



STUDIES IN ESCHATOLOGY

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**About this Study:**

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Introduction

Can you say “es-kuh-TAHL-o-jee?” As you probably know Eschatology is the study of future events related to Bible prophecy. Some may dismiss the idea of studying Bible prophecy because it is too difficult or controversial. However, if we avoid learning the basics about prophecy, we may be the victims of false teachers. (Eph 4:14) *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* We must be armed with the truth and we should know it for ourselves. The truth will set you free!

Some time ago I sat through a verse-by-verse study of the Book of Revelation taught by a well-known minister. About the second or third study session I could see he was heading off, to what I believe, was the wrong direction on a very fundamental doctrine. He could not substantiate his position with Scripture. It was my fundamental studies on the subject that raised the red flags in my own mind and was able to keep ME on the straight and narrow path of Biblical interpretation.

You might ask, “Is it really possible to understand Bible prophecy?” The answer is, “Yes.” God wrote the Bible for us to read and understand. Paul stated in 1 Thes. 4:13 that we should not be ignorant about God’s plans. God must consider prophecy important as He put so much of it in the Bible. A proper understanding of prophecy arms the believer against cults and false prophets.

“Are these really the end times?” Yes, I believe we’re living in the last days. Remember, the word “last” when used by the Bible is sometimes an e-l-a-s-t-i-c term. We can see from the Scriptures the last days started on the Day of Pentecost, some two thousand years ago. As you probably know the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost was prophesied in Joel 2:28-29. Joel said the outpouring would occur afterward or in the last days. Peter confirms this truth in Acts 2:16. You could accurately state we have been

living in the last days for two thousand years. I believe more correctly, we should state the outpouring was in the beginning of the end of days and now we're living at the ending of the end of days.

I'm starting with the premise that this group of lessons is not for the person with advanced studies on the subject. We'll leave the advanced studies to the theologians. If you're such a person, you may get bored. I attempt to explain myself clearly and sometimes reword a sentence to make sure I'm understood. I might give you more information than you want to know. I understand. We may even disagree on a matter. But that's okay too! We'll just agree to disagree!

Much of the content in this booklet is not original with me. I have "compiled" this booklet from the many things I've heard, read, or ever thought about over the past thirty-five years I've studied prophecy. To be sure, I can't take credit for everything I've included but when I've remembered the source I've given credit where credit is due. In other words, if I didn't give credit to something here that you've read or heard elsewhere, it just means we read the same book or attended the same prophecy conference—and I didn't remember!

I simply trust you'll find this study interesting and may it inspire or even provoke you to deeper study of God's Word as we anticipate the soon return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God bless you, Bruce Menzies, 2014

Lesson One

Essential Terminology for Eschatology

These are some of the words we'll be discussing in upcoming lessons. Don't get lost in the jargon. If necessary, let's expand our vocabulary like a good student of Eschatology and you'll see how easy it is "talk the talk."

Abomination of Desolation

This is the event at the midpoint of the Tribulation, when the Antichrist will break his covenant of peace with the Jewish people. At that time he will invade Jerusalem to desecrate and set up the abomination of desolation in the Temple in Jerusalem, Israel.

(Mat 24:15) When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

Antichrist

The Antichrist, also known as the "man of sin," is a man of lawlessness. This "false Christ" will appear at the beginning of the Tribulation period and continue his world-wide dictatorship long enough to set himself up against God as well as every object of worship.

(2 Th 2:7, 8) 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:

Armageddon

It's probably the best known word in all of Bible prophecy. It's the word everyone uses to refer to the end of the world. The word is found only one time in the Bible. It's a place in Israel, about twenty miles southeast of Haifa, Israel, that will be the rendezvous point for the armies gathering to descend upon Israel (Zech. 14:1-2). I think

we're safe to say it'll be the mother of all wars.

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

Church Age

This is the period of time we're now living in, a time of "whosoever will." It's also the time between the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and the Rapture of the Church. The Church Age is synonymous with the present Dispensation of Grace or the Age of Grace.

Date Setting

Bible prophecy has often suffered as much at the hands of its friends as it has at the hands of its foes. Date setting and attempting to identify the Antichrist has turned many people off to Bible prophecy. Usually date setting has to do with calculating the exact time of the Rapture of the Church.

Day of the Lord

The term, Day of the Lord or That Day is not a term which applies to a twenty-four hour period, but rather the whole program of events beginning with the Rapture of the Church and the entire Millennial age. It's used especially at a time in which judgments will fall. The term is used twenty-five times in the KJV. Each listing is connected with judgment, vengeance, darkness, and gloom.

(1 Th 5:2) *For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*

Double Reference

Some prophecies have in mind more than one fulfillment. Two events, widely separated as to the time of their fulfillment, may be brought together into the scope of one prophecy. This was done because the prophet had a message for his own day as well as for a future time. It may be that the fulfillment of the one should be the

assurance of the fulfillment of the other. (The Olivet discourse in Matthew 24 is a good example.)

Dispensationalism

The teaching that history is divided into various time periods during which God related to man in certain distinctive ways. Hence the terms dispensation of: innocence, human government, conscience, law, grace, kingdom economy, etc. The Greek word from “dispensation” means “economy” or “administration.” Different schools of Dispensationalism exist.

Elect

The word “elect” actually means to be chosen. An individual or group of individuals who have been chosen by God would be God’s elect. The word itself doesn’t specify which elect is referred to in any particular scripture. That must be determined by each passage where the word is found. In the Bible the word “elect” is ascribed to: The Messiah, Israel, the Church, and Angels. Understanding this word is absolutely critical to proper Eschatology.

Eschatology

This is the study of the body of knowledge of last things or end-time events. In our study of Eschatology we’ll cover the basic Biblical doctrines of the Second Coming of Christ, the Resurrection, the Tribulation, the Judgments, the Millennium, and the Final State. I will be learning right along beside you. While preparing for these studies, I have answered several questions I wondered about for many years.

The First Resurrection

This resurrection might also be called the resurrection unto life (Jn. 5:29). Inasmuch as this resurrection is made up of a number of component parts or groups of people, the first resurrection is that part of the resurrection program in which the individuals are raised

to eternal life. It includes within it all, who, at any time, are raised to eternal life. A critical point to remember: the destiny, not the time, determines to which part of the resurrection program any event is to be assigned. The “first resurrection” is also called the “better” resurrection (Heb. 11:35) and the “resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:14).

(Rev 20:5, 6) *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.*

The order of events in the First Resurrection would be: 1) The Resurrection of Christ as the “first fruits” beginning of the resurrection program (1 Cor. 15:20); 2) The resurrection of the Church-age saints at the Rapture (1 Thes. 4:17); 3) The resurrection of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:11-12); 4.) The resurrection of the Tribulation period saints, together with the Old Testament Saints complete the “First Resurrection.” I believe these groups, together, comprise the First Resurrection. Everyone else belongs to the Second Resurrection or a resurrection unto judgment and damnation.

Fullness of the Gentiles

Please don't confuse this with “the times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:4). The fullness of the gentiles refers to the Church. It speaks of the completion of the Mystical Body of Christ made up of both Jew and Gentile, who have been saved from the Day of Pentecost to the coming Rapture of the Church. At some day soon the last sinner will come to salvation completing this Age of Grace, therefore completing the Body of Christ.

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

Glorious Appearing of Christ

This is the physical, literal, appearing of Jesus Christ to the world at large. This is when Christ returns to establish His kingdom at the end of the Tribulation.

(Mat 24:30) And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Great Tribulation

That's the seven-year period of time between Christ's coming in the air for His Bride and His coming back to the earth. In other words the time beginning with the Rapture of the Church and ending with Christ's ascension to the earth.

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

Great White Throne Judgment

This is the great final judgment of the unsaved which takes place after the Millennium. People judged here will be judged from the "books." No doubt these include the books of the Bible and especially the Words of Christ. There is no salvation at this point, all are lost.

Imminent Return of Christ

This means Christ's return is likely to occur at any moment. Clearly, the Bible teaches us to expect Him at any moment. This is called the Doctrine of Immanency; the return of Christ is next on the program and may take place at any moment. If you're expecting to go through the Great Tribulation, then you're not looking for the imminent return of our Lord.

Judgment Seat of Christ

The Judgment Seat of Christ is one of two events portrayed in

Scripture into which the Church will be brought. I believe it will happen immediately following the Rapture of the Church. At the Judgment Seat of Christ believers from the Church Age will appear individually before Christ to receive rewards or loss of reward based on their lives, service, and ministry for the Lord, including the use we have made of our talents.

(2 Cor 5:10) *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

Last Days

We live in the last days. They began at the Day of Pentecost as a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy and reaffirmed by Peter.

(Acts 2:17) *And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:*

Mark of the Beast

This is a "mark" required by all to receive, either on the right hand or forehead, who wish to buy or sell anything during the Tribulation. The exact nature of the mark is not described, whether a tattoo, implant, invisible ink, etc. It probably cannot be removed, providing a permanent identification as a follower of the beast and his system.

(Rev 13:16) *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:*

Marriage Supper of the Lamb

This event will be the greatest, most pleasing wedding of all time. The Bible calls it the marriage of the Lamb, when the Lord Jesus Christ is joined to His bride, the Church, in Heaven.

(Rev 19:9) *And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.*

Millennium

In the Bible the millennial kingdom is that phase of God's kingdom when Jesus Christ rules and reigns. The word itself, taken from a Latin word meaning "thousand years" never appears in the Bible. Revelation specifically states six times that the duration of this kingdom is one thousand years or a millennial.

(Rev 20:6) *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

Rapture of the Church

The Rapture is that future event when Jesus Christ will descend from heaven to resurrect the bodies of departed believers and transform the bodies of living believers into His glorious presence in an instant and then escort them to heaven to live with Him forever. The Rapture is distinct and separate from the second coming or advent of Christ. The Rapture is the blessed hope of the church.

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

Regathering of Israel

This is a often-mentioned promise in the Old Testament that God will regather the nation of Israel. The regathering of Israel began in 1948 with the creation of its modern state and will continue until the Second Coming of Christ. I believe this to be a "super-sign" of the end-times.

(Isa 43:5, 6) *Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;*

Second Coming or Glorious Appearing

This is when Jesus Christ returns to this earth as King of kings

and Lord of Lords. The second coming of Christ to this earth—visible, literal, physical, glorious return—is explicitly referred to 1,845 times in the Bible.

(Rev 1:7) *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.*

Seventy Weeks or Daniel's Seventieth Week

This is a very important time in the prophecy calendar. Most Bible scholars have converted these “prophetic weeks” to 490 human years. The divine prophetic clock began ticking on March 5, 444 BC, when the Persian king Artaxerxes issued a decree allowing the Jews to return under Nehemiah's leadership to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and kept on ticking until March 30, AD 33, the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem for the Triumphal Entry.

When Israel rejected Jesus Christ as her messiah, God temporarily suspended His plan for Israel. Therefore, there is a gap of unspecified duration between the sixty-ninth and seventieth sets of seven. During this gap two specific events are prophesied: (1) Messiah will be killed (this was fulfilled in AD 33); and (2) Jerusalem and the Temple will be destroyed (this was fulfilled in AD 70).

Following the Rapture of the Church, God's prophetic clock for Israel will begin to run again. It will be the final set of seven “prophetic weeks” or seven human years—otherwise known as Daniel's Seventieth Week. Read Daniel chapter 9 for the complete text.

The Times of the Gentiles

The “times of the Gentiles” has been defined by the Lord as that period of time in which Jerusalem was under the dominion of Gentile authority. It has continued unto the present time and will continue through the Tribulation period. The dominion of the Gentiles ends at Christ's glorious appearing.

(Luke 21:24) *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.*

Lesson Two Why Study Prophecy?

This is no time in history to avoid the study of future things. As I mentioned in Lesson One, if we avoid learning about the basics of prophecy we will be tossed “to and fro” by false teachers who come to us with cunningly devised fables and interpretations that will deceive us.

(1 Tim 4:1) *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.*

I believe:

- Christians need to know more about prophecy, not less.
- We must be armed with the truth.
- We need to know the truth for ourselves.

“Is it really possible to understand Bible prophecy?”

When I’m asked that questions my reply is prophecy is not so difficult to understand that it should be avoided. Some details may be difficult to understand, but the essentials are not. For instance, the subjects of: The return of our Lord; The Resurrection of the dead; The Judgment Seat of Christ; and information about the Great Tribulation. We have in our Bible the answers to questions about these great topics. God wants us to understand! (1 Th 4:13) *“But I would not have you to be ignorant . . .”*

Consider the following about prophecy:

- The Bible is not a single book but is actually a library of books of which prophecy is an important part.
- Moses, the lawgiver and author of the first five books of the Old Testament, was a prophet.
- There are sixteen books on prophecy in the Old Testament including the Minor and Major Prophets.

- In the New Testament, there are several books that cover the subject: Matthew, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Jude, and Revelation.

Consider the following about the Bible:

- Total verses in the Bible: 31,124
- Total number of O.T. verses with predictions: 6,641
- Total number of N.T. verses with predictions: 1,711
- Total percent of the Bible that is Prophecy: 27%

Prophecy reveals our Lord as He really is:

- (Rev 19:10) “. . . *for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*”
- Prophecy gives an exalted view of Christ.
- Where the gospels tell the wonderful story of His humiliation, including His birth, suffering, and death, the Second Coming is a different matter!
- The next time He comes it will be in power and great glory as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- Phil 2:10,11) *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

A proper understanding of prophecy arms the believer against cults, false prophets, and false teachers:

- Scripture teaches that false Christs and false teachers will arise in the last days.
- Edgar Whisenant's book, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988* sold more than 300,000 copies.
- In 1989 his book, *89 Reasons Why the Rapture Will be in 1989* sold only 30,000 copies.
- Another suggested 1988 was the red-letter year, based on the following equation:

Year 1948 events in Israel + forty years (a biblical generation),
+ prophecy (Mat. 24:32) about this generation not passing away (Mat. 24:34) = 1988.

- As of this writing a new book has gained popularity based on the above formula only replacing the assumption of a forty-year generation with a sixty-seven- to seventy-year generational basis. Using that arithmetic, the author suggests 2014-2018 is the *window of the Lord's return*.
- In 2013 a very popular television evangelist and pastor released yet another book dating the Lord's return based on celestial events known as "blood moons." The blood moons theory is founded on the connection of celestial patterns with events on earth. According to the pastor, earthlings can now better chart those patterns due to modern technology and therefore know the time of the Lord's return. The current charts predict a blood moon *tetrad* (four total lunar eclipses in a row) coming soon which will result in monumental changes affecting the Holy Land and ultimately Earth in general. These changes will commence the Great Tribulation and hasten the Rapture of the Church.

Here's Jesus' answer to the efforts of dating the Lord's return: (Mark 13:32) *But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*

Still, the best way to avoid being deceived by the false teachers is to know the prophetic teachings of the Word of God—for yourself!

(1 Tim 4:1) *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;*

The study of prophecy promotes an evangelistic church:

- The church at Thessalonica was an evangelistic church.
- From the time our Lord said, "*I will come again and receive you unto myself,*" (John 14:3) the early church had an evangelistic fire that lasted almost three centuries.
- The study of prophecy is also helpful in counteracting the materialism of this present age. Those who study Bible prophecy recognize that this world is very temporary. One day all these things will be burned up (2 Peter 3:10).

The study of prophecy tends to purify the believer:

- It's no secret we live in an unholy age. One tool which the Holy Spirit uses to help believers live holy lives is the study of prophecy, particularly those passages that relate our Lord's soon return.
- (1 John 3:3) *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*
- Have you ever asked the question, "Do I want to be doing this when Christ returns?" Or, "How much eternity is involved with what I'm doing?"
- The study of prophecy will challenge us to live our lives so that when He comes we will be found doing those things that will earn the praise and not rebuke (Mat. 25:21).

Prophecy offers confident hope in a hopeless age:

- Human beings can absorb many pressures in life, but lack of hope is not one of them.
- The world in which we live has no hope—it offers no hope!
- Early Christians, even under tremendous persecution, greeted each other with "Maranatha" which means "O Lord, come" or "The Lord comes soon!"
- As students of prophecy, we know certain things must come to pass, but we also know the One Who holds the future.
- If we read the book of Revelation, we know that the worst days, the most dramatic days of human history, are not behind us but are still ahead!
- Yet, it should offer no great personal concern for the Christian who rightly understands God's prophetic plan as it is outlined in the Scriptures, for he is confident of his place in God's plan.
- (John 14:27) *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*
- We don't look to the future with a casual understanding of hope, saying, "We hope things will turn out all right." No, we are confident that the future will happen exactly as Christ predicted it.

