent an ambassador to demand that Antiochus withdraw. In a famous moment of history, when Antiochus told the ambassador he would consider his demand, the ambassador drew a circle around him in the sand and demanded that Antiochus give an answer before exiting the circle. Antiochus then capitulated to the Romans. The common expression, "line in the sand," is thought to have derived from this moment. This too was prophesied by Daniel (11:30).

While Antiochus was on this expedition, a rumor started in Jerusalem that he had been killed. This led to an uprising in which Menelaus, the High Priest appointed by Antiochus, was forced to flee the city. Menelaus was incomprehensively corrupt, and very complicit with Antiochus in his efforts to replace Jewish culture and religion with that of the Greeks. When Antiochus heard of the rebellion, he was filled with rage, and started a campaign of terror in which an estimated 80,000 Jews were killed. He outlawed Jewish religion, punishing many offenders with death, and ordered the worship of Zeus. He raided the temple of its treasure, set up an idol in it to Zeus,



and sacrificed a pig on the altar. This was the first of Daniel's abominations of desolation (11:31). It has been dated to December 15, 167 BC.

A number of Jews were cooperative or even complicit with Antiochus in these atrocities, but others remained faithful to their religion. Among the faithful was a family by the name of Maccabaeus. These became famous in Jewish history, especially one named Judas. The family led a militia against Antiochus and fought his forces in numerous battles, usually winning against enormous odds. In 164 BC they were able to defeat Antiochus' generals and retake the temple, cleanse it, and resume sacrifice. According to 1Maccabees 4:59, this took place on Kislev 25 of 148 AG (per the Seleucid system of dating), which corresponds to December 14, 164 BC. The Jews celebrate this date even today with their holiday they call Hanukkah. This verse also emphasizes that the event took place exactly on the third anniversary of the desecration, albeit under their lunar calendar.

The events of the last paragraph happened when Antiochus was personally on a military expedition in Persia. After enduring defeat there, he received news of how his forces had been defeated back at Jerusalem also, and how that the temple had been retaken by the Jews. He then withdrew to Babylon where he became sick and deranged, and died there in 149 AG, evidently no more than a few months after the rededication of the temple (1Mac 6). These details become important later when considering Antiochus as a type of the man of sin.

I will finish this section by mentioning that during the Greek era, a remarkable number of Gentiles converted to Judaism. Some of this was because the Maccabees forced the religion on Gentiles they subjugated on the perimeter of Israel, especially the Edomites, but with many it was voluntary. This included a significant number even of Egyptians, and this partly explains why the Septuagint, a famous Greek translation of the Old Testament, was actually written in Alexandria. The translation was motivated by the large number of Greek-speaking people in that part of the world who then took an interest in Judaism. Of course, the Greeks are famed for their use of logic and their promotion of systematic thought, and this likely explains why so many Gentiles were then turned to the Bible.

## Daniel's Prophecy of the 2300 Days

The vision of Daniel recorded in his eighth chapter has been fulfilled in many of its parts. This conclusion stands on solid ground because the vision was explained quite thoroughly by the Bible itself, and this explanation explicitly applied the vision to a series of past kingdoms, beginning with that of the Persians, then to the Grecian kingdom under Alexander, and ending with the Seleucid kingdom that derived from Alexander's empire. The Jews endured the burden of all these kingdoms, but the worst would prove to be the last, particularly under a wicked Seleucid king named Antiochus Epiphanes, who reigned from 175 BC to 164 or 163 BC. Antiochus attempted to destroy true religion among the Jews and to force upon them the corrupt paganism of the Greeks. His cruelty and wickedness were so great that most Bible scholars correctly consider him to be a leading type of the antichrist, and this likely explains why Daniel was inspired to write so much concerning him. Antiochus is not only considered in Daniel 8 but also in Daniel 11, and some think in Daniel 12 as well.

In the eighth chapter, while describing the extreme vanity of this wicked man, Daniel wrote the following details concerning him:

*Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered. Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. – Dan 8:11-14*

These predictions were fulfilled when Antiochus, being aided by the cooperation of apostate Jews, prohibited the daily sacrifice and polluted the temple by erecting an idol of Zeus in it and by sacrificing a pig on its altar. The apocryphal books called Maccabees date these events to December 15, 167 BC. These and other atrocities provoked a rebellion among faithful Jews, who were led by one Judas Maccabeus – a man of great fame in Jewish history who is celebrated by them to this day. The rebellion would eventually lead to the overthrow of Seleucid rule over the Jews, and in path to such success, the Jews regained control of the temple, cleansed it, and resumed the daily sacrifice, exactly as the prophecy had said. But there has been considerable disagreement among Bible scholars as to how the prophesied period of 2300 days is to be reconciled with the historical record.

Much of this confusion is unnecessary and derives from failure to carefully consider the details of the prophecy. The prophesied period of 2300 days clearly terminated with the cleansing of the sanctuary. This date is also well-documented in the books of the Maccabees (1Mac 4:52) as December 14, 164 BC. It is a date still celebrated by Jews today (i.e. "Hanukkah"). On the old

lunar calendar then used by the Jews, the cleansing of the temple occurred on the same day (i.e. Adar 25th) upon which it had been desecrated three years prior, and this fact was explicitly noted in 1Maccabees 4:54. Now counting back from this date by 2300 days, using Julian reckoning, places us at August 29th of 170 BC. Is there any documented event distinguishing this date? Evidently not, or none that has been discovered as of yet, but there are ample possibilities.

Observe that the prophecy said Antiochus would be given a host against the daily sacrifice “*by reason of transgression.*” That is, he would be given power and permission to disrupt the daily sacrifice because of the transgressions of the Jews. This fact becomes important when interpreting the subsequent question, “*How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?*” The period contemplated by the question embraced not merely the disruption of the daily sacrifice but also the transgressions that led to it. Some of the primary perpetrators of these transgressions were the high priests themselves, including especially one Menelaus, who acquired the priesthood by bribery, plundered the temple more than once, was complicit with Antiochus in the corruption of Jewish culture and religion, and who arranged for the murder of a former high priest who had protested against him. While the historical record does not provide exact dates upon which these atrocities occurred, we can be sure they happened at or near the time that Daniel’s 2300-day interval began.

As before noted, the period considered by the prophecy embraced more than the suspension of the daily sacrifice. It included also the transgressions that led to such, and extended through the time that the host would be “*trodden under foot.*” While the Jewish soldiers would continue to face challenges and fight battles even after the cleansing of the temple, it is foolish to charge the prophecy with inaccuracy on this account. God’s people are never without battles to fight, and it surely was not the intent of the prophecy to suggest otherwise. When Antiochus heard of the Jewish victories leading to the cleansing of the temple, these and other losses are claimed to have moved him to a state of delirium and grief that was shortly followed by his death. The retaking of the temple by the Jews was a clear signal that the Seleucid kingdom had lost the upper hand and that Jewish forces would no longer be *trodden under foot*.

Careful consideration of detail also shows that this prophecy applied to different events than the prophecy of Daniel 12:6-13 and the abomination of desolation it prophesied. Many have errantly attempted to fulfill both prophecies in the times of Antiochus. Context shows that the latter applies to the times of the resurrection and is therefore thousands of years removed from Antiochus. While both prophecies speak of a suspension in the daily sacrifice, the one in Daniel 12 calls for a suspension of 1290 days, or slightly over 3.5 years, whereas the suspension under Antiochus was for only three years. Notwithstanding, some Christians, being bent on fulfilling Daniel 12 in the past, have resorted to strained interpretations in an attempt to put a left shoe on a right foot. Infidels are also disposed to apply Daniel 12 this way, and all other prophecies as well, but this is because they are hell-bent in their mission to prove that the prophecies failed – a thing they cannot do when such prophecies are interpreted as applying to the future.

## Daniel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks

There can be no doubt that one of the most important prophecies of all time is contained in the ninth chapter of Daniel wherein he prophesied of a 70-week period that would prove most crucial to Jewish history. All scholars agree that the term “week” in this prophecy simply means a group of seven and is analogous to the word “dozen” where we mean a group of twelve or the word “couple” where we mean a group of two. These groups of seven were specifically of years, making each week equal to seven years, and 70 weeks would therefore equal 490 years. The prophecy covers a period of 490 years, and it ends shortly after the death of the “Messiah.” Under any reasonable interpretation of this prophecy, this “Messiah” can only mean Jesus Christ. He was killed, exactly as the prophecy predicted, and at the time the prophecy predicted, and with the blessed effects that it predicted, and His death was followed by calamities in Israel that were exactly as the prophecy predicted. The actual words of the prophecy were:

*Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. – Dn 9:24-27*

This prophecy was made while the Jews were still in Babylon, but the Babylonians had recently been conquered by the Medes and Persians, so the Jews were under the authority of the latter. Jerusalem and the temple still lay in ruins, but a decree would soon be issued by the Persian king authorizing the Jews to return to their land and to rebuild their temple. The above text predicts this decree and instructs that the date upon which it occurred should be carefully noted because it would serve as an important chronological benchmark from which other important events would be dated, including the coming of Messiah the Prince.

It is reasonable to expect that a prophecy so momentous must have an exact fulfillment. We would not expect the 490-year interval it contemplates to be merely approximate, nor the 483-year interval (i.e. 69 weeks) leading up to the Messiah. But Bible scholars have not agreed as to the exact beginning and end of the prophesied intervals. Obviously, the prophecy calls for the beginning of the interval to occur with a decree to rebuild Jerusalem, but there were actually

several decrees that might serve as candidates for this. There is also ambiguity about the end of the interval. Should we measure to the birth of Christ, baptism of Christ or death of Christ? Even if we knew the answer to this question, not all scholars are in agreement as to the dates upon which these events occurred. Notwithstanding all these problems, I will show in what follows that the prophecy can be reconciled to the historical record beyond reasonable doubt.

As to the beginning of the 490-year interval, there are able Bible scholars who have insisted that this must correspond to the decree of the Persian king Cyrus, who permitted the Jews to return to their homeland and to rebuild the temple. The return of the Jews actually occurred in stages, and was accompanied by several such decrees of Persian kings, but the decree of Cyrus was distinguished by being the first, and also by the fact it was issued by the greatest of the Persian kings. Of far greater distinction is the fact that decree of Cyrus had been prophesied in Isaiah 44 & 45, where Cyrus' name was exactly called long before he was born, and where he was declared to be the liberator of God's people. This is yet another momentous prophecy in scripture, and the power of it has moved several Bible scholars to conclude that the decree of Cyrus absolutely must be the starting point for the prophecy in Daniel.

The problem is that most scholars date this decree to 538 BC, and moving forward from this by 69 weeks, or 483 years, we are left short of the birth of Christ by over 50 years and short of his baptism and crucifixion by over 80. The decree, it would seem, occurred far too early to satisfy the terms of Daniel's prophecy concerning the Messiah. Some scholars are undeterred by this, insisting that Isaiah 45 is an obvious inspired assertion that the decree of Cyrus is the proper starting point, and they contend that historians have simply gotten the date of his decree wrong. They say it occurred much later than 538 BC, and some have gone through considerable effort attempting to prove it. While their respect for scriptural inerrancy is commendable, the evidence against them is formidable. As already shown, the times of Nebuchadnezzar are well-established, and we know that Daniel served under both Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, so we cannot re-date Cyrus by so large an interval without re-dating Nebuchadnezzar also. Doing this would also put the 70-year prophecy covered in a previous chapter in doubt. Add to this that we have another cuneiform tablet (BM 33066) with astronomical information that would fix the seventh year of Cambyses (i.e. Cyrus' son) to 523 BC, which is consistent with the contested 538 BC date for Cyrus. All this creates a mountain of evidence that is very difficult to climb. While measuring from the decree of Cyrus would otherwise seem intuitive and obvious, the fact is that God is not in the habit of doing what is obvious. He is far more apt to do what is profound.

A more plausible explanation of the prophecy begins with the decree of Artaxerxes recorded in Ezra 7. This decree was made in the seventh year of his reign, which is commonly thought to have been late in 458 BC. Moving forward from this by 483 years carries to late in AD 26, which would be the likely time of Christ's baptism, and adding 3.5 years to this to account for the length of His ministry, we arrive at a date early in AD 30, which is exactly the time most scholars think His crucifixion occurred. Incidentally, when measuring spans across the BC/AD boundary, one must account for the fact that there is no such thing as BC 0 or AD 0; rather, AD 1

follows BC 1. A man born in BC 1 would therefore be one year old as of AD 1, meaning that to compute the span, we must add the BC date to the AD date and decrement by one.

While this explanation is not the first suggested by intuition, deeper inspection shows it to be very sensible. The decree of Artaxerxes might seem anticlimactic to that of Cyrus, but could actually be judged as the greater decree by any student of the Law and its promises, prophecies and warnings. The centerpiece of that decree was an order that God's Law was to rule in the land and that it was to be taught and enforced by Ezra. The implications of this are enormous to any Bible believer. Without this condition, no decree of Cyrus would be of any enduring benefit, and with this condition, neither Cyrus nor all kings combined could successfully prevent the Jews from returning and rebuilding. God had promised the land to them if they obeyed His Law and warned that they would be removed from it if they did not. Obedience to God's Law was the necessary and sufficient condition for the city of Jerusalem to be rebuilt.

Of course the decree anticipated by the 70-week prophecy was one "*to restore and to build Jerusalem.*" The copy of the decree recorded in Ezra 7 says nothing of this, and some might dismiss it on this account. However, there is good circumstantial evidence that the decree did in fact serve to this effect. The words "*to restore and to build*" likely referred primarily to the rebuilding of the wall, as is indicated by the details of the prophecy. It is therefore crucial to carefully examine all scriptural data that relate specifically to the wall.

The original decree of Cyrus said nothing of a wall. It was concerned only with the temple. However, it seems that the Jews went beyond authority and commenced to build a wall also. When their adversaries formally complained of this to the Persian king (a successor of Cyrus), the king promptly ordered the rebuilding of the wall to cease until authorization was given (Ezra 4). The letter of complaint to the king said nothing of the temple, nor was anything said of it in the king's reply. There were likely strategic reasons for this. The objectors knew that the Jews could legally defend themselves for building the temple because they had the decree of Cyrus to support their case, but the decree said nothing of a wall, so this was the issue the objectors chose to press. When the Jews were ordered to cease with the wall, they were so disheartened that they ceased with the temple also (4:24), but Haggai and Zechariah thereafter motivated them to resume (5:1-2), not in rebellion to the king, but acting on what the details of the decree would allow. Such details were doubtlessly important. Laws issued by the Medes and Persians could not be altered (Dn 6:8), so all parties had strong incentive to be attentive to every jot and tittle.

However, we find in the first chapter of Nehemiah that, by the 20th year of Artaxerxes, a wall had been built or partially built, although it had been severely vandalized by adversaries of the Jews. Nehemiah was authorized by Artaxerxes to rebuild it. So there must have been a decree authorizing the construction of the wall before the 20th year of Artaxerxes but after the order to desist. The only decree presented by the Bible in this period is the decree under consideration, that is, the decree to Ezra by Artaxerxes in the seventh year of his reign. So this is circumstantial evidence that such decree also authorized the rebuilding of the wall.

It is also sensible to make the baptism of Jesus to be the event marking the coming of the Messiah. God had revealed to John the Baptist that the validating sign of the Messiah would be the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him (Jn 1:33). This happened at Jesus' baptism. It is also highly significant that the New Testament specifies only one date in all of its books. This was the year in which John the Baptist began his ministry. Luke 3:1 says this happened in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar. The fact that the Holy Spirit would supply this date, and only this date, in all the New Testament, cannot be dismissed as incidental. It is reasonable to suppose that the date was given because it is essential to validate one of the most important prophecies of all time.

Tiberius became coregent with Augustus Caesar on August 28, AD 11. This means his first year commenced on January 1, AD 12, and his 15th year commenced on January 1, AD 26. Luke 3:23 says that Jesus was about 30 years of age when He was baptized and commenced His ministry. This likely followed from the fact that this was the age specified by the Law for the induction of priests (Num 4:3). It is reasonable to assume that John the Baptist commenced his ministry at the same age, and since Christ was six months younger, the best assumption is that He was baptized six months after John commenced. This would make the most likely time of Jesus' baptism to be late in AD 26.

Starting the 70-week prophecy with the seventh year of Artaxerxes does no injustice to the great prophecy of Isaiah 45 concerning Cyrus. While both Darius and Artaxerxes made decrees concerning Jerusalem after the decree of Cyrus, Ezra 6 shows that these kings viewed their own decrees as simply enforcing the original decree of Cyrus, and while that original decree said nothing of rebuilding the city, it surely was not Cyrus' intent to build a temple that would be left in a pile of rubble. The decree to restore and build Jerusalem was truly by Cyrus, exactly as Isaiah 45 said, but it must be dated to the seventh year of Artaxerxes, or to 458 BC.

Having resolved the mathematics of Daniel's prophecy, the remainder becomes easier to interpret. First consider the words, *"and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."* This refers to the Roman general Titus, whose army breached the wall in 70 AD and flooded the city with soldiers, who then destroyed the city and temple. The land was left desolate in the sense that the Jews would not possess it for almost 2000 years, and it is void of a temple until this day. Next, consider, *"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."* The pronoun *"he"* here refers to the Messiah, not Titus, and the meaning is that the Messiah would render all sacrifices obsolete by His death. This would happen in the midst of the 70th week, which was in fact the exact time that Christ died on the cross. The week, or seven-year period, over which He confirmed the covenant, started with the 3.5 years of His own labors with the Jewish people, and to this we may add 3.5 years in which His apostles did the same after His resurrection. The week ended approximately with the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7, after which the gospel was mostly taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles. These two adjacent

intervals can also be seen in the famous parable of the wedding feast wherein the king twice sent his messengers to call the recalcitrant Jews to the feast (Mt 22:1-14).

Next, consider the words, *“and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”* The word *“desolate”* here and elsewhere primarily refers to the temple. The temple mount has been covered with things the Jews consider as abominations for most of the history since the second temple was destroyed. In 135 AD, the Roman emperor Hadrian built a temple to Jupiter on the site. This stood for nearly 200 years. From the seventh century till now, the mount has been covered with various Islamic structures, including the Dome of the Rock with its well-known golden dome, the Dome of the Chain, the al-Aqsa Mosque and four Islamic minarets. These structures have been obstacles preventing the Jews from rebuilding the temple; hence, the site has been desolate of a temple because of the overspreading of abominations. Such will remain the case *“until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate,”* that is, until God’s judgments have been fully executed against the Jews for their rejection of Christ, and this will be very near the *“consummation”* or the end of the world.

The stoning of Stephen in Acts 7 marks the redirection of the gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles and is therefore the most plausible point for the end of the 70<sup>th</sup> week. However, proof requires demonstration that the stoning occurred 3.5 years after the crucifixion. This cannot be fully proven on the basis of biblical and archaeological evidence presently in hand; however, it can be shown as plausible. An important archeological find in the year 1905 known as the “Delphi Inscription” implies that Gallio was deputy over Achaia around AD 51/52. Paul was likely tried before Gallio at such time (Acts 18). I assume this took place near the beginning of AD 52. We know that Paul spent 1.5 years in Achaia before the trial (Acts 18:11), and it appears that there were 14 years from Paul’s conversion till the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15 (Gal 2:1). So the span of time from Stephen’s stoning to AD 52 can be divided as follows:

Starting Point: The stoning of Stephen.

Interval 1: From the stoning of Stephen till Paul’s conversion. – Unknown interval

Interval 2: From Paul’s conversion till the Jerusalem conference. – 14 years (Gal 2:1)

Interval 3: From the Jerusalem conference till Paul’s arrival at Achaia. – Unknown interval

Interval 4: From Paul’s arrival at Achaia till his trial before Gallio. – 1.5 years (Acts 18:11)

Ending Point: Paul’s trial before Gallio. – Beginning of AD 52 (Delphi Inscription)

Interval 1 seems to have been short. I will assume a half of a year. Interval 3 contains so many travels and events (Acts 15-18) that it must have been a few years. I will assume two. Adding up, we have the span from the stoning of Stephen until AD 52 at 18 years, which would place the stoning itself near the beginning of AD 34. If Christ was crucified in March/April of AD 30, then adding 3.5 years would bring us very near to this date.

Some interpret Galatians 1:15-2:1 as implying there were 17 years from Paul’s conversion till the Jerusalem conference, but this is likely wrong. Under any set of reasonable assumptions, it



would imply an implausibly early date for the crucifixion of Christ. It is better to interpret the passage as saying there were 14 years from Paul's conversion to the Jerusalem conference. Notice also that the facts utilized by the analysis here cast serious doubt on any estimate placing the crucifixion later than AD 30.

Sir Robert Anderson also dealt with the mathematics of Daniel's 70 weeks in his famous book, The Coming Prince. His analysis significantly differs from what I have presented above. While commendable things may be said of his book, this part is in provable error. Unfortunately, this seems to be the very part that has captured the most attention and acceptance. He claimed to work the prophecy out to the very day, and many readers have been persuaded by this impressive claim to adopt his entire system without due precaution.

Anderson's starting point for the prophesied interval was the decree of Artaxerxes in the 20th year of his reign as recorded in Nehemiah 2. Nehemiah said this particular decree occurred in the month of Nisan. He did not specify the day, so Anderson assumed it happened on the first day of the month, offering an unconvincing defense for his assumption. Anderson claimed this date would correspond to March 14, 445 BC on the Julian calendar. Now measuring forward from this date by 483 years would considerably overshoot the times of Christ; however, Anderson patched this problem by redefining a year to consist of 360 days. He called this new definition a "prophetic year." He defended it upon the basis that both Revelation and the book of Daniel equated 1260 days to 42 months, suggesting a 360-day year. Measuring 69 weeks in terms of such years would yield a span of 173,800 days. Anderson claimed that adding this amount to the starting date would land one at April 6, AD 32 on the Julian calendar, which Anderson said would correspond to Nisan 10th on the Jewish calendar, this being the presumed date of Jesus' triumphal entry to Jerusalem, which Anderson claimed to be the terminal point of the first 69 weeks.

The first problem with this theory is mistaken math. The terminal point should have been April 3, AD 32, or Nisan 7th on the Jewish calendar (Anderson included endpoints in his reckoning; otherwise, the date would have been April 4th.). Anderson deliberately advanced his date by three days to compensate for error in the Julian calendar. This should not have been done. The Julian calendar, or almost any calendar, is satisfactory for purposes of measuring *spans* between two dates. The problem with the Julian calendar is that it does not stay synchronized with the Sun. This is of no consequence here since we are concerned only with the span between two Julian dates. Now Nisan 7th is not a meaningful terminal point for the prophecy. The second problem is the year in which Anderson places the crucifixion. I have already shown that any year after AD 30 is problematic. Also, some say Christ was crucified on Friday while others say He was crucified on Wednesday, but AD 32 is consistent with neither. The third problem is in the dubious definition he puts on a year. Interestingly, the Bible equated 1260 days with 42 months and with "a time and times and the dividing of time," but never with 3.5 years. Evidently, "year" in prophecy means a cycle around the Sun, the same as in astronomy and in our intuition. In other parts of this book, I also refer to this interval as being 3.5 years, but I am

only speaking approximately and am not attempting to suggest a new definition for “year.” The fourth problem is perhaps the greatest: It leaves no apparent role for the 70th week.

To resolve this last difficulty, many premillennialists have concluded that the 70th week is noncontiguous with the previous 69. They say the 70th week will happen in the future and that it corresponds to a period they call the “tribulation.” The enormous gap between the 69th and 70th week, now equal to 2000 years, is what they sometimes call a “parenthesis.” Though all this is dubious on the very face of it, the nonsense is commonly obscured in the cloud of smoke that its advocates are very capable of creating when defending it. The consequence has been that millions of Christians have bought into this theory, to the extent that Daniel’s 70th week has become a primary component of their eschatological thought and speech. They will commonly be vigorous in their defense of these ideas, mostly because they are needful to support other dubious aspects of their system. I hope to say more about all this in coming chapters.

This theory is nearly always committed to the idea that the words, “*he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week*” (vs 27), refer to the antichrist, and will be fulfilled in the 70th week. This partly explains their acceptance of the bizarre “parenthesis.” They must acknowledge that at least 69 of the weeks are past, and since the antichrist has not yet come, this means there must be a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks. Now I think both sound grammar and common sense dictate that “*he*” here must refer back either to the “*Messiah*” or to the “*prince that shall come*” who shall “*destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.*” The text offers no antecedents to “*he*” apart from these two. I have said earlier that “*he*” refers to the Messiah, and premillennialists say it refers to antichrist, but their claim leads to conclusions that neither of us believe because they are contradicted by what the Bible elsewhere says. Why would the antichrist destroy the sanctuary when he intends to glorify himself in it under the pretext of being God? Why would he destroy a city he intends to make his capital? The Bible does not say he will destroy the city; rather, it says he himself will be destroyed when besieging it. Further, the premillennial theory does not say that “*unto the end of the war desolations are determined.*” Rather, it says that *bliss* is determined in their 1000-year reign wherein Jerusalem is to be the glorious capital of the world. This whole theory strikes the eye as absurd, and closer examination only makes it worse.

I will finish this chapter by offering some important observations on all of the dating prophecies I have considered thus far, beginning with Jeremiah’s prophecy of the 70 years. In all cases it was true that the evidence corroborated the prophecy up to the very edge of proving it, but there was some piece of missing information that prevented the proof from being absolute. Even for the prophecy of the 70 weeks, we do not have information on the month and day of the terminal points. This encourages unbelievers and disappoints believers, but believers need to understand that it may have been done with divine intent.

To illustrate my point, consider a group of people who are scornfully laughing at a man who has claimed that he can hit the planet Jupiter with a rock. However, when the man throws the rock,

the crowd is silenced when they see it disappear into the clouds. They are further amazed when astronomers report observing the rock passing by the moon, and all are utterly astounded when it is seen hurling past Mars. Finally, the rock is also seen passing by Europa, a great moon of Jupiter, but at that point, the rock is lost to observation and none actually see it strike the planet. Now when all the evidence has been considered, it is clear that the man was not blowing hot air when making his claim, and it is clear that there is something exceedingly exceptional about him, and when all the evidence has been considered, no man in his right mind would wager that the rock actually missed. There is only one kind of man who would insist that it did. This is a man who wagered against it hitting *before* the rock was ever thrown. So is it with these prophecies.

The objector will of course claim that, if God can hit Jupiter with a rock, then it would be no challenge for Him to providentially arrange for the availability of sufficient data to absolutely prove it. No one argues against this, but the objection reflects ignorance about the character of God as revealed both in scripture and in nature. The Christian believes the personality of God is revealed in Jesus Christ, but Jesus was very much in the habit of withholding evidence from unbelievers (Mt 8:4, 13:10-17, 16:20, Mk 7:36, 8:30, 9:9, Lk 5:14, 8:56, 9:21). One must consider that since He is indeed the Son of God, He is in no need of man's approval.

As for the testimony of nature, consider that mankind has believed everything imaginable about God, including the absurdity that there is no God. Now all of this indecision about God actually enables us to make a decision about God; namely, that God is content to leave man undecided. He provides sufficient evidence to confirm Himself to any reasonable mind, as is illustrated by the man throwing the rock, but expect Him to throw a bone to the unbeliever too. The Bible teaches that if carnal man is given a molehill of evidence supporting what he wants to believe, and if this is placed in the shadow of a mountain of evidence to refute it, then carnal man will proudly perch atop his molehill every time. Expect God to provide both the mountain and the molehill. Indeed, the molehill may serve His purpose as much as the mountain. "*For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind,*" Jn 9:39

## Important Characters in Revelation

### The Two Witnesses

The two witnesses sent and empowered by God in Revelation 11 have been a matter of great intrigue to Christians throughout history. Many have believed these two witnesses are either literally Moses and Elijah or else their analogues. I believe this to be true, and hope to offer in this section evidence to support. Christians who reject these claims oftentimes do so because they consider them too sensational to believe. I would ordinarily agree, but these are the most extraordinary circumstances that mind could conceive. Nothing could be more irrational than to use rationalism to interpret prophecies concerning the final days of our Universe.

As is usually the case, it is important to understand context when studying these two witnesses. The scriptural account begins with:

*And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. – Rev 11:1-3*

The reason for measuring the temple was not to replicate it, as some have said, because measurements were also to be taken of the worshippers. Besides, none of the measured dimensions were actually given. In the Bible, to measure a thing often means to bring it under scrutiny and judgment (2Ki 21:13, Job 31:6, Isa 65:7, Dn 5:27, Hab 3:6, Mt 7:2). Such is the case here. The Christ-denying religious system of the Jews, represented here by the temple and its worshippers, is about to receive its final judgment and be brought down. This also explains why the Gentiles are left out of the measurement, though their time will surely come. The temple was a rival institution to Christianity in New Testament times, and my claim that it is to be negatively construed here is evidenced later when it is found to be placed in a city that is spiritually called “*Sodom and Egypt*,” (vs 8).

John next said concerning the two witnesses, “*These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth*,” (Rev 11:4). The astute Bible student will quickly recognize that John is here referring to Zechariah 4, where the prophet had a vision of a golden candlestick having seven lamps and a bowl on top, and on either side there were olive trees with pipes protruding from their trunks into the bowl, and by such means was oil supplied by the trees to fuel the candlestick. The likely interpretation of this prophecy is that the candlestick represents Christ and His church; the two trees represent the Law and the prophets; the oil represents the Holy Spirit, and the general meaning of the prophecy is that the Spirit-inspired writings of the Law and prophets would be converted to light, or fully revealed, by

Christ and His church. But it is clear that the olive trees also represent two specific individuals, as can be seen in the discussion that followed in Zechariah:

*Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth. – Zech 4:11-14*

Now if we examine scriptures to identify two individuals satisfying the distinction of standing by the Lord of the whole earth, there are no better candidates than Moses and Elijah. The last three characters mentioned in the Old Testament were Moses, Elijah and the Lord. Most importantly, Moses and Elijah stood by Him on the mount of transfiguration in one of the most significant scenes of the Bible, and a scene that was unmistakably characterized as a prelude to His second coming (Mt 16:28, Mk 9:1, Lk 9:27, 2Pet 1:16-21).

John referred to two candlesticks whereas Zechariah spoke of only one, yet Zechariah said that it terminated into seven lamps. These seven lamps were likely divided between two major branches, thus accounting for John's claim of two. Aside from this consideration, the correspondence of the two visions is beyond reasonable doubt.

Moses is of course an apt symbol of the Law, and Elijah is distinguished among the prophets as being the first to resurrect a man from the dead. This must be counted of great significance in a book whose primary subject is resurrection. There would be no better way to epitomize the Law than by Moses and the prophets than by Elijah. This was one of the primary motivations for their appearance with Christ on the mount. Any devout Jew in a state of indecision about Christ would have his doubts destroyed by the scene. Any form of Judaism that denies Christ is at once refuted upon showing that Moses and Elijah are Christians. Such was the effect on the three disciples who were present on the mount of transfiguration. For the same reasons, Moses and Elijah are sensible candidates for the two witnesses of Revelation 11. If the purpose is to “measure,” or render judgment upon, the Jewish temple and to falsify the Christ-denying religion it represents, then no better way to do this than by sending Moses and Elijah to testify of Christ.

The term “witness” suggests that these two men could attest to having seen or heard evidence serving to confirm Jesus Christ. It happens that at three of the most confirming events of His life, there were exactly two heavenly witnesses present. These were: 1) At his glorification on the mount (Mt 17:3). 2) At His resurrection (Lk 24:4). 3) At His ascension to Heaven (Acts 1:10). If these were the same witnesses upon all occasions, then the first establishes their identity. They were Moses and Elijah.

The description given in Revelation 11 itself also fits Moses and Elijah. Consider:

*These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.*  
– Rev 11:4-6

Power over fire, stopping rain, turning water into blood and smiting the earth with various plagues were the exact things these two prophets did. They were power prophets sent to buffet and restrain wicked leaders of their times and such will be the case here.

To this we must add what the Bible specifically says of Elijah. In a prophecy that was obviously famous to the Jews in the times of Christ, Malachi wrote:

*Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.* – Mal 4:4-6

Hence, Elijah was to be sent, and this was to occur “*before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,*” which seems a definite fit on His second coming and a definite misfit on His first. Additionally, Elijah is to bring about a momentous change of heart in Israel wherein he will “*turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.*”

The change of heart prophesied by Malachi can be better understood by considering what he had said before. In the prophet’s view, the Jewish religion had degenerated from what it had been in the days of the patriarchs or “fathers.” Legalism, ritualism, traditionalism and the influences of paganism had carried the religion far from where it started – a religion centered on messianic promises and heavenly hopes. However, the prophet also spoke of a time of restoration (3:1-6), and this is what is meant by his final verse, where his claim was that the children, or Jews of the latter days, would be reunited in religious fellowship with the fathers, or the patriarchs.

Those objecting to the idea this is to be fulfilled in the future will claim that fulfillment has already occurred in John the Baptist. This objection has superficial plausibility, but becomes dubious when all facts are considered. The objection is based upon two different occasions where Christ said that John the Baptist was an analogue to Elijah. The first was in a speech He made to the general multitude where He said:

*For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.* – Mt 11:13-15

The second was in a statement He made to Peter, James and John as they descended from the mount of transfiguration after seeing Elijah:

*And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist. – Mt 17:10-13*

These are both qualified statements. In the first, it was said to the multitude that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy "*if ye will receive it.*" They surely did not receive it, choosing rather to side with their corrupt religious leaders against Christ and the gospel. Christ's statement suggests that what John the Baptist would have been in the scenario wherein the Jews obeyed was different from what he actually was in the scenario wherein they disobeyed. This will seem less mysterious upon considering that we have no instances in the Bible where God punished people simply for sins they were *going to* commit. Accordingly, the consciences of men under divine chastisement perceive it as owing to what they have *already done*, not because of what they would eventually do. So, while God knows that a man will eventually disobey, He does not deal with him prior to the fact with a presupposition of guilt. Jesus here knew that the Jews would disobey in rejecting John the Baptist, but He did not address them as already guilty. In a world where the Jews accepted Christ and accepted John the Baptist, John would have been Elijah, but this was only a hypothetical world that never became real.

In the second statement, Christ affirmed that Elijah "*truly shall first come,*" and though this may have been a mere statement of principle, its future tense could also be taken to imply that the prophecy was yet to be fulfilled. More importantly, Jesus said that when Elijah came, he would "*restore all things,*" which is no doubt an allusion to the prediction of Malachi that Elijah would reunite the children and the fathers by restoring the children to a pure, Messiah-based religion. Now this did not happen under John the Baptist, as Christ Himself affirmed when He said the Jews had "*done unto him whatsoever they listed.*" That is, rather than seeing the momentous change predicted by Malachi, the story ended with John the Baptist simply being trashed. All this shows that the words of Christ did not shut the door on Malachi's prophecy.

Add to this the testimony of John the Baptist himself. When he was asked, "*Art thou Elias?*" (Jn 1:21), he flatly answered, "*I am not.*" There can be little doubt that the actual question being asked here was whether John the Baptist was the fulfillment of Malachi's final prophecy. It is clear that the Jews were very conscious of this prophecy and were waiting for its fulfillment (Mt 11:14, 16:14, 17:10, 27:49, Mk 6:15, 8:28, 9:11, 15:36, Lk 9:8, 9:19, Jn 1:21). In his reply, John denied being the fulfillment of this prophecy; rather, he explicitly claimed to be the fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3 (Jn 1:23). John the Baptist was "*in the spirit and power of Elias*" (Lk 1:17), and would have been him in the hypothetical scenario in which the Jews had obeyed, but he did not

actually represent the finality of Malachi's last prophecy. The truth is that God, for the purpose of confirming His word, will send an Elijah figure before *both* of His comings.

### **The Woman in the Wilderness**

I believe the woman in the wilderness of Revelation 12 represents a remnant among the Jews who will be converted to Christ before the man of sin appears. These will have a very special role in the plan of God. They are possibly the same with the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7 and 14. They will be delivered from the persecutions of the man of sin because God will give them a special refuge in the wilderness. They will possibly be the first taken in the rapture when Jesus returns, and will possibly accompany Him as he metes out destruction upon the wicked.

These are the verses in question:

*And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. – Rev 12:1-6*

The imagery involving the sun, moon and stars accords exactly with what Joseph saw in his second dream (Gn 37:9). We need not speculate on what these things represent because Jacob interpreted them for us, and he took them to represent his whole family (vs 10), which was the nation Israel in embryo form. The man child is obviously Christ, and this further corroborates the claim that the woman is Jewish. The dragon is the devil, and the purpose to devour the child represents past conspiracies of the devil to destroy Christ and the seed line leading up to Him. Thus far the imagery has been a flashback to the past for the purpose of establishing the identities of its characters. It then turns to the future when describing the woman as fleeing to the wilderness where she is given refuge from the serpent for a period of 1260 days or for “*a time, and times and half a time,*” (vs 14). Finally, she is described as those “*which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ,*” (vs 17). This is very important because it establishes that the woman is not only Jewish but also Christian. She represents converted Jews who will have special deliverance from Satan in the last days.

Jesus elsewhere mentioned some who would be delivered from the persecutions of the man of sin. He said in His famous Olivet discourse, after describing the wickedness and hazards of the last days, “*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all*



*these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man,” (Lk 21:36). In another famous passage, He said to the church of Philadelphia, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth,” (Rev 3:10). Such promises appear to pertain to the woman under consideration.*

The scriptures have also spoken elsewhere concerning a refuge being prepared by God in the wilderness for special Jews. Such scriptures include these in Hosea:

*Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. – Hos 2:14-15*

The context in which this passage is found will show that it can only pertain to the last days. Other possible references to the same event include the following passages:

*Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. – Ps 74:14*

*At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus saith the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. – Jer 31:1-2*

*As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. – Ezek 20:33-38*

*And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. – Ps 55:6-11*

This area called the “wilderness” will likely be to the east and south of Israel in what was formerly the regions of Moab, Ammon and parts of Edom. This was where Jews of old would sometimes flee when under the threat of invaders. The boundary between Moab and Ammon on the east side of Israel is also where the children of Israel crossed over Jordan when leaving the wilderness and entering Canaan’s land. Upon assuming this to be the actual refuge for the woman of Revelations 12, many other scriptures fall into sensible sequence, including:

*And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. – Zech 14:4-5*

While many interpret this scripture as teaching that Christ will return by landing on the Mount of Olives, this is better understood of an invisible divine intervention that produces visible, literal effects. His actual visible return is described at the end of the quote, not the beginning. The intent of the earthquake is to create a passageway of escape for the Christian Jews represented by the woman, and it will possibly also serve as a distraction to those who would otherwise prevent them. The direction of escape is to the east of Jerusalem, and would point to the aforementioned regions of Moab and Ammon beyond the Jordan River.

This also explains another otherwise enigmatic scripture. When describing the exploits of the man of sin, Daniel said:

*He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. – Dn 11:41-42*

If the man of sin will take Israel (i.e. “the glorious land”) and also take Egypt, then it should not be any challenge to take Moab, Ammon and Edom also, but divine providence will disallow it because the region will be reserved for the protection of the people represented by the woman.

Additionally, this theory explains scriptural descriptions of the path taken by the returning Savior. These have him approaching Jerusalem from the direction of Edom:

*Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their*

*blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. – Isa 63:1-4*

*God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. – Hab 3:3*

The last verse has God coming first from Mount Paran near to Sinai, then to Teman in southern Edom, and the next point on the journey would be further north in Edom to Bozrah, as indicated by the prior quote from Isaiah. We may reasonably speculate that the path commenced at Sinai in the wilderness (Dt 33:2). Now the reason He would start His return from such a point would be to first collect those saints represented by the woman, who would then become “*the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb*” (Rev 14:4), and we are further told that, “*These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,*” suggesting that they will travel with Him thereafter, so that to all others it may be said, “*the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,*” (Jude 14). Of course, all this would presumably happen very quickly and with the Lord and His saints being in the clouds and air (1Thes 4:15-18).

While it seems definite the woman represents Christian Jews who are converted to Christ before the ascent of the beast, it could of course be possible that she is not the same with the 144,000 as I have theorized. However, there are two important facts suggesting they are the same. In the first mention of the 144,000 in Revelation 7, they are obviously a group who are to receive special divine protection, which is also a characteristic of the woman. Second, if the path of Christ’s return is as I have described above, the woman in the wilderness will be among the first in the rapture, and this fits the description of the 144,000 as given in Revelation 14. To this we may add yet other evidence, though of lesser strength: The woman of Revelation 12 definitely seems the same with the woman of Hosea 2:14-23, yet the latter was distinguished by her singing, and such is also the case with the 144,000, who are to be given a new song (Rev 14:3).

## **The Beast**

From the times of earliest Babylon (Gn 11), Satan has attempted to centralize world power into a single government. The Lord then foiled his efforts by confounding the languages of men, upon which they were dispersed all over the planet. The final world kingdom will begin in alliance with the last Babylon (Rev 17:3) and will undertake the same wicked purpose. Consolidation of world kingdoms into a single entity would of course facilitate Satan’s purpose to rule over all. Hence, almost wherever this final kingdom is mentioned in scripture, consolidation is its principal feature. It is, of course, a futile exercise that aspires to political consolidation without accomplishing religious consolidation first, so both forms of consolidation are suggested in scriptural prophecy.

This consolidation brings together not only kingdoms of the future but also kingdoms of the past. These past kingdoms, that had sometimes been represented in the Bible by various animals, are in a sense resurrected and combined into a monster that the Bible calls “the beast.” Satan’s

purpose is parallel to, and in imitation of, the purpose of God. God's final kingdom is composed of resurrected bodies that are united in Christ (Eph 1:9-10), and Satan's purpose is evidently to resurrect the wicked of the past and unite them in himself. Of course, Satan does not have power to actually resurrect. His emulation is only by simulation (2Thes 2:9-12).

In the vision of his seventh chapter, Daniel saw great kingdoms that would emerge in the last days. The first was represented by a lion, the second by a bear, the third by a leopard and the fourth was a monster not comparable to anything in nature. But in Revelation 13, John would be given a more detailed view of this kingdom, upon which he described it as a beast "*like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion*" (vs 2). Hence, the final kingdom is to be a monstrous conglomeration of the animals preceding it.

The same principle can be seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of Daniel 2 wherein the history of the world was portrayed as a body whose parts were made of different metals. As was explained by the prophet, the various metals and body parts corresponded to different kingdoms that would emerge in series, yet the body as a whole evidently represented a single conglomerate entity also, as can be seen in the fact that the whole image was summarily destroyed, and its various parts simultaneously reduced to powder, by the uncut stone that represented Christ. Being inspired by this dream, Nebuchadnezzar literally created a colossal image in his next chapter and commanded that all the world worship it, as will also be the case with the beast and his image (Rev 13), but the servants of God were then miraculously delivered by the personal appearance of the Son of God in the fiery furnace. It is also of significance that Nebuchadnezzar would be reduced to a "beast" in the next chapter. All this portended important things to come.

The body seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is also an instance of satanic imitation of the plan of God. God's purpose is represented as a human body whose head is Christ and whose various other members are made up of His elect people (1Cor 12:12-31, Eph 5:23-33, Col 1:18). This body, which is His church, is central to God's plan for world history, and this is why Paul would say that upon the church "*the ends of the world are come,*" (1Cor 10:11). The satanic body has a Babylonian head, and this is why Babylon plays such an important role in Satan's plan and in Biblical prophecy concerning it.

Satan's purpose to imitate the plan of God can be seen in many other points as well, and this becomes especially evident in the book of Revelation. For example, God exists in the form of a Trinity. In Revelation, Satan manifests himself in the form of a trinity also, consisting of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. God has a Son, so Satan also has a son, the son of perdition (2Thes 2:3). Since God's Son was accompanied by a prophet, John the Baptist, Satan's son is accompanied also, but by the false prophet (Rev 13). God's Son was also accompanied by apostles who are to be enthroned (Mt 19:28). Satan's son is accompanied by 10 kings. God's Son has a virgin bride to whom He is faithful. Satan has a bride also, this being the Babylonian harlot, but he betrays her and burns her with fire (Rev 17:16). God has a city, the New Jerusalem. Satan has a city too. His city is Babylon. God has a resurrection, so Satan simulates

his own resurrection in the mortally wounded head of the beast (Rev 13:3). All these parallels suggest to us why Paul could say in his own times that “*the mystery of iniquity doth already work*” (2Thes 2:7). The appearance is that Satan, upon seeing the plan of God unfold in the life of Jesus Christ, and having it explained to him and other angels, both good and bad, by the Spirit-led church (Eph 3:10, 1Pet 1:12), then purposed to set in motion his own plan of imitation.

Returning to the consolidated character of the final kingdom, John was given the following interpretation of the seven heads of the beast:

*And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. – Rev 17:10-11*

So the seven heads represent seven kingdoms, mostly of the past, but these are in a sense raised from the dead, in imitation of the resurrection, and merged into an eighth kingdom, in imitation of unification in Christ, and all this is why the kingdom “*was, and is not, and yet is,*” (vs 8). It “*was*” in the sense that its various parts reigned in the past. It “*is not*” in the sense that these kingdoms were no longer thought to exist outside of the bottomless pit. It “*yet is*” in the sense that these kingdoms have been merged into a single monster that has been raised from the pit to rule over the earth. Obviously, the primary theme is consolidation.

There is yet more consolidation in the ten horns of the beast, which were explained as follows:

*And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. – Rev 17:12-13*

So these horns represent future kings who will reign simultaneously, but will consolidate themselves into a single entity under the authority of the beast, or the man of sin.

I will now offer some speculations about what countries are included in these visions concerning the beast; however, this is admittedly precarious business, and when the Savior commanded us to watch, He meant, among other things, that we should be cautious about committing to preconceived theories, but to form our interpretations as the facts become manifest.

As to the seven heads, we are given the following important details: “*five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space,*” (Rev 17:10). The most sensible approach is to assume that the seven heads are the old oppressors of Israel, and that Satan’s purpose is to bring the “dirty seven” together. This would mean that the five who were then fallen are: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece. Rome was yet ruling and was the sixth. The last could be Gog/Magog, as prophesied in Ezekiel 38 & 39.

As to the beasts seen by Daniel in the vision of his seventh chapter, many have interpreted these as being in replication to the kingdoms seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s image (ch 2). In that case, the

lion would correspond to the golden head, or Babylon; the bear would correspond to the arms of silver, or Media/Persia, and the leopard to the trunks of brass, or to Greece. This interpretation seems unlikely to me in that it is redundant and in that Daniel was told that, *“These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth”* (vs 17), suggesting that all were then future, whereas Babylon had already emerged as of the vision. A more likely interpretation is that these are *latter day* kingdoms, in which event, our best speculations would be that the lion is England; that its eagle’s wings represent the United States; that the lion being given a man’s heart refers to the conversion of England to Bible-based Christianity; that the bear corresponds to Russia; that it devours much flesh in that it covers a vast geographic region; that the three ribs represent three countries it will incorporate in the last days (e.g. Crimea, Ukraine, etc.); that the leopard corresponds to Germany or perhaps to western Europe in general; that the four heads refer to what Hitler called “reichs” with his own government being the third, implying that the next (or present) would be the fourth. The first two were under Charlemagne and Bismarck. Latter-day Europe may have been compared to a leopard because races all over the world have been migrating there like no other place in the world. The leopard’s various colors match the skin colors of the various races of men. The leopard was likely situated in time according to its fourth head, which would put it after the bear.

Under the interpretation of the previous paragraph, Daniel’s vision would then likely become elucidation on the lower parts of the image seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision. Rome ultimately divided into eastern and western empires. The legs would then represent these empires *and* the kingdoms that derived from them (e.g. England, United States, Germany, Russia, etc.).

John’s vision in Revelation 13 had the beast being a combination of the lion, bear and leopard, though it seems to be predominately leopard. Conspicuously missing from his vision of the beast were the eagle’s wings, though such had already appeared in the vision of the woman in Revelation 12, where upon her persecution by the dragon it was said, *“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent,”* (Rev 12:14). This offers hope that the United States will not be involved, or fully so, in the kingdom of the beast and that it will remain an ally of Christian Jews to the end.

The common modern opinion that the beast is the European Union does not fit the scriptural data. It may be partly this, but involves much more, including especially some of the ancient enemies of Israel in the Middle East. The present Islamic migration to Europe and the anti-Israel prejudice in the United Nations definitely open the possibility that the beast will involve both. As to the ten horns, it can likely be said now, even as of John’s times, that these *“have received no kingdom as yet”* (Rev 17:12), or at least their identity is not yet discernible.

When the scriptures refer to the “beast,” they can mean either the final world kingdom or to the wicked man who is to rule it. He is of course known as “antichrist” by most modern Christians, but this is not an actual scriptural name for him. His various scriptural names come primarily

from the Apostle Paul in 2Thessalonians 2 where he is called the “man of sin” and the “son of perdition” (vs 3) and also called “wicked,” where the adjective is used as a noun (vs 8), though Paul may have derived this last term from Isaiah 11:4. Some Bible readers have denied that the beast refers to any actual man, and this they say notwithstanding the clear and contrary impressions given by 2Thessalonians and other places. Such Bible readers have become much too comfortable with interpretations of scripture that are far-removed from intuitive meaning. This approach to the Bible could make anything mean nothing. It should be clear that the plan of Satan is in imitation to the plan of God and that the son of perdition is the satanic answer to Jesus Christ. Satan’s plan concerning him is called the “*mystery of iniquity*,” (2Thes 2:7). This is the exact opposite of the “*mystery of godliness*,” (1Tim 3:16). We know the latter is God manifest in the flesh. The former is therefore Satan manifest in the flesh.

The man of sin is extensively discussed in Isaiah 14:4-28 where he is portrayed as the king of Babylon and is given the name of “Lucifer.” Isaiah’s descriptions here may be applied either to Satan himself or to the man he intends to animate. It was revealed to Isaiah that Satan has an enormous ego and that his principal aspiration is to “*be like the most High*,” (vs 14). This explains his maddened compulsion to imitate God and imitate the plan of God, particularly as it pertains to Jesus Christ. While some ordinary king of ancient Babylon might fit certain parts of this prophecy, no such king could fit all of it. The king under consideration had fallen from heaven (vs 12) but was conspiring to ascend back to heaven (vs 13). This clearly refers to Satan. Isaiah also said this king intends to sit in the temple of God as though he were God (vs 13). Paul very likely referred to this statement in 2Thessalonians 2:4 when speaking of the man of sin. The prophecy of Isaiah also said to this wicked king, “*thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch*,” (Isa 14:19). Jesus was described in various places of the Old Testament as the “Branch” (Isa 11:1, Jer 23:5, 33:15, Zec 3:8, 6:12). The true Branch emerged from His grave in a glorious, immortal body, but Isaiah said this satanic imitator of Christ will do no such thing, but will be vomited up by the earth as an abomination. Another important detail is that the insane ambitions of this king will drive him to destroy his own land (vs 20). This does not fit any Babylonian king of the past, but it surely fits the description of the beast in Revelation 17:16.

Daniel spoke extensively concerning the man of sin also, sometimes directly and sometimes via type. Important details revealed in Daniel’s seventh chapter are: The man of sin will not be the builder of the final world kingdom; rather, he will emerge within it. This kingdom was depicted as a monstrous beast having ten horns (vs 7). These represented ten kings who will rule simultaneously and ultimately in a confederacy that will yield itself to the beast. These ten kings can also be seen in the ten toes of the image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (ch 2). The man of sin will emerge after them and will supplant three of the horns (vs 24). He will be a great blasphemer of God and a persecutor of His people, but his reign will be short, being only for “*a time and times and the dividing of time*” or 3.5 years (vs 25). Further detail is given from Daniel 11:36 to the end of his book. There we are again told he will be a great blasphemer and that he will magnify himself against the true God and even against all false gods. Moreover, he will

occupy several countries including especially Israel (11:41). Concerning the latter, Daniel said, *“And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him,”* (Dn 11:45). This corroborates what Isaiah and Paul said about him occupying the temple, and it corroborates what John said about him being destroyed in the land of Israel (Rev 14:20, 16:16).

He is possibly discussed in Zechariah 11:17 where he is called the “idol shepherd” – a characterization that would well fit what was said of the beast in Revelation 13:14-15. Zechariah described him as one sent in judgment against Israel for their rejection of the Good Shepherd. As Jesus said elsewhere, *“I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive,”* (Jn 5:43).

Add to these the prophecy of Ezekiel 28:12-19 where Satan and the man of sin were characterized as the king of Tyrus. This prophecy clearly cannot be fulfilled in any human king of the past. This king had once been in the Garden of Eden, being created in great beauty, but had become an apostate. He had once been *“the anointed cherub that covereth”* (vs 14), meaning that God had made him a guardian over man, thus showing the heinous nature of his conspiracy to corrupt and destroy man. But God said, *“I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God”* (vs 16), meaning that God would drive him from the seat he would take in the temple on the temple mount.

Finally, this seven-headed beast is described as having a mortally-wounded head (Rev 13:1-12). This makes him the fulfillment of the world's oldest prophecy:

*And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*  
– Gen 3:14-15

While I hope to say more about this subject later, observe for now that the beast also resolves a mystery in this ancient prophecy: We did not expect a mere “bruise” to the head of Satan; rather, we expected total destruction. The story of the beast informs us that our expectations were correct, but, as always, the Bible is correct too. The bruise to the head will in fact be mortal, but whereas the bruise to the heel was rectified by a resurrection, Satan will attempt to rectify the bruise to the head by a simulated resurrection. The resurrected head will then be placed among seven heads, which will seem too many heads to destroy, but all these efforts will be for naught because *“The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries,”* (Ps 110:5-6).

I will finish this section by considering one of the most intriguing aspects of the beast. It is said of his accompanying false prophet that:



*And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six. – Rev 13:16-18*

Many theories have been advanced concerning the mystical number 666, including some that are in disregard to the details stated above. Taking these verses exactly for what they say, we can conclude with fair confidence that:

- 1) The number is associated with the *name* of the beast. While some have theorized that it has something to do with a date or location or other details concerning him, such ideas are improbable because the verses in question explicitly state that the number is associated with his name. Further, by “beast” is meant the man of sin himself as opposed to his kingdom. It is “*the number of a man,*” not of a kingdom. The apparent intent of the warning is to give guidance toward identifying him.
- 2) The number is obtained by counting or calculation, and the calculation is such as would require wisdom and understanding. This suggests that the number is derived from the name by means of some computational method that converts the letters of the name to a number.
- 3) The method is one implemented by the false prophet himself inasmuch as he requires the number of anyone who would buy or sell.

There are two obstacles preventing inference of the name from the number 666: The first is that we presently do not know the translation algorithm. The second is that even if we knew it, the translation may not be invertible. That is, one might not be able to uniquely derive a name from a number even if they could uniquely derive a number from a name. The Jews did in fact have a system called “gematria” for translating names into numbers, and several theories about 666 have been based on it, but the problem is that the system cannot be used to translate numbers back to names. The system is not invertible because several names might translate to the same number. If the relevant algorithm has the same limitation, then it could still be useful toward eliminating candidates, or toward identifying a probable candidate, but it would not yield a definitive conclusive. This is apt to be the case. Had the Holy Spirit intended us to have definite knowledge of the name, then the Bible would have simply stated it.