- Informed Christians will enjoy a “peace that passes all understanding” as a result of knowing the prophetic Word of God.
- Ultimately, we can read the last page of the Book and see that we win!

Questions About the Study of Prophecy

“Are there valid prophecies or predictions about the future other than those found in the Bible?”

Throughout history there has been a constant parade of people who claim to know the future: Nostradamus, Jeanne Dixon, psychic hotlines, horoscopes, etc. However, the laws of probability could have actually helped them. It just makes sense that if you predict enough future events enough times one of them is bound to happen eventually. Even a clock that doesn't work is right twice a day! Only the true and living God can predict the future, and He can do it with one hundred percent accuracy one hundred percent of the time.

“Is America mentioned in Bible prophecy?”

People here in America want to know if the Bible has anything to say about the future of our nation. Will God continue to bless America in the future? Will we survive? Consider the following:

- Russia is seen in the Gog and Magog prophecy of Ezekiel.
- The European Unity movement is linked with the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation concerning the Revived Roman Empire.
- China may be identified with the “kings of the East.”
- Search as much as you like, you will never find America mentioned specifically by name.
- Why then, isn't America mentioned?

In his book, *101 Answers About the End Times* author Mark Hitchcock offers four basic options:

Option one:

America will still be a powerful nation in the last days, but the Lord simply chose not to mention her specifically. Most modern nations are not mentioned in the Bible: Scotland, India, Australia, Canada, or Japan. However, it would seem that if America were still the greatest nation in the world during the Great Tribulation, God would mention her in Scripture.

Option two:

America is not mentioned in prophecy because she will have lost her influences a result of moral and spiritual deterioration. She will experience a fall from the inside before the end times. Or, perhaps, the United States may have surrendered her national sovereignty in the name of “world peace” to the United Nations.

Option three:

America will become a third-rate nation overnight at the Rapture of the Church. Think about it! If the Rapture were to happen today, the United States would probably lose more people per capita than any other nation in the world. At the Rapture, the Islamic nations in the Middle East would feel almost no effect at all. But the U.S. could become a third-world nation overnight.

In a weakened economic and military condition, America might seek refuge with her NATO allies in Europe and be absorbed into the Antichrist’s emerging Western coalition. Even now, the United States is slowly and relentlessly being drawn away from national sovereignty and into a globalist order. During the Tribulation, America may find her place with the nations of the reunited Roman Empire in Antichrist’s kingdom.

Option four:

America’s foreign policy of protection for Israel could change. That would remove God’s hand of blessing on this country for being good to the Jews and result in the judgment of God on our nation as never before.

However, there is a specific prophecy that can be linked to the destiny of the U.S.A. It is more definite than any other. Jesus told us in Mark 16:15 to go into all the world and preach the Gospel.

- I believe more than any other nation, America comes closest to fulfilling this prophecy.
- Varying estimates that eighty percent to eighty-five percent of all missionaries and the finance for world missions and evangelization come from churches in the United States.
- Another reason I believe for America's greatness—we're a friend to Israel.
- "I believe that God's purpose for America was to provide a haven for the Church and a base from which the world could be evangelized in the last days." (David A. Lewis, author and Christian-Israeli Liaison)

May we always remember:

The "last days" are not about America, but about Israel.

God bless us both until we meet again for Lesson Three when we'll discuss the Super Signs pointing to the end of this age and the coming of Jesus Christ!

Lesson Three

Super Signs of the End Time

The sign of the times. That's a phrase we often use to describe the time in which we're living. But for us Christians who are watching and waiting for our Lord's return, that phrase has an entirely different meaning. We're looking for signs that point to His coming and the end of this age.

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

In this passage Jesus answered His disciples with some very general signs.

They include:

- Many will come in His name and shall deceive many
- There will be wars and rumors of wars
- Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom
- There will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes
- Christ's followers will be persecuted
- People will betray one another and hate one another
- False prophets will arise and deceive many

I believe as we see the above signs increase we can know the end is near. I mean more wars, more earthquakes, more famines, more betrayal, and more false prophets. We have seen these signs for many, many years. I guess it means we're just that much closer.

In this lesson I'd like to discuss some other very specific signs that the Bible calls for to tell us we're rapidly closing in on the end of this age. Some authors have called these signs, Super Signs. I want to call your attention to four of them.

Sign #1: The regathering of Israel to her own land.

Consider the following three Scriptures:

(Jer 30:3) *For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.*

(Isa 43:5-6) *Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;*

(Ezek 34:11-13) *For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.*

Never before was an ancient nation destroyed, its people dispersed to the ends of the earth, and yet for centuries remained a separate and distinct people. For that people to be regathered to its ancient homeland and reestablished as a nation after nearly two thousand years, is a contradiction of time and logic. The rebirth of the Nation of Israel in 1948 was an unparalleled miracle of history.

Look at the following re-population statistics:

- 1882-1904—25,000 returned from mostly Eastern Europeans.
- 1904-1914—40,000 Russian Jews return.
- 1919-1923—94,000 from Poland, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Yemen.
- 1933-1939—215,000 from Germany and Poland.
- 1939-1945—62,531 from Yemen, Turkey, Bulgaria.
- 1946-1948—56,476 from European Holocaust survivors.

- 1948-1951—Operation Ali Baba, Iraq, allowed one hundred twenty thousand Jews to immigrate to Israel. Total from 1948-1951 was 684,000.
- With the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie (1891-1975) in 1974, Ethiopia adopted a Marxist government, and the Jewish community experienced extreme persecution. From late 1984 through January 1985, Israel launched a program known as “Operation Moses” to secretly smuggle as many Jews out of Ethiopia as possible. On May 24 and 25, 1991, “Operation Solomon” was launched. During a thirty-three-hour period more than one hundred fifty-four thousand Ethiopian Jews were airlifted. Planes were taking off and landing one after another. Miraculously, not one plane crashed, nor was one life lost in that amazing airlift.
- 1995 approximately six hundred thousand Jews went to Israel from the Soviet Union.

(Figures from Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, Jewish Literacy)

Sign #2: The reuniting of the Roman Empire as described in the Book of Daniel.

(Dan 7:24) *And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.*

Here are some of the key events and dates of what appears to be the reuniting of the Roman Empire in our lifetime:

- 1957—Birth of the modern European Union, (Treaty of Rome), six nations join: Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, France, Italy, and the Netherlands (two hundred twenty million people).
- 1973—EEC (European Economic community) formed: Denmark, Ireland, and Great Britain join, bringing in sixty-six million more people. Greece joins the EEC in 1981, becoming the tenth member.
- 1986—Portugal and Spain join the EEC.
- Austria, Finland, and Sweden join the European Union, bringing

the total population to three hundred sixty-two million in fifteen members.

- January 1, 1999—Monetary union of the EU, currency called the Euro.
- As of the date of this writing the following countries are members in the European Common Market, now called the European Union: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania, for a total of twenty-two countries!

In years past it was held among prophecy students that the last stages of the ten nations of the revived Roman Empire, geographically, would coincide exactly with the boundaries of the Roman Empire in its former state hundreds and hundreds of years ago. However, it has been suggested that the ten-kingdom federation was not fulfilled in the fall of Rome, but awaits the last day before it reaches this state. The ten-kingdom federation that Daniel speaks of is in the future, and has never existed historically.

The future federation of states will probably not conform to the old historical boundaries of the old Roman Empire. However, having said that, all that now remains is for ten of the nations (or regions?) in the mix to rise to the top and form a consolidated common government. When this happens, Rome will truly live again! Out of the confederacy the Antichrist (another horn?) will rise to rule the world during the Great Tribulation. Wow! What do you think? In future lessons we'll have a lot more to say about the Antichrist and his power play.

Sign #3: The explosion of knowledge in the last 40 years.

(Dan 12:4) *But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the*

book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

According to one source ninety-percent of all the scientists who have ever lived are alive today and fifty-percent of the world's inventions have been created in the last ten years. The Internet is currently doubling in size every seven months. (Does everyone know about the Internet?)

What I'm trying to say is knowledge is increasing exponentially. Webster defines that word used in math as "the constant exponent raised to the power equal to a given expression." In other words, knowledge is being increased—fast!

A Leadership Conference held at Liberty University in 1997 cited the following figures:

- From 1900 to 1950 (fifty years) knowledge doubled.
- From 1950 to 1960 (ten years) knowledge doubled.
- From 1960 to 1968 (eight years) knowledge doubled.
- From 1968 to 1990 (every three years) knowledge doubled.
- From 1990 to 2001 (every eighteen months) knowledge doubled.
- 2005 to present, knowledge may be doubling every year or less.

Imagine you are living in the year 450 BC. Like Daniel, God has given you the opportunity to see into the future. You are filled with wonder as you look around and see contraptions which you have never seen or experienced before. Based on the limited knowledge of science and modern technology of an individual living in the Babylonian times, how would YOU describe the following inventions in a manner consistent with a limited vocabulary? Remember, you cannot use words or other inventions which were not in existence before the year Daniel was alive. Don't use the automobile, airplane, radio, telephone, television, or refrigerator.

Here are just a few areas where there's been advances in knowledge:

- Personal computers—Practically everything that was once done by pencil and paper, drafting tools, and artistry is now being done faster, easier, and better with the help of the computer. With the

advent of supercomputers, with parallel processing doing billions of operations per second, we can now understand how a world-wide economic system could be possible.

- Artificial intelligence—February, 1996, Garry Kasparov, reigning chess champion of the world, lost two out of six games against IBM's "Deep Blue" computer. Think about that!
- Fiber optics—One small fiber optic cable can replace ten thousand ordinary telephone lines.
- Satellites—Satellites can link the whole world together instantly. GPS (Global Positioning System) is now in place and in use, allowing worldwide satellite tracking of items with small transmitters.
- Programmable Tattoos—According to the magazine *New Scientist*, March, 1997 issue, a programmable tattoo is being patented by Interval Research of Palo Alto, California. A small liquid-crystal display is inserted just beneath the skin on the wrist, where most people wear a watch. As well as being a fashion accessory, the tattoo could contain biosensors to blood pressure, and display these readings. The device could have a more serious purpose. It could be used for electronic tagging.
- Smart Cards—The smart card—a piece of plastic with a computer chip on its face—is slipping into the United States with uses from defense and health care to retailing and transportation. The cards have replaced food stamps for many and meal tickets for students in college. Marines and peanut farmers are whipping them out for boot polish and crop reports. The Clinton Administration announced a nationwide system to use electronic banking technology to deliver billions of dollars in government benefits and President Clinton's health-reform plan would have required every American to carry a health identification card bearing, at a minimum, his or her Social Security number. (*The Wichita Eagle*, April 19, 1994)

This is an exciting time to be alive. Technology is changing so

fast—but not to worry—it’s all been predicted in the Bible. Surely what God has allowed man to invent and use for His glory and to spread His gospel, someday will fall into evil hands. No doubt the foundation is being laid and technology being invented and released into the world that will aid the Man of Sin to spread his message around the world.

Super Sign #4: Rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem.

(2 Th 2:3,4) Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Let’s start with a brief history of the Temple. We’ll begin with what we know:

Solomon’s Temple

- The first Temple was built in the tenth century BC, right after Solomon became king. David had wanted to build it, but was not allowed by God because of the bloodshed in his past.
- On the construction site, a thousand years earlier, Abraham had demonstrated his faith by being willing to offer Isaac.
- After his father died, Solomon began to build the Temple in the second month (May) 982 BC (in the fourth year of his reign). Reportedly, it contained 7,600,000 pounds of gold, 75,600,000 pounds of silver, 7,600,000 pounds of iron, precious jewels without number, cedar and quarried stone were all used by 30,000 Israelites and 153,600 aliens, in the construction of the Temple.
- To complete the massive project, Solomon imposed forced labor on all his subjects, drafting people for work shifts lasting a month at a time. Some 3,300 officials were appointed to oversee the

Temple's erection. The Temple was completed in the eighth month (November) 975 BC. The total construction time was seven and one-half years.

- Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. To this day, Orthodox Jews pray three times a day for the Temple's restoration.

The Second Temple

- This temple was built by Zerubbabel near the end of the sixth century BC. The story is told in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.
- The Second temple was called Zerubbabel's Temple. Cyrus, king of Persia, authorized the return of the Jewish captives, the return of the Temple vessels Nebuchadnezzar had looted, and the reconstruction of the Temple (about 537 BC), which was finished about 515 BC. The completed Temple was smaller than and inferior to Solomon's. The Ark of the Covenant has never been recovered, and so the Second Temple (and Herod's Temple) had no Ark.

Herod's Temple

The reconstruction of the Second Temple was begun by Herod the Great about 20 BC. It was an enhancement of the Second Temple. Herod's Temple was the greatest building in the world during that period of time. The gold and white stone shone so brightly in the sun that it was difficult to look directly at the Temple.

- The work on the Temple continued after his death until it was finished in AD 63.
- It had already been forty-six years in the rebuilding process when Jesus ministered there.
- The destruction of the Temple was prophesied by Jesus in Luke 21:5-6.
- Herod's Temple was destroyed in AD 70. It was torn down by four Roman legions under the command of Titus. The Jewish people have not been able to practice animal sacrifices since that time.

- As the story goes, the burning of the Temple caused the gold vessels inside to melt and run into the cracks between the stone. The conquerors literally removed every possible stone in order to find all the gold.

Fast Forward to the Temple Mount Today

The thirty-acre site is under the control of The Supreme Moslem Council. Even though Israel took all of Jerusalem in 1967, this concession was made by Moshe Dyan to keep peace. Jews are not allowed on the Temple Mount. The Western Wall, formerly called “the wailing wall” is the holiest place on the earth to Jewish people today. (The Western Wall was only a retaining wall and not an actual part of the Temple itself.)

The Necessity for a Temple

Let’s talk about the reasons that a Temple located in Jerusalem, Israel, is necessary:

1) Because of Bible prophecy

(Dan 9:26,27) *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.*

(Mat 24:15) *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)*

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

The above Scriptures indicate that at the midpoint of the Great Tribulation, the Man of Sin (Antichrist) will desecrate the Holy Temple.

2) Because of Israel's desires

Jewish law requires the Temple be rebuilt where it once was. A good part of the Old Testament commandments involve rituals that require the Temple be rebuilt.

3) The finished rebuilt Temple is described in the Book of Revelation:

(Rev 11:1,2) *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.*

Location of the Future Temple

The Temple must be built in the general area of the Temple Mount. There are several possibilities for the Temple's location.

- Major Problem—The Dome of the Rock, Islam's third most holy site now occupies the location.
- To destroy the Dome of the Rock would produce the mother of all holy wars.
- The issue may have to be settled by the Man of Sin's persuasive powers.

The Ark of the Covenant

What's a Temple without the Ark? The finding of the lost Ark (if it still exists on earth) would almost demand the building of the Temple. There's no biblical record of the disposition or location of the Holy Ark after the destruction of the first temple by the Babylonians about 600 BC. (Read about the looting of the Temple in 2 Kings 24.)

How exciting it would be for the Ark to be found like in Raiders of the Lost Ark movie.

Where is the Ark?

Check out the following scenarios:

- Scenario #1—Under the Temple Mount. Jewish scholars believe that it's quite possible for it to be under the Temple Mount. The keepers of the holy things including the Ark may have hid them away as foreign armies approached Jerusalem.
- Scenario #2—In Ethiopia. When the Queen of Sheba left Solomon, she carried home a little "souvenir." Menelik arrived nine months later! The Ark was moved to Ethiopia for safe keeping. Emperor Haile Selassie, in my generation, called himself, "The Conquering Lion of Judah."
- Scenario #3—On Mount Nebo. The Book of 2 Maccabees (one of the so-called lost books of the Bible) says that Jeremiah the prophet hid the Ark in a cave on Mt. Nebo at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the City when the prophet was kidnapped by his own countrymen and taken to Egypt (read the book of Jeremiah).
- Scenario #4—Mr. Blaser from Colorado is convinced the Ark is hidden in a cave in Ein Gedi on the shores of the Dead Sea.
- Scenario #5—A group of American Christian archeologists believe the Ark is hidden between Calvary and the Garden Tomb.