Many who have analyzed this number have made much of the fact that it involves a triplicated six. These analyses are questionable because such is the case only in the numeric system we use today. It would not have been true of numeric systems familiar to the apostle. For example under Roman numerals the number would have been written as dcmxvi and under Greek it would have been ϞϞϞ. Under modern binary it would be 1010011010 and under hexadecimal it would be 29a. In none of these is there a triplicated six.

One important question is: Why would this criterion of identification be so important when the man of sin would seem to be glaringly distinguished without it? This would be true especially as of the time described in Revelation 13, because by then the false prophet will have moved multitudes to worship him and will have erected a notable image in his honor. There are at least two potential reasons: One would be to distinguish the man of sin from similar tyrants who might predate him. The other would be that the number might serve as an early indicator that would help identify him before he is worshipped or sits on the temple, or before the false prophet actually enforces the number as a condition to buy or sell.

Some have claimed that “Nero” has a numerical value of 666 under the gematria system, but this is true only after the data has been thoroughly massaged. For the calculation to work, his title must be added (i.e. “Nero Caesar”) and his name must be translated to Hebrew using questionable spelling. Besides, if Nero were the man, then we would be constrained to say that God’s word returned unto Him void, and did not accomplish His intents (Isa 55:11), because we have no evidence that the Christians of Nero’s generation ever got the clue. If they had, then it would certainly seem that either they or their children or their grandchildren would have told us.

On the other hand, some have advanced the theory that the antichrist is in some mystical sense a reincarnation of Judas Iscariot. Even the well-known Arthur Pink held such a view. This theory has a surprising amount of evidence in its support – much more than the theory about Nero – but it cannot be accepted with satisfactory confidence because the name does not yield a numerical value of 666 under any known algorithm that John might have used. While the revelation concerning 666 will serve its intended purpose in due time, it likely cannot be resolved for now.

### **The Babylonian Harlot**

Though the beast and the harlot begin in an unholy alliance, they are not the same. The harlot is a symbol of corrupt ancient religion, and is as old as the world itself, and has been a persecutor of God’s people over the ages. The beast is something new, and likely begins as a political entity, but will degenerate into a religious entity that will rival even the harlot. The harlot is Babylonian because this country, whose name literally means “confusion,” has been the source and symbol of most false religious ideas, and is therefore called “*the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird,*” (Rev 18:2).

Important imagery concerning the beast and harlot are given in Revelation 17:

*So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I*

*saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. – Rev 17:3-6*

The fact that the harlot rides on the back of the beast shows that she has him under her influence at the beginning of his reign. She is seen in the wilderness because she conspires to use the power of the beast to destroy the woman God is protecting there (ch 12).

This imagery also says much about how the Bible has elsewhere viewed the world. The general posture of the Bible is that civil government is of itself a good thing that is ordained by God (Rom 13:1-8), and therefore God's people are almost everywhere commanded to obey it. However, the Bible views false religion as an abominable thing that God's children are never to obey. In the biblical view, civil government goes amiss when it comes under the sway of corrupt religion or philosophy – that is, when false religion rides on its back. This shows why Christians should always contend for separation of government and religion, because when they are merged, Christians are very apt to find themselves in a precarious predicament. In the last several decades, America has had many problems because religion and state have not been kept separate; rather, government has in many ways enforced Darwinism, which is in fact a religion when objectively viewed.

The Bible indicates that both the beast and the harlot will seek to advance themselves in the last days through commerce and even through commercial coercion. The beast will attempt to prohibit buying and selling except to those who bear his mark (Rev 13:17). When the harlot is destroyed, those who lament her the most are the merchants of the world (Rev 18:11). In Zechariah 5 she is portrayed as being in the midst of an ephah. The ephah is likely a symbol of commerce, and the harlot in the midst possibly says that commerce will be exploited as a vehicle for the spread of Babylonian ideology in the last days. This can be seen in present America where enormous corporations, worth more than many entire countries, promote their own corrupt agendas through their control over the media and other means. They also use their power to censure those who would oppose them. The whore is in the midst of the ephah even now.

But the whore will come to an unexpected end. Paul said of the man of sin: “*Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God,*” (2Thess 2:4). This means he accepts no rivals, whether from true religion or false, and Daniel said he shall “*magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods... Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers*” (Dn 11:36-38). This conveys the same idea, namely, that he will be adversarial even to traditional false religion. This means he is on a collision course with the harlot, and this will lead to the following prophecy:

*And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the*

*beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth. – Rev 17:16-18*

Jesus said the devil's kingdom cannot stand if divided, and though this is something he would not otherwise do, the mighty hand of God will bring it to pass, whereupon Satan's kingdom will fall. This will also be a fitting end to the harlot. It had been her intent to use the beast to destroy the woman in the wilderness (17:3-6), but like wicked Haman in the days of Esther (Est 7:10), the harlot will hang from her own gallows. *"The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands,"* (Ps 9:16).

From all indications, the city whose destruction is described in Revelation 17-19 is literal, though the city will likely go by a name other than "Babylon." Two important clues as to its identity are that it sits on seven mountains (17:9) and that it also sits on many waters (17:1). While these details have symbolic meaning, they are apt to prove literally true also. The city of Rome was famed for sitting on seven mountains, so many have assumed it is meant, but the ancient city of Constantinople had the same reputation, and was also strategically situated on important waterways of the ancient world. This partly explains why Emperor Constantine wanted to make it the new capital of the Roman Empire, and it was in fact called "New Rome" before being renamed as "Constantinople." This city is presently Istanbul in Turkey. A third clue as to the identity of Babylon is that she is presented as saying of herself, *"I sit a queen, and am no widow"* (18:7). Remarkably, both ancient Constantinople and modern Istanbul have been famously known for their boast as being the "queen of cities." A fourth clue is that the city is responsible for massive martyrdom of Christians (17:6, 18:24, 19:2). Now when the whole of Christian history is considered, it would be difficult to find any place in the world where more Christian blood has been shed than in Turkey. A fifth clue is that the city is a place of intensive commerce (18:11-19). Istanbul has a famous marketplace known as the "Grand Bazaar" that rates as one of the world's largest tourist attractions. The market is so enormous that it is said to be visible from space. It is claimed to have approximately 4,000 stores covering 61 streets. Some say it is the oldest shopping mall in the world, being in existence since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A sixth clue is that the book of Revelation was addressed to seven churches, all of which were located in what is modern Turkey. There are surely important reasons for this. I will not be so bold as to confidently assert that Istanbul, Turkey is the place called "Babylon," but given all these facts, I can confidently state that any watchful Christian had best keep an eye on it.

Rome was central to the Roman Catholic Church and Constantinople was central to the Eastern Orthodox Church. This has led many to associate these degenerate bodies with the harlot; however, she is apt to include much more. The theme of end-time wickedness is consolidation, and this means religious consolidation also. The whore is apt to represent a medley of error from multiple religions.

Perhaps the most important point about the Babylonian harlot is that she is composed partly, if not primarily, of apostate Christianity. Christians have believed this for as long as there have

been Christians, and for very good reasons. The New Testament repeatedly warned that the greatest enemy of true Christianity would be a fallen rendition of itself, and that this would especially be true in the last days.

The Bible describes the world as being very wicked in the last days, but when interpreting such statements, one must bear in mind that the world has always been wicked, and has at times been worse than now. The thing that distinguishes the last days is the location and type of evil, not simply its magnitude. This wickedness will be prevalent in what represents itself as the church. This is expressed in numerous statements, starting with words of the Lord Himself:

*For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. – Mt 24:5*

*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves... Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. – Mt 7:15-23*

These are obviously statements warning against those who present themselves as being Christians. Add to this the many statements of the apostles to the same effect:

*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils. – 1Tim 4:1*

It is evident that one cannot depart from the faith without ever having been in the faith. The text is describing Christian apostasy. The same is indicated in the verses below:

*I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. – 2Tim 4:1-4*

The people under consideration had once endured sound doctrine, meaning that they represented themselves as Christians, but their real character will manifest itself in the end. Such apostates are described in much detail in the following passage:

*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures*

*more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.* – 2Tim 3:1-5

Observe that these wicked people have “*a form of godliness*,” which means they do not pretend to be Pagans, atheists, agnostics, etc.; rather, they pretend to be Christians. They are in fact far from it, as may be seen in the verses below:

*Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* – 2 Pet 3:3-4

Now these scoffers are not Pagans nor are they other non-Christian religionists. Unbelievers like these have always scoffed at the second coming of Christ. Such behavior would do nothing to distinguish the last days. The text is describing people whose professed doctrine has changed toward corruption, and corruption so severe that it denies, either explicitly or implicitly, the very coming of Christ.

Add to this the parables of the Lord, which repeatedly communicated the same message. In the parable of the wheat and tares (Mt 13), the field, purportedly representing His kingdom, will be thoroughly infiltrated with tares when harvest comes. In the parable of the three loaves, all loaves will be permeated with leaven in the end. In the parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25), half of them will be without oil (representing the Spirit) when the Lord comes, and all of them will be slumbering. In the parable of the wicked judge, the Lord asked the most troubling question, “*Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*” (Lk 18:8).

All of the above definitely suggest that the Babylonian harlot likely wears a cross around her neck. Evidences of her effects on modern Christianity are everywhere. Paul said, “*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.*” (2Thess 2:3). This means a falling away from Christianity, which can now be seen in declining churches over most of the world, and even worse is the degradation of Christian morals, commitment and soundness. The greater part of nominal Christians today love the world and want to be loved by the world, and their so-called churches are prompt to accommodate them in both. This is Babylon. The Lord commands, “*Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues,*” (Rev 18:4).

## **The Locusts**

The ninth chapter of Revelation is difficult with respect to its details but not with respect to its general meaning. The chapter begins with the release of what are called “locusts” upon the earth, but they clearly are not literal locusts. Indeed, they are no form of biological life at all, because they are released from the bottomless pit where biological life presumably cannot live, and they are forbidden to eat plants, indicating they are not herbivores, and they are also forbidden to kill, suggesting they are not carnivores. Rather, they are devils unleashed on the

wicked men of the earth for the purpose of tormenting them. The fallen star that releases them from the pit is evidently Satan (Rev 12:9-12). After this, four destructive angels are released who had been bound in the river Euphrates, the birthplace of civilization and likely also of religious corruption. This is followed by a rampage of 200,000,000 so-called “horsemen,” who are evidently satanic beings also because a human army of this size would seem a logistic impossibility. At this stage, the violence and destruction are escalated, because the original “locusts” were forbidden to kill but the four angels and the hoard of horsemen will kill a third part of men. The chapter ends with a telling statement that divulges its general intent:

*And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk. – Rev 9:20-21)*

Wicked men have worshipped and served devils since the fall in Eden, yet had it not been for the merciful, restraining hand of the righteous God they denied, those devils would have destroyed them long ago. Even in the practice of idolatry, men were truly worshipping devils (1Cor 10:19-20). So this chapter has a most fitting judgment: The devils those wicked men had loved and worshipped are unleashed upon them in torment and destruction, yet, in unequivocal proof of human depravity, those wicked men will not repent in any degree whatsoever of their worship of these devils over the true God of Heaven. God’s final actions toward this earth seem calculated to demonstrate conclusively the total depravity and utter incorrigibility of both wicked men and devils. God will even incarcerate some for 1000 years to prove it beyond all doubt. Given all this, every professed Christian who denies the total depravity of man should be warned that the final acts of God toward this planet will be purposed to expose his heresy.

The fundamental theme of the Bible was set in its opening pages when God created man in His own image and likeness (Gn 1:26). This meant that man was given highest rank in the order of creation (Ps 8:6), and also meant that God had a personal interest in his success and promotion. Certain of the angelic host led by Satan objected to this, evidently believing this lofty status should have been given to them. They therefore conspired to secure the fall of man and have been seeking to corrupt and abase him ever since. The most ancient book of the Bible gives important insight regarding Satan’s motives. In the book of Job, Satan’s purpose was to demonstrate to God the unreasonableness of His love for man by showing that even the best of men was no more than a self-serving animal who would honor God only when in personal interest to do so. Satan is still obsessively pressing the same case today (Rev 12:10).

The Bible explains that man is now a physical and spiritual degenerate from what God originally made, but there are vestiges of his original greatness. This explains why man has conquered higher math, mapped and measured the galaxies, sent men into space, designed computers, decoded genetics, etc. All other creatures of God are doing now the same things they were doing in the beginning, e.g. climbing trees, grazing grass, etc, but man has made, and continues to make, phenomenal advance. He is not like other creatures. He is very special. He was created

in the image of God. Yet man's achievements are nothing in comparison to what they would have been excluding his fall, or even had he honored God after the fall.

The mission of Jesus Christ was to recover an element of the race from its degenerate state and to elevate it to and beyond what it had originally been. This will explain why Christ put more emphasis on the potential of man than any religious teacher of all time. He famously said, *"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you,"* (Mt 17:20). Again He said, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father,"* (Jn 14:12). His apostle later said that God is able *"to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,"* (Eph 3:20). Again Paul said, *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,"* (Rom 8:18). Observe that the glory here is revealed *"in us"* not merely *"to us."* This is because the resurrected body of Jesus Christ is the prototype of what man will ultimately be. Now these are the heights to which God is prepared to elevate man, and He will do it in the interest of His own glory because in His own image was man created.

The devil is, of course, bitterly opposed to this and is still relentlessly seeking to overthrow the God-given primacy of man. This is why Paul said that, regardless of how things might appear to the eye, the struggle of man is really and ultimately against Satan and his cohorts: *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand,"* (Eph 6:12-13).

It is therefore the height of ingratitude that man should deny the God who gave him his original glory, and the God who invested Himself in man's preservation and progress, and it is the height of folly that man should instead worship and serve the very devils who have been bent on man's destruction from the beginning. In this chapter of Revelation, God passes a judgment whose reasonableness should be apparent. Wicked men have always wanted devils, so devils are what they will have. Perhaps two-hundred million of them will suffice.



## The Abomination of Desolations

The Lord Jesus in His lengthy and momentous prophecy on the Mount of Olives made a statement that His disciples were perhaps surprised to hear. He said:

*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains. – Mt 24:14-16*

The Lord applied Daniel's prophecy of the abomination of desolation to the future whereas any Bible-believing Jew would have thought it had already been fulfilled in the times of Antiochus. But Daniel spoke of an abomination of desolation in several places, and closer inspection reveals that these could not all be referring to the same event. As already shown, the one recorded in 8:13 applied to Antiochus. This is a fact that almost none will dispute. The one in 11:31 is a restatement of this, and it was given with such remarkable and renowned historical correlation that I assume none would dare dispute this also. But the one recorded in 9:27 was to occur after the death of the Messiah, and must therefore be different, and the one in 12:11 appears to apply to the times of the general resurrection. Hence, there are at least three distinct abominations of desolation. The Savior was directly referring to either 9:27 or to 12:11 or both.

The issue should be of great interest to us. Jesus said concerning this event, "*whoso readeth, let him understand.*" The same admonition is given in Mark 13:14. The Savior here gives the distinct impression that the abomination of desolation is key to understanding end-time prophecy and should be studied assiduously by all seeking a better understanding. It is therefore my intent to consider it in great detail. An explanation of the prophecy must accommodate several facts, and while I will present a theory that has good fit on these facts, this is not to say that it *uniquely* fits them. Other theories may fit also, and it is best to remain open-minded to such possibilities.

The first question to address is actually controversial: Has the Savior's prophecy already been fulfilled or is it yet to come? There are many who will say that all instances of the abomination of desolation in Daniel have already been fulfilled, and these will claim that those instances to which the Savior referred were fulfilled in AD 70 when the Roman army, being led by General Titus, destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. However, it takes much imagination and creativity to see any such abomination in that siege. The principal defense for this position is based on divergence between the wording of Luke from that of Matthew and Mark. In the last two books, the abomination of desolation was the clue given by the Savior upon which believers were to flee Jerusalem in the face of its impending destruction; however, in Luke we have these words:

*And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them*

*which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. – Luke 21:20-24*

Those who put fulfillment of the prophecy in the past say the words “*abomination of desolation*” as recorded in Matthew and Mark, and the words “*Jerusalem compassed with armies*” as recorded in Luke, refer to exactly the same thing. They further explain that the various sections of the Roman army carried ensigns, which were effectively idols and worshipped as such. This is how they account for the use of the word “abomination.”

In reply to this, the applicability of the Luke account to AD 70 is happily acknowledged, and it is true that Roman soldiers worshipped their ensigns as idols, and Josephus confirms that such ensigns were indeed present in the siege, and further says that, after the city walls were breached and the temple burned, the Romans erected these ensigns at the eastern gate of the temple. However, the problem is that none would otherwise consider a besieging army carrying ensigns and encircling a city to be an “abomination of desolation.” This expression normally means a desecration of the temple that renders it unfit for service and is possibly the occasion of its destruction. Accordingly, the word “desolation” refers principally to the temple, and means that it has been vacated of true worship and worshippers and has possibly been destroyed. These definitions were vividly illustrated by the experience with Antiochus. It is clear in retrospect that “abomination” there referred to desecration of the temple, especially by placement of an idol, and “desolation” meant the temple was rendered inoperable. The Matthew account strongly suggests that the same definitions were intended by Christ. He there said, “*When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, **stand in the holy place.***” The words “*stand in the holy place*” surely do not suggest any place outside the temple, much less to the ground outside the city.

Advocates of the theory, realizing these deficiencies, have defended themselves by claiming that the ensigns were eventually placed on temple grounds, and though they have no proof of such, they claim it likely that the ensigns were placed in the temple itself. The problem here is that they are now effectively denying the true equivalence of “*abomination of desolation*” and “*Jerusalem compassed with armies*,” thus forfeiting the primary scriptural leg upon which their theory presumably stands. Besides this, the placement of the ensigns on temple grounds served as no effective warning. By the time it was done, the city walls had been breached, the temple burned, and hundreds of thousands were already dead. Christ clearly presented the abomination of desolation as a clue to flee while opportunity remained. The point is that “*abomination of desolation*” must mean either ensigns about the city or mean ensigns on the temple grounds. It cannot mean both, yet neither of these alternatives is plausible without the aid of the other.

A more plausible explanation is that “*abomination of desolation*” and “*Jerusalem compassed with armies*” do not refer to the same thing. Rather, these are two different parts of the same message. The questions being answered by Jesus in His discourse were: “*When shall these things be?* (i.e. destruction of the temple) *and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*” The statement in Luke about Jerusalem being encompassed by armies was in answer to the question about the destruction of the temple. The statements in Matthew and Mark about the abomination of desolation were in answer to the questions about His coming and the end of the world. The plausibility of this explanation will be more clearly seen by considering the actual statements of Daniel concerning the abominations of desolation.

Of the four places Daniel spoke of such, two clearly pertained to Antiochus. This leaves a couple to consider, starting with verses in chapter 9:

*Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. – Dn 9:24-27*

The words, “*prince that shall come,*” are best applied to the Roman general Titus, who destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. Titus’ father, Vespasian, was emperor of Rome at the time, and Titus was eventually made emperor himself. The words, “*he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week,*” are best applied to the Messiah. This approach yields far more sensible results than the common modern opinion that “*prince that shall come*” refers to the antichrist. To prop up this conclusion, its advocates must theorize that the 70 weeks are noncontiguous with the 70th week being separated from the others by a span of 2000 years. They acknowledge that the antichrist has not yet come, and they have no recourse but to acknowledge that 69 of the weeks are past, so they must put the 70th week two millennia after the previous 69. This widely-held theory is so far-fetched that it serves as veritable proof that humans will believe almost anything if a sufficient number of their kind will affirm it. Their error partly derives from misinterpretation of the words, “*seal up the vision and prophecy,*” which they take as implying the final *fulfillment* of all prophecy. It is more sensible to take it as implying the final *revelation* of all prophecy, or that all prophetic writings will have been given as of the indicated time. This explains why no books

have been added to the Bible since the times of Christ and His apostles. This latter interpretation is also consistent with how “*seal up*” is used elsewhere (Rev 10:4, 22:10).

Anyone familiar with the facts of history will see that those facts decidedly support the interpretation that says the prophesied destruction of the city occurred in AD 70; that it was the Messiah who confirmed the covenant in the 70th week; that He terminated sacrifices in the midst of that week by rendering them obsolete with His crucifixion. The first 3.5 years of the week occurred during His ministry. The final 3.5 years of the week were when His apostles labored exclusively with the Jews before turning to the Gentiles after the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7). This division can be seen in the parable of the wedding feast (Mt 22:1-14). This parable has the messengers of the king being sent to the Jews twice, with the two trips corresponding to the two 3.5-year intervals. So this interpretation is well-supported by such considerations, and also by the fact that, as already shown, it produces a very good fit on the 70-week prophecy.

This then leads us back to the original question about the abomination of desolation. Concerning such, this text said specifically, “*for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.*” Observe that here we have not one but multiple abominations that “*overspread.*” It has already been shown that there are numerous problems in assuming these to be the Roman ensigns. Though the word “*overspread*” might apply to them to some degree, it applies in another way with far greater plausibility and far greater consequence.

The temple mount has been overspread with abominations for almost the entire history since the temple fell, and this is known to all the world as being the primary reason the temple has never been rebuilt. The Dome of the Rock, the Dome of the Chain, the al-Aqsa Mosque and four Islamic minarets overspread the mount today, all of which are considered as abominations by religious Jews, and such Islamic structures have been on the mount for over 1300 years. Prior to that, the mount was home to a pagan temple to Jupiter built by Caesar Hadrian. This stood for hundreds of years. Very few people in this world, including even Jews, know anything about the Roman ensigns, but millions know about these Islamic structures, especially the golden surface of the Dome of the Rock, which is so frequently displayed by the media as to make it the leading icon of the city. Now the prophecy said the abominations would be in place until the “*consummation*” – that is, right up to the very end – and until “*that determined be poured out on the desolate*” – that is, until God has finished executing His judgments against the Jews for their rejection of Christ. This suggests that the abominations under consideration would serve as obstacles causing desolation for a very protracted period, whereas the Roman ensigns ceased to be obstacles long ago.

All this accords with what Paul said concerning the man of sin:

*And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be*

*taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. – 2Thes 2:6-8*

Thus, there is an obstacle in place that prevents the man of sin from being revealed. The previous verses specified what would be necessary to reveal him: “*Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God,*” (2Thes 2:4). So he is definitively revealed when he takes seat in the temple declaring himself to be God. This obviously cannot be done if a temple does not exist, and there is indeed an obstacle in place preventing its existence. The thing that “*withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time*” might be these abominations or the wicked powers behind them.

When Paul said, “*the mystery of iniquity doth already work,*” this is no grounds to dismiss the prophecy as having been fulfilled. The time of Christ’s coming is perhaps the most carefully guarded secret of all time. Not even the devil knows it. So he must assume that his next opportunity may be his last. As a consequence, God has had the devil playing the two-minute drill for two thousand years. The devil has been attempting to implement his final strategy all along, but has been repeatedly foiled because God has cast stumbling-blocks in his path. The strategy will be carried to its fullest extent only when God permits. This suggests that Christians of the past were not entirely in error when they prematurely saw the Romans, Ottomans, Nazis, etc. as being the final world kingdom. This may have been exactly what the devil intended, and in this respect it could have been said even then that “*the mystery of iniquity doth already work.*” Another interesting consequence of his repeated but failed efforts to implement his plan would be the production of a cyclical pattern in history, with final fulfillment being preceded by potentially multiple partial fulfillments. Of course I have already presented the case that such a pattern pertains to many scriptural prophecies.

Having considered Daniel 9:24-27, we are left with one other abomination of desolation in Daniel that is candidate for Christ’s warning in Matthew 24:14-16. This is:

*And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. – Dn 12:11-12*

Context shows this text pertains to the last days. The second verse of the chapter is a prophecy of the final resurrection. The fourth verse indicates that the prophecy pertains to “*the time of the end.*” The seventh verse connects the prophecy to a special period of “*a time, times, and an half,*” which is the same span repeatedly applied to the last days in Revelation (11:2-3, 12:6, 12:14, 13:5). All evidence indicates this was the verse Jesus was considering when He said, “*When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet,*

*stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains,*” (Mt 24:15-16). While the abomination mentioned in Dn 9:24-27 was yet to be fulfilled when the Lord spoke, it would not have served as an effective warning under any reasonable interpretation. As already shown, the other instances of the abomination of desolation had already been fulfilled in Antiochus. This leaves the above text as sole candidate.

Some will surely object to applying this text to modern times on the basis that sacrifices are supposedly a thing of the past. This naive objection fails to consider that Moslems still do sacrifices by the millions. So do Hindus. Certain of the Jews would be doing them also if circumstances allowed. In the mongrelized, apostate religion of the last days, sacrifices are far from inconceivable. Add to this the fact that Catholics have a daily “sacrament,” which Daniel might have described as a daily “sacrifice.”

The above scripture was in answer to the question, “*What shall be the end of these things?*” This suggests that the 1290-day period it mentions measures from the daily sacrifice being taken away and the abomination being placed to “*the end of these things*” or to the time that corrective measures are taken against them. Now the span of time is odd to scriptures. In multiple places the Bible speaks of a 1260-day period, which is alternately described as 42 months or a “time, times and half a time,” but nowhere else does it specify the period of 1290 days. This has led some to suggest mistranslation, but the Lord did not say, “whoso readeth let him doubt,” nor “whoso readeth let him correct;” rather, it was, “*whoso readeth, let him **understand**.*” The interval of 1335 days specified by the prophecy is also unique to the Bible, and this confirms that the prophecy is conveying information in addition to what the Bible revealed elsewhere when speaking of the 1260-days. In what follows, I hope to offer a plausible theory concerning all of these measurements. In my opinion, the issues considered here carry us to a crucial juncture where many prophetic scriptures are at stake. It is important that the reader remain of an open and studious mind, and be careful about over-committing to any theory, whether mine or other’s.

## **The 1260 Days**

The Bible says much about what will happen in the 1260-day period. First, it measures the time that the saints will be under the oppression of the man of sin and his satanically-inspired beast kingdom. Daniel was the first to mention it, saying of the saints, “*they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time,*” (Dn 7:25). John imitated this very text when describing certain saints as being delivered from the beast and given refuge in the wilderness where they are to be “*nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent,*” (Rev12:14). Daniel again mentioned this interval in his final chapter:

*And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river,  
How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in  
linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his  
left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a*

*time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. – Dn 12:6-7*

The final words of this text again associate the 1260-day span with the oppression of the saints. The same will be found in the remaining occurrences of this interval in Revelation 11:2 and 13:5-7. So everywhere this 1260-day period is named, even when alternately described as 42 months, etc., it has to do with the oppressive reign of the beast.

Another important point upon which the Bible is consistent and clear is that the man of sin will set himself up in the temple and proclaim himself to be God, and this too will last for 1260 days. The fact that he would occupy the temple was first revealed in Isaiah:

*For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. – Isa 14:13*

The words, “*mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north,*” refer to the temple, as is confirmed by Paul:

*Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. – 2Thes 2:4*

Daniel also referred to this fact in the final verse of his 11th chapter:

*And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him. – Dn 11:45*

So all these verses have the man of sin sitting in the temple, and the last verse says this temple or “palace” will be situated “*in the glorious holy mountain,*” which almost surely means the temple mount in Jerusalem.

Some will surely complain that God has no use for a physical temple because His real temple is now a spiritual house of which Christ is the cornerstone, etc. This is absolutely correct, but it does not necessarily deter deluded men from building one. If the man of sin is to sit in a temple, as all of the above texts surely say, then such a temple must be built. The fact that God would allow the man of sin to then desecrate it is sufficient to show that God has little regard for it, exactly as any reasonable Christian should expect. Consider also the words of John:

*And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. – Rev 11:1-2*

The above verse further corroborates the existence of a temple at Jerusalem in the last days. The verse also supports the claim that such temple is not under the blessings of God. In multiple

places in the Bible, to “measure” a thing means to judge it (2Ki 21:13, Job 31:6, Isa 65:7, Dn 5:27, Hab 3:6, Mt 7:2), and statements following the verse are consistent with this interpretation. The fact that it is called the temple “*of God*” does not imply that it is literally such. Jerusalem is here called the “*holy city*” but is called “*Sodom and Egypt*” only six verses later. It is the temple “*of God*” only in that it purports to be such and is perceived to be such by men. Accordingly, it is not implied that the worshippers in the temple are Christians or that the occupants of Jerusalem are Christians, though both Jews and Christians will be persecuted by the man of sin. This is because Paul said he “*opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.*” Hence, he is rival to all religion, both true and false, both Christian and Jewish.

This verse also informs us that the city of Jerusalem is to be occupied by Gentile forces for 42 months. These are surely the forces of the man of sin, as is indicated by the length of their occupation, and as is confirmed by verses that follow. So in all this, we are given yet further detail on the events of the important 1260-day interval, and thus far we can say that it is a period over which: 1) The saints will be generally oppressed, 2) Certain saints will be protected in the wilderness, 3) Jerusalem will be occupied by Gentile forces, and 4) The man of sin will sit in the temple. There is no reason to suppose that different spans of time are in view in any of these.

This then brings us to the final mention of the 1260-day period:

*And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. — Rev 11:3-10*

This says the witnesses will be given extraordinary power to resist the beast, and even to antagonize him, until they are finally given into his hand. Remember that Daniel said of the beast that “*when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished,*” (Dn 12:7). When describing the two witnesses, John used the word “power” no less than three times. Their deaths mark the point at which the beast shall have accomplished “*to scatter the power of the holy people,*” where the word “scatter” applies to the



Christian Jews who have fled Israel and taken refuge in the wilderness and the word “power” applies to the Christian prophets left behind to antagonize the beast. The above text says their deaths occur at the end of the 1260-day period and therefore mark the end of the beast’s oppression over the saints. His remaining reign will amount to only a matter of days, and this is why a few verses later we have, “*And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever,*” (vs 15). Whereas the death of Christ seemed to be a victory for Satan, but did in fact spell his ruin, even so, the deaths of these two witnesses will seem a victory for the beast, but will in fact mark the beginning of his end.

I will finish this section by addressing the common claim that most of Revelation will be fulfilled over a seven-year period consisting of two adjacent 3.5-year intervals. This may be true, but Revelation nowhere states this, and when it or Daniel speak in various places of a 3.5-year interval, the evidence says the same period of time is meant, i.e. there is only one 3.5-year interval, not two. This can be seen in the fact that everywhere the interval is mentioned the terminal point is the same. The instance in Daniel 7:25 is followed by the judgment (vs 6) and the kingdom being given to the saints of the Most High (vs 7). The instance in Daniel 12:7 is followed by the words, “*all these things shall be finished.*” The instance in Revelation 11:2-3 is followed by, “*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever,*” (vs 15). The instance in Revelation 12:6 is followed by, “*Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ,*” (vs 10). The instance in Revelation 12:14 is equivalent to Revelation 12:6. Finally, the instance in Revelation 13:5 marks the end of the beast, but nearly all theories agree that this occurs with the appearance of Jesus Christ (Rev 19:11-21).

### **The 1290 Days**

This brings us to the 30-day interval leading from the 1260-day period up to the 1290 days of Daniel 12:11. This brief period is likely one of great importance in which many prophecies will be fulfilled. There is no reasonable doubt that the 1290-day period is an extension of the 1260-day period. Daniel 12 mentions both in the same context, and mentions the 1335-day period also, and presents all three intervals in ways implying they are overlapping.

Daniel’s prophecy implied that corrective action would be taken against the abomination of desolation after 1290 days. As already shown, the 1260-day period will end with the deaths of the two witnesses, and I have already presented the case that these two witnesses will be Moses and Elijah. I believe this then brings the final words of the Old Testament to bear:

*Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the*

*fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. – Mal 4:4-6*

This scripture predicts that a momentous change of heart in Israel will be occasioned by Elijah. As already explained, the meaning of the text is that the children, or Jews of the last days, will be reunited with the fathers, or the patriarchs, in a true, Christ-based religion. Christ Himself corroborated this by saying, “*Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things*” (Mt 17:11). I have already shown this cannot be dismissed as finally fulfilled in John the Baptist. Its final fulfillment is yet to come, and no better place to put it than here.

Revelation indicates this great conversion under Elijah will take place more at his death than in his life. It says his dead body “*shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified,*” (Rev 11:9). This city is obviously Jerusalem, and is portrayed in a deplorable manner that we would not expect were there any significant number of Christians in it at the time. But, a few verses later we have these words:

*And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. – Rev 11:13*

This seems to mark a change of heart in the city. It now has inhabitants giving glory to God whereas it was spiritually Sodom and Egypt before. It could also be a widespread change of heart because the Greek word for “*remnant*” implies “the remainder” and not necessarily a minor subset. It is reasonable to assume that the change of heart indicated here is the fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy. The above verse seems to be the only candidate in Revelation to account for the Jewish conversion Malachi predicted, and it seems unthinkable that Revelation would have omitted an event of this importance. Such a conversion is further evidenced by the fact that the next chapter of Revelation will definitely be about Christian Jews, and though I think those to be different from the ones considered here, it still follows that, at some point in Revelation 12 or before, the subject became Christianized Jews. There is no better place to put that point than here. Though what is here said may seem a subtle way to communicate such a significant event, this should perhaps be expected given the cautious and limited answer that Christ gave His apostles about this same issue in Acts 1:6-7, and given the high mystery with which Paul characterized it in Romans 11:25-36.

Now when this conversion will occur, the period that Daniel called the “*indignation*” (8:19, 11:36) will have been accomplished. That is, God’s indignation against the Jews for their rebellion against Christ will come to an end. Elsewhere he described it as a time when “*that determined shall be poured upon the desolate,*” (Dn 9:27) which again refers to completion of divine judgments against them. This being the case, all of the blessed promises God has made to them will pertain, including His promise revealed in Leviticus:

*And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. – Lev 26:7-8*

My opinion is that the Jews will be promptly and powerfully turned to Christ after the resurrection of Elijah; that the nation will then be empowered and invigorated in a spectacular way by the Spirit of God, and then the words of Paul will come to pass: “*For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*” (Rom 11:15). Further, I believe the Jews will rise up against the man of sin and drive him from the temple and city within 30 days, thereby putting an end to the abomination of desolation and fulfilling the 1290-day prediction of Daniel. However, the Jews will not put an end to the man of sin himself. This will be done by Jesus Christ in short time.

I acknowledge that the previous paragraph makes claims that are not fully and explicitly declared in any particular verse of the Bible, but a remarkable number of difficult scriptures fall into sensible sequence when these claims are assumed. For example, Zechariah 14:1-2 and Revelation 11:1-2 describe Jerusalem as a captured city with the foe being within it, yet when Christ returns, it is described as a besieged city with the foe being gathered around it (Rev 14:20, Joel 3:1-16, Zech 12:2, Mic 5:1). It follows that at some prior point the foe must have been driven from the city, though not totally defeated. Next, the Bible teaches in various places that the Jews will be blessed with great valor and success in the last days against their enemies (Zech 9:11-17, 12:6-8, Mic 5:8, Isa 31:5-9). While some of this may have already been seen in the military successes of modern Israel, these scriptures seem to be describing something far more spectacular. These scriptures are explained by the theory I have presented. I believe it will be very difficult to account for them any other way.

Add to this that nearly all Bible scholars agree that Antiochus Epiphanes was a type of the man of sin, and was perhaps the strongest of such in the Bible. The scenario here being presented is very similar to what happened to Antiochus. The valiant Jews under the Maccabees were able to retake the temple and much of the city of Jerusalem, and did this against overwhelming odds, but Antiochus himself was not destroyed until later. He died no more than a few months thereafter, not in battle and not at the hands of the Jews, but was smitten by God, or as Daniel prophesied, he was “*broken without hand*” (Dn 8:25). Such will be the case with the man of sin also.

### **The 1335 Days**

Notwithstanding their success in driving the man of sin from the temple and city after 1290 days, I believe the Jews will then face a far greater obstacle when almost the entire world is provoked to gather against them. This last great battle is described in several places, including the ones quoted below, which I present with a few comments:

*For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of*

*Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. – Joel 3:1-2*

Many think the Valley of Jehoshaphat is near Jerusalem, but this is far from certain, and it may be that the name was intended to describe the purpose of the valley rather than its location. The name literally means “Jehovah shall judge.”

Two more scriptures concern the final battle:

*Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. – Zech 12:2-3*

*For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. – Zech 14:2-3*

This last verse considers both the beginning and the end of the battle for Jerusalem by the man of sin. In the beginning, he takes and abuses the city, but in the end, God fights against him.

Isaiah described this battle in graphic detail in his 29<sup>th</sup> chapter. This chapter begins by pronouncing woes on a city called “Ariel.” The city is actually Jerusalem and Ariel refers to its great altar at the temple. The city is characterized by its altar because it is a place where multitudes of sacrifices will eventually occur, not of animals but of men, and these men will first be Jews and afterwards be Gentiles. The prophecy contemplates the entire future of the city, starting with Isaiah’s times and moving forward to the end of the world. It first describes the sacrifice of the Jews and the total destruction of the city. This occurred under the Babylonians and the Romans. Then it describes the sacrifice of multitudes of Gentiles (also called “strangers”). This will occur at the end of the world. The words to this effect were these:

*Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion. – Isa 29:5-8*

The last part of this quote gives remarkable insight to the mindset of the wicked armies that will gather against Jerusalem in the last days. They will be as a man having a dream in which he has escaped the realm of reality and thinks himself to be in state of good, but is suddenly awakened to the harsh state he left when falling asleep. Consider a man who is in jail awaiting execution the next day, but falls asleep and has a dream wherein he is on a beautiful river and catching a big fish, but suddenly he awakens to reality, and knows it is the day of his death, and that he will never see a beautiful river again and will never catch another fish. Even so, in the last days, the wicked will know of the Bible (Mt 24:12) and know of its prophecies against them, but this they will scornfully dismiss, having minds given over to a reprobate state on account of their hatred for God, which has then escalated into a maddened frenzy wherein their minds are no longer burdened by thoughts of Him or His ominous prophecies, yet, at an instant, they are forcefully slapped awake by the appearance of Jesus Christ. *“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober,”* (1Thes 5:6). *“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed,”* (Rom 13:11).

More verses on the final battle are these:

*And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. – Rev 14:19-20*

*And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. – Rev 16:13-16*

While Armageddon is commonly thought to be the location of the last battle, other verses make Jerusalem the object of attack. The famous verse above actually only makes Armageddon a point of rendezvous. It could also be that with armies so large and numerous, soldiers will be situated and destroyed at both.

Our final scripture of this battle is this passage:

*And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the*

*remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. – Rev 19:19-21*

Now the prophecy from which we started (Dn 12:11-12) affirmed that the final abomination of desolation would stand in place for 1290 days. This abomination will be none other than the man of sin himself and the idol erected to his honor by the false prophet (Rev 13:13-15). The abomination will be removed when the newly converted Jews, being now in favor with God and empowered by Him, will drive the man of sin from the temple and city. This will prove a provocation leading to the armies of the world being gathered against them, which I think will be accomplished over the next 45 days. This then carries to the final part of Daniel's prophecy: "*Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.*" I believe this refers to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the final destruction of the man of sin and the armies of the world.

The following important prophecy contains many of the features I have presented in this chapter:

*Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness... In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem... In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. – Zech 12:2-10*

Observe that the prophecy unmistakably describes a great outpouring of the Spirit on Jerusalem and a powerful conversion to Christ. It describes the Jews being blessed with valor against their adversaries. It describes the entire world being gathered against Jerusalem. Finally, it describes what appears to be destruction directly by the hand of God Himself. It is essentially a restatement of most of what I have said, but I have explained and ordered these events using information supplied from other parts of the Bible.

To summarize what we have thus far: Certain of the Jews will be converted to Christ before the emergence of the man of sin. These are depicted by the woman of Revelation 12 and possibly by the 144,000 of Revelation 7 and 14. Afterward, the man of sin will occupy the city of Jerusalem and take his seat in the temple, and an idol in his honor will also be erected there. The Christian Jews, recognizing this as the final abomination of desolation prophesied by Daniel, will act on the warning of Christ (Mt 24:15-16) and flee to the wilderness. They will be aided by the earthquake described in Zechariah 14. The city of Jerusalem, being now deprived of her Christian occupants, will be spiritually reduced to Sodom and Egypt. But two Christian Jews, namely Moses and Elijah, will be left there for the purpose of antagonizing the man of sin, and also to preserve the principle that God never leaves Himself without a witness. The man of sin will reign for 1260 days; the two witnesses will oppose him for 1260 days, and the refugee Jews in the wilderness will be protected for 1260 days. When the witnesses are put to death by the beast after 1260 days, and are thereafter resurrected, the Spirit will be poured out on Jerusalem and all elect there will be converted to Christ. Being mightily empowered by God, the Jews will drive the man of sin from the city and temple after 30 days, thus putting an end to the abomination of desolation, but then the nations of the world will retaliate by assembling massive armies at Armageddon, and possibly elsewhere, for the purpose of retaking Jerusalem. This will happen over the next 45 days. But their purpose will be foiled by the second coming of Christ, whose return will initiate at Sinai and carry through Edom, Moab and Ammon, and will take the refugee Christians in the wilderness first, who will accompany Him as He enters Israel, resurrecting, rapturing and destroying as He goes.

I will further add that I would expect Him to cross Jordan exactly where the children of Israel crossed to enter Canaan, which is also where John the Baptist began to baptize (see Jn 1:28 where “Bethabara” means “the house of the crossing”), and where Jesus initiated His journey to the cross (Jn 10:40), resurrecting Lazarus as He went. This would explain why, when Joshua stood at this same place nearly 1500 years before, he was commanded of the angel to remove his shoe (Josh 5:15) because the ground was holy. This was also near to where Moses was buried and where Elijah was taken up.

This chapter may be the most important of the book if measuring by the number of scriptures that are at stake. Daniel’s prophecy of the abomination of desolation in his 12th chapter is complex in that it involves more important events than the typical prophecy. This means there is greater potential for error when interpreting it. So I will finish where I started in exhorting the reader to accept my explanations with due precaution. The prophecy is almost surely crucial to a general understanding of all future prophecy. This is why the Lord exhorted us saying, “*whoso readeth, let him understand,*” (Mt 24:15)

## **The 1000-Year Reign**

The 1000-year reign mentioned in Revelation 20 has perhaps been the occasion of more disagreement than anything else in the Bible. There is a full hand of major interpretations of this chapter, not to mention all of the minor variations on these major views. Indeed, almost all major views on biblical prophecy in general are classified by where they stand on Revelation 20. I have little doubt that many who read my book will go directly to this very paragraph without considering anything prior. Right or wrong, this is the emphasis that men put on Revelation 20.

The verses at issue are these:

*And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. – Rev 20:1-7*

### **Problems with the Premillennial Theory**

The interpretation of these verses that has gained much popularity in the last several decades is the so-called “premillennial” view, which says that the blissful period here described, wherein Satan is incarcerated and the saints reign with Christ, is literally to occur in the future *on the present earth*. There are a few variations that are built on the basic premillennial framework, but most of them theorize things concerning this period that no student of Jesus Christ or His apostles would have otherwise expected. Such things can include: 1) The perpetuation of death during the reign, albeit at greater ages. 2) The co-existence of people with resurrected, eternal bodies with those yet in mortal bodies. 3) The co-existence of the righteous with the unrighteous. 4) Reconstruction of the temple and the reinstitution of sacrifices and other Old Testament service – all being done with divine approval. 5) A rebellion against Christ at the end of the 1000-year period. Support for such ideas is commonly based in how certain Old Testament verses are construed, but the only kind of person who would find such things elsewhere in the New Testament would be one who was looking for them before ever starting. An intuitive, unprejudiced, unforced interpretation of the New Testament would never lead to the



premillennial theory. Rather, it does much to contradict it. This is very disconcerting to anyone believing that the Old Testament is to be interpreted in the light given by Christ and His apostles.

Premillennialism is a complicated doctrine having so many problems that it is difficult to discuss them thoroughly in one place. I will present a sample of problems here, but more problems will be discussed in other chapters, especially the one about the rapture. Problems include:

1) The theory clashes with other parts of Revelation itself. Consider what was said in the 10th chapter near the end of the prophecy concerning the seven trumpets:

*And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. – Rev 10:5-7*

This is effectively an oath by the angel of God Himself that the premillennial theory cannot be correct. The seventh trump is surely the same with what Paul called the “*last trump*” which is the same with the trump at whose sound the dead will be raised (Mt 24:31, 1Cor 15:52, 1Thes 4:16). What could be more misleading than to say “*there should be time no longer*” when there would in fact be another 1000 years to go? It would also be misleading to say “*the mystery of God should be finished*” when the earth was about to enter its most mysterious era ever inasmuch as nothing in the other teachings of Christ or His apostles would have led one to expect it.

2) More problems posed by Revelation are in the 1000-year reign prophecy itself. Consider:

*And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. – Rev 20:7-9*

Under typical renditions of the premillennial theory, many unsaved men will live during the reign, but will be held in check by the rule of Jesus Christ. These unsaved men are thought to be the ones who are gathered by Satan in the previous quote. Now consider how dubious are such claims. These carnal men will exist in such vast numbers that they will be “*as the sand of the sea*” and they will occupy all quadrants of the planet. For the entirety of this presumably joyous reign, it will be known by everyone that such men will ultimately rebel against Christ and be burned in the lake of fire. We are also to accept the idea that all of these bad trees then covering the planet will somehow bring forth good fruit in a period of 1000 years notwithstanding Jesus’ claim that such can never happen (Mt 12:33). This is a strange and dubious concept of bliss.

Premillennialists account for all this by saying that the wicked will then be kept at bay because Jesus will rule them with a “rod of iron.” The problem with this explanation is that when scriptures speak of Christ as ruling with such a rod, He is *destroying* the wicked with it, not merely containing their conduct (Ps 2:9, Rev 2:27, 19:15).

I will add that, in addition to all the above problems, the premillennialists making these dubious claims oftentimes deny the total depravity of man. Now consider that over this 1000-year period in which Christ will visibly and gloriously reign, thereby proving the claims of the gospel more powerfully than ever before, we will still be left with an accumulation of wicked, unsaved people in such numbers “*as the sand of the sea.*” If all this is somehow true, then either total depravity must be true or else the Savior must be one of the poorest evangelists of all time.

3) The asserted coexistence of saved and unsaved people during the millennium clashes with Christ’s claim that these will be completely and forever separated immediately upon His return. This was implied in His parable of the wheat and tares where it was commanded: “*Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn,*” (Mt 13:30). Hence, the wheat and tares will no longer be together after the harvest; rather, one will have been gathered into the barn and the other will have been destroyed by fire. Now Revelation describes this harvest in 14:14-20, but these verses clearly place it *before* the millennium. This also follows from the explanation of the parable itself, because Christ there said the tares were sown by the devil (Mt 13:39), but this sowing could hardly be during the millennium because the devil will then be bound in the bottomless pit and prevented from deceiving the nations anymore. On the other hand, if these tares were sown by the devil prior to the millennium, then they would be a thousand years old when harvested! It follows that the tares were both sown and harvested *prior to* the millennium. Notice further that Christ said the reapers will be the angels (vs 41). Now this event is almost surely the same as that described elsewhere with: “*And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*” (Mt 24:31), but this gathering is best placed *before* the millennium. Premillennialism says the wheat and tares will still be together during the millennium, but this claim is not consistent with the parable.

Finally, notice that in His explanation of the parable, Christ said, “*the harvest is the end of the world*” (vs 39), which would seem an unlikely thing to say if in fact the present world had another thousand years to go. See also the parable of the net (Mt 13:47-50) where exactly the same ideas were conveyed.

4) The continued existence of the wicked during the millennium also clashes with scriptural indications that all wicked men will be *destroyed* when Christ returns. Consider the scriptures saying, “*All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him*” (Rev 1:7) and these “*said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*” (6:16) and “*then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they*

*shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,”* (Mt 24:30). These are the reactions of wicked men who are about to be destroyed, not about to be made free-riders to a millennium of bliss. Accordingly, Christ said:

*And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. –*

Luke 17:26-30

Observe that in drawing analogy to these former events, He twice said these calamities “*destroyed them all.*” The same indications follow from the verses below:

*Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. – 2Thes 1:6-10*

The flaming vengeance described here cannot be taken at the end of a millennium on this earth because it will happen when “*the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven.*” The premillennial theory says He was so revealed a thousand years before the end of the millennium and had visibly reigned from Jerusalem from that time. The vengeance described here ends in total destruction, as Peter confirmed:

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. – 2Pet 3:10*

The end of any millennium on this earth surely will not come as a thief in the night because it has been plainly announced for over 2000 years and the period measures forward from one of the most discernible events in the history of the world. All men in the presumed millennium should know the exact date upon which it will end.

5) To see the next problem, consider what follows the quote just given:

*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt*

*with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. – 2Pet 3:10-13*

Observe that the scripture looks hopefully for “*new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,*” but it says nothing of a glorious 1000-year reign on this earth. Even premillennialists acknowledge that the 1000-year reign is distinct from, and precedes, the New Heavens and Earth. How is it that Peter completely omitted it?

6) This omission cannot be lightly dismissed when the same pattern is seen elsewhere. Central to the premillennial theory is the glorious, earthly Jerusalem from which Christ will presumably reign. Now it is a strange thing that the New Testament says absolutely nothing about any such city, though it repeatedly refers to the New Jerusalem – the city that is to come down from Heaven onto the New Heavens and Earth (Gal 4:26, Heb 11:10-16, 12:22, 13:14, Rev 3:12, 21:2, 21:10). Hence, what we find in Peter is exactly what we find elsewhere, namely, that any 1000-year reign on this earth is omitted, and that any glorious Jerusalem on this earth is also omitted, and we see that instead of such, all joyous anticipation is focused either on Heaven or on a New Heavens and Earth with its New Jerusalem.

7) Further problems emerge for premillennialism in Isaiah 24-26. There can be no reasonable doubt that these chapters are parallel to Revelation 20. Consider the following quotes from chapter 24:

*Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left... The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. – Isa 24:1-20*

Now keeping all this in mind, consider the verses that come next:

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed,*

*when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously. – Isa 24:21-23*

So the prophet said that Satan and his host, along with wicked kings of the earth (possibly the 10 who cast their lot with the beast), will be incarcerated in what he calls the “*pit*” for a period of “*many days*.” This is exactly what John described in the opening verses of Revelation 20, though he revealed that “*many days*” precisely means 1000 years. John is also clear that the 1000-year reign with Christ will be concurrent with this incarceration. Now Isaiah implied this period would be after the earth will “*fall, and not rise again,*” which could hardly be said of it were it about to enter upon a glorious 1000-year era that would surpass anything it had ever experienced. Thus premillennialism clashes with the very Old Testament text that motivated the things said in Revelation 20.

Next, consider the state of affairs that will exist while Satan and company are locked away in the pit. This is described in the next chapter of Isaiah:

*And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. – Isa 25:6-8*

Note the continued correspondence between what Isaiah said and what John said. What Isaiah called the “*feast of fat things,*” John called the “*marriage supper of the Lamb,*” (Rev 19:9). Whereas Isaiah said God would destroy “*the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations,*” John said that Satan “*should deceive the nations no more,*” (Rev 20:3). But note that Isaiah also said “*He will swallow up death in victory.*” Thus it will be a utopian state of immortality after Satan is bound in the pit, not the semi-utopian state imagined by premillennialists. Likely, the glorious description given in the last quote embraces both the 1000-year reign and the New Heavens and Earth, but it does not embrace semi-utopia.

The parallels between Isaiah and Revelation continue into Isaiah’s 26th chapter:

*Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them. – Isa 26:10-11*

The “*favor*” shown to the wicked will likely be in their release from the bottomless pit. They will be released with the “*land of uprightness*” in view, and where the hand of the Lord is “*lifted up*” in visible glory, yet their depraved natures will be affected by none of this, nor will their 1000-year incarceration move them to any repentance. They will only see the prosperity and

peace of God's redeemed people and be moved to envy. Both Isaiah and John said their rebellion will prove of no consequence as they will be immediately destroyed by fire. Indeed, in both places they are said to be "devoured by fire," and these are the only two places in the Bible where this expression is used.

Now all of this powerfully shows that Isaiah 24-26 are parallel to Revelation 20, yet the former has the 1000-year reign occurring after the present earth has fallen, and it says nothing to endorse the semi-utopian state that premillennialists teach.

8) Jesus told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world (Jn 18:36). This seems to be denying more than merely saying it was not *then* of this world or not *yet* of this world. All agree that He presently reigns from Heaven, and one of the most famous verses in the Bible says for how long this will be: "*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool,*" (Ps 110:1). Premillennialism has Him reigning in this world 1000 years before His enemies are finally destroyed and it therefore conflicts with this most crucial passage.

### **Problems with the Amillennial Theory**

Notwithstanding all these problems with premillennialism, the conventional amillennial theories fare even worse. These theories typically make the first resurrection to be either the resurrection of Christ or the regeneration of His elect, and then make the second resurrection in 20:13-15 to be the general bodily resurrection. Either way, the 1000-year reign is considered to be ongoing, and is typically thought to correspond to the gospel era. Such interpretations are far-removed from the intuitive import of the words, and necessitate the same treatment of other parts of Revelation in order to bring them into compliance. Amillennialism is like premillennialism in that the dubious commitment it makes here can have far-reaching consequences for how the remainder of the Bible is interpreted. It is a dubious commitment for several reasons, including the following considerations:

1) From all appearance, these verses are describing an *absolute* binding of Satan. Being shut up and sealed in the bottomless pit surely does not suggest he is as a "*roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,*" (1Pet 5:8). Rather, it implies, as the text says, that "*he should deceive the nations no more.*" If this is intended to be a description of the present state of things, then every child of God should wonder where else did the Bible exaggerate to this extent? Such an interpretation exposes itself to the most precarious possibilities for the entire word of God. For the same reason, it is disingenuous to characterize this as an issue of allegorical versus literal interpretation. "Allegorical" is not a synonym for "misleading." Bible allegories tend to be evident once attention has been drawn to them, and they also tend to amaze with the number and accuracy of their parallelisms. Such is far from the case here. The amillennial interpretation of these scriptures looks more like a strand of tape than a bona-fide Bible allegory. Also, where the Bible is known to have used allegory, earthly things were used to depict heavenly things and ordinary things were used to depict extraordinary things and lesser things were used to depict

greater things. Yet here the effect is exactly the opposite, because amillennialism says that the momentous and extraordinary claims of the passage are intended to convey far less than initial impression would suggest.

2) This approach to the Bible uses a method of interpretation that is a proven failure on prophecies that have already been fulfilled. The Jews of old erred in that they did not take scriptural prophecies for their literal and intuitive meaning. In retrospect we can see that even when these prophecies seemed too improbable or bizarre to accept at face value, in the end, their literal, intuitive meanings proved to be true. For example, when Isaiah said a virgin would conceive, this defied all natural science, yet it proved to be true. When Daniel said the Messiah would be killed, the Jews thought this could not possibly be literal, but it proved to be such. When Zechariah made his bizarre prophecy about 30 pieces of silver being cast unto the potter in the house of the Lord, in the end, the 30 pieces of silver were found to represent 30 pieces of silver, the potter represented a potter, and the house of the Lord represented the house of the Lord. Having faith in God means to take Him at His word, realizing that it could very well prove to be literally true even when it makes no sense to us. It does not mean to selectively allegorize and literalize and choose among unlikely word definitions until a meaning is found that comports with our preconceived notions.