Preparations for the Temple

There are people in Israel who are convinced that the Temple will be rebuilt soon, and are preparing to make it a reality. For those with Internet connections you can find out more at www.templemountfaithful.org. It's exciting that this may become a reality in our lifetime. Or, it may happen after the Rapture of the Church.

"What do you think happened to the Ark?"

- Training. The Seminary of Aterat HaKohanim (Glory of the Priests) is currently training priests and Levites in priestly rituals

and animal sacrifice. Hal Lindsey says that there are about 200 descendants of Levi in training now.

- Material. By 1994, more than thirty of the necessary vessels for animal sacrifice had been made. Another sixty-five still needs to be made. Robes have been made for the High Priest in the exact way prescribed in the Bible.

In reality, there doesn't seem to be anything that points to the immediate construction of the Third Temple. Geopolitical situations prevents that from happening. However, it WILL be built in God's perfect time. He's in control of this whole situation. No doubt after the Rapture of the Church things will happen very fast. Stay tuned.

God bless you as you study this third lesson in Biblical Eschatology. I hope it whets your whistle for more of God's Word, more of His power, and more of His presence.

In Lesson Four, we'll discuss Dispensationalism. I believe it's a valid methodology of studying where we've been and where we're at now in a timeline history of God's dealing with humanity.

Notes:

Lesson 4 The Dispensations

Although God has but one plan of salvation, He has had various ways of dealing with man in regard to it. Jesus Christ, the “Lamb of God” verily was “. . . *foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times . . .*” (1 Peter 1:20). For reasons known but to God, He chose to take thousands of years to prepare the world for His Son. Galatians 4:4 describes the proper time as the “fullness of time.”

(Heb 1:1,2) *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.*

Henry Clarence in his book *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*, says the object of this time of preparation was threefold:

1. To disclose to man the true nature of sin and depth of depravity to which he had fallen.
2. To reveal to man his powerlessness to preserve or retain an adequate knowledge of God, or to deliver himself from sin by philosophy and art.
3. To teach him that forgiveness and restoration are possible only on the ground of a substitutionary sacrifice.

The means God used to accomplish these objectives were numerous. At the very end He will have used seven different dispensations or ways to deal with mankind. We will study them as: past, present, and future.

The Past

Dispensation: Innocence • Duration: Unknown

Scripture: Genesis 2:17–Genesis 3:24

Can you imagine our first parents being placed into a garden with a perfect environment? No smog, no acid rain, no pollution of any kind. Add to that, the fact they had no sinful nature, that is to

say, they had no natural inclination towards evil. There probably was no need of Salvation as Adam and Eve were perfect in their sinlessness and in their devotion to God, Who walked with them in the Garden of Eden.

I believe Adam and Eve were created with human bodies designed to live eternally. They were designed to never wear out! I don't believe it was a glorified body, as Christ's resurrected body, but a human body that would last forever. Life was simple, there was no sin therefore there was no sickness or disease. And, they probably possessed extraordinary intelligence. God said it was good!

God subjected them to a most simple test, and warned them of the consequences of disobedience. When Satan came under the guise of a serpent, Eve listened to him, ate of the forbidden fruit, gave her husband also and he ate.

As a result:

- They became guilty before God and their nature became corrupt.
- They died spiritually and the process of physical death began.
- At that moment Adam and Eve began to get old.
- They transmitted the effects of their sin to their offspring.
- They did not retain the true knowledge of God.
- God expelled them from the Garden after He had pronounced a curse upon the serpent and the ground.
- Because of this one sin, Adam and Eve was no longer in a state of innocence. The transition from innocence to guilt is what we have come to know as "The Fall." In other words, man has fallen into sin (and he can't get up!).

Have you heard the phrase, "One small step for man—one giant leap for mankind"? One small act of disobedience resulted in a giant leap away from God for all mankind who followed. The book of Romans tells us that because all have sinned, all have died—even those who did not commit the same sin as Adam and Eve did (Romans 5:14).

I'm going to get off the subject of Dispensations for a minute

(I'm known to do that) and talk about the sin nature. Do you ever wonder why you still sin—even though you love Jesus? Even though you know your past sins are under the Blood of Christ? Do you ever wonder why you commit sin even when you don't want to? It's because of the sin nature that dwells inside of you and I. The sin nature is similar to being born with a genetic defect, say, an extra chromosome, affecting the soul of every human being. Or, you can think of it as part of your inheritance from the first Adam. It's been passed down to every person in every generation (except Jesus Christ).

Here's what the Word of God says about the sin nature:

(Gen 6:5) *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

(Jer 17:9) *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

(Rom 7:18) *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

(Rom 7:23) *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

(Rom 8:7) *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

(Gal 5:17) *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

Here are several terms used in the above scriptures to refer to what is known as the sin nature:

- Sin
- Flesh
- Old Man
- Heart

Often, mankind and even Christians will try to rehabilitate the sin nature. Frequently, they begin with psychology which starts with the premise that:

- All men are good, therefore, it's not your fault
- You're a victim of your circumstances
- You're a victim of your environment
- You're a victim of your upbringing
- Your actions are the results of some syndrome
- With proper counseling, drugs, or behavior modification you will get better
- If you'll just read from Dale Carnegie, Napoleon Hill, Denis Waitley, or some other top thinker you can think your way to a better life
- Perhaps a clinic with a multi-step program

Good luck trying to rehabilitate the sin nature. Examine your positive self image in light of what the Bible says:

(Isa 64:6) *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

(Jer 17:9) *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

(Rom 3:23) *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

And that's describing the believing Christians!

Did Cain inherit a sin nature from his parents? What do you think? He murdered his own brother!

I believe there's never been a greater Christian than the Apostle Paul and he battled the sin nature as told in Romans 7:17. Read the story for yourself. Paul had a will made of steel, but if he battled with it so will you.

It will not go away just because you disagree with me and refuse to believe it. You may quote the promise in 2 Peter 1:4 about having received a "divine" nature and that's true. The truth is you have both

natures at one time. If you don't believe you have the old sinful nature still with you, just scratch the surface a little bit the wrong way and you'll prove to yourself it's still there. Just a little flare of the temper, maybe a wrong word from someone, just a little drink from the bottle or glance of pornography and the sin nature can be fully enflamed like a raging fire out of control. The believer, living out of fellowship, living in partnership with the world, can actually commit any sin that his unbelieving counterpart would commit.

What Paul is teaching from Romans chapter 6 tells us about the sin nature is:

- It's not to be a problem for us as we've been given victory over it.
- Our faith in Christ and His finished work on the Cross will always be central to maintaining that victory.
- It is to remain dormant so to speak.
- We are to be dead to sin.
- The sin nature is to be crucified (daily).

We have been set free from the power of sin and we're to walk in that victory each and every day. Just don't let down your guard. Be vigilant as your adversary the devil would like to take you out! Remember, we have been given the power to steadfastly resist him.

Fortunately, the sin nature will not be found in the believer's resurrected body:

(Phil 3:21) Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

(1 Cor 15:49) And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

The Dispensation of Innocence ended in Genesis 3:24: "*So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*" I've often wondered if the Cherubim with a flaming sword was probably put there so Adam and Eve would not

return to the Garden and partake of the tree of life, enabling them to live eternally in a sinful state.

“What do you think?”

Dispensation: Conscience

Duration: 1656 Years, From the Fall to Noah

Scripture: Genesis 5:1–Genesis 7:11

The Dispensation of Conscience is so named because during this period man had nothing to guide him but his conscience. God did not give any specific commands to anyone during this dispensation. There were no “thou shalt” or “thou shalt not.” God just left man to his own conscience, or heart, to guide him. Man was given the opportunity to show that his conscience was sufficient to bring him back to God.

The problem is, the God-directed conscience originally given to man in the Garden, was lost in the Fall and mankind gained a self-directed conscience instead. Conscience is the knowledge of good and evil. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were probably more conscience of God and His presence than they were of the trees and grass. After the Fall, or in their fallen state, they were more conscience of themselves and their surroundings than they were of God.

It didn't take long before the conscience led man astray as Cain became a murderer. All flesh corrupted its way and every imagination of the thought of the heart was only evil continually. Despite precious few exceptions, there was no seeking after God. The voice of conscience was insufficient to cause man to seek after God and His way of salvation. The first chapter of Romans tells us of a people with a seared conscience are capable of. Only Noah found favor with God. He was just and perfect in his generation and the only righteous person mentioned at the age preceding the building of the Ark (Gen. 6:8, 9). Because of the horrible sin in the earth God was obliged to visit the world in judgment.

Some may ask here, "How could God hold them accountable for being wicked when He gave them no specific laws to keep?" The answer is, man has an unwritten law written in his heart or conscience (Rom. 2:14-15). Though this law is vague compared to a written or verbal law, it will still convict a person of guilt when he contemplates evil. For instance, when Cain slew his brother Abel, he did not break any written law against murder because none was yet given, but he did break the law God had written in his heart and was therefore guilty. The dispensation of conscience ended in Genesis 7:11 or thereabouts.

Dispensation: Human Government
Duration: 427 Years, From Noah to Abraham
Scripture: Gen. 8:15–Gen. 11:9

When the flood waters receded and the ark settled on Mt. Ararat, a new dispensation began. From this time forward, men were to be governed by men. Innocence had failed. Conscience had failed. Salvation, however, would still be dependent upon the faith of the believer, as demonstrated in the offering of blood sacrifices and evidenced by the fact that Noah immediately built an altar upon which to offer those sacrifices when he left the ark (Gen. 8:20).

There were certain laws in this period that man was to carry out and by which to govern himself. Man was to be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth (Gen. 9:1). The same command was given to Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:28). We notice in chapter nine, that God instituted capital punishment. Other laws were added by Moses. But what was the result? Men made a great federation and erected a tower for the purpose of idol worship. The glory of man seems to have been the chief purpose in the erection of the tower of Babel. Man had ceased to rule for God and had begun to rule for himself.

God came down in judgment upon their disobedient race and confounded their speech. Though divinely instituted, the dispensa-

tion of human government was not sufficient to lead men to God. That dispensation ended in approximately Genesis 11:9.

Dispensation: Promise or Patriarchal
Duration: 430 Years, From Abraham to Moses
Scripture: Genesis 11:10–Exodus 12:51

We speak of this as the Dispensation of Promise because of the promises made to Abraham and his seed. For the first time God made promises to one group of people at the exclusion of all others. Until this time, God dealt with the entire race of mankind. From the 12th chapter of Genesis until the 12th chapter of Matthew, however, God began to deal with just one family of, those descended from Abraham, through his son Isaac.

Beginning with the 12th chapter of Genesis we have two classes of people dealt with in general—Jew and Gentile. Abraham is singled out and made the head of the Jewish race. In Jesus' day Abraham was still considered to be their spiritual father (Luke 13:16, Luke 16:30, Luke 19:9).

It is important that we know God's promises to Abraham and his seed still hold true today, including "*I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*" (Gen. 12:3). In fulfillment of the first part of this verse we have seen the decline and ruin of nations which have persecuted the Jews. On the other hand, there are examples of blessing on the countries which have dealt kindly with the chosen people. We do not have to go back far in history for examples; we have seen tragedy come upon Germany after World War II. In contrast, there is the unparalleled blessing of God on our own country, the United States of America, which has been a veritable land of opportunity for the Jewish people.

Let's take a minute to talk about Israel and America and acts of terrorism which occurred September 11, 2001. Why did this awful thing happen? You can talk about the logistical reasons: Inadequate

sharing of intelligence between government agencies or the breakdown of airport security. (Sunday, September 8, 2001, I passed through Chicago's O'Hare International Airport without being asked for a photo I.D.) And though the terrorists took advantage of those weaknesses, I believe there are essentially two reasons for their horrible acts: first, our solidarity with Israel, and, second, what America stands for. For this lesson I'll just talk about the first.

To discuss Israel you have to go back to the Book and see that God has chosen Israel. The People and the Land are inseparable. Also, God has chosen Jerusalem for Himself. Did you know after Christ returns and rules the nations, He will not rule from New York City, Frankfurt, Paris, or Hong Kong? He will rule from Jerusalem, Israel. Why are countries of the Middle East at war with Israel? Why do the Palestinians want Jerusalem for their capital? Is it the wealth of the land or the strategic location? No, it is because God has chosen Jerusalem for Himself (2 Chronicles 6:6). You'd think the peoples of the world would rejoice over that. They don't.

Who is Israel's friend? Who has stood by her in the past? Who supplied the Patriot missiles to Israel when Sadaam shot S.C.U.D. missiles at her? America. Finally, who, with Israel, walked out of the conference on racism, etc., in Africa recently? The United States of America. America has correctly taken a position of solidarity with Israel and because of that, the nations of the Middle East hate us. But now, however, America has started down a slippery slope at which many Evangelical leaders cringe.

It appears that President George W. Bush and Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, put the pressure on Israel to surrender the land known as the Gaza Strip. Condoleezza Rice made repeated pleas for Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to make concessions to and prop up Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) as a moderate leader of the Palestinian Authority. Abbas was the right hand man to Yasser Arafat. His doctoral thesis in 1982 titled, "The Secret Connection between the Nazis and the Leaders of the Zionist Movement" was later published as a book in which he claimed less than one million—not

six million—Jews died (in the Holocaust) and those because of a conspiracy of Jewish leaders, who wanted Palestine, with the Nazis.

The *Jerusalem Post* of August 12, 2005 reported that the Palestinian Authority (PA) organized its first mass celebration of the impending Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Organized by the government (Palestinian Authority), it appeared to be part of an attempt by Abbas to seek credit for the pullout and defuse Hamas' claims that its attacks drove Israel out. Abbas spoke briefly to the crowd: "From here, from this place, our nation, and our masses are walking toward the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital." God help any country, including America, that would help divide Israel from her God-given borders and territories.

Many of you probably know America is but one of four nations or groups trying to decide Israel's future. The four are officially known as the Quartet. The four members are: United State of America, Russia, United Nations, and the European Union. (I'm sure they'll all have Israel's best interest at heart when they make their decisions!) More information about the Quartet can be found from the U.S. State Department publications.

Meanwhile back to our discussion on the Dispensation of Promise. God promised to give Abraham great posterity, and make him a blessing to all nations. However, the promises made to Abraham were not sufficient to make them and their following generations obey God in all His commandments. God was about to give them the Law. The Dispensation of Promise ended when Charlton Hesston (Moses) descended Mt. Sinai carrying the two tablets (from the movie *The Ten Commandments*).

Dispensation: Law
Duration: 1,700 Years, Moses to Christ
Scripture: Exodus 13:1–Matthew 4:11

(John 1:17) For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

You should not think that before Moses there was no law. Even in innocence there was a law (Gen. 2:16-17), and there were laws given to Noah in Genesis chapter 9. But on Mount Sinai God proposed a Covenant of Works and the people accepted it. However, before Moses could deliver the Ten Commandments written on two tables of stone, Israel had made an idol and begun to worship it.

God, foreseeing the failure of the Jews under the Law, instituted many blood sacrifices and rituals for the atonement for their sins. All of the sacrificial deaths and the substitutionary shedding of animal blood pointed ahead in time to the moment when the Lamb of God would be offered to pay once and for all the penalty for every man's sins from Adam and Eve until the very end of the world.

After the book of Malachi, there is a period of 400 years of supposed silence, so called because we have no divinely inspired record of any prophet of that time until John the Baptist came preaching his message of repentance. Then came Jesus Christ, not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it. The Jews, as a whole, rejected Him and demanded that the Romans crucify Him. Finally God sent these same Romans to destroy their city and temple and to scatter the people over the face of the whole earth.

The Present
Dispensation: Grace
Duration: 2,000+ Years, From Pentecost to the Rapture of the Church
Scripture: Matthew 4–Revelation 19

So far up this point, God has used five different doctrinal arrangements with man, five different methods of testing and deal-

ing with Him, and man has miserably failed in every one! That this dispensation is named grace does not mean that God's grace cannot be found in the other dispensations (Gen. 6:8), only that it is more prevalent and visible in this one. God now offers to every man Salvation through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The Dispensation of Grace extends from the Cross of Calvary to the second coming of Christ. It has already lasted longer than any of the preceding dispensations.

Grace literally means unmerited love and favor granted to unworthy sinners who are unable to help themselves. My dear mother-in-law, Carrie E. Greer, taught me many years ago another meaning of grace:

God's Riches At Christ's Expense

This is the Church Period. After all the previous methods, finally the Savior Himself appeared. By His death He made atonement for the sins of Old Testament believers as well as for those of New Testament believers. Now all that is required of any man is to accept what God has provided in Christ. If a man by faith accepts the offer of eternal life, He is born again of the Holy Spirit. We no longer have to offer up animal sacrifices for our sins. The body of Christ was offered once and for all.