Allegory is prevalent in the Bible, but rules must be followed before assuming it. One obvious rule is that the literal sense should be the preferred sense anytime it is sensible. The vulnerability of this rule will be that the literal sense might not make sense but the text be literal anyway. One must also bear in mind that even if allegory were intended, the literal sense is still apt to be true. For example, the rock in the wilderness was used to represent Christ (1Cor 10:4), but it was nonetheless a literal rock. In cases where the literal sense has no bearing whatsoever, the Bible commonly saves us from misimpression by telling us explicitly that allegory was intended. For example, God is capable of creating a one-horned goat as in Daniel 8, but we need not go looking for such in nature because the Bible tells us outright that the one-horned goat was not literal, but was a symbol for Greece.

3) When John repeated the word “thousand” no less than six times, it is a bold assertion to say this is only an approximate number, particularly when the intent is to defend the idea that the approximation was so poor that the truth would be more than twice what he said. Also, the primary meaning of “thousand” in scripture is 1000. The primary meaning of “resurrection” in scripture is the raising of the *body* from death back to life. The primary meaning of “bound” is to be immobilized. The primary meaning of “dead” is to be *bodily* dead or *naturally* dead. The primary meaning of “with Christ” is to be in His presence. Amillennialism puts too many twists on too many words for any reasonable analyst to be comfortable with it.

4) There can be no reasonable doubt that the verses in question echo Isaiah 24:21-22. Now the incarceration of Satan in Isaiah is preceded by an unmistakable description of the literal destruction of the earth and is followed by an unmistakable description of literal, absolute bliss.

On the other hand, amillennialism is like premillennialism in saying that the earth will be in a blessed state during the reign (with the gospel), and then imitates premillennialism further in saying this blessed state will be far short of utopia. Isaiah implied that, as of the incarceration, the present earth had fallen, not to rise again, and described the state during the incarceration by saying, “*He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it,*” (Isa 25:8).

5) In Revelation 12 when Satan was unleashed upon the earth, his point of origin was heaven. Accordingly, he is elsewhere described as being among “*spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Eph 6:12), and as being the “*prince of the power of the air*” (Eph 2:2). If amillennialism were true, then we should have expected quite the opposite. He should have been unleashed from the bottomless pit, where amillennialism says he presently is, and he should have been among spiritual wickedness in *low* places, being the prince of the power of the *abyss*.

6) The thrones mentioned in this passage are very likely thrones upon which the apostles shall sit and are the same with the thrones of Matthew 19:28 and Luke 22:33, but these latter thrones are clearly blessings to be experienced in Heaven. They are to occur in the “*regeneration,*” and to be experienced *after* forsaking houses, brethren, lands, etc. Such things are forsaken in our earthly existence while under the spiritual reign of Christ and are received afterward in our literal heavenly existence.

7) Being beheaded and enduring the temptations of Satan are things that God’s children endure *during* the spiritual, gospel reign of Jesus Christ. In the 1000-year reign, such things are *past*. These two reigns therefore cannot be the same.

8) The text says the rest of the dead lived not *again* during the span of the reign. This implies they had lived before. This can only be true in a natural sense because they had never lived in a spiritual sense. So this reign occurs when the wicked are *naturally* dead – a thing that surely is not true of the gospel age.

### **The Celestial Millennium**

No theory concerning the 1000-year reign is without difficulties; however, I think there will be far fewer if we take this reign to be situated in Heaven instead of this present earth; furthermore, taking this approach actually serves to resolve a difficulty on another extremely important point. Indeed, Revelation 20, which has proven to be an enigma for so many, may have actually been intended to resolve one.

In particular, the Old Testament scriptures definitely taught a resurrection of the body, and did to a lesser extent reveal the immortality of the soul, but the Old Testament did not reveal that resurrected bodies will be *taken to Heaven*. While the Old Testament is not averse to such a notion, the general impression it gave was that resurrected bodies would dwell on a resurrected



and glorious earth. The New Testament corroborates this with its teachings concerning the New Heavens and Earth, but it also teaches in multiple places that resurrected bodies will live in Heaven too. This raises the question: How can both be true? While the New Heavens and Earth will have numerous similarities to Heaven, these two places must be distinguished. Heaven has long-existed but the New Heaven and Earth are yet to be. Revelation 21:2 says the New Jerusalem shall descend from Heaven to the New Heaven and Earth, thus showing that the two places are not the same.

Some renditions of the premillennial theory have yet another serious problem on this point, because such theories say that the resurrected body will first exist on the present earth during the millennium, and thereafter exist in the New Heaven and Earth, but at no point do they have resurrected bodies living any meaningful amount of time in Heaven.

Yet, evidence of a heavenly existence for the resurrected body is beyond deniability. Consider these verses:

*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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. – Jn 14:2-4*

Observe how Christ referred to His father's house as *then* existing, and the same may be said of the promised mansions. This is also the place to which Christ went in His ascension, and is the place where His body presently resides. There can be no reasonable doubt that Christ was here referring to Heaven. Now it might be argued that His promise only pertained to the spirits of men and not their bodies, but this would be a bold and baseless assertion, and would deny the plain implications of another famous passage:

*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. – Mt 25:34*

This proclamation will be made at the final judgment when the resurrection will have already occurred. It therefore pertains to the glorified body. Now the righteous are here called to a kingdom that was prepared for them before the foundation of the world, which seems to imply a kingdom situated in Heaven.

The same conclusion follows from the fact that Christ is the first-fruits. His own experience is the template to which all saints are to be adapted. Since the resurrected body of Christ surely went to Heaven, it follows that the bodies of His saints will do the same. In connection with this idea we also have this assertion:

*But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God,*

*even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. – 1Cor 15:23-24*

So this scripture not only says the kingdom will be delivered *up*, but that it will be delivered up *to God*. This clearly refers to the resurrected body. The chapter in which it is contained is famous for its treatment of this subject. It elsewhere describes the resurrected body as being *celestial* as opposed to *terrestrial*, and it contends that such body is modeled after Christ whereas the terrestrial body is modeled after Adam. In particular, Paul writes:

*The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. – 1Cor 15:47-49*

These would be unexpected statements if this so-called *heavenly* body were never to actually see Heaven but always be confined to some utopian or semi-utopian earth.

The same indications are given by this passage:

*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. – 2Cor 5:1-3*

This text cannot be limited to the soul or spirit of man. It must also include the body. In prior verses Paul said, “*Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you,*” (4:14). So the glorified body is being considered.

Next, consider what is possibly the most famous of all resurrection passages:

*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. – 1Thess 4:15-17*

While it is, of course, possible that the saints could be caught up and then immediately brought back to experience the millennium on this planet, this is a stretched interpretation and contrary to what intuition would say. Intuition says we will be caught up *to Heaven*. The same is true in Colossians:

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For*

*ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. – Col 3:1-4*

The latter part of this text doubtlessly refers to the general resurrection, but when the apostle says we will then appear with Christ “*in glory*,” the clear implication is that such glory will not be on the present earth, but will be above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and where our affections should now be set.

Next, consider the 144,000 in Revelation 14. These are said to be the “*firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb*,” (vs 14). This cannot mean they were the first to be born again or the first whose spirits went to Heaven. They are all clearly Jewish, as is proven by the fact they derive from the twelve tribes of that nation (Rev 7:4-8), yet the Jews did not exist as a race over the first third of world history. Rather, the 144,000 will be firstfruits in the sense of being the first to be “*redeemed from the earth*,” (vs 3), which can only mean they will be the first given glorified bodies, being preceded only by Christ Himself. Now since they are “*redeemed from the earth*,” their glorified bodies must occupy Heaven, and since they are first-fruits, those harvested later should experience the same. The term “*firstfruit*” implies a harvest, and the resurrection is considered as such elsewhere (Mt 13:30-39). In a harvest, the grain is taken from the field to the barn. It is not merely transformed and left in the field.

All of these texts convincingly show that the resurrected body must have a heavenly existence, yet it is sufficiently clear that such bodies will ultimately dwell in the New Heavens and Earth where there will be a New Jerusalem that will be relocated to it from Heaven. Now if we take the 1000-year reign of Revelations 20 as occurring in Heaven, we instantly have a reconciliation of all these claims. The resurrected body will have a heavenly existence for 1000 years and thereafter reside on the New Heavens and Earth. If this interpretation is correct, then Revelation 20-21 would likely become the only place in the Bible where these two stages of glorified existence are considered together in an explicit and coordinated manner. This is why I said earlier that Revelation 20 may have been intended to solve a mystery, not to create one.

However, in solving one mystery we have admittedly created another. In all parts of the Bible besides Revelation 20, the resurrection of the just appears concurrent with the destruction of the world, and the resurrections of the just and unjust appear to be at approximately the same time. Neither claim seems compatible with the resurrection of the wicked following the resurrection of the just by a period of 1000 years.

Passages indicating that the resurrection of the just occurs very near the end include these:

*So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I*

*wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands. – Job 14:12-15*

*Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. – Jn 11:24*

While the last verse records the claim of one who was possibly uninspired, Jesus said nothing to correct her, and Himself corroborated this claim in His parable of the wheat and tares where He said the harvest of the righteous would occur at the end of the world (Mt 13:37-43). The same was true of His parable of the net (Mt 13:47-50).

Add to these scriptures the following passages that seem to make the resurrections of the just and unjust to be at approximately the same time:

*And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. – Dn 12:2*

*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. – Jn 5:28-29*

*I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. – 2Tim 4:1*

*As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. – Mt 13:40-43*

Before proceeding with our main issue, I will address the fact that some have taken the last parable to teach that the wicked will be raised *before* the just, thus contradicting the order asserted in Revelation 20. There are two reasons this does not follow. The first is that it likely was not the intent of the parable to establish an order of the two resurrections. In practice, the sickle is put to the wheat and to the tare at the same time. Though the parable evidently does present events in a chronological order, the likely intent was simply to say that separation must occur before storage. The tares must be separated from the wheat before putting the latter into the barn. The second reason derives from the fact that at the time being considered, only one thing will be done to the righteous but two things will be done to the wicked. The righteous will be resurrected and glorified, but the wicked will be destroyed first and resurrected second. When the Bible speaks of the harvest of the wicked, it may have reference to their destruction by death, not to their resurrection. Such can be seen in Revelation 14:

*And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. – Rev 14:14-20*

Hence, the harvest of the righteous is a resurrection but the harvest of the wicked is not. This shows there is no contradiction between the parable of the wheat and tares and the order presented in Revelation 20.

Returning to our main subject, one would not expect the Lord to destroy the wicked in one second only to raise them in the next, so it is reasonable to suppose there will be an interval of time between the resurrections of the just and unjust. I will not speculate on how long this interval will be. It may be for a “*little moment*” as in Isaiah 26:20, or it may be for several days. The issue is whether we would otherwise expect an interval so large as 1000 years, and considering all else that the Bible says on this subject, we definitely would not.

In the enormous cloud of smoke that Christians have created over Revelation, the fire in the midst is mostly fueled by this very issue. We have two resurrections that are here spaced by 1000 years whereas they are everywhere else approximately concurrent. It is a remarkable thing how Bible students have resorted to the utmost extremities to accommodate this difficulty, even drastically reformulating their hermeneutic for the entire Bible, yet never with satisfactory results, always being compelled at some point or another to the most dubious conclusions. All conventional theories about Revelation have dire deficiencies. Problems with premillennialism and amillennialism have already been discussed. Postmillennialism is a delusional doctrine rooted far more in wishful thinking than in biblical fact, and contradicts such facts perhaps worse than any of these schemes. Preterism is possibly the most dangerous doctrine of the bunch. There is enough truth in it to make it credible, yet after the Lord solemnly warned us to watch, preterism responds by offering a theory that practically negates every reason for watching.

As already shown, many problems can be solved by understanding that the 1000-year reign is a heavenly reign. As for the remaining problem of the large interval between the two resurrections, instead of accepting the conventional theories with their loathsome consequences, and instead of conforming our approach to the entire Bible to a hermeneutic we would not have

otherwise adopted, it seems far better to me to simply accept a proposition that any physicist since Albert Einstein would endorse, namely, that clocks in Heaven do not run at the same speed as clocks on earth. What is 1000 years in one place may not be 1000 years in the other. The Bible confirmed this long ago in verses such as the following:

*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. – 2Peter 3:8*

*For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. – Ps 90:4*

Surely a realm in which all things are eternal and immortal must be under a very different regime of physics than a realm wherein all things die and decay. It must therefore be under a different regime of time. No physicist believing in the existence of Heaven would assume that time there would be the same as here. The better explanation is therefore that John's 1000 years is from the perspective of glorified saints, and this is what they will experience with Christ in Heaven, but from the perspective of earth, the time will be much shorter, and this is the perspective from which other scriptural writers wrote.

While this is an unconventional explanation of the 1000-year reign, it accepts all scriptures on this subject for their literal, intuitive import. When John said the two resurrections are spaced by 1000 years, it is best to take him exactly for what he said, but when other scriptural writers presented these two resurrections as being near concurrent, it is best to take them exactly for what they said also. There is only one logical way to reconcile the two. It is in understanding that two different perspectives are being taken wherein time measurements are not comparable. If this explanation were shown to be wrong, then before accepting any of the conventional theories about Revelation, I would sooner retreat to the idea that the earth will lie in a desolate state for 1000 years during the heavenly reign, and I would submit to the idea that the two resurrections will be separated by this lengthy span notwithstanding initial impressions given by other verses. The conventional theories simply are not feasible alternatives in my view.

Some will surely complain that the 1000 years cannot be in Heaven because there is no time there. This is poor reasoning. If there is no time in Heaven, then how could we truly say it is eternal and everlasting? Revelation 8:1 speaks of there being silence in Heaven for half an hour, which would be senseless if there were no time there. Wherever there is motion, there must also be time. When Revelation 10:6 says there shall be time no longer, the meaning is time *for earth*. Nor is it valid to complain of "years" in a realm where there is no Sun. The Solar System gets its time from God and not vice-versa. Scientists date the Universe by years, even when extending back to eras in which they say there was no Sun.

This brings us then to important verses that follow the description of the reign:

*But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. – Rev 20:5-11*

I have already discussed the dubious nature of the claim that these hordes of wicked men will be residents of a 1000-year reign on this earth. The better explanation says that the words, “*they went up on the breadth of the earth,*” mean they will emerge from the ground, being resurrected in massive numbers including all the unjust of all ages, and this will occur simultaneously with the release of Satan from the pit, who will immediately set to deceive them and gather them against “*the beloved city.*” While these likely are not identical to the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel 38 and 39, I think there is nonetheless a deliberate connection here with what Ezekiel wrote. I hope to develop this more fully in a later chapter.

Now we have no reason to suppose this “*beloved city*” to be any other than the New Jerusalem. The New Testament gives us no reason whatsoever to think it to be some blissful Jerusalem on the present planet, because, as before noted, it is completely silent about such. But it repeatedly refers to the New Jerusalem – the blessed city that will come down from Heaven onto the New Heavens and Earth. But this raises some crucial questions: 1) How is it that the New Jerusalem here appears on the present planet whereas it is surely to reside on the New Earth? 2) How is it that such a blissful city could even so much as be besieged by wicked men?

One plausible way of answering these questions begins with the assumption that the New Earth will actually be formed from the present planet, whose elements will by means of a melting fire (2Pet 3:12) be transformed, even at the atomic level, and reformed into the New Earth. The earth will in a sense itself be resurrected. Peter referred to this as “*the times of restitution of all things*” (Acts 3:21), and Christ called it “*the regeneration,*” (Mt 19:28). Before this happens, the wicked will be resurrected and removed from the earth, and their removal will be part of its cleansing and reformation. When they are resurrected, the New Jerusalem will not yet have descended from Heaven, but the wicked, in anticipation of its arrival and knowing where it will be situated, will set themselves to take it, but this is where we are told that “*fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them*” (Rev 20:9), which I think to be an alternate way of saying they will be judged and cast into the lake of fire per verse 14. After their removal from the planet, its

transformation will be completed; the New Jerusalem will arrive, and the eternal era of the New Heavens and Earth will commence.

In further support of the claim that the New Jerusalem will be yet in Heaven, or in descent from Heaven, when the siege of Gog and Magog occurs, observe that in no place in Revelation is the city actually on its final ground. It is everywhere either in Heaven or descending from such (Rev 3:12, 21:2, 21:10). As to the idea that the New Earth will be constructed via radical transformation of the present planet, this would be supported by such verses as Psalms 78:69, 104:5 and Ecclesiastes 1:4. It also has appeal in that it would leave Satan and wicked man without even a partial victory in their attempts to corrupt and destroy God's creation. The Lord's precious promise is, "*Behold, I make all things new,*" (Rev 21:5). The promise is not that He will make "all new things" but that He will make "*all things new.*" This is the hope for all bodies in the grave, and I think for the earth itself. Paul said, "*For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now,*" (Rom 8:22). While this may refer only to the spiritual creation, if it refers to the natural also, then this would suggest that it groans for transformation, not annihilation. As for Peter's claim that "*the elements shall melt with a fervent heat*" (2Pet 3:10), this may also refer to radical transformation and not annihilation. Peter elsewhere said the old world "*perished*" in the flood (vs 6), but this did not mean that it was annihilated.

In the final verses of Revelation 20 we have these statements:

*And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. – Rev 20:13-15.*

This might seem to clash with my claim that the resurrection of the wicked occurred as of the eighth verse with the emergence of Gog and Magog, but one must bear in mind that Revelation oftentimes tells things in logical order as opposed to chronological order. It might consider a span of time as it appears from one perspective, and then reconsider the same span from another perspective or a perspective having more detail. I therefore believe the verses quoted above are in elucidation and elaboration on times and events that had already been presented.

I will finish this section by noting that what is a 1000-year reign for some is a 1000-year incarceration for others, and the latter may be more important in the plan of God than the former. For practical purposes, the reign of the saints is not 1000 years but is eternal, and is so represented in numerous passages. Their heavenly existence and their existence on the New Heavens and Earth will both be accompanied by the Lord's presence and must therefore be essentially the same since all other considerations pale in comparison to this. So the primary distinction of the first 1000 years will be in the treatment of Satan and his cohorts in the pit. The likely purpose of this can be seen in divine tendencies witnessed throughout the Bible.



It seems to be very important to God that the wicked be adequately warned, left without excuse, and that their incorrigibility be demonstrated beyond all human doubt. For this reason, God sent prophets to people He knew would not hearken to them (Isa 6:9-11, Jer 1:17-19, Ezek 3:4-7) while denying others who would have obeyed had prophets been sent (Mt 11:20-24). He had the gospel preached to the Jew first, though He knew they would reject it. The gospel serves His purposes whether accepted or rejected (2Cor 2:15-16). He has also allowed His own people to be persecuted at the hand of the wicked so as to fill up the iniquities of the latter (Mt 23:32-36). This shows beyond all question the importance God places on proving the wickedness and inexcusability of men and devils. The intent of Revelation 9 was to show that wicked men are unrelenting worshippers of devils. Last of all, God will prove the incorrigibility of Satan himself, showing that not even 1000 years of incarceration will be adequate to reform him, and demonstration of such is likely the primary intent of the millennium.

## The New Heavens and Earth

In this section, I will consider several important passages, beginning with this one:

*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. – Rev 21:1-5*

This passage is of great interest to all students of Bible prophecy; however, not all are at agreement as to its meaning. The intuitive reading of the text takes it to be a literal description of the final, glory state. However, there are some who claim it to be an allegorical description of temporal blessings one receives in the church.

Those holding the latter view should be deeply disappointed at their own conclusions. Though all Christians happily acknowledge the blessings of the church, its joys have been ever-mingled with tears, death and sorrow. The above text describes a state wherein it plainly declares that such things no longer pertain. Now if this is not literally true, and if the text is no more than an allegorical description of the temporal church, then we are constrained to conclude that “allegorical” must be a near-synonym for “exaggerative.” Such a conclusion is as troubling as any thought the mind could conceive. If biblical promises that would seem to speak of our resurrection and glorification cannot be taken for their literal, intuitive import, then one must question whether anything claimed by that book can be taken at its face value.

One rule of interpretation that all sensible Bible readers must follow is that, if the literal sense of a passage is sensible, then this is the sense that should be given priority. Some Bible students refer to themselves as “literalists,” claiming to be distinguished by their commitment to this rule, but the truth is that the rule is no more than common sense. Even an allegorist, if he has common sense, will follow it. If he believes *anything* in the Bible to be literal, then he must use this rule for purposes of delineating between what is literal and what is not. Indeed, the rule is not unique to the Bible, but must be followed to interpret almost any human communication. For example, if a fisherman claims to have caught a bass that weighed six pounds and 12 ounces, then because his literal sense is sensible, we are safe to assume he intends for us to take him exactly for what he says. But if he claims to have caught a bass that looked “like a hog,” then the fisherman would consider us very naive for interpreting him as saying that the fish had pointed ears, a snout and a curly tail.

The point is that those who use allegory generally intend for their audience to know that allegory is indeed being used, and will alert their audience to this fact by telling their story in such a way that the literal sense will not be entirely sensible. Conversely, those who speak literally will want to be taken literally, and will therefore tell their story in such a way that the literal sense can be accepted. All this means that, if the literal sense of a passage is sensible, then we should be very disinclined to move away from it. This is a common-sense rule that none should question. It should not be unique to “literalists.” Besides, titles like “literalist” or “allegorist” are not things that Bible students should wish to wear. Any sensible person knows that the Bible is replete with both literal and allegorical language. The aim should be to implement reliable rules by which one can be accurately delineated from the other.

The literal sense of this passage is entirely sensible, or at least when it is considered by itself. All Christians agree there is a future blissful state wherein there will be no sorrow, pain or death. It is therefore entirely sensible to suppose that the apostle intended these words to be taken literally, and, as already argued, if they cannot be taken literally, then we are left with a sad irony indeed in that a statement evidently calculated to comfort does instead have implications that are absolutely disconcerting. Given all this, we should depart from the literal interpretation only if there is something external to the text that absolutely prohibits it.

But when we consult other scriptures on this subject, we find little, if anything, to prohibit the literal interpretation. Instead, they do far more to prohibit the idea that the New Heavens and Earth can only be an allegorical description of the temporal church. For example, consider the words of Peter:

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. – 2Pet 3:10-14*

Observe that: 1) The New Heavens and Earth described here cannot be the temporal church because Peter lived squarely within that church yet viewed the New Heavens and Earth as being in his future. 2) Nor can the New Heavens and Earth be placed anywhere else in time because Peter plainly stated they will be realized after the end of time. 3) The New Heavens and Earth must be things that are literal, because they are represented as being the replacements of that which is literal. The context clearly presents them as being replacements for the current heavens and earth after they have been dissolved and melted with a fervent heat. Earlier verses (5-7) made this final destruction analogous to what happened in the flood – a destruction that literally

happened to the literal earth. Hence, the language of the text is clearly literal and futuristic to any unprejudiced mind.

This scripture is so definitive in its implications that our case should be settled provided that it and Revelation 21:1 refer to the same thing. Among all rules of scriptural interpretation, none rank higher than the one dictating that, wherever possible, scriptures should be allowed to interpret themselves. That is, if two scriptures referring to the same subject are such that one is ambiguous but the other is clear, then the former should be interpreted in the light of the latter. Now I think only a belligerent position would deny that 2Peter 3:10-14 and Revelation 21:1 are referring to the same thing. Such denial is also confronted by that self-evident truth known to logic as the “transitivity axiom.” This axiom states that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. All evidence says that these two scriptures are equal to the same thing, namely to an important prophecy in Isaiah:

*For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. – Isa 65:17-20*

To see that Peter had this passage in view, consider how he said that we “*according to his promise*” look for a New Heavens and Earth. Where could this specific promise be if it is not either in Isaiah or Revelation? The New Heavens and Earth are referred to elsewhere by name only in Isaiah 65:17, 66:22, and Revelation 21:1. Add to this the fact that of all scriptural writers, none were more intensive in their use of other scriptures than the Apostle Peter. He will be found as either quoting scripture or alluding to scripture throughout almost everything he said or wrote. Given these considerations, the promise to which Peter referred was almost surely the passages in Isaiah. As for Revelation 21:1, there can be little doubt that it too refers to this passage. Both it and Isaiah 65:17-20 speak of a New Heavens and Earth; both speak of the passing of the former heavens and earth; both speak of the New Jerusalem; both speak of no crying, and I think by reasonable interpretation one can also conclude that both speak of eternal life for the righteous and of eternal punishment for the wicked. Since all evidence says these three passages are referring to the same thing, any ambiguities with one can be resolved by considering the others. When this is reasonably done, the New Heavens and Earth cannot be dismissed as a mere description, either allegorical or literal, of the temporal church. This leaves no reasonable alternative but to accept them as literal phenomena to be realized in the future.

Yet further proof is derived from what the scriptures say concerning the New Jerusalem. There can be no doubt this city is to be located in the New Heavens and Earth. Our primary text expressly states this. It is also stated in Isaiah 65:17-18 and implied in Isaiah 66:20-23. If one is literal, so must be the other, and if one is future, then the other must be future also. These two things must go together. Now Paul said:

*Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. – Gal 4:21-28*

One can be sure that when Paul spoke of “*Jerusalem which is above*,” he meant the New Jerusalem. This city is repeatedly described as presently being in Heaven (Heb 11:16, 12:22, Rev 3:12, Rev 21:2). But observe how Paul refers to the worldly city as being the Jerusalem that “*now is*.” The clear implication is that Jerusalem which is above is a city that *shall be*, and it must also be a literal city because it serves to replace a literal city. This interpretation is verified by considering what Paul said later:

*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. – Heb 12:22-26*

Hence, the New Jerusalem is no less literal than Heaven itself. If we insist it is not literal, then we had just as well insist that neither is Heaven literal, nor God, nor angels, nor spirits, nor Jesus Himself. Nothing but a hyper-extended imagination could conclude that part of the things listed here are literal and part allegorical.

Still, some in a feeble attempt to defend the allegorical interpretation will make a point of the fact that we “*are come unto*” this heavenly Jerusalem, which they say implies we are presently in it and enjoying its benefits. But exactly the same language is used with reference to the innumerable company of angels, who are nonetheless literal and in Heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, who are also literal and in Heaven, and to Jesus, who is both literal and in Heaven, so what else is there to conclude but that the New Jerusalem is also *both literal and in Heaven*. But if there be any doubt about this, surely it should be dispelled a few verses later when Paul said, “*Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come*,” (Heb 13:13-14). This verse states the crux of the matter: The New Jerusalem is not something that is now; rather, it is a literal city that is “*to come*.” Exactly the same must be said of the New Heavens and Earth because these are two things that go together as a hand in glove.

There are some who think that any position advocating a literal New Heavens and Earth has the intent of setting up revolutionary ideas about the life hereafter. This is not the case. The New Heavens and Earth do not replace usual notions of a future dwelling in Heaven in the presence of God. The two ideas are essentially the same, but the fact that the Bible sometimes refers to this future existence as a “*new heavens and earth*” gives additional insight regarding it. In particular, it shows that it is a real, material existence, suitable for real, material, resurrected bodies, and that it is an existence bearing similarity to the one we presently know in that it is endowed with the same types of natural wonders and beauties, though of course in greater degrees.

The Lord Himself concluded His promise of the New Heavens and Earth by saying, “*Behold, I make all things new.*” Observe He did not say “I make all new things,” but He said, “*I make all things new.*” This is the joyous hope of all God’s children. God will not replace us with something else that is new; rather, He will make us new. No doubt many things will be different, but there must also be many similarities. To say otherwise is to suggest that God’s original plan of creation was inferior in every detail. The problem, of course, was not with His original creation but with what sinful man made of it. The similarity between the old state and the new can be seen in our resurrected bodies. The resurrected body will be different, but none believe that the resurrection will change us so radically as to destroy our identities. The resurrected body of Jesus Christ conclusively teaches otherwise. What is true of the body will be true of all else.

It is a created existence (Isa 65:17), though created to endure forever, not being cursed with the laws of entropy that cause all things in the present world to die and decay. Paul described both creations using language from Psalm 102:

*And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.* – Heb 1:10-12

The present creation is waxing old in all parts under the curse of sin, but Paul asserts this will be “*changed.*” This will occur in what he later called “*the world to come.*” In particular, he said, “*For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak,*” (Heb 2:5). Now this world to come of which he had spoken can be none other than the changed earth mentioned in 1:10-12. Examination of all prior verses yields no other candidates besides these.

These interpretations of Paul's statements in Hebrews fully accord with what Peter said in the third chapter of Acts:

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world*

*began.* – Acts 3:19-21

This text asserts a time of “*refreshing*” and “*restitution*” of all things. This blessed state is attained in a series of steps: First, there is a regeneration of the soul and spirit in man by means of the spiritual birth. Next, there is a regeneration of the body in the resurrection. Finally, there is a regeneration of the material creation resulting in the New Heavens and Earth. All forms of regeneration are accomplished in exactly the same manner, namely, by the supernatural power of God and without the aid or instrumentality of man.

One reason that some are resistant to a literal interpretation of the New Heavens and Earth is that they associate such ideas with premillennialism and the problems that accompany it. They fail to consider that the New Heavens and Earth do more to compete with premillennialism than to complement it. Premillennialism contends for two blissful earths in the future – one being in the 1000-year reign and the other being the New Earth. Now these two earths would be difficult to distinguish even if they were true, and if in fact there were only one, it would be easy to imagine two, especially if this were what the analyst wanted to do. Those Old Testament verses that premillennialists think to be describing a 1000-year reign on this earth would be better applied to the New Earth. Such verses include: Isaiah 2:2-4, 25:6-9, 35:1-10, 65:17-25 and Zech 14:16-21.

Viewing the problem more abstractly, the premillennial theory grades poorly under the principle of parsimony. This principle says that simple models with few variables and few assumptions tend to work better than complicated models with many variables and many assumptions. The premillennial theory has too many variables and assumptions. It assumes two 3.5-year intervals, two general apostasies, two comings of Christ, two resurrections, two judgments, two future utopian eras, two blissful Jerusalems, etc. The challenge of accurately interpreting prophecy is furthered by adding the difficulty of delineating between these near-indistinguishable pairs. For example, if the analyst encounters a scripture speaking of a future apostasy, then the uncertainty of his interpretation is furthered by the possibility that he will mistake the first apostasy for the second or the second for the first. The premillennialist has so many variables and assumptions to juggle that he might easily fit his system to the data in hand, but the problem is that such systems have a notorious tendency to collapse when put to the actual task of predicting the future.

Central to the premillennial theory is the idea that the present world will be carried through a near-utopian era lasting 1000 years with Jesus Christ reigning as king from a blissful, world-wide capital at Jerusalem. Those advocating this seem remarkably undeterred by the fact that Christ and His apostles said *absolutely nothing* about any such Jerusalem. When Christ and His apostles spoke of a future, blissful Jerusalem, they in every instance were referring to the New Jerusalem in the New Heaven and Earth. This fact is so clear in scripture that not even premillennialists will be eager to dispute it. The New Testament scriptures therefore provide no basis for expecting any blissful Jerusalem apart from the New Jerusalem.

The premillennial idea is largely based on Old Testament scriptures, particularly those which predict a future blissful state, but in certain terms and details that are common to this present world. This largely explains why premillennialists leap to the conclusion that the present world is intended. But as already mentioned, premillennialism has two of almost everything, and is therefore predisposed to the error of confusing one thing for another. The better view is that there is but one future utopian state for earth and but one future Jerusalem, and that these are to occur in a New Heavens and Earth. The New Earth will have many characteristics common with this world, and this will explain why certain Old Testament texts might *seem* to be describing this world, but they are in fact speaking of the world to come.

I will finish this section by addressing a couple of difficult passages in connection with this subject that I think are commonly misinterpreted. The first of these will be Isaiah 65:17, which is clearly a cornerstone scripture on the New Heavens and Earth, but some will question how it could be taken literally when subsequent verses say:

*There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord. – Isa 65:20-25*

Hence, in this existence called “*the new heavens and new earth*,” it is suggested that infants potentially die, that people can be under the curse of sin, that people have offspring, etc. – none of which comport with our expectations of what the final, glory state will be. Some people use this to dismiss the literal interpretation while others come to bizarre conclusions about the nature of future bliss. I believe the passage can be reasonably interpreted to avoid both errors.

Premillennialists mostly handle the problem by applying the text to the 1000-year reign. They postulate that this reign will be a semi-utopian era in which things will be vastly improved over the present but significantly short of perfection. They commonly claim there will still be death in it, though they say that life-spans will be restored to pre-flood levels. They can even claim that resurrected, immortal bodies will coexist with mortal bodies. They also claim that unregenerate men will continue to exist, though they say their wickedness will be held in check by Jesus Christ, who will rule over them with a rod of iron.



Problems with their explanation begin with the glaring fact that Isaiah's 17th verse states that he is here describing the New Heavens and Earth, not a 1000-year reign. Even premillennialists acknowledge these to be different eras. The next problem is that Revelation 21:1-4 closely parallels this passage, but at the point where the difficult parts of Isaiah commence, the Revelation passage simply says, "*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*" So, following the rule that the Old Testament is to be interpreted under the guidance of the New, we can conclude that the difficult parts of the Isaiah passage were generally intended to convey the simple idea that the New Heavens and Earth will be void of sorrow and death. The guidance offered by the New Testament therefore casts further doubt on the premillennial explanation, because the latter anticipates a semi-utopian state whereas the former claims a utopian state outright. A third problem is exposed simply by comparing what Isaiah said here with his own former statements. His concluding words here were, "*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.*" This "*holy mountain*" was presented at earlier points in his book as the capitol of the glory state, being the place from which God visibly reigns (2:2-3, 11:9, 25:6-10, 40:9, 65:25, 66:20). Now consider what he said of this in the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter:

*And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. – Isa 25:6-8*

To "*swallow up death in victory*" means to put a final end to it. One can be sure of this because the New Testament so interprets it in one of its most famous passages (1Cor 15:53-55). Since the mountain considered in these two places in Isaiah is almost surely the same, this further establishes that the difficult passage in Isaiah 65 is to be interpreted as simply meaning "*there shall be no more death.*"

This, of course, leads to the question: Why would Isaiah express such ideas as he did? The best answer is that this is yet another prophecy that contemplates more than one thing. It is another instance of the double-fulfillment phenomenon. The text contemplates two eras at once. The primary era is the eternal state and the foreshadowing era is the age of the gospel. In the eternal state, those who had died in infancy will be blessed with eternal life. This means that in the gospel state, where this salvation is understood and assured, the tragedy of their death is also understood to be meaningless. It is all the same as if the child had died at 100 years of age. On the other hand, if a man in the gospel era were to live 100 years, yet die in his sins, then his 100 years of life will be meaningless, and he will be seen as dying accursed. The remainder of the passage can be interpreted in similar terms. The general principle is that knowledge of eternal life in the gospel era will change the perspective of everything. As Paul put it, "*Therefore if any*

*man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,”* (2Cor 5:17). All things will obviously be new in the New Heavens and Earth, but our *perspective* of all things is new even now if we believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As before mentioned, premillennialists commonly apply the text in question to the 1000-year reign in spite of the fact that the 17th verse plainly declares the context to be the New Heavens and Earth. If this is indeed the setting of the verses that follow, then it would show that the Old Testament can sometimes describe the utopian state of the New Earth in terms that are superficially sub-utopian. This would be a damaging conclusion for premillennialists because they commonly follow a rule that assigns scriptural descriptions of a utopian earth to the New Earth and assigns descriptions of a *near*-utopian earth to the 1000-year reign. The passage in question invalidates this hermeneutic, and it suggests, as I have already claimed, that all scriptural descriptions of a future, blissful earth are in fact speaking of the New Earth and none of them are describing the millennium as imagined by premillennialists.

Another example of this occurs in the following difficult passage:

*And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.... And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.... and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts. – Zech 14:9-21*

This is yet another passage that premillennialists commonly apply to the 1000-year reign. The first problem with their interpretation is exposed by the words, “*there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.*” This statement is sufficient to show that much of the language being used is figurative because Canaanites are not literally barred from eternal bliss. Nearly all interpreters will agree that “*Canaanite*” is here used as a metaphor for unregenerate people. Now the fact there will be none of such in the state being considered shows that the 1000-year reign envisioned by premillennialists cannot apply here because they claim there will be multitudes of unsaved people alive at that time. The second problem is even greater: The following verse in Revelation is likely a commentary on the passage:

*And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. – Rev 21:3*

The antitype and ultimate realization of the feast of the tabernacles is in God dwelling visibly in the presence of His people. So says the last verse, and I think most premillennialists would agree with this interpretation. Yet, the last verse is expressly declared to be a description of the New Heavens and Earth (Rev 21:1). It follows that the passage in Zechariah is describing the same, and not a 1000-year reign on the present earth. Thus, we have another case where the utopian New Earth is superficially sub-utopian in an Old Testament description.

I say “superficially” because there is no real contradiction between Zechariah’s statement and the claims of Revelation 21. Saying that droughts and plagues *would* happen under stated conditions does not imply they *will* happen in fact. Revelation 21 implies they will not. Much of what was revealed in that chapter was through an angel who had poured out one of the vials containing the seven *last* plagues (vs 9). If these be the last plagues then none can follow them. The Bible has progressive revelation on the subjects of salvation and eternal bliss. Full revelation on these things were honors reserved for Jesus Christ, who would bring “*life and immortality to light through the gospel*,” (2Tim 1:10). Zechariah did not actually state there would be droughts and plagues in the New Earth, nor did Isaiah actually state that infants would die there, but neither did their statements disallow such possibilities. The New Testament, being blessed with further light, would rule them out, claiming instead that the New Earth will be a fully utopian existence.

Rain is sometimes used in the Bible as a sign of God’s forbearance and goodness even of those who do not worship Him (Mt 5:45, Acts 4:16-17). Zechariah’s comments about rain were likely intended to convey the idea that the eternal state would have no forbearance of such error *if such error existed*. This is not to say it will actually exist. Also, the book of Zechariah begins with complaints that false worshippers then had free reign over the present earth and over God’s people (1:11), but the book ends rejoicing in the New Earth where truth will reign without rival. The feast of the tabernacles celebrated in the eternal state is likely not in strict accordance with the specification in Leviticus 23; rather, it is the antitype of this feast that is meant, i.e. the visible presence of God in the midst of men.

## Ezekiel's Vision of Gog and Magog

Ezekiel's prophecy of Gog in his 38th and 39th chapters is one of the most intriguing parts of the Bible and is also one of its most difficult. According to the prophecy, Gog, who will be king of the land of Magog, and who will also be the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, will descend from his place in the north with a massive army to attack Israel in the last days. He will be aided in the attack by several other countries, including Persia (modern Iran), Ethiopia and Libya. The prophecy says that Israel at this time will have been gathered out of all nations and be dwelling in safety and prosperity, though evidently not yet converted to Christ.

The attack will prove an utter failure and catastrophe because the hand of God will oppose it by various extraordinary means, including infighting, disease, floods of rain and brimstone from heaven. The prophecy says only a sixth part of this massive army will remain when all is done. Then the prophecy makes assertions that almost surely imply this conflict cannot be the same with the final siege of Jerusalem by the man of sin. Rather, it must occur several years prior because Ezekiel said Israel will take seven months to bury the dead (39:12) and seven years to consume the spoils of the destroyed army (39:9-10). The event is also different in that Ezekiel neither describes a visible appearance of the Lord nor a destruction of the enemy by such appearance nor a resurrection. For similar reasons, the event must also be different from the siege of New Jerusalem related in Revelation 20:8-9, even though John described that siege as being at the hand of "*Gog and Magog*." Another difference is that Ezekiel has Gog and his army coming from the north whereas John has it coming from the four corners of the earth.

Notwithstanding, there must be some connection between all these events because Ezekiel also said the destruction of Gog would be a time of spiritual awakening in Israel when the Spirit would be poured out upon them (39:29) and they would be forever turned to the Lord (39:22). Also, John's use of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:8-9 definitely seems to be an allusion to Ezekiel. Gog is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible apart from these two places (there is clearly no connection with 1Chron 5:4). In what follows, I will offer a theory that reconciles all this, but it admittedly involves precarious speculations that should be accepted only with caution. These are my *ideas*. They are not my *assertions*. Notwithstanding, there is obvious value in showing that scriptural claims can, in fact, be reconciled even if we are not sure exactly how to do it.

My theory begins with the observation that Daniel said the man of sin will not be the builder of his final empire; rather, he will emerge within a structure already in place. Also, both Daniel and John revealed that this empire will endure a serious disruption or defeat before the man of sin appears. Daniel represented the man of sin as a little horn who will uproot and displace three of the ten horns that were already in place on the beast kingdom (Dn 7:7-8), and John said this seven-headed, ten-horned beast will have a head that had received a seemingly mortal wound of the sword but had nonetheless lived, and this will be to the amazement of the world (Rev 13:3 & 14). Now Gog is presented by Ezekiel as being prince over Magog, Meshech and Tubal. These are three different countries, as is suggested by the fact that they descended from three different

sons of Japheth bearing the same names (Gn 10:2). However, at the time being considered, Gog, the king of Magog, will have also subjugated and incorporated Meshech and Tubal. My speculations are that these three countries will be the three uprooted horns on the beast and that these horns will all be situated on the same wounded head described by John. This seemingly deadly wound will be inflicted in the very defeat described in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Then, in all the chaos caused by this catastrophe, the man of sin will emerge, assuming control of the beast kingdom, and being hell-bent on vengeance (see Josh 11:19-20). I think it likely that the man of sin will be part of this kingdom even as of the defeat, but not yet promoted to the lofty station he will ultimately occupy.

These explanations would also help resolve another mystery concerning these chapters. Ezekiel here wrote, *“Thus saith the Lord God; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?”* (38:17). Many Bible scholars have wondered what prophets were under consideration here, because the things prophesied by Ezekiel seem to be unique to the Bible (except possibly Joel 2). But if Gog is the wounded head of the beast, then he would in fact be the fulfillment of the world’s oldest prophecy (Gn 3:15, Ps 110:6, Rom 16:20), and would also be connected to all of the oldest prophecies concerning the man of sin (e.g. Isa 14:4-22).

Though Magog, Meshech and Tubal are commonly thought to correspond to modern day Russia, this seems to be based more in folklore than in fact. This is a misconception that could prove very damaging to our political judgment and distract attention from where it should be focused. The best maps place all three of these ancient countries in modern-day Turkey. Ezekiel himself said that Meshech and Tubal were trading partners with Tyre (27:13), which makes Turkey likely – far more likely than Russia. This would also mean these countries were either within, or on the fringes of, the Seleucid empire, which would explain why Daniel suggested the man of sin would emerge from there (chs 8-11), and why Daniel repeatedly equated him to the *“king of the north.”* It would further explain why the book of Revelation was actually addressed to seven churches in that very region (*“Asia”* there meaning Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey), and possibly why Pergamos in particular was described as the place of *“Satan’s seat,”* (Rev 2:13).

Furthermore, it would explain at least partially why John described the resurrected wicked as *“Gog and Magog”* in Revelation 20:8-9. These are, so to speak, the *“zombies”* of the Bible. When Ezekiel earlier described wicked nations that had been cast into the *“pit”* (32:18-32), he included Meshech and Tubal, but he distinguished them from the others by saying they were buried with their weapons of war and with their swords being under their heads, as though they had been buried with the expectation that they would rise to fight again. If my theory concerning Ezekiel 38 & 39 is correct, then they are again portrayed this way in the mortally wounded head of the beast. So it would be in keeping with this imagery for John to describe the revolt of the resurrected wicked in the same terms, and indeed, those men who had been destroyed in Ezekiel’s vision may be part of, or even at the head of, that revolt. If so, then we have a remarkable demonstration of the incorrigibility of depraved men. These resurrected wicked had

been in siege against Jerusalem when they were killed, yet, when they will be resurrected, their time in hell will have taught them nothing, because they immediately resume in their intent to besiege (as if buried with their swords under their heads per Ezek 32:27), albeit against the New Jerusalem in descent from Heaven.

So Ezekiel's vision is mostly about events that will shortly precede the final 3.5-year interval discussed elsewhere in the Bible, but the first sets up the stage for the second. However, Ezekiel's vision does at points peer into the 3.5-year interval and intermingles these revelations in its overall prophecy. The conversion of Israel to the Lord is an example of this. I do not think Israel will be turned to the Lord at the exact time that Gog is destroyed, but it will not be long after, and the first event initiates a sequence leading up to the second. When a man views two close trees from a distance, they might appear to be as one tree, but a closer view will reveal that they are somewhat spaced. Such can be the case with prophecy. An Old Testament prophet might have been given a general view of connected future events but not given the discernment to see certain distinctions between those events or the order in which they would occur, this honor being reserved for other prophets, especially Christ and His apostles.

## Ezekiel's Temple

In this section I will undertake to address what many scholars claim to be the most difficult chapters in the Bible. This would be Ezekiel 40-48, wherein the prophet set forth a detailed specification of a temple and its service, of new geographic boundaries for Israel along with tribal allotments within those boundaries, and set forth various other specifications to govern the nation. All this was written while Israel was yet in Babylon. It appears to be a separate vision from what we have already considered in chapters 38 and 39, being written as much as 13 years later (33:21 vs 40:1). The challenge is to determine when these things are to be fulfilled. No temple of the past even remotely resembled the one Ezekiel described. This has led some to conclude that almost everything in this vision is symbolic. The problem with this interpretation is that there is such a deluge of detail in what Ezekiel wrote that no man could possibly determine the meaning of it all if symbolism were intended. The detail is so extensive that some have counted 318 measurements in what Ezekiel wrote. This would not be expected of symbolic language. The chapters definitely leave the impression of being literal.

The descriptions of the temple are such that it obviously cannot be placed in Heaven, and it presumably cannot be placed in the New Earth either because John said of this, "*And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it,*" (Rev 21:22). All this has led premillennialists to conclude that the temple must therefore be placed in their 1000-year reign on the present earth. Indeed, they consider it a strong point of their theory that it can at least find a place to put this enigmatic temple whereas competing theories are more challenged, but this comes at a cost. Premillennialists are then forced to submit to some very dubious conclusions. In particular, this temple has an order of service that includes numerous animal sacrifices and other activities that seem a definite fit to the Old Testament and a definite misfit to the New. Premillennialists will reply to this by saying these services are merely commemorative, and that the temple will be effectively a museum exhibiting things of the past.

I hope to show that this explanation is not very credible, and it leaves other crucial questions with dubious answers. Problems with the premillennial explanation of the temple include:

1) There is absolutely nothing in Ezekiel 40-49 saying, or even suggesting, that the service being specified is merely commemorative. The sacrifices are described as "sin offerings" and "trespass offerings" and are presented as conditions of reconciliation and of divine acceptance (42:13, 43:21-27, 44:27-29, 45:17-25, 46:20). There is nothing suggesting that these sacrifices will have intent or function differing in the least from sacrifices under the Levitical system. Nor does the Bible present anything elsewhere definitively saying that such commemorative services would ever be instituted. The New Testament says these things have been done away, being replaced with the antitypes they represent. The claim that these services are only commemorative is obviously a contrived patch to cover a very big hole.

2) If these services are to be commemorative, then we would expect to find the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat, the candlestick, the showbread, etc., since all of these were important parts of what is supposedly to be remembered, and all are things having very important symbolic meaning to the New Testament, yet there is no mention of any of them. Ezekiel's temple and its service significantly differ in numerous ways from the former tabernacle and temple. This would not be expected if Ezekiel's temple were intended to commemorate these things.

3) One of the conditions to be met by the priests was stated: "*Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before,*" (Ezek 44:22). This seems a strange fit on the millennium as proposed by premillennialists. It suggests divorce in the millennium – a very disappointing possibility for this presumably blissful era. It also suggests mortality in the priests. Premillennialists commonly believe both mortal and immortal will be alive during the reign, which is of itself inconceivable, but it is particularly difficult to account for mortality in saved individuals. The Bible is clear that all saved people will be changed from mortal to immortal at the coming of Christ (1Cor 15:50-57), and also says that "*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*" (1Cor 15:50), so how do we account for these mortal priests? Are we to accept the dubious conclusion that they will be among the unsaved? Whether saved or unsaved, why would sinful mortals be put in these positions when sinless immortals could be used instead? If sinless immortals are to be put in other positions of leadership, then why not here? Were these priests actually born during the millennium? If so, were their parents among the mortal or the immortal? Could both be true? What then?

4) All Levites except for those deriving from the house of Zadok are to be prohibited from the higher duties of priests (44:10-16). This is to be a punitive action by God against them for past offences. This would seem a strange action for the millennium since it would have Levites being denied on account of offences done over 2500 years before. This does not accord well with any reign of the Savior given that God elsewhere said, "*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more,*" (Heb 8:12). Also, it clashes with what Malachi said of Christ: "*And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness,*" (Mal 3:3).

5) Ezekiel described the reign of a "prince" who obviously cannot be Christ. This prince must offer sacrifice for his own sins (45:22) and is admonished by God that he should not oppress the people (46:18). This does not accord well with a reign that is supposedly under the exclusive rule of Christ and His apostles.

These and other problems show that premillennialism falls far short of satisfactorily accounting for Ezekiel's temple. Some of the most bizarre aspects of their theory derive from their strained and futile efforts to do so.



I do not claim to have an explanation for this vision that will put the mind at complete peace, but I will offer here what I think to be the best explanation: From all appearance, this temple falls squarely under the Law. It has characteristics of a Law entity as much as anything found in Leviticus. If these chapters were truly a prophecy concerning the Messianic era, then we should have expected more descriptions of Christ. Though Ezekiel twice referred to the Messiah (i.e. “David”) in earlier chapters (34:23-24, 37:24-25), there are no explicit references here. Ezekiel was written at a time when the Jews were away in captivity and their temple was in ruins, but they were hoping to return with a fresh start. Ezekiel’s temple seems to be presenting an ideal or best-case scenario for them in this endeavor, and its realization was conditioned on a degree of obedience that was never actually forthcoming. Indeed, the vast majority of Jews never even left Babylon because many were content to remain there. Such complacency and disobedience are offered by some Jewish commentators themselves as reasons why Ezekiel’s temple was never built. The temple was obviously intended to shame and motivate the Jew, as can be seen in this passage:

*Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. – Ezek 43:10-11*

The fact that the temple was never realized because of failure to meet requisite conditions should come as no surprise. The Law itself ended in failure. God expected it to end in failure, and He gave it that we might learn that it would end this way (Rom 3:19-20, 4:15, 5:20, 7:5-13, 8:3, Gal 2:19, 3:10, 3:24, Heb 7:19). The Bible would be turned upside down were the Law to prove a success. Nevertheless, the blissful aspects of Ezekiel’s vision will be realized through Christ in the New Heavens and Earth. This includes its miraculous river (47:1-5 vs Rev 22:1), its wondrous trees (47:12 vs Rev 22:2) and its visible divine presence (48:35 vs Rev 21:3).

## Psalm 83

This chapter will be very brief but I think it covers a topic of significance. The 83rd Psalm appears to be prophecy of divine judgment against many nations that are the traditional enemies of Israel. Nearly all these nations were also on the perimeter of Israel. They included Philistia on the western border, Edom on the eastern border, Tyre on the northern border, etc. The one exception might have been Assur (i.e. “Assyria”) but even it was not far away. The psalm describes a time when all these nations will be united in a confederacy against Israel. It would be difficult to identify a time in the past when these nations were in this degree of cooperation, so it is reasonable to infer that the psalm points to circumstances of the future.

Most would agree that the events of Psalm 83 will occur before the destruction of Gog/Magog recorded in Ezekiel 38 & 39, and indeed, some of Psalm 83 may have already been fulfilled in the recent victorious wars of Israel against their hostile neighbors (e.g. Syria, Jordan, Lebanon). Most would also agree that Ezekiel 38 & 39 will occur before the final destruction of the armies of the world under the man of sin. Now Psalm 83 involves nations on a ring immediately surrounding Israel, whereas Ezekiel 38 & 39 involve nations on the next ring out (Magog, Meshech, Persia, Ethiopia, etc.), and the final battle evidently involves nations that are far away. It is as though the Lord will make Israel a raging vortex in the last days that destroys the wicked nations of the world in a growing perimeter about it. All this brings many scriptures to mind:

*Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms. – Jer 51:20*

*In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. – Zech 12:6*

*Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee; When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. – Zech 9:12-13*

*And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standardbearer fainteth. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them. – Isa 10:17-19*

*And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it. – Obad 18*

Some of these scriptures have already been fulfilled, but even they serve to illustrate the general principle. The same principle will apply to the nations here, as is indicated by the words:

*O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. – Ps 83:13-15*

The “*wheel*” mentioned here comes close to my vortex analogy. While some have said this refers to a wheel that crushes grain, this does seem likely because it is an enemy who will be made as a wheel, not Israel, and the subsequent mention of “*wind*” suggests that the enemy will be spun as a wheel by the power of a whirlwind. This text also uses the analogy of a spreading fire, with Israel being its origin, and the destructive fire growing from there in all directions.

All these scriptures and their correlation to modern circumstances and events add yet further evidence to the case that Israel cannot be dismissed as a thing of the past or as a mere symbol of other things. In the last 3000 years, many nations have come and gone; their boundaries have been changed; human migration has oftentimes changed their racial composition, and their enemies and allies can be very different from what they were in the past. Yet, this psalm of 3000 years ago said the circumstances of Israel would be much the same in the future as they were in the past. It is remarkable that such is indeed the case today. The only things that have changed are the names of the nations. Israel is likely the only nation in the world today that has enemies on every side. The psalm declared: “*They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance,*” (vs 4). This is exactly what Israel’s neighbors are now saying, and if they were to say otherwise, only the most naive would believe them. Further, the psalmist said to the Lord, “*For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee,*” (vs 5). Hence, all of these nations, notwithstanding their inevitable differences, will be united in their opposition to Israel. Thousands of years later we can now understand why: It is because all of them have the same Jew-hating, Islamic religion – a religion that did not even exist when the psalm was written.

Anyone who would dismiss this psalm and other prophecies concerning Israel to the past should be given serious pause by these facts. Israel still occupies a very important place in prophecy. Since the church is the virgin bride of Christ, it ranks first in His affection, but Israel is the frame of reference in which scriptural prophecy has been placed, and I think anyone denying this fact is destined to misunderstanding and error.

## The Rapture

By “rapture” is meant the idea that those who are living and saved when Christ returns will never die, but will be transformed from mortal to immortal and simultaneously caught up from earth to Heaven. Almost all Christians believe in a rapture as I have here defined it, and they believe such will happen immediately after the resurrection of the righteous. All of this is very much in accordance with scripture (Jn 11:25-26, 1Thes 4:13-18, 1Cor 15:51-58). However, the timing of the rapture has been one of the most debated subjects among modern Christians.

Nearly all of this controversy has been provoked by the so-called “pre-tribulation rapture” view, which also seems to be the most common opinion among premillennialists today. This view says there will be a seven-year period they call the “tribulation” in which most of the calamitous events of Revelation will occur, including the rise of the antichrist and his kingdom. They say this period will end with the return of Jesus Christ and the destruction of the antichrist, and this will mark the commencement of the 1000-year reign, which they place on this present earth. However, they say the church will be raptured out of the world immediately *before* the tribulation, and will dwell in Heaven during such time, but will be brought back with Christ at the end of the tribulation to reign with Him during the millennium. Another key feature of this doctrine is the unpredictability of the rapture. They commonly say it could happen at any time, being preceded by very few signs, and some would say without any signs whatsoever.