In this dispensation God is no longer dealing with man primarily as nations but as individuals. Every individual can have a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of God during this dispensation or age is to call out of all nations a people for His name. Everyone has the opportunity to come to Christ.

God will take His Church home to Himself and deliver the rest of earth's population over to the awful Tribulation that is to come. Even grace will not convert the entire world in this age. The Dispensation of Grace will end at the Rapture of the Church (1 Thes. 4:17, Dan. 12:1).

The Future
Dispensation: Kingdom Period
Duration: 1,000 Years

A great change is promised to come to earth for the Kingdom Period. Christ will reign in every area where sin has been. He will come again and take charge of this world by force. As the Son of David He will institute an earthly kingdom. Israel will be the center of that kingdom and guess where the capital will be—Jerusalem, Israel.

This is the time we also know as the Millennial Kingdom. Although the word millennium is not found in the Scriptures the idea of it is. Millennium comes from the Latin words which mean a thousand years. Read about this time span in Revelations chapter 20. It is the time between the Second Coming of Christ to the loosing of Satan at the end of the one thousand years. During this time, all the glorified saints will reign with Him. In ages past, righteousness has suffered, but during this time it will reign supreme.

The purpose of these thousand years will be to:

- To build the Millennial Temple
- To divide the land to the twelve tribes of Israel as was promised to Abraham and his seed
- To evangelize the nations that survive the Great Tribulation
- To establish the universal Kingdom of Christ

The Characteristics of the Millennium

- The nation of Israel will at this time begin to realize the fullness of God's promises to their Father Abraham, and will become the leading nation in the world.
- The Millennial Temple will have been built and will become the seat of spiritual and civil government of the world (Isa 2:2-4; Ezek. 43:7).
- There will be a theocracy. God will reign through Jesus Christ and the saints who have part in the first resurrection (Rev. 12:5, Luke 19:17).

- The Spirit will be poured out (Ezek. 36:27).
- There will be universal knowledge of the Lord (Jer. 31:34).
- Human life will be prolonged; however, people will still die (Isa. 65:20).
- The aggressive nature of animals will be changed (Isa. 11:6-8).
- There will be natural (human) people on the earth during this period (Isa 65:20).

The thousand years follow an unparalleled period of confusion and tribulation. It ends with the universal revolt and war, battle of Gog and Magog, which will be stopped by fire from heaven (Rev. 20:9).

We have seen in this study of the Dispensations that in each one only the grace of God in the individual heart can change the life permanently in any age.

Notes:

Lesson Six The Rapture of the Church

I believe the next great event on God's prophetic timetable is the Rapture of the Church. You'll recall from our definitions in Lesson One, that the Rapture is that future event, when Jesus Christ will descend from heaven to:

- Resurrect the bodies of departed believers, and
- Transform the bodies of all living believers

He will do all this in an instant and then escort us to Heaven to live with Him. In other words, God is going to show up and show off! The Rapture is the blessed hope of the Church (Titus 2:13). Sounds fantastic, doesn't it? Does that sound too fantastic to believe?

Well, consider this: Salvation is fantastic from start to finish! From the Old Testament account of Creation, the miracles of the Old Testament, the Immaculate Conception and birth of Jesus, the miracles of the New Testament, Christ's ascension into heaven—it's all fantastic! It shouldn't surprise us then that God will wrap up this Church Age (Dispensation of Grace) with a sensational ending!

The Rapture of the Church is the first part or first phase of what we generally know as the "Second Coming" of Jesus Christ. In addition to the catching away of the believers, the Second Coming could also include but not be limited to:

- The Judgment Seat of Christ, as outlined in 2 Cor. 5:10 and Romans 14:10
- The Marriage Supper of the Lamb, as referred to in Rev. 19:7-9
- The Great Tribulation
- Christ's glorious, public, visible, appearing to the whole world, and bodily ascension to planet earth

Tim LaHaye, author of the Left Behind series of books, has counted 318 mentions of Christ's Coming in the New Testament alone. Reverend LaHaye says, "When we examine those references it

becomes clear that there are two phases to Christ's return. There are simply too many conflicting activities connected with His return to be merged into a single coming." In Brother LaHaye's book, *Understanding Bible Prophecy for Yourself*, he lists fifteen differences between the Rapture of the Church (phase one) and the Glorious Appearing (phase two) at the end of the Great Tribulation. (It's an excellent comparison if you can find a copy for yourself.)

Outline in a Nutshell

As a student of the Word, I take the Bible literally whenever possible. Literal interpretation means to take God's Word as meaning, in real terms, exactly what it says. That's another reason why I believe Christ talks about His coming in two phases, in other words, sometimes He's referring to phase one and sometimes phase two, however, I wouldn't argue about terminology. The Rapture is a literal moment in time when all Christians (both dead and living) will be snatched into the air above planet earth to go to heaven and the Father's house with Jesus Christ.

Here's the way I see His Plan coming about:

- First, He will come suddenly in the air to Rapture His Church and take believers to His Father's House (1 Thes. 4:17). Can you see how this first event will leave the entire world shaken and confused? (Sounds like a perfect time for an eloquent, new leader to appear on the scene?)
- Second, we'll be taken into the heavenlies with Christ where we will all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10).
- Third, after the Judgment Seat of Christ, we'll partake in a very holy event—The Marriage of the Lamb or the Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).
- Fourth, probably while all that is going on, the inhabitants of the earth (Jews, Gentiles, and the nations of the world) will be going through pure hell. I'm talking about the Great Tribulation and the Winepress of God's wrath (Dan. 12:1, Rev. 3:10).

- Next, Jesus will gloriously and publicly appear in great power to the world (Mat. 24:30, Jude 14) and will rule with righteousness for one thousand years.

The Rapture Phase

Whenever someone mentions the word Rapture, another one is certain to point out that the word never occurs in the Bible. However, the concept of the Rapture is clearly present.

Consider the following Scriptures:

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

(Acts 1:9) *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.*

(Acts 8:39) *And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.*

(2 Cor 12:2) *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.*

(2 Ki 2:11) *And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*

(2 Ki 2:16) *And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.*

(Heb 11:5) *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

Do you get the picture? You could exchange each of the above underlined words with, “catch away” or “snatch away.” Each person in the above passages whether they were “caught away,” “taken away,” or “went away” were forcibly removed from earth. They were removed from the pull of gravity by the One who made the laws of gravity!

The Truth of the Rapture

There are three main passages that give specific details about the Rapture in the New Testament.

The Rapture according to 1 Corinthians 15:50-53:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Do you enjoy a good mystery? In 1 Cor. 15:51, the apostle Paul refers to the Rapture as a mystery. Why? Because, although Elijah and Enoch did it (and possibly others), the idea of going to Heaven without dying was not considered. The revelation of the Rapture is a New Testament phenomenon.

So what is a New Testament mystery? In the New Testament, a mystery is a truth that is being revealed by God for the first time. It’s a little piece of information kept hidden from previous generations (Rom. 11:25, Col. 1:26, Eph. 3:5-9, 1 Cor. 2:9, 2 Thes. 2:7). In the New Testament or New Covenant, God has chosen to reveal a previously hidden truth. It may come to us by Revelation of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10) or by our diligent searching the Word such as the Bereans (Acts 17:11, 1 Peter 1:10). It may not be new information at all, but simply a greater personal understanding of the Bible.

If you read the Bible from Genesis chapter 1 to 1 Corinthians chapter 14, you would correctly conclude that the only way to get to Heaven and obtain your glorified body would be to die. However, the mystery of the Rapture is this: Some people will go to Heaven and receive new, glorified bodies without ever dying! In 1 Corinthians 15, everything changes. A whole generation of believers will be transformed without feeling the sting of physical death. This passage should be studied along with 1 Thes. 4:16-17. It's no wonder the writer of Titus 2:13 calls this our *blessed hope*.

The Rapture according to 1 Thes. 4:13-18:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The Lord wants every believer to know the truth of the Rapture. After examining the Apostle Paul's passage it seems he wants us to know the following:

- Our believing loved ones who have passed away will not miss out on this blessed event.
- When Jesus comes again, He will bring the perfected spirits of departed believers with Him.
- When believers die, it's not good-bye; it's more like "good night."
- Paul wanted to us to know where he got this information—the Word of the Lord.
- When Christ returns (phase one) from Heaven, the bodies of

deceased believers will be raised or resurrected and reunited with their perfected spirits, which will have returned with the Lord.

- These resurrected bodies will be glorified and made incorruptible, fit for the heavenly realm.
- When the dead have been raised, the living believers will immediately be transformed into the presence of the calling Christ without dying.
- This translation will take place in the amount of time it takes to blink one's eye.
- We will meet the Lord in the clouds in the air. Sound fantastic?
- The truth of the Rapture brings comfort and hope. Think of the thousands of funerals through the centuries where this truth has brought comfort and encouragement.

The Rapture according to Jesus:

John 14:1 *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

I believe this to be one of Jesus' few references to the Rapture that I can find. All His other teachings on His return have to do with Glorious Appearing (phase two) which is His literal and physical appearing (Rev. 1:7). It may be the reason for that is so much of the Great Tribulation has to do with Israel and the Jews. The redemptive work among the Jews will prepare them to accept their Messiah at the Tribulation's end (Zech. 12:10).

The Timing of the Rapture

All pre-millennialists believe in the Rapture of the Church. But there is wide disagreement about the timing of this event in relation to the Great Tribulation period. Will the Church go through any or all of the Great Tribulation before the Rapture occurs? In the minds of many believers, this is the big question and it's clearly the issue most often debated about on that subject.

Here are probably the four main points of view on the timing of the Rapture:

- The Pre-Tribulation Rapture—The Rapture will occur before the Great Tribulation period begins. Included in this point of view are me and probably the majority of Christians. We'll call these folks "pre-Trib."
- The Mid-Tribulation Rapture—The Rapture will occur at the midpoint of the Tribulation. A lesser amount of Christians probably believe this but many do, including some well-known ministers. We'll call these folks "mid-Trib."
- The Post-Tribulation Rapture—The Rapture will occur at the end of the Tribulation, at the Second Coming (Glorious Appearing) of Christ to the earth. We'll call these folks "post-Trib."
- The Partial Rapture—Only the most faithful, devoted, overcoming believers will be raptured before the Tribulation. The rest of the believers will be left on earth to go through the purging of the Great Tribulation. (I don't know what to call these folks except wrong!)

"To which category do you belong?"

I believe three out of the above four views contain error and cannot be reconciled to Scriptures. For instance, the Partial Rapture Theory states in general only the most *worthy* Christians will be Raptured. The un-Raptured believers will be left behind to be purified in the Great Tribulation. For that to happen, Christ's body (us) would have to be divided.

Consider the following Scripture:

(Dan 12:1) *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*

That Scripture tells me if my name is entered into the Lamb's Book of Life, then I will be delivered from that time of trouble.

“What does that Scripture say to you?”

A final observation about the partial Rapture theory: it is based on achieving a certain degree of spiritual attainment that makes them worthy to be included. J. Dwight Pentecost, in his book, *Things to Come*, observes the following about the partial Rapture theory:

- The partial rapturist position is based on a misunderstanding of the value of the death of Christ as it renders him acceptable to God.
- The partial rapturist must deny the New Testament teaching on the unity of the body of Christ.
- The partial rapturist must deny the completeness of the resurrection of the believers at the translation.
- The partial rapturist confuses the Scriptural teaching on rewards.
- The partial rapturist confuses the distinction between law and grace.
- The partial rapturist must deny the distinction between Israel and the Church.
- The partial rapturist must place a portion of the believing church in the Tribulation period.

The mid-Trib and the post-Trib crowd also have the Church going *through* the Great Tribulation and suffering from God's wrath. However, salvation and deliverance from God's wrath has never been about our good works, but about His work on the Cross. It was there the sin debt was paid in full, so there's nothing else for us to do except believe it and accept it by faith. I'm not talking about rewards as that's another subject. I'm talking about the salvation of a person's soul.

You might be thinking that God's people have always suffered persecution down through the centuries. Yes, that's right but the Great Tribulation is about God's wrath being poured out on this earth and we're not appointed to that.

Consider this Scripture:

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

"How do you interpret that Scripture?"

How does that promise affect us as it relates to the wrath of God? It means to me that Jesus Christ suffered God's wrath for our sin. He paid a debt that I could never pay. Consider the following Scriptures:

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

(Eph 5:6) *Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*

(Rom 1:18) *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*

Reasons for a Pre-Tribulation Rapture

a) The place of the Church in the Book of Revelation

The passages that deal with the Great Tribulation period consistently fail to mention the presence of the Church.

- The main portion of Revelation dealing with the Tribulation is chapters 6-19, and in this section there is silence concerning the Church.
- In Revelation 1-5, the Church is specifically mentioned nineteen times, but in chapters 6-19, the Church of Jesus Christ is absent from earth. (I believe we're in Heaven with Christ.)

b) The removal of the Restrainer

(2 Th 2:5-8) *Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 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:*

In the second letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 2, the apostle Paul was dealing with false beliefs. The Thessalonians had been falsely told the Lord had already raptured His true disciples and the Tribulation was underway. The persecutions which they were enduring had given them a basis for this erroneous consideration. It was simply error mixed with truth.

Paul wrote them to say such a thing was impossible because two events had to first occur: 1) a great falling away had to happen, and 2) the man of sin had to be revealed. However, the latter could not happen until the One who restrains him is first taken out of the way (verse 6). The word used here is “letteth” or “let.” It’s an old unused word in the King James’ vocabulary actually meaning to “restrain” or “withhold.” It would not be improper to replace the word “letteth” with “restrain.”

The verse would read thus:

“...he who now restrains/withholds will continue to restrain/withhold until he (the restrainer) be taken out of the way (removed).”

Here in chapter 2 the writer outlines three important ages that take us from the present age to eternity:

- **The Present Age** (before the Rapture)—The Age of Restraint—2 Thes. 2:6.
- **The Tribulation Age** (after the Rapture)—The Age of Rebellion—2 Thes. 2:7-9.
- **The Messianic Age** (after the Second Coming)—The Age of Revelation—2 Thes. 2:8b.

Though it may be hard to believe, we're now living in the age of restraint! Someone or some thing is holding back the full blast of evil that is to come when the Antichrist is unleashed. We know the spirit of Antichrist is already at work. If this evil world is now described as the time of restraint, what in the world will it be like when the Restrainer is removed? You can get a pretty good picture by reading the Book of Revelation starting with chapter 6 as the great Seals are opened. The opening of the Seals is the removal of restraints. The Seals have graciously operated for the protection and preservation of society all these centuries. The forces of evil, making for total war and destruction have been held in providential check.

Looking at the big picture of end time events is like looking at a jig-saw puzzle. There are many little parts that must come together and find their place in God's plan. We gain understanding about each piece of the puzzle as we research and study. We can't get the whole picture of prophecy by reading just one book of the Bible. The idea of a Restrainer is one of those valuable small parts. It's only referred to in a small section of Scripture but it is critical to understand the Restrainer's job and identity.

Who or what is the Restrainer?

Whoever the Restrainer is, he must be powerful enough to hold back evil. Whatever the Restrainer is, it must be removable. I would emphasize this: The Holy Spirit will not be removed during the Tribulation. Why? The Holy Spirit, being a third part of the Trinity is omnipresent—everywhere at the same time. Have you ever read this Scripture:

(Psa 139:7,8) *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.*

I believe that the Restrainer would be understood as: God's Holy Spirit working in and through the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not just the Holy Spirit and not just the Church. It's both,

working together. And as long as the Holy Spirit is resident within the Church, which is His Temple, this restraining work will continue and the Man of Sin cannot be revealed. It is only when the Church, the Temple, is removed that this restraining ministry ceases and lawlessness can produce the lawless one. It should be noted that the Holy Spirit does not cease His ministries with the removal of the Church, nor does He cease to be omnipresent with her removal, but the restraining ministry does cease.

Therefore, this ministry of the Restrainer, which will continue as long as His Temple is on the earth and which must cease before the lawless one can be revealed, requires the pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church, as Daniel 9:27 reveals that lawless one will be manifested at the beginning of Daniel's Seventieth Week.