As before noted, most who disagree with this doctrine are apt to make the timing the primary bone of contention. Objectors will likely say the rapture occurs at the *end* of the tribulation (i.e. “post-tribulation rapture”), and a few will say it happens at the very *middle* of it (i.e. “mid-tribulation rapture”), but the pre-tribulation view has become so common that the word “rapture” itself has been made synonymous with it in some Christian circles. In what follows, I hope to carefully examine this view, and for sake of brevity, I will henceforth refer to it as “PTR.”

Obviously, any Christian would have strong incentive to believe PTR. Few thoughts could be more comforting than the idea of averting the events of the tribulation. However, this would also mean that any Christian opposing this idea would do so only because he thought there were compelling scriptural reasons against it. Such is the case with me, and I frankly think that most of the arguments in defense of PTR are weak enough to disappoint even an adversary.

An important feature of this debate is that the disputants are oftentimes varying breeds of premillennialists. Hence, the premillennial doctrine is taken as given by both sides. Such an assumption instantly lends credibility to PTR because premillennialism does not make much sense without it. As shown in a previous chapter, the Bible abundantly teaches a heavenly existence for the resurrected body, but premillennialism has no real place to put this without PTR. Premillennialism says glorified bodies will dwell on this earth during the millennium, and thereafter dwell in the New Heavens and Earth, so about the only time this doctrine could put

such bodies in Heaven is during the seven years spanning the tribulation. This partly explains why premillennialists can be so energetic in their defense of PTR. The credibility of their entire system is at stake. Since I have already given numerous reasons against premillennialism, it would be redundant to answer any of the arguments for PTR that assume this doctrine to be true; however, I will offer replies to some of the other arguments in what follows. I acknowledge that advocates of PTR have arguments in addition to the ones I will consider, but I think my list includes what are commonly thought to be the stronger arguments.

1) Advocates of PTR commonly defend their view by saying that the coming of Christ is sometimes presented as being sudden and unpredictable, whereas it is at other times presented as being portended by numerous signs. They contend these cannot be the same, and that the sudden, unpredictable coming will occur with the rapture, and that the one marked by signs will occur later when He comes to destroy the antichrist and commence the millennium.

In reply to this, the scriptures say at least as much about the unpredictability of His destructive coming as they do about the unpredictability of the rapture (Mt 24:36-42, 24:48-51, Lk 17:26-30, Mk 13:31-33, 1Thes 5:1-3, 2Pet3:10). Add to this the numerous scriptures commanding us to *watch* (Mt 24:42, Mk 13:33, Lk 21:36, 1Thes 5:6, Rev 3:3, etc). Now there are two circumstances under which it would be senseless to watch: The first would be for an event whose time was absolutely *unknowable*. The second would be for an event whose time was absolutely *knowable*. However, these are the two very circumstances this argument very nearly sets up. The time of the rapture is presented as being unknowable, but the time of Christ's destructive coming is *exactly* knowable given that the rapture has occurred. So the argument reduces Christ's commandment to nonsense. If we believe watchfulness is a characteristic of saved, obedient people, then because saved, obedient people are the ones who are presumably to be raptured, then those who are to be raptured must have *signs* for which they are to watch. I therefore think it obvious that the two different characterizations of His coming (i.e. unpredictable versus marked by signs) are not the consequence of two different events, but of two different perspectives of the same event. That is, some people will be watchful and see the signs whereas others will be negligent and taken by surprise.

I will add that the need for unpredictability with respect to the timing of the rapture is another reason why premillennialists are too willing to accept a gap between Daniel's 69th and 70th weeks. They typically say this prophecy carries to the very end of time, but this would mean that it gives an exact chronology where the Bible elsewhere says there will be unpredictability. The hypothesized gap, being of indeterminate length, then becomes a convenient fix to the problem.

2) One of the leading texts presented in support of PTR is:

*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of*

*God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. – 1Thes 4:15-18*

The argument is that since these words have the stated intent of comforting, and since there is no comfort in the thought of enduring the tribulation, then these words must imply deliverance from the tribulation. Though any Christian would earnestly wish to agree with this, it smacks far too much of wishful thinking. The reasoning of the argument would equally apply if we were to replace the word “tribulation” with “indigestion.” Observe that the context started with the words: “*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope,*” (1Thes 4:13). So the comfort being offered concerns saints who are *already* dead, many of whom had *already* endured tribulation, and this comfort has no basis whatsoever in the idea that we are to be exempted from what they suffered. The Bible is far more apt to encourage us to persevere *through* tribulation, comforting us with what occurs *after* tribulation, than to promise us deliverance *from* tribulation. There is no reason to assume this text is any different. The comfort given in this text is obviously in resurrection, glorification and reunification, not in deliverance from tribulation.

Even the words that immediately follow weigh heavily against the conclusions drawn by PTR:

*But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. – 1 Thes 5:1-3*

The expression “*times and seasons*” clearly refers back to the scripture being examined, and the apostle says these times will be when “*sudden destruction cometh*” upon the wicked. As already discussed, PTR is very guarded about the unpredictability of the rapture, but does this at the expense of forfeiting the unpredictability of the destruction of the wicked. This is because the latter is known to happen exactly seven years after the former. The last text contradicts this, saying *both* events are alike in this regard, and for the apparent reason that they happen *at the same time*. This is confirmed by what he later said to the same church:

*And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. – 2Thes 1:7-10*

So our rest will come at the same time when Jesus takes “*vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*” and when “*he shall come to be glorified in his saints,*” which almost surely happens with the resurrection and glorification of His saints.

Observe also that the text in question says that when Christ returns, and when we shall be caught up to meet Him in the air, such will occur “*with the trump of God.*” With respect to the “*trump,*” Paul elsewhere called it the “*last trump*” in one of the most famous of all resurrection passages (1Cor 15:52). Now PTR has no recourse but to say this “*last trump*” is different from the seventh and last trump blown by the angel in Revelation 10:

*And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. – Rev 10:5-7*

Though intuition suggests these trumpets are the same, PTR must deny this, because it says the “*last trump*” mentioned by Paul will be followed by seven years of tribulation, whereas anyone can see that the last trump of the angel cannot be followed by anything. In this dubious claim, premillennialism plays the same wearisome game that is the habit of the theory, namely, in telling us that seemingly equal things are not the same. If two scriptures tell us of a 3.5 year period, premillennialism is apt to tell us these are not the same. If two scriptures tell us of the coming of Christ, premillennialism is apt to tell us these are not the same. If two scriptures tell us of a future judgment, premillennialism is apt to tell us these are not the same. If two scriptures tell us of a future utopian era, premillennialism is apt to tell us these are not the same. Premillennialism has two of almost everything, even two *last* trumps. A logical mind by nature seeks out connections. Premillennialism is constantly asserting disconnections.

To settle this question, we need merely consult the words of the Lord Himself:

*And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. – Mt 24:31*

This is the only place where Christ associated a trumpet with His coming, and the best assumption is that when the apostles thereafter spoke of such trumpet, they were inspired by this very statement. But, once again, premillennialism is apt to play its habitual game of telling us that things are not the same, and that the gathering of the elect here is not the same as that of the rapture; rather, this is the gathering of those who will be saved during the tribulation. The problem is that in playing the game here, it runs afoul with its second favorite game, which is to make much of what scriptures don’t say as opposed to what they do. I will call this the “no-mention game,” and will say more about it later, but observe for now that when it spins the above scripture as being something other than the rapture, then this lengthy and momentous prophecy, recorded in not less than three places in the Bible, is left *without a single word* about PTR.

To any unprejudiced mind, the trump mentioned by the Savior here is the same with the “trump” in 1Thessalonian 4:15-18 and the “last trump” in 1Corinthians 15:52, but now consider the preceding words of the Lord:

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. – Matt 24:29-30*

The trump under consideration is to occur *after* the tribulation of those days and when the very Universe is coming apart and when even the wicked of the world will acknowledge their doom. One could not hope for a plainer statement than this. If premillennialists are to be true to their claim of being literalists, then they must acknowledge that any astronomer who literally took the words above would resolutely affirm “*that there should be time no longer.*”

3) Advocates of PTR will almost invariably make much of the fact that the term “church” disappears from Revelation after 3:22, not to appear again until concluding remarks in 22:16. The reason for this disappearance, they say, is that the church will disappear from the world as of the point corresponding to 3:22, which is a point that precedes all prophecies of the tribulation. This is of course the “no-mention game” I spoke of earlier.

The first problem here is a peculiar spin on the word “church.” Even PTR affirms there will be converts and believers in the tribulation, but somehow these seem to be omitted from the term “church.” In common renditions of the theory, this distinction is rooted in the idea that most, or even all, of the converts in the tribulation will be of Israel, whereas “church” is taken to be a Gentile concept. However, the church is never represented in scripture as a Gentile entity, nor is it a racial entity in any respect. Further, this idea that the church will disappear from the world is not so agreeable with scriptures such as these:

*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. – Eph 3:20-21*

*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. – Mt 24:14*

PTR should also be careful about playing the “no-mention game” because numerous other things are not mentioned here either, nor are they mentioned anywhere in the Bible, including: a) A seven-year tribulation. b) Any explicit claim that the church will ever disappear from the world. c) Any explicit claim of multiple future comings of Christ. d) Any statement whatsoever saying that Christians living, suffering and dying in the tribulation had been any less saved, less worthy, less watchful or less prepared than those who will presumably be raptured when the tribulation



begins. I happily acknowledge that arguments based on scriptural silence can have relevance, but such arguments do more to harm PTR than to help it.

PTR will bolster its claims about the disappearance of the church by noting the next verse:

*After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. – Rev 4:1*

The claim will be that John was caught up to Heaven here because this corresponds to the point at which the same will be done to the church. This argument fails to see the distinction between interpreting facts through the eyes of a theory and presenting facts in *proof* of that theory. Indeed, PTR has a habit of doing this. There is no proof here at all unless it can be shown that there is no other plausible explanation for the words “*Come up hither.*” In fact there are other reasonable ways to account for these words. One would be that the context here is a time when Heaven will assert absolute rule over the world and wicked men. This being the case, John was made to view things as they will proceed from the throne. Another explanation would be that the revelation to be given John would be so extensive and extraordinary as to require a heavenly perspective (2Cor 12:1-4). When choosing among these three explanations, we see that PTR clashes with the remainder of the Bible whereas the last two explanations do not, so, obviously, the last two should be preferred.

What PTR is presenting here as proof is really no more than a suggestion, and no harm would be done in presenting it as such, but opposing positions could of course do the same. For example, an opponent could argue against PTR using the following scripture:

*And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. – Rev 6:9-11*

Now the raptured saints obviously will never be “*slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held,*” so one could argue that since there is “no mention” of them joining with these persecuted and slain saints in their cry to God that the evils of the world be stopped, and since this is something they would have surely done, then it must be the case that they will not yet be in Heaven at this point, thus refuting *pre-tribulation* rapture.

4) Another argument is that the return of Christ as described in Revelation 19 has Him destroying the wicked but there is no mention of Him resurrecting or rapturing, and it is claimed this is so because these things had been done seven years prior. The text also describes Christ as

being accompanied by the armies of heaven, being clothed in white linen, and PTR claims these armies will consist of saints in glorified *bodies*.

This is once again a “no-mention” argument, and while it is not my intent to dismiss all such arguments in principle, they become wearisome when evaluating PTR. It is as though the Bible should be expected to rehearse every detail of every event occurring within any period of time upon every instance wherein the Bible refers to that time. In this case, it is not true that there is silence concerning the resurrection. It is mentioned in the next few verses, and though these verses occur across a chapter boundary, no competent scholar believes that chapter boundaries in the Bible imply changes in subject. The resurrection mentioned there is the *first* resurrection, meaning that it must be concurrent with the rapture, but the fact that the destruction of the wicked is presented *before* this resurrection actually militates against PTR.

As for Christ being accompanied by saints, there is no reason to suppose these will be in glorified bodies given that Paul said, “*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him,*” (1Thes 4:14). Even PTR affirms this text is about the rapture, but that would mean that the accompanying saints are *in spirit*. Nor do their white garments imply they are in bodies. These garments are clearly used symbolically of the imputed righteousness of Christ (Rev 3:4, 16:15) and could equally apply to human spirits.

5) Another alleged proof is in drawing a contrast between what was said to the church of Thyatira and the church of Philadelphia. To the first it was said:

*Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. – Rev 2:20-22*

But to the church at Philadelphia He said:

*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. – Rev 3:10*

The problem here is that Christ never said one would be raptured and the other not. A rapture implies deliverance from tribulation but deliverance from tribulation does not imply a rapture.

6) Incredibly, some rapture theorists can even see proof in this verse:

*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. – Jn 16:33*

Though He plainly said we will have tribulation, this is somehow twisted into saying we will *not* have tribulation. This appears to be wishful thinking, not rational thinking.

7) The next alleged proof text is in Revelation 7:

*After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. – Rev 7:9*

This is actually one of the few respectable arguments offered for PTR, though it falls short of constituting proof. The preceding verses describe the sealing of the 144,000. These are clearly Jewish since they are distinguished by Jewish tribes. The commandment was there given to “*Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads,*” (vs 3). This suggests that one purpose of their sealing is to immunize them against divine judgments about to be brought on the earth. This is then followed by the verse in question, which is decidedly Gentile in character since it pertains to “*all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.*” Now if the purpose is to immunize saved Jews from divine judgment, then we could reasonably infer that a similar action is intended for the Gentiles, in which event, we might speculate that the protective measure will be a rapture.

The problem is that we can only speculate, and there are other explanations that are at least as credible. The text did not actually say this great multitude was seen in bodies, and even if they were, and even if they had been resurrected or raptured, this was not apt to have happened in a *pre-tribulation* rapture, given that only a few verses later we are told, “*These are they which came out of great tribulation,*” (vs 14). But the greater problem for PTR is posed by:

*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. – Rom 11:25*

This verse says that God is presently harvesting a people from among the Gentiles, and that the day will come wherein this harvest will be complete or near complete, upon which God will open the eyes of the Jews. This means that the likely explanation for the diverse multitude seen by John is that they are the cumulative sum of this harvest, having been gathered from Gentiles in all ages, not by rapture but by death.

8) Another text thought to be a promise of PTR is: “*For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,*” (1Thes 5:9). This is yet another case where wishful thinking appears to have obscured judgment. Context will show that the apostle was exhorting the Thessalonians to be watchful:

*But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For*

*when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. – 1 Thes 5:1-4*

Hence, the Thessalonians were commanded to watch for a day that the wicked would fail to anticipate, and a day in which they would be destroyed. This would hardly make sense if Paul knew the Thessalonians would not even be in the world when that day arrived.

9) The next argument is based on presumed typology in the life of Enoch, and it contends that whereas Enoch was taken from the world before the flood, even so will the church be taken from the world before the tribulation or conflagration.

This argument is not very convincing when the details of the story are considered. If the Holy Spirit had intended to use Enoch to illustrate PTR, then we would have expected him to live in the same generation as the flood and to have been translated seven years before the flood. Instead, he lived three generations before the flood and was translated 669 years before it.

10) The last argument is also based in type, and draws upon parallels between a Jewish wedding and the relationship between Christ and His church. The Jewish marriage process began with the prospective groom going to the home of the prospective bride, making a covenant to marry her, then making payment for her, upon which they became betrothed, then the prospective groom would return to his father's house where he was to make accommodations to receive the bride, after which he returned to take the bride, then a marriage ceremony was performed, the marriage was consummated, and this was followed by a period of feasting and celebration, sometimes lasting for a week. All of this has a remarkable correlation with the relationship between Christ and His church, and this fact is expressly noted in several scriptures. Now the claim of PTR is that Christ will come to receive His bride at the onset of the tribulation, rapturing her to Heaven, and that this is effectively the consummation of the marriage, and that the subsequent seven years in Heaven, while the tribulation is transpiring on earth, will correspond to the time of feasting and celebration.

As plausible as all this sounds to many, there are numerous problems with it, including those listed below:

a) The marriage supper of the Lamb as described in Revelation 19 is presented as being *after* the destruction of the Babylon harlot, which will almost surely be late in the tribulation.

b) Accordingly, the scriptures portray the consummation and celebratory period of this marriage as occurring in the millennium. This can be seen in the fact that the description of the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19 is immediately followed by a description of the resurrection and the millennium in Revelation 20. The suggestion is that all these things happen at approximately the same time with the latter setting up the stage for the former. Furthermore, the chapter after this begins with:

*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God... And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. – Rev 21:1-9*

This is evidently a presentation of the newly-married bride, implying that the consummation and celebratory period had just happened, which would mean that it happened in the millennium. All this supports my earlier claim that the millennium will be in Heaven.

c) Even advocates of PTR claim that people will be saved in the tribulation, especially among the Jews, but PTR must exclude these from the bride, marriage supper of the Lamb, etc. There is no scriptural justification whatsoever for excluding any saved person from this great marriage. This will explain why the marriage supper of the Lamb is presented in Revelation 19 in the same context of the destructive return of Jesus Christ. He will not destroy the world until *all* of His elect people have been justified and regenerated (2Pet 3:9).

d) Most Christians today would be very surprised to hear that the Bible nowhere says there will be a seven-year tribulation. This idea is conjecture based upon an erroneous interpretation of Daniel's 70 weeks, and it is altogether invested in the dubious claim that the 70th week is separated from the previous 69 by over two millennia. While Revelation repeatedly speaks of a period of 3.5 years, never does it speak of a period of seven years, and I have shown in a previous chapter that all references to the 3.5-year interval, whether in Revelation or Daniel, are referring to the same period of time. There is no reason to suppose there are two of them.

e) The asserted seven-day celebratory period in Jewish weddings was not always seven days and was nowhere commanded in the Bible. Even if it were, it would suggest a rapture occurring seven *days* before the destructive coming of Christ, not seven *years*. This problem may be added to the fact that we cannot even know that the tribulation will last seven years, and I think it far more probable that it will last only 3.5.

Advocates of a pre-tribulation rapture have the noble intent of comforting God's people, but as God said to Jeremiah of certain prophets, "*They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace,*" (Jer 6:14). These advocates should consider that none have a greater interest in the comfort of God's people than the Comforter Himself (Jn 14:16). Had this theory been true, then I think the Comforter would have made it unmistakably clear in His inspired word. Instead, it is far from clear, and I think, in fact, it is clearly wrong.

While God has surely made promises of deliverance to at least some in the last days (Lk 21:36, Rev 3:10, Isa 26:20, Hab 3:2), this deliverance almost surely does not come in the form of a *pre-tribulation* rapture. I do not rule out all hope of a rapture provided it is placed a *short time* before the end. This would perhaps account for the verses just cited and their promises of deliverance, and might also account for the heavenly scenes in Revelation 7:9-17 and 15:1-3; however, it cannot be placed so long before the end that it would imply that the Bible had been misleading in other places where it taught that the rapture would occur at the end.

## The Seven Seals

In this chapter I will offer an explanation for the seven seals of Revelation 6-8, the first four of which are the infamous horsemen. Nearly all will agree that the most difficult seal is the first, or the rider of the white horse. This seal compounds the difficulty of correctly interpreting the prophecy as a whole. If we err concerning the first seal then we are apt to err concerning the others. A journey that takes a wrong turn from the very start is not apt to arrive at the right destination. So it is very important that this seal be carefully studied. The exact words concerning it were:

*And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. – Rev 6:2*

For purposes of identifying this rider, first consider that Revelation is a book containing two major blocks of prophecy. Revelation 4-10 is one prophecy and Revelation 11-22 is another, as is plainly implied by the final words of Revelation 10. We might also consider Revelation 1-3 as being a major block, or think of it as part of the same block as 4-10, but I will henceforth refer to the prophecy in 4-10 as being the first block or first prophecy. Now this prophecy covers the seven seals and the seven trumpets, and it has the trumps being wholly contained within the seventh seal. The last of the seven trumps carries us to the very end of the world (10:5-7). The second prophecy also carries to the end of the world, so this means that the sequences of events considered by the two prophecies must intersect at one or more points.

Now a dominate feature of the second prophecy is the emergence of the beast. There is no explicit mention of him in the first prophecy, yet he must have an implicit presence there given the interval of time it embraces. Another reason is that Bible scholars have long-believed that the book being unsealed in Revelation is none other than the book that Daniel was commanded to seal (Dn 12:4). There can be no doubt that the beast had a prominent role in the book that Daniel sealed, so he should have a prominent role in the book that Christ unsealed.

After diligently searching for the best place to put the beast in the first prophecy, there is no better candidate than this white horse. To see this, consider the seals in reverse order: The seventh seal contains the seven trumpets, each of which brings terrible divine judgments against the wicked of this earth. We would expect the beast to have appeared before these. As of the sixth seal, wicked men are sensible of their doom and are bewailing it – a thing that could not be true while they are still under the delusions of the beast. The fourth and fifth seals are about many Christians who had died under persecution. The beast has no stronger footprint than the persecution of the saints, so he would seem to precede this also. The second and third seals are about war and exorbitant food prices, with the latter likely being the consequence of the ravages of the former. Now these conditions are also clear evidences of the beast's presence. When describing his descent into hell, Isaiah famously said of him:

*They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? –*  
Isa 14:16-17

If he makes the world “*as a wilderness*,” then high food prices would likely follow. So in following the beast’s footprints by backtracking through the seals, we are led directly to this very white horse. The two major blocks of prophecy in Revelation must have one or more points of intersection, and we have reasonable evidence saying that the emergence of the beast in the second block is one and the same with the emergence of the white horse in the first.

But some have said the very opposite of this white horse, affirming that the rider is Christ himself, and that the conquests it mentions are the spread of the gospel throughout the earth. As plausible as this may seem on the surface, it does not fare so well under deeper inspection. Reasons include:

- 1) Those already stated. If every tree is known by its fruit (Mt 12:33), and if the subsequent seals are the fruit of the first, then the first seal cannot be Jesus Christ.
- 2) Revelation repeatedly speaks of Christ, but always does it with great exclamation and praise. For example, when addressing each of the seven churches in chapters two and three: Christ is portrayed as holding the seven stars. He walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. He is the first and the last. He was once dead and is alive. He bears the two-edged sword of God’s word. He has the piercing eyes of fire and the brazen feet that have endured tribulation. He has the seven spirits of God. He is holy and true. He holds the key of David. He is the faithful and true witness. He is the beginning of the creation of God. The same pattern follows thereafter: In chapter five, he is the Lamb that was slain, who only is worthy to open the seals of the book, because He had redeemed a great multitude by His blood. In chapter six, great multitudes attribute salvation to Him as the Lamb. In chapter 11, He is the God of the whole earth and the Christ unto whom the kingdoms of the world are given forever. In chapter 12, he is the promised child that is caught up to God and to His throne, and who will rule the nations with a rod of iron. In chapter 14, He is the Lamb in the midst of Mount Zion, who is adored by the 144,000. He is also the one riding upon the clouds and wearing a golden crown and holding a sharp sickle whereby He harvests the earth. In chapter 16, He is praised as great, marvelous, just and true. In chapter 17, He is again the Lamb, who also is Lord of Lords and King of Kings. In chapter 19, He is the faithful and true husband to His bride, and He wears many crowns, and He wages war, but in righteousness. In chapter 20, He gloriously reigns with His saints for a thousand years. In chapter 21, He is the alpha and omega, who freely gives to all that are athirst. He is also the very temple of the heavenly city. Finally, in chapter 22, He is again the Lamb, who shares the throne of God and whose reward is in His hand. So John cannot mention Him anywhere without highest exclamation and praise, yet with this rider of the white horse in the first seal, there is little or nothing of the kind. This is a very telling fact concerning the rider’s true identity.



- 3) The first horseman is identified as bearing a bow, whereas Christ and His word are repeatedly associated with a sword (Heb 4:12, Rev 1:16, 2:12, 2:16, 19:15-21), including the time when He is revealed as riding a white horse in Revelation 19. One reason for mentioning the bow may have been to clue the reader that the horseman *is not* Christ.
- 4) The first horseman wears a single crown, but Christ wears many crowns when riding the white horse in Revelation 19:12.
- 5) The armies of Heaven that follow Christ on the white horse of Revelation 19 wear garments that are white *and clean*, but the horseman of the first seal is not described as being clean.
- 6) As I have already shown that, from this point forward in the book of Revelation, Satan will be depicted as habitually playing a game of imitating Christ. This white horse rider of the first seal is probably an imitator, and is a harbinger of more imitation to come.

So the evidence weighs heavily in favor of the idea that the rider of the white horse is the beast or antichrist. The remaining horses then fall into sensible sequence: The red horse represents wars that are caused by antichrist. The black horse represents a time of shortage, likely occasioned by the wars. The prophecy here says, “*A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine,*” (6:6). In biblical times, a penny was a day’s wage for the common man (Mt 20:2). A measure of wheat was very near to a sustenance level of food. So the prophecy says that wheat will then be short enough, and the price therefore high enough, that a whole day of labor will be necessary to buy a single measure. The same circumstances apply to barley, but it has a lower price on account of it being an inferior grain to human taste. Finally, the pale horse represents a time of persecution.

This interpretation is further corroborated by the Lord’s statement in the Olivet Discourse:

*And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. – Mt 24:4-9*

Hence, he warned of false christs first, followed by a warning of war, followed by a warning of famine and pestilence, and this followed by a warning of persecution. These are the exact same events in the exact same order as I have interpreted the four horsemen of the first four seals. As for His mention of pestilence (i.e. disease), this may have been covered by the third rider where it was said “*hurt not the oil and the wine.*” These substances were sometimes used as medicines in the Bible (Lk 10:34, Js 5:14, 1Tm 5:23).

There is another interpretation of the four horsemen that runs as follows: The white horse is taken to represent Roman Catholicism and its spread over the whole earth. White is of course the common color of the garb worn by the pope and other prominent Catholics over the ages. The red horse and its rider are taken to represent the Axis and Communist powers of World War II, red being the color of the German swastika, the Japanese rising sun and of the Communist party of Russia. The black horse and its rider are taken to represent the spread of capitalism and its consequent wealth throughout the world. Obviously, this puts a very different spin on the statement about the penny, wheat, barley, etc. Finally, the pale (i.e. green) horse is taken to represent the spread of Islam and all of the persecutions that have followed it. Green is of course a distinguishing color of that religion.

This interpretation is plausible, and perhaps other plausible interpretations could be given as well, but I do not think these would necessarily negate the interpretation I gave before. It is not uncommon for God to fulfill His word in multiple ways and at multiple times. However, I think the interpretation I have given is more apt to be the primary and ultimate meaning of the prophecy, and I think it is commended by the fact that it is an interpretation that could have been understood by all generations of Christians from the time of Revelation until now.

## Dating the Book of Revelation

The date at which Revelation was written is a disputed matter, but this is mostly because of preterism. This doctrine claims that the prophecies of Revelation were largely fulfilled as of AD 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. Now most scholars believe that Revelation was written very near to AD 96. If this is indeed a fact, then it is obviously a dagger in the heart of preterism. As a consequence, preterists are ready to fight from tooth to toenail to discredit this date and to defend their claim that the book was written prior to AD 70, with most contending for a date in the late AD 60s. The opposing parties, commonly called “futurists,” may be varied in their general interpretation of Revelation, but are alike in the claim that primary fulfillment of the book is yet to come. These typically contend for the later dating of Revelation, and can be passionate in their position also, but mostly because of their zeal to decapitate preterism and kill it instantly rather than allow it to slowly bleed. Futurists would otherwise care little about the date because it has nil effect on their theories.

At the vortex of this controversy is a quote from an early Christian named Irenaeus (AD 130-202). This man was a Greek bishop who had been a student of Polycarp who had, in turn, been a student of the Apostle John himself. Irenaeus originated from Smyrna, which was located in modern-day Turkey, and was the location of one of the seven churches to which Revelation was addressed. Of all witnesses of the past, Irenaeus had the closest link to the Apostle, and for this reason, his testimony is considered to be of particular importance. In commenting upon the number 666 (Rev 13:18), he expressed his belief that it would be the numerical value of the Antichrist’s name, but noted that caution should be taken by those who would speculate about it because several names could translate to this value (applying the conversion methods then in use). Irenaeus also expressed his opinion that the name was unknowable to his own generation because, being too soon situated after the writing of the prophecy, it was left with a dearth of data to derive it. His words on this point were:

We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian’s reign. – Against Heresies, 5.30.3

Domitian reigned as Roman emperor from AD 81-96, so the above quote, and others like it, have led most to conclude that AD 95 or 96 are the best estimates for the date of Revelation.