- The Holy Spirit is spoken of in Scripture as restraining sin and evil in the world (Gen. 6:3).
- The Church and its mission of proclaiming the gospel is the primary instrument the Holy Spirit uses to restrain evil in this age. We are the salt of the earth and a light in the world.
- By our influence and testimony we help hold back the development of lawlessness.

The Restrainer at work today

Beyond the awesome work of the Holy Spirit behind the scenes, holding back a tidal wave of evil and lawlessness we have the local church. And, in the local church we have individuals, making a difference in this world by making an impact on our culture.

I'm thinking of:

- For years a local pastor kept a major street in our community alcohol free by being a positive, godly force and keeping a commitment to doing what he could.
- Christians today are often refusing to patronize businesses that support or encourage an ungodly lifestyle.
- Christians have created investment companies whereby other Christians can invest into companies that are morally responsible.

- Many Christian ministries and denominations have a ministry to those incarcerated.
- Other Christians lobby local town officials to keep abortion providers out of their community.
- We have other ministries such as The American Family Association and Focus on the Family both providing families with information on how to uphold Christ's standards in our community and in our families.
- The Gideon's International place Bibles in 179 countries in 82 languages. They may be best known as the ones who place Bibles in hotels, but they also place Scripture in hospitals, nursing homes, and domestic violence shelters, schools, colleges, and universities, the military, law enforcement personnel, fire fighters, and EMTs, prisons and jails. Every seven days the Gideon's place 1,000,000 Bibles in these places. Just think of the impact of their ministry.
- We now have many godly Internet Web sites where you can receive ministry and help.
- Christians, now more informed than ever, instead of voting their pocket books, are voting their conscience at the polls each year, supporting candidates that are pro-life and pro-family.
- Christians, now more informed than ever, are supporting advertisers who are pro-family and are boycotting advertisers who support television that tears down the family and promotes sex and violence.

Henry Clarence Thiessen, author of the book, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology* wrote, "There are few worldly communities that realize the true worth of the people of God in their midst. It has, however, often been said that not many of the ungodly would want to live in a world where there are no churches and no Christians."

There are so many ways the Church, empowered by the Holy Ghost, is making an impact, restraining the works of the devil and holding back a flood of evil in our society today. Just imagine what the world will be like when we're all gone. There will be no force on earth left to hold back the work of Satan.

c) Exemption from divine wrath

Many who say the Church will endure the Tribulation period use the argument that Christ's Church has never been spared trouble in the past. That's true! Indeed, the Bible promises rough times periodically for the Church.

Consider the following verses:

(2 Tim 3:12) *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

(Gal 5:11) *And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.*

(James 5:10) *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.*

(Acts 9:16) *For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*

(Rom 8:17) *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

The Great Tribulation period is all about judgment and punishment and God's wrath upon the children of disobedience and the ungodly nations including the Jews.

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

I don't know of any pre-Trib minister who believes we'll never have problems and suffer persecution. Christians, from the get-go have experienced tribulation and persecution. That is not the Great Tribulation. The only tribulation we'll experience is that which we suffer in this world. The Bible promises that God's people are exempt from the coming wrath of the Tribulation period.

Consider the following Scriptures:

(1 Th 1:10) *And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*

(1 Th 5:9) *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,*

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

(Isa 26:20, 21) *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

d) Twenty-four Elders in Heaven

In Revelation there are twelve references to a group of beings called the “twenty-four elders.” The fact that they are mentioned twelve times makes them key players in Bible prophecy.

(Rev 4:4) *And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.*

(Rev 4:10) *The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying.*

There are four main views concerning their identity. People have suggested that they are: angelic beings, Israel, the Church, or all of the redeemed.

Because of the following:

- Their title
- Their number
- Their position
- Their crowns
- Their clothing

- Their praise
- Their distinction
- Their location

I believe they are somehow representatives of the Church. (But I won't argue with you.)

e) The imminence of His return

The word "imminent" is a theological word rather than a biblical word. The word doesn't appear in Scripture so you can't establish its meaning through word studies. The Webster Dictionary defines imminent as: "Likely to appear at any moment—impending" If applied to the Return of our Lord it means the Rapture of the Church could happen at any moment. How exciting is that!

"Are you ready?"

I believe the writers of the New Testament were looking for the Lord's return in their lifetime.

Consider the following Scriptures:

(Phil 4:5) *Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.*

(Titus 2:13) *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;*

(1 Cor 1:7) *So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

(Phil 3:20) *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

(James 5:8) *Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*

(Heb 9:28) *So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

(Mat 24:44) *Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

(Mat 25:13) *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*

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

“How can we watch and look for His return, if there is even a single event that is predicted to precede Christ’s return? If the Tribulation precedes the Second Coming, then we are obliged to look for it as the first thing on the program. Then we cannot expect the Lord to return at any time; then the truth of the Lord’s return cannot be the incentive to holiness, service, and watchfulness that the Scriptures represent it to be” (Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*).

If we take the doctrine of immanency and apply it to the Rapture of the Church it would consist of the following beliefs:

- The certainty that He may come at any moment.
- The uncertainty of the time of His arrival.
- The fact that no biblically-prophesied event must first occur.
- Other things may happen before the Rapture but nothing else must happen.
- The purpose of such immanency is that the Church may be in a constant state of expectancy.
- Only the pre-Trib position allows for an imminent and sign-less coming of Christ for His Bride. The Church has been told to live in the light of the imminent coming of the Lord to translate them in His presence.
- Only the pre-Trib position allows us to say, “Jesus may come today!”
- Mid-Tribbers, the Rapture must be at least three and on-half years away.
- Post-Tribbers, the Rapture must be at least seven years down the road.

As a final note to the doctrine of immanency, Jesus told us:

(Luke 17:26, 27) *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.*

In other words, it was business as usual. People were living their everyday lives like every other day of their life. This was Jesus' emphasis in the passage. There was nothing unusual about this particular day (until it started raining).

“Do you believe it will be business as usual during the Tribulation? Do you really see yourself attending weddings and eating at the local barbeque during the Great Tribulation?”

I don't either. That's why the only way it can be is if Christ returns *before* the Great Tribulation begins.

The story of Noah also tells me something else about God. He will hold back judgment because of the presence of the godly among the wicked, and He takes the righteous out of the midst of the ungodly before He sends the judgments.

Here are some examples of that truth:

- The rescue of Lot and his family from Sodom.
- The taking of Enoch to heaven before the flood.
- The story of Noah.

Lastly, I'd like to quote the Reformer Martin Luther, “I believe that all the signs which are to precede the last days have already appeared. Let us not think that the Coming of Christ is far off; let us look up with heads lifted up; let us expect our Redeemer's coming with longing and cheerful mind.”

John Calvin also declares: “Scripture uniformly enjoins us to look with expectation for the advent of Christ.”

f) The nature and purpose of the Tribulation

It's already been said that some believe that because the Church was not exempted from persecutions in the past, there is no ground for supposing that it will escape the persecutions of the Tribulation to come. But this is to misunderstand altogether the nature and purpose of the Tribulation.

Consider the following Scriptures:

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

(Jer 30:7) *Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.*

(Isa 26:20,21) *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

(Dan 12:1) *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*

g) To complete God's unfinished plan with Israel.

The Rapture of the Church is needed so that God can complete His unfinished program with Israel that will result in her conversion and eventual millennial blessings.

- The Rapture will enable the Church to avoid a conflict of purpose for the Church and Israel.
- God's plan for Israel has been suspended until the Tribulation during which time it will resume.
- The Rapture of the Church will trigger a time when God will fulfill His plan for His elect—national Israel. The Church will have no part in Daniel's Seventieth Week. (We'll discuss Daniel's Seventieth week in a future lesson.)

These are most of my reasons for believing and teaching the pre-Trib Rapture of the Church. I may be completely wrong about this and someday soon we'll find out. The important thing is to be ready for what ever comes our way. Jesus has promised to be with us what ever may happen.

Questions About the Rapture of the Church

What about the “last trump?” If the last trump mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:52 is the same last trump in Rev. 11:15, doesn't that mean we'll be halfway into the Tribulation before we'll be Raptured?

The confusion rests on the use of the word last in connection with both events. Someone else has pointed out that the word “last” can mean one of two things: last in a point of time, or last in a point of sequence. Just because it's the last trumpet in a sequence does not mean it's the last trump to be blown forever.

Consider the following:

- The trumpet that sounds for the church is called the trump of God, while the seventh trump in Revelation is an angel's trumpet.
- The trumpet that sounds for the church is singular. No trumpets have preceded it so that it cannot be said to be the last of a series. The trumpet in Revelations is clearly the last of a series.
- The trumpet in Thessalonians issues a blessing and eternal life in glory, while the trumpet in Revelations issues judgment upon the enemies of God.
- The trumpet that sounds for the church is sounded “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” The Revelation trumpet implies the sounding over a continued period of time.
- The trumpet sounding in Revelations depicts a great earthquake in which people are slain. The Thessalonian trumpet mentions no earthquake.
- Finally, it's inconceivable to me that throughout the Millennium and Kingdom worship of Jesus Christ there will never be another

trumpet blown. If that's true then the Thessalonian trumpet is the last in a point of time and not the same as the trump of Revelation which is simply the last in a series of trumps

2 Thessalonians 2:3 tells us the Rapture cannot happen until the Antichrist is revealed. Doesn't that mean we'll at least go part way into the Tribulation before the Church is raptured?

I'll be honest here. I've studied that passage for thirty-five years and have yet to hear a satisfactory answer from a pre-Trib point of view. Like someone once said, "The Bible says what the Bible says."

Having said all that, there is a possible explanation in the fine print. Verse 1 talks about the "coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto him" which is clearly reference to the Rapture of the Church. Verse 2 speaks about the "day of Christ is at hand" which is not so clearly the Rapture. It's possible the Apostle Paul was referring to two separate events. Is the "Day of Christ" the same as the "Day of the Lord?" We understand by study that the Day of the Lord is not a twenty-four hour period of time but rather includes a whole program of events beginning with the Rapture of the Church and the entire Millennial age. The term is used twenty-five times in the King James Version and each citation is connected with judgment, vengeance, darkness, or gloom.

Consider the following Scriptures:

(Isaiah 13:6) *Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.*

(Joel 1:15) *Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.*

(Joel 2:1) *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;*

(Joel 2:31) *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.*

(Obadiah 1:15) *For the day of the LORD is near upon all the*

heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

(1 Thessalonians 5:2) *For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*

If you are a mid-Trib or post-Trib believer, it may be that I have to put that passage in your column. I've had to do that with the belief of Eternal Security as I simply don't believe "once saved—always *safe*." And, I believe the preponderance of Scripture backs that up. However, there are a few Scriptures I have to put in their column.

Back to the subject at hand. If you continue reading 2 Thes. 2:8, the Scripture talks about a "restrainer." I've written about that at length in this Lesson and I believe that to be the Spirit-empowered Church. Verse 8 says after the restrainer is removed then the Antichrist will be revealed. Verse 2 has to be balanced by verse 8.

We know from the book of Daniel 9:27 that the Antichrist is revealed at the *beginning* of the seven-year period. Also from Daniel 12:1, it says God's people will be delivered from the terrible time coming on the earth.

"How do you balance verse 2 and verse 8?"

Will Old Testament Saints be resurrected along side the Church?

Author Tim LaHaye gives a good answer for this question: "The Bible is not entirely clear on whether Old Testament saints will be included in the Rapture. Some believe the Rapture is only for the Church, and that Old Testament believers who looked forward to the Cross by faith will remain in the grave until the Glorious Appearing. That may account for the fact that the Old Testament saints are not specifically mentioned in any Rapture passage. The Rapture may be for the Church only, which would fit the overall plan of God's dealing with Israel in the Old Testament, as separate from His dealing specifically with the Church for almost two thousand years in the present Church age."

What will happen at the Rapture to babies and young children?

Let's discuss the two popular theories:

View #1 All infants and young children will be raptured to Heaven before the Tribulation.

When babies and young children die, they go to Heaven.

(2 Sam 12:23) *But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*

(Luke 18:16) *But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.*

Since they are Heaven bound when they die, surely they'll be raptured.

View #2 Infants and young children of believers (only) will be raptured to Heaven before the Tribulation.

(1 Cor 7:14) *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.*

- It seems inconceivable that the Lord would rapture believing parents to Heaven and leave their defenseless children alone in the world for the Tribulation period.
- In the days of Noah, the Flood destroyed all unbelieving men, women, and children. But God delivered Noah, his wife, and his three sons and their wives.
- In Sodom and Gomorrah, God destroyed all the inhabitants of the cities, including the children of unbelievers. The only ones to escape were Lot and his daughters.
- Those who die during the Tribulation, before the age of accountability, will be taken to heaven to be with Christ.
- There's lots of room for discussion here.

I've heard that the belief of a pre-Tribulation Rapture is relatively recent. What's up with that?

I've read about that too. As the story goes, in 1830 a person in Scotland named Margaret Macdonald had a vision of a pre-Tribulation Rapture and that's what started the whole idea of that belief. Well, I can't personally confirm or deny the vision happened. I have read about it on the Internet. Here's my response if it did happen:

It appears that there are times in church history that God chooses to renew a truth. For instance, take the doctrine of justification by faith. That doctrine was not clearly taught until the Reformation. It was about 1550 when the Reformer, Martin Luther, delivered his thesis which included the idea of the "just shall live by faith." We could accurately say that doctrine has been popular for less than 500 years. However, the failure to discern the teaching of the Scriptures for hundreds of years prior does not nullify the truth of the doctrine.

Another example is the Pentecostal Movement. Did you know in 1900 there was no Pentecostal *movement* in America? In 1901 the Spirit was poured out in Topeka, Kansas, and shortly afterwards at the Azusa Street revival in 1906. We could accurately say that doctrine has been popular for only slightly over 100 years. However, the failure to discern the teaching of the Scriptures for hundreds of years prior does not nullify the truth of that doctrine.

Maybe God *did* use Margaret Macdonald by giving her a vision of the Rapture. And maybe the vision rekindled the fire of the saints to be looking for the imminent return of the Lord. I quote J. Dwight Pentecost, who says, "It was not until the last century (the 1800s) that the field of Eschatology became a matter to which the mind of the church was turned."

If all the above is true, then we could accurately say the pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine has been popular for only 184 years. However, the failure to discern the teaching of the Scriptures for hundreds of years prior does not nullify the truth of that doctrine. Whew!

What if I miss the Rapture and am left behind, can I still get saved later?

That's a tough question and hard to answer. Let's look at 2 Thes. chapter 2:10:

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

That Scripture seems to indicate those who were offered the Gospel with opportunity to be saved and refused that invitation will not be saved later because they will have no desire to be saved. That's because God will send them a strong delusion. The Bible is pretty hard on people who are like that. Consider reading Romans chapter 1 for more information. Here's the more important question: why even put yourself in that situation? Call on Jesus Christ now to save you and He will. (Acts 2:21) *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

If you do miss the Rapture—pray. Pray for the Holy Spirit to do a work in your heart and ask Jesus to save you. The Tribulation period will not be a pretty scene. I'm sorry I can't offer more information about this question.

Lesson Six The Great Tribulation

We now come to a very important part in our study of Eschatology: The events that occur between the Rapture of the Church (1 Thes 4:17) and the Lord returning with His Saints (Jude 14). This seven-year period of time is known in the Bible as the Great Tribulation (Mat 24:21). The Tribulation period is the final 2,520-day (seven year) period before the Glorious Appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ and the one thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on this earth.

We'll see in our study that the Great Tribulation is an independent time belonging neither to the Church Age or the Kingdom Age—it's sandwiched between the two ages. Unlike other Dispensations, there'll be no overlapping of the times, either at the beginning, as the Tribulation will not begin until the Church is taken out of the way, or at the end, as the Kingdom Age will not begin until Satan is bound for one thousand years.

My goal for this Lesson is to cover the material on this subject in an exhaustive and conclusive way. I hope to answer many of your questions during our discussion.

You may be asking yourself this question, "If I'm going to be raptured to Heaven, why should I care about the Tribulation?" I can think of three reasons why we should be interested.

First, we should be interested because God's Word teaches it. All Scripture is important and worthy of our careful study and application to our lives.

Second, in studying about the Tribulation we learn a great deal about the nature of Man, God, and Satan:

- It teaches us that Man is sinful, rebellious, and easily deceived. (We already knew that!)
- It teaches us that God is holy and that He unleashes His wrath against sin, but He will save millions of people even in earth's darkest hour.
- It teaches us about Satan and his ultimate intentions and purposes.

The third reason for this study is, as we see the signs of the coming Tribulation developing before our eyes, it fills us with hope and expectation that the Lord's coming is near. Signs such as we've already discussed in previous Lessons:

- European Union and Globalism, common currency for Europe.
- Developing technology for the Mark of the Beast.
- Preparations for rebuilding of the Temple.
- Regathering of Jews in Israel.

Anyone who takes the Bible literally must accept the fact that Scripture teaches there is a time of tribulation awaiting the inhabitants of the earth (Mat. 24: 21). There is a terrible storm of unprecedented horror.

Let's look at the following writers of Scripture and see how they described that future time:

Jesus Christ

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

Here's Matthew 24:21 from other versions of the Bible:

"For that will be a time of greater horror than anything the world has ever seen or will ever see again" (Living Bible).

"For then there will be great tribulation—affliction, distress and oppression—such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now; no and never will be again" (Amplified Bible).

Daniel

(Dan. 12:1) *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*

Zephaniah

(Zep 1:14-15) *The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.*

Jeremiah

(Jer 30:7) *Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.*

Joel

(Joel 2:1) *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;*

Here are some Old Testament descriptions for what we call the Great Tribulation: The Time of Jacob's Trouble; The Seventieth Week of Daniel; Jehovah's Strange Work; Jehovah's Strange Act; The Tribulation; The Indignation; The Overflowing Scourge; The Day of Vengeance; The Time of Trouble; The Day of Wrath; The Day of Distress; The Day of Desolation; The Day of Darkness; The Day of Gloominess; The Day of Clouds; The Day of Thick Darkness; The Day of the Trumpet; The Day of Alarm.

Here's some from the New Testament: The Day of the Lord; The Wrath of God; The Hour of Trial; The Wrath to Come; The Great Tribulation; The Tribulation; The Hour of Judgment.

Daniel's Vision of Seventy Weeks

To understand the "nuts and bolts" of the Tribulation, we must understand the vision given to Daniel. Let's read about Daniel's vision from Daniel 9:21-27:

Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly,

touched me about the time of the evening oblation. 22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. 24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. 25 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. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off; but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Okay, let's just stop right here! Before we go any further, we need to know the "keywords" used in this prophecy and what they mean to us earthlings.

Terms Used in Daniel's Vision of Seventy Weeks

- **Evening Oblation**—The time of evening prayer or maybe sacrifice. Notice in Daniel 9:27, the Man of Sin will cause the evening oblation to cease.
- **Seventy Weeks**—These are "prophetic weeks" equal to a week of years. Most students of Eschatology agree that a prophetic week is seven years. Therefore seventy prophetic weeks would be calculated as 70×7 , or 490 "human" years.

- **Daniel's 70th Week**—483 years have been accounted for between Artaxerxes' decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The final week, or week of years, (seven years) of the original seventy has not occurred but will be that seven-year period known as the Great Tribulation—Daniel's Seventieth Week.
- **Thy People**—Who were/are Daniel's people? The Jews.
- **Thy Holy City**—What was/is Daniel's Holy City? Jerusalem.
- **Messiah the Prince**—The Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth.
- **Seven Weeks, and Threescore and Two Weeks**—483 years.
- **The "People" of the Prince That Shall Come**—The Romans. Under the command from Titus, they destroyed the City and the Temple in AD 70.
- **The "Prince" That Shall Come**—Man of Sin, or Antichrist. This "prince" shall be of the same people who came and destroyed the city. That's why many feel the Man of Sin will be from a country of the Old Roman Empire.
- **Desolations**—To be completely and utterly destroyed, to be laid waste and barren, to be devastated. That was accomplished in AD 70 by Titus and his Roman army when they destroyed the Temple and wrecked havoc in Jerusalem. This must not be confused with the term "abomination of desolation" referred to by Jesus.
- **Covenant with Many**—This is believed to be the phony peace agreement.
- **Messiah be "cut off"**—I believe this to be a reference to Jesus' crucifixion.
- **Confirm the covenant with many for one week**—This "covenant" is believed to be a phony agreement between the Man of Sin and the Jewish nation. The "week" referred to is what we call "Daniel's Seventieth Week," otherwise known as The Great Tribulation which shall last seven years (or one prophetic week).

Okay, we got that out of the way, let's resume our discussion.

Daniel's prophecy teaches us the following:

- The beginning of the Tribulation starts when Antichrist and Israel sign a covenant with each other (Dan. 9:27) and ends at Christ's Second Coming.
- The intervening "weeks of years" (seven years) between these two events is what the Bible calls the Seventieth Week of Daniel.
- The specific time or duration of the entire Tribulation is specifically given in only one place in the Bible—verse 27.

There are a few things about Daniel's prophecy we need to know:

We must understand Daniel's use of the term "weeks" in his prophecy.

- The Hebrew word is *shabua*, which means literally a "seven." That would enable us to read Daniel 9:24 thus, "...*seventy sevens are determined...*"
- Precedence for using a "week of years" is found in Genesis 29:27.
- If we interpret the "sevens" as days, the entire period would extend for only 490 days or a little over one year—an impossibly short period of time for all the described events to occur.
- Most modern Bible scholars interpret Daniel's seventy weeks as "prophetical weeks" or units of seven years—490 "human" years.
- Additionally, a prophetical year is 360 days, not 365 days.
- (Rev 12:6) *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.*
- (1,260 days divided by 30 days = 42 months divided by 12 = 3.5 years)
- Also known as "time, times, and a half time."

(Rev 12:14) *And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.*

(Dan 7:25) *And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times*

and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

We must understand the beginning of the sixty-nine weeks.

Daniel was told that this 490-year period would begin: “...from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem...” (Daniel 9:25).

The Scriptures contain several decrees that have to do with the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. However, in none of these decrees is the condition of Daniel 9:25 met until Nehemiah 2:5-8. Secular historians and chronologists have definitely ascertained this date to be translated as March 14, 445 BC. If we do the math from Daniel 9:25 the equation would be something like this:

Seven weeks (of years) + threescore (60 weeks of years) + two weeks (of years) = 69 prophetic weeks (of years) or $(69 \times 7) = 483$ human years.

The 483 years should close with some event to satisfy the words, “...unto the Messiah the Prince...” Any guesses who Messiah the Prince is and what might have happened 483 years later? Jesus Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem was on Sunday, April 6, AD 32, the week of our Lord’s death!

(Luke 19:41-42) *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

Was Jesus weeping over the city knowing that if the people of His day had “done the math” from Daniel 9:25, as we just did on the previous page, the Scriptures would have revealed to them Who He was? (But it was hid from their eyes.)

We must understand there is a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week.

According to Daniel 9:26, two major events are said to take

place after the sixty-ninth week and yet before the seventieth week: The cutting off of the Messiah, and, the destruction of the city Jerusalem and the Temple in Jerusalem (Titus, AD 70). These two events did take place between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. (The Church had its beginnings after the sixty-ninth week and will have no part of the seventieth week.)

What else has happened since the end of the sixty-ninth week?

- The Church was born on the Day of Pentecost.
- God's dealing with Israel has been temporarily suspended (Rom. 11:25)
- You and I have been saved!

In the prophecy of Daniel, the angel indicated that six things must happen: 1) finish up the transgressions, 2) make an end of sins, 3) make reconciliation for iniquity, 4) bring in everlasting righteousness, 5) seal up the vision and prophecy, and 6) anoint the most holy (verse 24).

The entire time period involved is exactly specified as seventy weeks; and these seventy weeks are further divided into three lesser periods: first, a period of seven weeks; after that a period of three-score and two weeks; and finally, a period of one week (verse 25-27). We have seen the fulfillment of sixty-nine weeks but not the seventieth. Like a sporting event, God's time clock seems to have temporarily been suspended. We're missing Daniel's Seventieth Week!

“The six promised blessings are related to the two works of the Messiah: His death and His reign. The first three have special reference to the sacrifice of the Messiah, which anticipate the removal of sin from the nation. The second three have special reference to the sovereignty of the Messiah, which anticipate the establishment of His reign. The ‘everlasting righteousness’ can only refer to the millennial kingdom promised Israel” (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*).

We must understand the beginning of the seventieth week.

Let's read Daniel 9:27 again: (Dan 9:27) *And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.*

Again, I quote from J. Dwight Pentecost's book, *Things to Come*, to make the following points:

- According to this Scripture the seventieth week begins with a "covenant" that is made with "many" for one week (seven years).
- This seventieth week is a seven-year period which lies prophetically between the Rapture of the Church and the return of Christ in glory.
- This seventieth week provides the exact chronological framework for the great events recorded in chapters 6 through 19 of the Book of Revelation.
- The seventieth week will begin with the making of a "firm covenant" between the coming Roman prince and the Jewish people.
- In the middle of the seventieth week, the Roman prince will suddenly reverse his friendly attitude toward the Jews and "cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."
- The breaking of the "firm covenant" between the Jews and the Roman prince will make the beginning of a period of unparalleled desolations for the Jewish people.
- The end of this final seven-year period will bring to its close the entire series of the Seventy Weeks, and therefore usher in a great blessing promised to Israel in Daniel 9:24.

We must understand the Seventy Weeks are all about Israel and not the Church.

(Dan 9:24) *"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city..."* Do you see the "Jewishness" of this passage of Scripture? It's talking about Daniel's "people" and Daniel's "city."

It's talking about the Jews and Jerusalem. The Seventy Weeks are not determined upon Christ's Church—we're His Bride!

The Purpose of the Great Tribulation

We'll get to all the Scriptures and all the reasons in a moment. First, let's talk about something more fundamental. Let's talk about what the purpose for the Tribulation is *not*:

a) It's not for the punishment of the Church for our past sins.

That's already been taken care of by Jesus Christ on the Cross. That's not to say we are never chastised.

(Heb 12:8) *But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*

(Rev 3:19) *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

After the Rapture of the Church we will each face the Judgment Seat of Christ. This judgment is about our works, thoughts, and deeds, but not about our soul's salvation.

(1 Cor 3:15) *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

Those of us in the Body of Christ have placed our faith in the One Who paid the ultimate and eternal price for sin. The punishment for our sin was carried out on the back and body of Jesus Christ. (Isa 53:5) *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.* We have accepted that by faith. God loves us. Because of what Christ did for us on the Cross, God's not mad at us anymore! To believe that the Church will go through any part of the Great Tribulation is based on, what I believe, a misunderstanding of the value of the death of Christ as it frees the sinner from condemnation and renders him acceptable to God.

Let's look at three benefits of our Salvation:

1. Propitiation

(Rom 3:25) *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*

- “By the suffering of the sinner’s atoning substitute, the divine wrath at sin is propitiated, and as a consequence of this propitiation the punishment due to sin is released or not inflicted upon the transgressor. This release or non-infliction of penalty is forgiveness, in the biblical representation” (*Lectures in Systematic Theology*).
- As our Propitiation, Christ’s death has appeased God’s wrath.

2. Reconciliation

(Col 1:20) *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*

- The thought/picture is something like this: At first God and man stood face to face with each other. In sinning, Adam turned his back upon God. Then God turned His back upon Adam. Christ’s death has satisfied the demands of God and now God has again turned His face toward man. It remains for man to turn around and face God. Since God has been reconciled by the death of His Son, man is now entreated to be reconciled to God.
- God now deals with souls in the light of what Christ has accomplished on the Cross. God completely believes in the sacrifice of Christ, and accepts it. So He is able to remain Just and Holy, yet justify any sinner who accepts the Savior as his Reconciliation.

3. Redemption

(Eph 1:7) *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

“Redemption is an act of God by which He Himself pays as a ransom the price of human sin which the outraged holiness and government of God requires” (J. Dwight Pentecost).

Propitiation, Reconciliation, and Redemption—this threefold work is a perfect salvation, by which the sinner is justified, made acceptable to God, placed in Christ positionally, to be received by God.

b) It's not to refine or purify the Church.

That's already been taken care of by Jesus Christ on the Cross. That's not to say we don't go through a refining and purification process now—in this life.

(1 Pet 1:7) *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

(2 Tim 3:12) *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

Moreover, the Bible clearly teaches that we do not need to face the Great Tribulation to be accounted worthy. Here, the Bible makes the opposite point:

(Luke 21:36) *Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*

Consider the following Scriptures:

(Eph 5:26) *That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,*

(Rom 5:9) *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

(Eph 2:13) *But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

(Col 1:20) *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*

For us to go endure the Great Tribulation to be “accounted worthy” of Heaven or the Kingdom then what part did the shedding of Christ’s blood play? And, would that not create a theological problem? What about all the Christians who have already died? They will never experience the Tribulation and its purifying process. By what process would they be purified? How would they become worthy?

Finally, the tribulations that the Apostles faced and we sometimes face come from different sources. The tribulations we face in this present world come from Satan and evil men. The source of the Great Tribulation will be coming from God. That Tribulation period will be punishment for an unbelieving world.

c) It’s not for the perfecting of the Saints.

That’s already been taken care of by Christ’s work on the Cross. That’s not to say we’re already perfect or have attained sinless perfection. We haven’t.

After Christ’s victorious ascension to the throne, He gave gifts to men (and women) of the Church.

(Eph 4:11-13) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

(Eph 5:25-27) Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

(John 15:3) Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

(1 John 1:7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

By virtue of His work on the Cross and His glorious ascension to the throne, Jesus has made every accommodation for our maturing or perfecting in this life. It is accomplished through our being disciplined by holy men and women of God teaching us the Word of God and our positive response to that teaching by repentance and applying the Word of God to our lives everyday. It is accomplished by our mortifying the deeds in our body by the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:13). It is done by allowing ourselves to be perpetually cleansed by His blood and His Word. We are not perfected by the shedding of our own blood during the Great Tribulation. Our blood is not an atoning agent—Christ's is!

Let's look at what the Tribulation is for:

a) To purge Israel and prepare her for the Messiah.

(Zec. 13:8-9) And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

God will use the Tribulation to bring the Jewish people to their knees. During the Tribulation, God will put the nation of Israel in a vice grip from which there is no earthly hope of deliverance.

Many of the Jewish people will cry out to God for salvation from their sins. God will mercifully answer this prayer of confession and will save a remnant in Israel.

b) To punish the gentile nations.

God will use the Tribulation period to punish the Gentile nations and all unbelievers for rejecting His Son.

(Isa 13:11-13) And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man

more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.

(Obadiah 1:15) *For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.*

Light has been revealed to the Gentiles

1) The light of nature

- This the Gentiles have.

(Rom 1:20) *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

- The Light of Nature is to the Gentiles what the written Law of Moses is to the Jews.
- Gentiles had the equivalent of (not of the ceremonial law) but to the moral law.
- They had the works of the Law. Not what the law commands (perfect obedience) but what the Law does, to direct us what to do (school master).
- They did by nature the things contained in the Law.
- They had a sense of justice, equity, honor, love, obedience to parents, pity to the miserable, forbade murder.

2) The light of conscience

- They had that which examined them as to what they had done—the conscience. It approved. It condemned.

3) The light of the Gospel

(Rom 1:20) *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

The times of the Gentiles

(Luke 21:24) *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.*

- The “times of the Gentiles” has been defined by the Lord as that period of time in which Jerusalem was under the dominion of Gentile authority. It has continued unto the present time and will continue through the Tribulation period. The dominion of the Gentiles ends at Christ’s Glorious Appearing.
- The Scriptures tells us (Daniel chapter 2) that from the time of Daniel until the time of the Gentiles being “fulfilled” there will be four great empires which will rise and fall. Those were the a) Babylonian Empire (gold), b) Medo-Persian Empire (silver), c) Greek Empire (brass), and d) the Roman Empire (iron).
- The last seven years appointed for Israel will also be the last seven years of the times of the Gentiles.

c) To portray Satan’s true character

God will use the Tribulation to fully unmask Satan for what he is—a liar, a thief, and a murderer. When God removes all restraint, the character of Satan will be fully manifest. One of his instruments to carry out his will is the Antichrist.

The Antichrist

Other than Jesus Christ, the main person in Bible prophecy and all of human history is the coming world ruler, Antichrist. Who is this satanic superman who is yet to burst onto the world scene? What will he be like?