Now we know from the inspired text itself that Revelation was written while John was exiled to Patmos, an island in the Mediterranean off the Turkish coast (Rev 1:9). This makes the next quote to be of particular importance: Eusebius (AD 260-340) is the most famous of all ancient

Christian historians. While commenting on the banishments ordered by Domitian, Eusebius made the following statement:

But after Domitian had reigned fifteen years, and Nerva had succeeded to the empire, the Roman Senate, according to the writers that record the history of those days, voted that Domitian's honors should be cancelled, and that those who had been unjustly banished should return to their homes and have their property restored to them. It was at this time that the apostle John returned from his banishment in the island and took up his abode at Ephesus, according to an ancient Christian tradition. – Ecclesiastical History, 3.20

So the above quote supplies another witness that John's time on Patmos, and the time at which he wrote Revelation, was late in the reign of Domitian. Most evidence says that John's exile was brief, and this is why Revelation is commonly dated to the final years of the emperor. Eusebius did not cite his source(s) for the "ancient Christian tradition" but the wording suggests more than one, and earlier references to Hegesippus and Tertullian suggest that they were in the group. Hegesippus was a Jewish Christian thought to have lived from AD 110–180. His writings have been lost except as quoted by Eusebius. Tertullian (AD 155-220) was a prolific Christian writer from Carthage in Africa.

Jerome (AD 342–420) was possibly quoting Tertullian when saying that John was banished to Patmos in the reign of Domitian:

John is both an Apostle and an Evangelist, and a prophet. An Apostle, because he wrote to the Churches as a master; an Evangelist, because he composed a Gospel, a thing which no other of the Apostles, excepting Matthew, did; a prophet, for he saw in the island of Patmos, to which he had been banished by the Emperor Domitian as a martyr for the Lord, an Apocalypse containing the boundless mysteries of the future. Tertullian, moreover, relates that he was sent to Rome, and that having been plunged into a jar of boiling oil he came out fresher and more active than when he went in. – Against Jovinianus, 1.26

Hippolytus (AD 170-235) was a prolific Christian writer, and quoted by both Eusebius and Jerome, yet none seem to know where he lived and died. One of his writings, commonly entitled "The Fate of the Twelve Apostles," gives detail as to where each apostle preached and how he died. Concerning John he said:

John, again, in Asia, was banished by Domitian the king to the isle of Patmos, in which also he wrote his Gospel and saw the apocalyptic vision; and in Trajan's time he fell asleep at Ephesus, where his remains were sought for, but could not be found.

Add to this the testimony of Victorinus, who was pastor of a church near Vienna, Austria, and suffered martyrdom at the hand of Diocletian in AD 303 or 304. Victorinus wrote a commentary on Revelation, evidently around the year 260. In commenting on Revelation 10:11 he wrote:

He says, "*It is necessary to preach again,*" that is, to prophesy, among peoples, tongues, and nations: this is because, when John saw this, he was in the island of Pathmos, condemned to a mine by Caesar Domitian. Therefore, John is seen to have written the Apocalypse there. And when now old, he thought it possible to return after the suffering. Domitian having been killed, all his judgments were undone and John was released from the mine, and thus afterward he handed over this same Apocalypse which he received from the Lord.

A book called the Acts of John is yet another source affirming that John was exiled under Domitian. This ancient writing is generally dated to the second or third century. It told of how Domitian summonsed John upon hearing that he was teaching the eminent fall of Rome. It then claimed that John was abducted in Ephesus by soldiers and escorted to Rome. While before Domitian, John affirmed that Rome would exist for many more years. The book also claimed that Domitian witnessed John drinking poison without any harm and resurrecting two people from the dead. Domitian had already decreed that Christians be condemned without trial, but being subdued by the power of these miracles, he opted to spare John's life, yet wanting to avert public humiliation, Domitian banished John to an island. The exact words to this effect were:

And when all were glorifying God, and wondering at the faith of John, Domitian said to him: I have put forth a decree of the senate, that all such persons should be summarily dealt with, without trial; but since I find from you that they are innocent, and that their religion is rather beneficial, I banish you to an island, that I may not seem myself to do away with my own decrees.

Now the Acts of John are tainted with Gnosticism and have always been rejected by orthodox Christians as heretical. Similar complaints could be made against some of the other sources already quoted. So let us suppose, as some do, that the story related here is mostly fabulous. This would do little to help preterists, because even deceivers are not apt to clumsily bewray themselves in misdating their fabrications by a quarter of a century. Such would especially be the case with stories about John, who was obviously legendary among early Christians, and who was therefore the object of their close attention.

Add to all the above the testimony of Sulpicius Severus (AD 363-425) of France:

Then, after an interval, Domitian, the son of Vespasian, persecuted the Christians. At this date, he banished John the Apostle and Evangelist to the island of Patmos. There he, secret mysteries having been revealed to him, wrote and published his book of the holy Revelation, which indeed is either foolishly or impiously not accepted by many. – Sacred History, bk 2, ch 31

Now preterists have no recourse but to defy all these quotes. They commonly do this by arguing that the passage from Irenaeus was mistranslated, and they further argue that most or all of the other authors are to be dismissed because they were simply repeating what Irenaeus said. With

this combination of arguments the preterists actually shoot themselves in the foot. The other writers almost surely did not read any translation of Irenaeus and certainly not an English one. The English language did not even exist. If they read Irenaeus at all, most of them did it in the original Greek, and all of them interpreted it as saying that John was banished to Patmos in the reign of Domitian. Who would be better qualified to understand the Greek of Irenaeus than the Greek-speaking Christians nearest to his times? So the preterists have problems in any scenario. The men quoted above either serve as qualified interpreters and translators of what Irenaeus said, or else they serve as independent witnesses corroborating his claims or else they serve as both. The last possibility is the worst case scenario for preterism, yet it is very apt to be real. The accusation that these men merely parroted Irenaeus has no evidence in its support, and indeed, there is evidence against it, because none of them, except for Eusebius, actually claimed to be quoting Irenaeus, and nearly all of them added details that are not found in his account. Notwithstanding, some preterists are so committed to this spurious accusation that it is not uncommon for them to emphatically but dishonestly say that Irenaeus is the *only* witness to the late date for Revelation.

Preterists offer their own constructive arguments that John was banished to Patmos at an earlier date under the reign of Nero, but these arguments nearly always involve obfuscation over terms, inductive fallacies, inconsistencies or masterful use of *petitio principii*. I will consider a few of these arguments in what follows.

As for the historical sources they quote, most of these occurred later than the ones given above, and for this reason, I will not undertake to consider them all. The basis for quoting these ancient people is the assumption that their proximity to the times of John made them qualified witnesses to facts concerning him. When preterists skip over the earliest witnesses simply because their testimony is at odds with preterism, the premise justifying use of these quotes is forfeited and the preterists had done just as well to quote the Reverend Jesse Jackson. Besides all this, any attempt on the part of preterists to use early Christians to support their case will entail the hypocrisy of exploiting these Christians to support a doctrine they would have disclaimed. Early Christians wrote extensively about Revelation but nearly all of them were futurists.

The Muratorian Canon is an instance of an early writing adduced by some preterists in support of their case. Scholars are not in agreement about when this document was written, but some think as early as the latter part of the second century. This important document discusses what religious books the early Christians considered to be authoritative and what books they did not. In one place it says:

As to the epistles of Paul, again, to those who will understand the matter, they indicate of themselves what they are, and from what place or with what object they were directed. He wrote first of all, and at considerable length, to the Corinthians, to check the schism of heresy; and then to the Galatians, to forbid circumcision; and then to the Romans on the rule of the Old Testament Scriptures, and also to show them that Christ is the first object in

these; which it is needful for us to discuss severally, as the blessed Apostle Paul, following the rule of his predecessor John, writes to no more than seven churches by name, in this order: the first to the Corinthians, the second to the Ephesians, the third to the Philippians, the fourth to the Colossians, the fifth to the Galatians, the sixth to the Thessalonians, the seventh to the Romans. Moreover, though he writes twice to the Corinthians and Thessalonians for their correction, it is yet shown – i.e. by this sevenfold writing – that there is one Church spread abroad through the whole world. And John too, indeed, in the Apocalypse, although he writes only to seven churches, yet addresses all.

The claim that John was predecessor to Paul in writing to seven churches is seized upon as evidence that Revelation was written before Paul's epistles to these churches. The problem with this is that it argues for too much. Nearly all preterists contend that Revelation was written in the late AD 60s but nearly all chronographers contend that Paul's writings were completed by this time. The argument therefore clashes with the accepted chronology of almost the entire New Testament. When the Canon referred to John as Paul's predecessor, the likely meaning was simply that the ministry of John began before that of Paul. Besides, it cannot be seriously thought that Paul deliberately limited himself to seven epistles for the reasons stated. It is likely that the Canon offered the comparison of seven to seven merely as a mnemonic device.

Some preterists also make much of a passage from Jerome (Against Jovinianus, 1.26) wherein he quotes Tertullian as allegedly saying that Nero plunged John into a container of hot oil, but that John came forth unscathed, even being more vigorous than before, then afterward he was exiled to an island. The crucial part of this statement is its suggestion that John was exiled by Nero instead of by Domitian. The statement in question is:

Tertullian, more over, relates that he was sent to Rome, and that having been plunged into a jar of boiling oil he came out fresher and more active than when he went in.

Notice that nothing here is actually said of Nero; however, some preterists claim this is a mistranslation, and that "Rome" was put for "Nero" by one who was prejudicial toward the late-date view. But consider what the immediately preceding sentence said:

John is both an Apostle and an Evangelist, and a prophet. An Apostle, because he wrote to the Churches as a master; an Evangelist, because he composed a Gospel, a thing which no other of the Apostles, excepting Matthew, did; a prophet, for he saw in the island of Patmos, to which he had been banished by the Emperor Domitian as a martyr for the Lord, an Apocalypse containing the boundless mysteries of the future.

So the obfuscation over "Rome" is done in oblivion to the immediately preceding sentence. Even if the translator did make edits at this point, he need not have ulterior motives for so doing, given the context in which the statement is found, and given that it cannot be thought that Jerome himself was a supporter of the early-date theory when he elsewhere wrote:

In the fourteenth year then after Nero Domitian having raised a second persecution he was banished to the island of Patmos, and wrote the Apocalypse, on which Justin Martyr and Irenæus afterwards wrote commentaries. But Domitian having been put to death and his acts, on account of his excessive cruelty, having been annulled by the senate, he returned to Ephesus under Pertinax and continuing there until the time of the emperor Trajan, founded and built churches throughout all Asia, and, worn out by old age, died in the sixty-eighth year after our Lord's passion and was buried near the same city. – Lives of Illustrious Men, ch 9

Another problem with this obfuscation over “Rome” is that Jerome is allegedly quoting Tertullian from a document that is no longer extant, yet when we read from what we actually have in hand from Tertullian, he indeed relates a story of John being immersed in boiling oil in Rome, but says nothing of which emperor ordered it (see Prescription Against Heretics, ch 36).

Preterists are also fond of a story in Who is the Rich Man that Shall be Saved? (ch 42) by Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215) wherein John, after returning from exile, converted a young man to Christianity, but who thereafter fell from his profession and became a robber. The story then said that John successfully labored for the young man's restoration. Details of the story have John riding a horse and running afoot. Preterists contend that these events took place over many years, thus clashing with the claim of late-date theorists that John died only a few years after returning from exile. The late-date theory also has John being very old when returning, so preterists contend it unlikely that such a man could have ridden a horse or run afoot. However, the quoted texts do not state the time interval over which these events occurred, and say nothing to necessitate the idea that they took place over many years. There is also a bit of contradiction when the preterists accept as true a story of a man being plunged into boiling oil and emerging more vigorous than before, but think it unlikely that the same man could ride a horse at an advanced age. Add to this that Clement's account does in fact explicitly state that John was an old man when these events occurred.

Another preterist argument is based on statements Irenaeus made concerning Cerinthus in Against Heresies. Obviously, it is a strange thing that preterists would attempt to defend their case by a man they elsewhere strain to discredit. Now Cerinthus was an infamous heretic of the first century, who, according to Irenaeus (3.3.4), was a contemporary, co-resident and adversary of John while he was an old man at Ephesus. The argument is based on the statement:

John, the disciple of the Lord, preaches this faith, and seeks, by the proclamation of the Gospel, to remove that error which by Cerinthus had been disseminated among men, and a long time previously by those termed Nicolaitans, who are an offset of that knowledge falsely so called, that he might confound them... (3.11.1)

Here they seize upon the claim that the Nicolaitans had been disseminating their heresy “a long time previously” to Cerinthus. Since Revelation described this heresy as being at the churches of



Ephesus (2:6) and Pergamos (2:15), it is concluded that these churches were addressed “a long time previously” to John being an old man at Ephesus. The problem here is that the quote above shows that Irenaeus viewed the heresy of Cerinthus as being of the same stripe as that of the Nicolaitans but being taught at a later date. Besides, one cannot conceive of a weaker defense than that which argues for the certainty of a thing merely on the basis of its possibility.

Preterists offer what they think to be internal evidence from Revelation itself for their early date, but their arguments here are chronically afflicted with *petitio principii* and are, in my judgment, inferior to the internal arguments offered by their opponents.

The most crucial point in this debate is one that should not be lost: Even if the preterists could prove their early date, and even if they could stack evidence to Heaven showing that the prophecies of Revelation could in some sense be aligned to the events of AD 70, this would not prove that those prophecies were *finally* fulfilled at that time. What happened in AD 70 was a prelude to, and preliminary fulfillment of, events that are yet to come, and those past events were ordered by divine providence to serve toward the corroboration of His prophets. The error of preterism is not in saying these prophecies have past fulfillment. Rather, it is in saying they have no future fulfillment. Preterism is a half-truth, not an outright lie. I will also partially credit preterists for their interpretation of the opening words of Revelation: “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass...*” While preterists become obsessed with the word “*shortly*” and drive themselves to great extremes to accommodate it, they at least understand the words “*come to pass*.” Revelation is a *prophecy* about persons and events that *are to come*. It is not a mere symbolic representation of familiar concepts or past events. In this regard, the preterists are well ahead of some of their amillennial adversaries.

Notwithstanding, preterists are of a strange mindset that is difficult to understand. Many of them are so bent upon fulfilling the prophecies of Revelation in the past that they seem ready to draw such conclusions if there is *any* evidence to support them. They should be of opposite bent because preachers of preterism take on enormous risks. They should be wary of the doctrine if there is *any* evidence to oppose it. If these prophecies are in fact about our future, and if the intent of them is to warn and prepare God’s people for things to come, then preterism becomes a heresy, and those ministers who advocated it will have committed deceit and egregious dereliction of duty. A wise man hedges his bets. A preterist preacher plays Russian roulette with all cylinders loaded except possibly one.

## The Second Coming and Apocalypse in Scriptural Type

All will happily acknowledge that the Old Testament is laden with types foreshadowing Christ as of His first coming. These are powerful confirmations of the inspiration of the Bible and of the legitimacy of Jesus as both the Christ and the Son of God. However, we should also expect to find the same thing regarding His second coming. I hope to show in this section that such is indeed the case, and that it has been the case from the earliest days of divine inspiration.

### The Assyrian Invasion

Of all invaders of Israel, the worst was likely the first. The Assyrians dispersed the 10 northern tribes who were never to return in any significant number. Indeed, they are commonly called the “10 lost tribes,” though this characterization is somewhat of an exaggeration, or at least as of New Testament times (Lk 2:36, Acts 26:7, Js 1:1). There is little doubt that the Assyrians would have taken the whole country had it not been for the extraordinary and spectacular intervention of God. God also orchestrated those events to portend even greater things. The Bible is a book having so many types and shadows that no sensible man would claim to have found them all, but this is a case that should be fairly obvious to any serious student of prophecy.

Indeed, most prophecies about the birth of Christ were given in the context of the Assyrian invasion. These are very familiar prophecies because they are a common part of the Christmas season. In these prophecies, Christ was portrayed as the promised child who would deliver from the Assyrian. Now Assyria was actually a thing of the distant past when Christ was born, so the nation was obviously used in these prophecies as a type of something else. It foreshadowed the final world empire, and the Assyrian king foreshadowed the man of sin.

The first of these prophecies is famous:

*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.* – Isa 7:14

The context of this prophecy was that Judah was then in fear of being invaded by Samaria and Syria (not “Assyria”), who were then in alliance with each other. God revealed to Ahaz, the Judean king, that no such invasion would ever occur, and that the hostile kings of both these countries would soon be dead. God then revealed that the real threat to Judah would instead be Assyria, who would mow down the land like a razor to the beard (vs 20), and said that its invading armies would be as a flood rising to the neck (8:8), which is to say that it would bring Judah to the very brink of ruin. After these prophecies, God then offered to give Ahaz a sign confirming them, and when Ahaz thereafter declined, God said He would give him a sign nonetheless, upon which the above verse was given. The sign would become sensible later when the promised child was represented as being the savior from the Assyrian. Consider the following verses:

*For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. – Isa 9:5-6*

So battles are typically struggles with gains and losses being experienced on both sides, but this battle will be with victorious annihilation because the promised child will prove a champion.

Isaiah continued His prophecy of the promised child:

*And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And 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; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. – Isa 11:1-5*

Now in the previous chapter, starting with the 28th verse, the prophet described the extensive conquests of the Assyrians, but said these would end with their siege against Jerusalem. Though their army was compared to a formidable forest, the prophet said the Lord would fell them as a woodsman with an axe (vs 34). Then in the verses quoted above, the Lord's axe was alternately described as a "Branch," expressing the humble beginnings of Jesus Christ, who was in sharp contrast to the formidable forest. The "Branch" would spell the ruin of the Assyrian and would destroy them "with the breath of his lips" – a statement that Paul applied to the destruction of the antichrist in 2Thessalonians 2:8.

Such types would continue in Micah with yet another famous prophecy of Christ's birth:

*Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. – Mic 5:1-2*

So the Assyrians would initially humiliate Israel, showing contempt even for its leadership, yet an Israelite born in Bethlehem would defeat them. His power to do so was expressed a few verses later:

*And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight*

*principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders. – Mic 5:5-6*

By “principal men” is meant men who are princes. The identity of these shepherds and princes is not altogether clear, but it is likely no coincidence that the New Testament was written by seven men who were shepherds (i.e. preachers), all of whom, along with an eighth, will be made princes by Christ. The seven shepherds were: Matthew, Mark, John, Paul, James, Peter and Jude, all of whom were preachers, and the eighth was Luke, who was never presented by the Bible as being a preacher but was definitely a “principal man.” This interpretation accords well with Paul’s claim that Christ will destroy the son of perdition by “*the spirit of his mouth*” (2Thes 2:8). There is possibly also significance to the fact that Revelation 16 presents the man of sin and his kingdom as being buffeted by seven angels pouring out seven vials, and all of these as acting under the command of an eighth.

Micah follows this with details that I think corroborate claims made elsewhere in this book:

*And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots... And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard. – Mic 5:7-15*

As explained in former chapters, I think these things will happen when the Spirit is poured out on the Jews (Zech 12:10, Isa 11:1, Joel 2:28-3:2), upon which they will be mightily turned to Christ, bringing an end to the indignation against them, and they will therefore be blessed and empowered to drive out the heathen forces then occupying Jerusalem. These converted Jews will be in a spiritual sense as a dew from heaven upon drought-stricken ground ready to die, but in a natural sense they will be as a terrible lion in the midst of the forest. Now when it is made known that a lion is in the forest, all creatures, whether rabbits, squirrels, possums, deer or men, will have their attention and concern fixed upon the same thing, namely, the presence of the lion. Even so, these converts will become the focus, worry and burden of the entire wicked world (Zech 12:3). This should serve as admonition to all Christians disposed to doubt and fear. God put us here to worry the world, not to worry *about* the world. After these Spirit-empowered acts of valor by the Jews, Micah then described what must be the second coming of Christ, who “*will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.*”

Isaiah actually lived to witness the fulfillment of his own prophecies against the Assyrians, and he recorded it in his 36th and 37th chapters. The Assyrian army, having destroyed much of the land, surrounded the city of Jerusalem, and would have surely destroyed it also without the opposition of God. There would be other occasions in the history of Jerusalem when armies would be gathered against it, but in this case the invader would be spectacularly destroyed whereas, in the others, it was Jerusalem that took destruction. The Assyrian emissary, while boastfully speaking to the people up on the walls, attempted to intimidate them into surrender. His speech contained the worst blasphemies against God recorded in all the Bible (36:16-20, 37:10-12), thus foreshadowing him who “*shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods*” (Dn 11:36) and who will open “*his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven*” (Rev 13:6) and who “*opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped,*” (2Thes 2:4). However, God said that the Assyrians would not so much as launch an arrow against the city (Isa 37:33). God then sent a destroying angel into their midst, who killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night (37:36), sparing only a small handful (10:19), likely for the purpose of leaving witnesses to the event. The king of Assyria was thereafter assassinated (37:38).

Thus, almost three thousand years before the event, God used the Assyrian to foretell a greater story about a time when the wicked armies of the world would be gathered against Jerusalem to besiege it, but would be annihilated by the glorious return of the Savior. As Zechariah said:

*Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. – Zech 12:2-3*

### **Joshua and the Taking of Canaan**

It is a well-known fact that “Joshua” and “Jesus” are the same name, though in different languages. The equivalence of the names is perhaps more than coincidental because Joshua was a powerful type of Jesus as He will be at His second coming, and the fall of Jericho and the conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua were orchestrated by God to portend important events that will occur at the end of the world. Indeed, the book of Joshua tells much the same story as the book of Revelation, though in brilliantly constructed types.

Nowhere are these claims more evident than in the procedure ordered by God for the taking of Jericho (Josh 6). The Jews were commanded to march about the city once each day for a period of six days. This was to be done carrying and blowing seven trumpets. But on the seventh day, the city was to be encircled seven times, and on the seventh circuit, the seven trumpets were to be blown, and on the final blast of these trumpets, all the people were ordered to shout, upon

which God promised that the walls of the city would fall. The people were commanded to be in absolute silence until the order to shout.

All of this has undeniable correlation to the book of Revelation. In chapters 6-10 of that book, there is the breaking of seven seals of a scroll. The scroll had been partially wrapped and then sealed, then wrapped more and sealed again, and so forth, until sealed seven times. As the seals are broken, the scroll is unwound, disclosing its contents. In similar manner, as the children of Israel marched about Jericho seven times, they were effectively “unwinding” the city. With the breaking of the seventh seal in Revelation, seven trumpets were dispensed, which were blown individually in series, but upon the sound of the seventh trump, the following will occur:

*And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. – Rev 10:5-7*

That is, the earth will fall on the seventh trump even as did the walls of Jericho. As for the shout of the people, this too portended things to come, as can be seen in this passage:

*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. – 1Thess 4:15-17*

Even the silence commanded of the people prior to the shout was prophetic. John said, “*And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour,*” (Rev 8:1).

Both events will also be accompanied by the appearance of the archangel. In the case of Joshua, such angel commanded that he remove his shoe because he stood on holy ground (5:13-15). This was enigmatic at the time. No explanation was then given for why the ground was to be counted holy, but all would be manifest over a millennium later when John the Baptist began to baptize there (see Jn 1:28 where “Bethabara” means “the house of the crossing”). Jesus from there initiated His journey to the cross (Jn 10:40), resurrecting Lazarus as He went, and I think it likely He will traverse the same location from the air upon His return as He enters Israel from the southeast (coming from Edom per Isa 63 & Hab 3), resurrecting as He goes.

Prior to taking the city, Joshua sent two spies to evaluate it (ch 2). Even so, God will send his two witnesses into the world before destroying it (Rev 11:3). Finally, and most importantly, as

the city of Jericho was destroyed, none were spared except those under the protection of a scarlet thread, and none will be spared in the fall of the world except those under the blood of Christ.

Parallels to Revelation continue thereafter. In the 10th chapter, Joshua is described as destroying ten Canaanite kings, even as there will be ten horns of the beast. When the first five were routed, they fled and took refuge in a cave, but Joshua sealed the entrance of it, leaving them there for a time, and thereafter releasing and destroying them. In like manner, God will seal Satan and various kings (Isa 24:21-22) in the bottomless pit, with the intent of releasing them later and casting them into the lake of fire. Then in the 11th chapter of Joshua, the desperate Canaanites assembled their largest force ever, whose numbers were described “*even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude*” (11:4), which is exactly the same description applied to Gog and Magog in Revelation 20. In both this conflict and the former, Joshua utterly destroyed them all.

The parallels between the second coming and the taking of Canaan were also explicitly declared by Zechariah. After describing how that God would gather all nations against Jerusalem in the last days, the prophet said, “*Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle,*” (Zech 14:3). By “*day of battle*” is meant the conquest of Canaan when God did spectacular things such as parting Jordan, demolishing the walls of Jericho, raining down hailstones from heaven on the Canaanites and causing the sun to stand still in the sky (Josh 10:11-14). Zechariah claimed those times would parallel the end times, and as I have already shown, the points of similarity are numerous. To these we may add several more.

Joshua became the supreme leader of Israel after the death of Moses, who typified the Law, and whose death marked the end of the Law in the typology of the story. “*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,*” (Rom 10:4). Joshua then led the children of Israel from the wilderness into the promised land in a period of three days whereas Moses was unable to do it in 40 years. Accordingly, Christ did in three days what the Law could not do in any period of time. Also, upon being made leader of the Jews, God made a promise to Joshua that would scarcely pertain to any man who has ever lived:

*There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.* – Josh 1:5

The reason for this promise was that Joshua would serve to represent Him to whom “*every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth,*” (Phil 2:10). Another interesting distinction of Joshua was that the Jews, who habitually rebelled against nearly all divinely-appointed authorities, absolutely and heartily obeyed Joshua all the days of his life (1:16-18). In this he depicted Him of whom it was said, “*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*” (Ps 110:3) and “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me*” (Jn 10:27) and “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,*” (Jn 6:37). Then when God said, “*I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee,*”

Joshua represented Him who said, *“Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always,”* (Jn 11:41-42).

Next, God charged Joshua saying, *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success,”* (Josh 1:8). Accordingly, Christ said, *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled,”* (Mt 5:17-18). There has also never been a more successful man than Him of whom it was said, *“the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand,”* (Isa 53:10).

Joshua ensured that all Israelites were circumcised before the siege of Jericho. Even so, all elect of God will be circumcised in heart before God destroys the world (Rom 2:28, Col 2:11, 2Pet 3:9). The place where this was done was named “Gilgal,” which means “rolling,” because God declared that He had then rolled away the reproaches of Egypt from His people, even as all His elect will be absolved of their sins in Christ before entering Heaven.

When God confirmed His covenant to Abraham by passing through the animal pieces, He first passed as a smoking furnace and then as a burning lamp (Gn 15:17). The furnace represented the trials they would endure in Egypt (Dt 4:20), but the burning lamp indicated that, after these trials were done, God would use the Jewish people to enlighten the world. It was for this reason that all inspired books came from them, and nearly all of those books were written after Egypt. God is also One who declares the end from the beginning and from ancient times things that are not yet done (Isa 46:10). So we see that from the beginning of the inspired books, God was declaring what His Son would do in the end. Some of the most vivid pictures of Christ were painted by providence in the exodus from Egypt and in the taking of Canaan, but it is important to understand that these portraits were not only of His first coming but also of His second.