Let’s see what the Scripture has to say about him:

(2 Th 2:3-4) *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

(Dan 9:26-27) *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.*

(Rev 13:15-16) *And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. 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:*

The Antichrist will be:

- An Intellectual Genius (Dan 8:23)
- An Oratorical Genius (Dan 11:36)
- A Political Genius (Dan. 9:27)
- A Commercial Genius (Dan. 11:43, Rev. 13:16)
- A Military Genius (Rev. 6:2, 13:2)
- A Religious Genius (2 Thes. 2:4, Rev. 13:8)

The coming world ruler will possess:

- The Leadership of a Washington and Lincoln
- The Eloquence of a Franklin Roosevelt
- The Charm of a Teddy Roosevelt
- The Charisma of a Kennedy
- The Popularity of an "Ike"
- The Political Savvy of a Clinton
- The Intellect of a Jefferson
- The Hair of Wayne Newton!

According to Revelation chapter 13, Antichrist, who will be energized by the Devil, will be considered so wonderful that many of the people of the earth will voluntarily offer to worship him. They will see him as a benevolent dictator. Not content with this, at the height of his power, he will make it mandatory for everyone to give him homage.

No one who receives the mark will ever be able or willing to repent and become a true Christian.

The final form of world government in this Tribulation period will have these aspects:

- Military (leads the armies of the world)
- Religious (the harlot church or one-world religion)
- Political (will lead the emerging one-world government)
- Economic/Technological (will control worldwide commerce)

Antichrist is in total opposition to Jesus Christ:

Christ

The Truth
 The Holy One
 The Man of Sorrows
 The Son of God
 The Mystery of Godliness
 Cleanses the Temple
 The Lamb

Antichrist

The Lie
 The Lawless One
 The Man of Sin
 The Son of Destruction
 The Mystery of Inequity
 Desecrates the Temple
 The Beast

The Mark of the Beast

There's probably been as much speculation about this subject as most other subjects in the Bible. The Antichrist (Beast) is given a strange designation:

(Rev 13:18) *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.*

The Antichrist will require everyone to receive a mark on the right hand or forehead. It probably will be non-removable. The mark is the name of the beast or the number of his name. All else is speculation.

d) To harvest a group of believers

The Lord will graciously use this terrible time of trouble to drive men to Himself in repentance and trust. He will harvest more souls during that time than anyone can count.

(Rev 7:9) *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 7:13-14) *And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

The Tribulation Saints

The Tribulation Saints, those saved during that awful time, will be basically the same as the believers of today. They will be Christians—people who have put their faith in Jesus Christ, who have repented of their sins, received Christ to come into their lives, and have been born again, just like us. However, unlike most of us, many, if not most of them, will die for their faith.

Believers in the Tribulation will need the Holy Spirit just like us. But since they will not be accepted into the Antichrist's evil world system, they will not be allowed into public places of influence, as teachers, business leaders, and government positions. The Holy Spirit may not have the same "restraining influence" that He had during the present Church Age.

Consider the following:

- After the Rapture of the Church some churches may be empty, others may not be affected.
- Many of those who are left behind will actually be relieved to be rid of the fanatical ones.
- Some churches will close down others just reorganize and go on.
- Many new believers will go “underground,” sharing resources, gas, food, etc.
- There may be hundreds of thousands of immediate conversions the morning after the Rapture.

The First Half of the Great Tribulation

One day as Jesus was leaving the Temple grounds, His disciples came along beside Him and wanted to take Him on a tour of the various Temple buildings. Jesus told them (Mat. 24:2) all the buildings would be knocked down, with not one stone left on top of another! To this statement the disciples asked a three-part question:

(Mat 24:3) *And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

Their question was basically this: “*Tell us when shall these things be?*”

- The destruction of the Temple
- The sign of Christ’s coming
- The sign of the end of the world

Matthew chapter 24 and Luke chapter 21 are essentially the answer to their three-part question.

(Mat 24:4-8) *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.

Jesus said the above was the beginning of “sorrows.” The Living Bible says it’s the beginning of “horrors.” The New American Standard says it’s the beginning of “birth pangs.” The Strong’s Concordance defines the word used for sorrows as: “Intolerable anguish, in reference to the dire calamities before the advent of the Messiah.”

Jesus then said that as bad as it seems, the end is not yet—there’s much more sorrow and horror to come! These are only the “low hurdles.” Hang on. It gets much worse before it gets better! But the question is this: “Are these events as described by Jesus, past, present, or future?”

- **Past**—were the words of Jesus’ prophecy fulfilled in the lifetime of the disciples?
- **Present**—are we currently, today, in the period known as the “beginning of sorrows”?
- **Future**—are the events allotted for some future time and generation?

There seems to be, at least to me, evidence to support the view that the first half of the “week” is described in Mat. 24:4-8. If this is the correct interpretation, there must be perfect harmony between that part of the Olivet discourse contained in Matthew chapter 24, and the part of Revelation beginning with chapter 6. Let’s compare the two passages:

(Rev 6:1-2) And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. 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.

The First Seal loosened a rider on a white horse carrying a bow with no arrows and wearing a crown. This is probably Antichrist

riding a white horse as Jesus Christ will someday. Remember, Antichrist is the false Christ—the great imposter. He will be a deceiver with wonders and will eventually wage war against the Tribulation saints. The thought about the quiver with no arrows is that his will be a bloodless conquest through mass deception without shedding blood. Remember, he will be a Benevolent Dictator.

(Rev 6:3) *And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.*

The Second Seal loosened a rider on a red horse, carrying a large sword to banish peace from the earth. He will bring anarchy to the earth, with war and killing. This goes along with what Jesus described as wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation and kingdom and against kingdom.

Consider the following about wars:

- World War I was called “The War to end all wars.” It did not end war; it only taught us more about how to fight in a more deadly way, using the air to deliver death from the sky.
- War has been more common down through history than we might at first suppose. One popular quote describes it this way: “The Norwegian Academy of Sciences has determined that since 3600 BC there have been 14,531 wars and only 292 years of peace. This is approximately 2.6 wars per year, and one year of ‘peace’ out of every two decades or a little over 36 hours of peace per month, or about a minute of peace every four hours.”

“When the seals are opened, God will release, step by step, the last restraints holding back the evil that already exists in men’s hearts. Even now in our violent age bad men, as well as good, enjoy ‘common grace’ from God—and a great deal of protection every day of our lives, all from God’s benevolent hand. We ought to be thankful every day for this restraining hand of God which allows us to live in comfort most of the time. But the end time is a season in

which evil is allowed to run its full course, unchecked and unimpeded—except for God’s final intervention” (Lambert Dolphin).

(Rev 6:5-6) *And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.*

The Third Seal—is a black horse with balances in the hand of the rider. During this time a loaf of bread will sell for the equivalent of \$20. Jesus said in Mat. 24:7 “...there shall be famines...”

What causes famine? Some famine results from war directly when crops are destroyed by warfare, and indirectly when the process of farming and distribution of food is disrupted by blockades and the diversion of manpower and resources for the war effort.

(Judges 9:45) *And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and slew the people that was therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt.*

Other causes of famine:

- Too much rainfall destroys farmland and causes crops to rot in the water-covered fields in which they lie.
- Plant diseases and insect infestations are also a common cause.
- Natural disasters such as cyclones, earthquakes, early frosts, and tidal waves also contribute to causing famine.
- Drought is the primary cause of famine. Areas near deserts often fall victim to severely dry climates which do not provide the rainfall needed to sustain life.

Effects of famine:

- Destruction of livestock and seed lowers the production level which only prolongs the disaster.

- Crime level is increased due to the sudden demand for unavailable food; theft steadily rises during a time of crisis.
- Migration to areas where food may be available occurs during times of crisis which at times leads to the separation of families.
- Death and disease are the major effects of famine. The lack of food and water causes people to become weak leaving the door open for diseases to quickly spread throughout the population.

(Rev 6:7-8) *And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.*

The Fourth Seal is a pale horse, followed by Hell. Power is given to them to kill with the sword, hunger, death, and the beasts of the earth. It's been said, "Death rides the horse, but Hades follows with the hearse."

This Scripture also is in harmony with what Jesus said in Mat. 24:7, "...and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places."

We can easily understand how people will die with the sword (war) and hunger (famine), but how will they die from the "beasts of the earth."?

Let's look at human deaths caused by contact with animals. Yes, occasionally a hunter gets eaten by a bear or mountain lion, or maybe dies from a snake bite, but that's really a rare event. (However, during the Tribulation when things get really out of sorts, it could be that animals will become more aggressive towards humans.) How about all the diseases which come from the animal kingdom? How about Rabies, Monkey Pox, West Nile virus, Yellow Fever, Malaria, Buffalo Pox, Ebola Virus, flesh-eating Strep diseases, the SARS virus? Those all come from animals or insects. Do you know how humans first contracted A.I.D.S.? It's thought someone was bitten by a monkey!

All of the above mentioned diseases may one day be overshadowed by what's on the horizon and fast approaching—H5N1—otherwise known as the Avian Bird Flu. Reports almost daily are in the news about someone in another country has contracted H5N1 and died! There doesn't seem to be any cure for it now.

An example of how deadly H5N1 is, in China in the south-central province of Human, a 20-year-old female farmer developed symptoms on January 27, 2006. She was dead on February 4th. (Source: World Health Organization.)

These four horsemen are called the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. No, I don't believe they have left the barn as yet. I believe the "seal" is still firmly in place restraining them. However, I do believe there is a connection between the "restrainer" on earth being removed and the opening of the seals in heaven which now are being restrained from opening.

The Second Half of the Great Tribulation

(Mat 24:15-22) *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: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

Jesus said when you see the abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke of (Dan. 9:27), then it's time to get out of Dodge! (Evacuate Jerusalem.) This is the event that Paul wrote about to the Thessalonians in his second book talking about the Man of Sin.

(2 Th 2:4) *Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is*

called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

According to Daniel 9:27, the Man of Sin will cause the sacrifice to cease in the “middle of the week.” The middle of the seven-year period will be the beginning of the last half or the last three and one-half years. And when that happens “all bets are off,” it’s every man for himself! Jesus warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem to flee. The persecution of the Jews then will be unbearable.

Jesus also told those alive on earth at that time to pray they don’t have infants. Pray it doesn’t happen in the winter (distress of cold?) or on a Sabbath (travel limitations?). Many believe the godly remnant will find refuge in the ancient rock-hewn cliff city of Petra. The remnant will survive there, protected by God, for three and a half years. You can read the account in Revelations chapter 12.

There’s no way of predicting what the Tribulation will be like in America or in small communities for those left behind. We know it will probably be worse in Jerusalem and it will affect the whole world:

(Luke 21:35) For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

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

During the second half of the Tribulation there will be no safe place to hide anywhere on earth—except, maybe, in the refuge God has provided for the Jewish remnant. May God have mercy on those who miss the Rapture!

The Jewish People in a Nutshell

During the Tribulation, the Jewish people will probably be divided into at least four groups:

- Apostate Jews—These are the Jews of Daniel 9:27, many who will enter into a covenant with the Antichrist. This group will make up about two-thirds of the nation of Israel and will die in the

worldwide persecutions by Antichrist when he betrays his peace covenant with them (Zech. 13:8).

- 144,000 Jews—will come to faith in Christ after the Rapture of the Church and become a group of last day Evangelists who will spread the gospel during the Tribulation (Rev. 7:1-8).
- Hebrew Christians—those Jews who turn to Christ during the Tribulation. Many to be martyred for their faith.
- The Faithful Remnant. Jews who comprise the majority of the one-third who will survive the Tribulation (Zech. 13:8). Throughout the Tribulation period, they will not believe in Christ as their Messiah, but neither will they accept the Antichrist. They are divinely protected from the Antichrist (Rev. 12:6, 13-17).

Just before Jesus returns to earth, this remnant will turn to Christ.

(Zec 12:10) And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Then, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

(Mat 24:29-31) Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Who are God's "elect"?

In Lesson One in "Essential Terminology for Eschatology," I said understanding this word is absolutely critical to proper Escha-

tology. Who is this group of people the angels will gather immediately after the tribulation? To answer this we have to define “elect.”

The word “elect” means “chosen.” An individual or group of individuals who have been chosen by God would be God’s elect. The word itself doesn’t specify which elect is referred to in any particular Scripture. That must be determined by each passage where the word is found. In Scripture the word “elect” is used to describe the following four entities:

- **The Messiah.** (Isa 42:1) *Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*
- **Angels.** (1 Tim 5:21) *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.*
- **The Church.** (1 Pet 1:1,2) *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*
- **Israel.** (Isa 65:9) *And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.*

(Zec 2:8) *For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.*

(Rom 11:28) *As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.*

“Which ‘elect’ do you think Jesus was referring to?”

Let’s see if we can find another clue in the above passage of Scripture. Jesus said the tribes would mourn. I recall their being twelve tribes in Israel. The Apostle Paul said he was from the tribe of Benjamin (Philemon 3:5). Additionally Zechariah said the Jews

would mourn for the Messiah upon his return. (Zec 12:10) *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*

In this passage I believe it's describing the believing Jewish Remnant (Rom. 9:27; 11:5; Rev. 11:13; Rev. 12:17). Mid-Triber's and Post-Tribers believe Matthew 24:29-31 is talking about the Church. However given the Jewish context of the Scriptures, I believe it's talking about the Jews. The Raptured Church is already with Him (Jude 14).

Remember this Scripture:

(Rom 11:28) *As concerning the gospel, they (the Jews) are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.*

Also remember:

The last days are about Israel, not about the Church.

After Christ returns, the faithful Remnant will enter the millennial kingdom, where God will give them the Land promised to Abraham in Genesis 15:18, and Christ will rule over them (and the world) from His throne in Jerusalem.

Questions About the Great Tribulation

Will the Antichrist be a born of a virgin?

While the supernatural origin of the Antichrist is certainly possible, it seems better to view the Antichrist not as Satan's literal son but as a man who is totally controlled by Satan. The Antichrist is consistently presented in the Bible as a man.

Is the Antichrist a Jew or a Gentile?

Daniel 11:37: “...neither shall he regard the god of his fathers...” Those who maintain that the Antichrist is a Jew believe that his rejection of “the God of his fathers” proves his Jewishness. However, this statement could equally apply to a Gentile whose parents were followers of Christianity, Buddhism, or Islam or anything else. This verse simply says that Antichrist will totally reject whatever religion his ancestors practiced.

The argument of his Jewishness—the only way he could represent the Jews or enter the Temple.

The argument of his non-Jewishness—1) Antichrist rises from the old Roman Empire, non-Jewish countries. (He could be Italian, Hungarian, German, Belgium, etc. or 2) his violence against the Jews or 3) presented as the final ruler of the Gentile world power.

Could the Antichrist come from America?

The Antichrist will probably arise out of the reunited Roman Empire. He will probably arise from some European nation, maybe Rome itself.

Is the Antichrist a Homosexual?

Daniel 11:37 says the coming Antichrist will, “...show no regard...for the desire of women...” Since the Antichrist is a man who is totally controlled by Satan, he will probably live his life in complete disobedience to God in every area of life. The Antichrist may be sexually polluted, perverted, and profane. Or, the phrase might simply mean that the Antichrist will not have a natural desire for women—not that he will have sexual desires for men. The context of this passage seems to indicate that the Antichrist will be so intoxicated with his love for power that it will totally consume all of his passion.

Will believers in Christ know who the Antichrist is before we are raptured to Heaven?

The Antichrist will be revealed at the beginning of the Day of the Lord (Tribulation period) and the Church will be raptured before this time (2 Thes. 2:7-8, Dan. 12:1, Rev. 10:3). It doesn't appear that Christians will know the identity of the Antichrist before we are taken to Heaven. As we see the last days develop, we may be able to recognize certain individuals who could fit the picture of the Antichrist given in the Bible.

Can people who take the Mark of the Beast ever be saved?

For those left behind, each will face a monumental decision: "Will I take the mark of the Beast?" What to do when the baby daughter is crying for milk or, when you've run out of food or medicine for your baby's fever. What will you do?

(Rev 14:9-11) *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

Will people who reject the gospel, miss the Rapture, and are left behind, have another opportunity to be saved during the Tribulation?

Most prophecy writers believe people will be saved during the Tribulation period. Some believe those who rejected Christ in this life will actually be "prevented" afterwards because God will send a strong deception, rendering them unable to believe on Jesus Christ (2 Thes. 2:8-12). Also, read Genesis 6:3, Romans 1:18, 21-23, 28.

Is there any way we could be in the Tribulation NOW?

No. Here's why: Technically speaking it will take the occurrence of any one of the following three events to begin the Tribulation:

1. Dan. 9:26-27: The Man of Sin making a seven-year covenant.
2. Rev. 6:1: The opening of the first Seal.
3. 1 Thes. 4:17: The Rapture of the Church.

It's the same argument the Apostle Paul addressed in 2 Thessalonians. He said the Day of the Lord could not happen until the Man of Sin be revealed first. And, that would NOT happen until the "restrainer" be removed (2 Thes. 2:7-8).

Will anyone survive the Tribulation?

The Lord Himself ends the Tribulation for the sake of those who have been saved during this time and are undergoing terrible suffering (Mark 13:20). Many will survive the horrors of the Tribulation. These will be gathered together for judgment at Christ's Glorious Appearing, and the righteous will enter the millennial kingdom.

In a nutshell, what should I do if I'm left behind?

- Don't bother calling 9-1-1.
- Prepare for lengthy and frequent fasts.
- Don't go on a Holy Land tour to Jerusalem.
- Immediately hoard rations, guns, and ammo.
- Go to the mountains of Arkansas and get lost.
- Trust no one.
- Prepare to live off the land for seven years.
- Get a good seven-year calendar.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to return to you and repent.
- If there's any one thing you do or don't do: PLEASE DO NOT TAKE THE MARK. Let them kill you first instead of taking the mark of the Beast. Accept this fate while asking Jesus to come into your heart.

Lesson Seven When Christians Meet the Lord

In this Lesson we want to talk about the events that happen to the Church following the Rapture. Something to remember is there are parallel events occurring in heaven and earth at the same time. In other words, at the same time the inhabitants of the earth are going through the Great Tribulation, we the Church, will be in the heavenlies with Christ enjoying fellowship with Him. Most Christians look forward to the incredible day when we will see our Lord.

“What a day that will be / When my Jesus I shall see / When I look upon His face / The One Who saved me by His grace / And He takes me by His hand / And leads me to the Promised Land / What a day, Glorious day, that will be.”

Or,

“Some glad morning when this life is ‘or, I’ll fly away / To a home on God’s celestial shore, I’ll fly away.”

There are two great events portrayed in Scripture into which the Church will be brought following the Rapture. The Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage of the Lamb. Let’s talk about them.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

Did you know, immediately after the Rapture we will be judged by Christ? You may not have thought about that. Here’s the Scripture:

(1 Cor 4:5) Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

Consider the following:

- This judgment is not for the purpose of determining whether or

not we are saved. (If you're not saved you won't be there!)

- It's not for the purpose of judgment of sins committed prior to our salvation.
- This judgment is to determine the rewards that we will receive for our faithful service after our salvation.
- It's where "good works" pay off. Otherwise rewards are eternally lost.

What's this judgment called?

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

(2 Cor 5:10) *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

Who will stand before the Judge?

(Rom 14:12) *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

The Lord expects His children to work for Him after they have been given salvation. In fact, we will be rewarded in the next life in direct proportion to the way we have served Him in this one.

Consider these Scriptures:

(1 Cor. 3:9-15) *9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. 10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what*

sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

The following is from Tim LaHaye:

“Talent + Gospel + Time = Reward”

“My formula for rewards is this: Talent (times) our productive sharing of the gospel (times) the amount of time we had after our salvation to labor will (equal) our reward. The record of our works is kept by God, Who knows what ability we have to serve Him and will hold us accountable for how we use our talents and time for service.”—Tim LaHaye

The following is from Loren Triplett:

Three billion souls without an adequate witness of the Gospel
 + God not willing that any should perish
 + More Great Commission Christians than ever before
 + Better communications and technology
 + Shorter time period
 = Global Revival

Purposes of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

One purpose of the Judgment Seat of Christ is to reward faithful servants with job assignments for the millennial kingdom. You will serve Christ during that period in direct proportion to the way you have faithfully served Him during this time on earth.

- If you've been a spectator in life, you will be one in the next.
- If you've been responsible in life, you'll have responsibility in the next.

(Mat 25:21) *His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

(Luke 19:17) *And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.*

Another purpose is for the faithful to receive their crowns. These crowns are representative of the kinds of conduct and service that the Lord will reward:

The Incorruptible Crown

The reward for those who consistently practice self-discipline and self-control.

(1 Cor 9:25) *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

The Crown of Righteousness

The reward for those who eagerly look for the Lord's coming and live righteous lives in view of this fact.

(2 Tim 4:8) *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

The Crown of Life

The reward for those who faithfully endure and persevere under the trials and tests of life.

(Rev 2:10) *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

The Crown of Glory

The reward for those pastors, elders, and church leaders who lovingly and graciously shepherd and oversee God's people.

(1 Pet 5:2-4) *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

“What do you think we will do with these crowns?”

Do you think we'll strut around the streets of gold and compare sizes of crowns? Will we try to find who's got the biggest crown? No, I believe we'll lay our crowns at His feet and sing His praises for His worth and honor.

(Rev 4:10) *The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*

He will NOT say, “Well done thou good and *successful* servant.” We must be a good and *faithful* servant.

Get Ready. Get Ready. Get Ready.

The Bible tells us that the great test day for our life as God's child is coming. But like a kind, gracious teacher, God has given us the test questions beforehand. Let's study these questions so we can be prepared and make an “A” on the final exam. Here's a list of areas of testing found in the Scriptures:

- How we treat other believers
- How we employ our God-given talents and abilities
- How we use our money
- How well we accept mistreatment and injustice
- How we endure suffering and trials
- How we spend our time
- How we run the particular race God has given us
- How effectively we control our fleshly appetites
- How many people we witness to and win for Christ
- How much the doctrine of the Rapture means to us
- How faithful we are to God's Word and to God's people
- How hospitable we are to strangers
- How faithful we are in our vocation
- How we use our tongue

(Rev 22:12) *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

The Marriage of the Lamb

God's Word is clear that a day is coming when the Church, the bride of Christ, will be joined to her Bridegroom in heaven. The Bible calls this the "Marriage of the Lamb." It is the next great event in heaven that takes place after the reviewing and rewarding of the saints at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

(Rev 19:7-9) Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

The Time of the Wedding

The Wedding as revealed in Scripture falls between the translation of the Church and the Second Advent (glorious appearing). Prior to the Rapture, the Church is still anticipating this union.

The Place of the Wedding

It can only be in Heaven (heavenlies). It follows the Judgment Seat of Christ, which has been shown to occur in Heaven.

The Participants

I believe this event will involve only Christ and His Church (His Bride). The Tribulation Saints will not have been resurrected at this point (Rev. 20:4-6). It's questionable whether Old Testament Saints will have been resurrected. They may be "friends of the Bride." There's room for discussion here.

Lesson Eight Christ's Glorious Appearing

The most thrilling event in all of human history is yet to come. It will be that moment when our Lord Jesus Christ returns to this earth in power and great glory to set up His Kingdom that will last one thousand years. This is not the Rapture we're talking about here, rather we're referring to Christ's Glorious Appearing, that time at the end of the Great Tribulation when Jesus returns to earth and stands upon the Mt. Olives in Jerusalem. It's important to clarify that point.

Get Ready World, Jesus is Coming

From a prophetic standpoint, it will be the culmination of all prophecy. There is nothing more clearly stated in the Bible than the fact that Jesus is coming back to this earth again. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ to this earth is predicted, according to one writer, 325 times in prophecy. As a matter of fact, the first prophecy spoken by a human concerned the Second Coming:

(Jude 1:14) And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

To get all the facts of His coming, we'll have to read several prophecies and then put them all together to help us understand the following topics.

The Place of His Coming

I believe the Bible is clear that Jesus will return to earth at the same place from which He left—the Mount of Olives. Here's the Scripture:

(Zec 14:4) And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

The Purpose of His Coming

The Bible tells us of at least six reasons for Christ to return to earth:

1) To conquer and defeat the Antichrist and his armies

Rev. 19:19, 20 *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.*

2) To regather and restore His elect

The most frequently mentioned promise in the Old Testament is God's promise that He will one day regather and restore the nation of Israel.

(Isa 43:5, 6) *Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;*

(Jer 33:7, 8) *And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.*

The regathering began in around 1948 with the creation of the modern state of Israel and will continue until the Second Coming of Christ. During the Great Tribulation, Israel will be scattered for the final time due to the anger of Satan (Rev. 12:12), then Christ will gather the believing Jews (His Elect) together and restore them as His people. Read this prophecy in Isaiah and in the words of Jesus:

(Isaiah 11:11-16) *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. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

(Matthew 24:30,31) *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.*

Who are God's "elect?" They are God's people of course. Specifically they are the believing Jews that will be dealt with at that time and they are the Jews that God is dealing with at this time.

(Rom 11:28) *As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.*

The restoration of Israel is the subject of Romans chapter 11. In that chapter, the Apostle Paul makes his case for the Jewish nation and the Jews as a race. He is showing his Roman audience that the Jewish nation still figures into the Plan of God for the end-times and they have not been forsaken or forgotten.

We now live in what we call the "Church Age." We discussed

that at length in Lesson Six. It is the New Testament Church of the Lord Jesus Christ that has been given responsibility for showing the world Jesus. We have the responsibility for sharing with the world the Word of God. Going to the ends of the earth with God's Plan for Salvation. Did you know that giving the Church this responsibility was not God's first choice?

It is said of Israel, they are the "chosen people"—the elect of God—and they are. Have you ever been chosen? Did any of you receive a letter in the mail during World War II or the Korean War or Viet Nam, beginning with the words, "Congratulations! You have been chosen!" Didn't that make you feel really special?

Think of Israel as being "chosen" because she was given a big job to do.

- They would be the "depository" or "custodian" of the Word of God.
- They were to be the vehicle of God's Theocracy.
- They were given the glory of the Covenants.
- They would receive and introduce the Messiah to the world.
- They would be the primary agent responsible for world evangelism.
- They would be the bearer to Glad Tidings to the Gentiles.
- They would be Light and Salt unto the world.

God's plan in the beginning had been that the Gentiles would see the blessings of God upon Israel, and be provoked to jealousy, desiring what they had. They would inquire after Israel's God. That's exactly what happened in the days of Solomon.

(2 Chr 9:23) *And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart.*

During the time when Christ was on the earth, the Jews were under Roman rule. They greatly chaffed at that. Consequently, Israel was looking for a Messiah who would restore her place and position in the order of Nations as God had originally intended. Such was impossible because of her spiritual condition. The Jews chose not to

accept Jesus as her Messiah. Some believe that was her national sin, not Jesus' murder.

Inasmuch as Israel would not obey the Lord in the matter, but rejected His Plan (and His Son), despite the fact that they were His chosen people, according to Romans chapter 11, He purposely set them aside, in order that the Gospel might go to the entirety of the world.

Reading the book of Acts will show you over and over how the Gentiles accepted Christ's forgiveness of sins and embraced the Messiah.

(Acts 13:46) Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

The inclusion of the Gentiles in the Plan of God is spoken of as a "mystery" in the New Testament. In other words, it was not revealed in the Old Testament.

(Eph 3:4-6) Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

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

Paul tells us the "mechanics" of how we were included:

(Rom 11:12) Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

(Rom 11:15) For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

(Rom 11:17) *And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;*

Israel has:

- Fallen,
- Been cast away,
- Her branches have been broken off,
- She will someday be restored to her rightful place. But not just yet, there's still a job to do.

Because of Christ's work on the Cross:

- We, the Gentiles, the Church, have received these riches.
- We, the Gentiles, the Church, have been reconciled to God.
- We, the Gentiles, the Church, as wild branches, have been grafted in the Root.
- We, the Gentiles, the Church, have only been included; we have not replaced Israel in the Plan of the Ages.

Here's something that really bothered the Jews of Paul's day: Our inclusion into the Family of God is only by God's Grace—His unmerited favor. What He did on the Cross some two thousand years ago makes it all possible.

Israel demanded that her thousands of years of history had earned them something. Especially considering that they were:

- God's Chosen People
- The People of the Law
- The People of the Book
- The People of the Prophets
- The People of the Land

Surely, they thought, this earned them something. In fact, it earned them much, but not Salvation.

(Rom 3:1,2) *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*

Remember the Parable of the folk who only worked for one-half day? That's about us and them!

(Mat 20:10-12) *But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.*

It's similar to a baseball game where the original pitcher has worked eight and one-half innings. At the bottom of the ninth inning the Manager brings in a relief pitcher and wins the game. He seemingly gets all the credit and glory. But what about the original pitcher who worked the whole game until the last inning? What about him? Who are we (the Church), coming in the game for the last two thousand years? We're the new kid on the block.

(Rom 11:1) *I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*

The answer to the Paul's question is, "No." God has not permanently cast them away. Paul's own Salvation by God's grace is proof Israel is not cast away forever. Even though Israel as a Nation is today out of the Will of God (still denying her Messiah) the Lord Jesus Christ, has an ultimate Plan for these people still intact.

(Rom 11:28, 29) *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.*

Question: What will it take for Israel to turn to Christ?

Answer: Seven years of hard time!

During the Tribulation period a remnant will return to God and they will cry out for their Messiah but not without pressure. This is the main reason for the Great Tribulation. To put the needed pressure on the Jewish people to humble them and bring them back to God.

According to the prophet Daniel, some days after the Rapture of the Church, Israel will sign a seven-year treaty with the Antichrist to bring about peace to the Israeli/Palestinian/Moslem problems. Antichrist, for a period of time, will change his headquarters to Jerusalem, actually taking over the Temple (which must be rebuilt). He will break the Covenant after three and a half years, (in the midst of Daniel's week) and persecute the Jews. He will kill two-thirds of them.

Many Jews will flee into the wilderness (Rev. 12:6). Facing total extinction, Israel will then begin to call on God for her Messiah as she has not heretofore done. Then Christ, at His Glorious Appearing at the end of the Tribulation period, will:

(Zec 14:3,4) Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. 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.

(Zec 12:10) And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Israel will repent, accepting Jesus as her Messiah and Saviour and will be restored to her rightful place as the leading nation of the world. Jerusalem, Israel, will become the Capital of the World! With Israel in her rightful place, the nations of the world will be blessed. The Times of the Gentiles will be over. The Church age will be ended.

Let's talk about America. Vice, crime, and sin exist in our country today because of America's rejection of Bible Christianity. (We too have a national sin, it's called abortion.) There's probably only a small remnant in America that are truly born again as the

Bible teaches born again. But this small remnant carries a weight of responsibility out of proportion to its size. In other words, great blessings have come to this nation and the world because of Salt and Light.

I believe America was destined by God to be a “light” to the world. With our freedoms of worship, public assembly, speech, the free enterprise system, our Constitution, she is the envy of the world. As someone has said, “You don’t see those refugees running the other way!” I have read and I believe that most of the missionary effort and printed gospel comes from this country.

When this salt and light are taken out of this world the entirety of the world will be plunged into great spiritual darkness and into great tribulation as it has never before seen. God chose the Light of this world—Jesus Christ—to come to the world through the Jews. God chose the Word of God to come to the world through the Jews. We have a debt to Israel and the Jews for whatever it was that made God choose them.

The Church must ever know we were God’s second choice—not His first. The Church ought to have a deep and abiding love for Israel.

The Church and all Americans should know and understand that if the leaders of Islam had their way there would not be a single American left alive anywhere in the world. The only thing that stops them is not lack of will, but rather the might and power of the United States of America. The Koran promises Paradise to all who kill infidels. One of America’s primary jobs in this world today is to protect and be a guardian to the tiny nation of Israel. It is one of the things that insure the blessing of God for this country. It is at least one of the reasons that this nation is the only super power left in the world. During the two thousand years of blindness, I’m not aware of any record of Jews taking up arms against Christians.

There are several organizations that promote peace between the Church and Israel. We should pray for their success while we continually pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

3) To judge the living

When Christ returns, all Gentiles who survived the Great Tribulation period will appear before Him to determine whether they can enter His kingdom. This will be the Judgment of the “sheep and goats.”

(Mat 25:31-34) When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 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:

4) To resurrect the dead

One of the events to happen soon after the Glorious Appearing is the resurrection and rewarding of Old Testament Saints and martyred Tribulation believers. (Some discussion, even in my mind, continues about the timing of the Old Testament Saints' resurrection.)

(Rev 20:4) And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5) To bind the devil

(Rev 20:1-3) 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.

6) To establish Himself as King

Christ will return as King of kings and Lord of lords! He comes to sit on His glorious throne and reign over the earth.

(Rev 19:16) *And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

The Campaign of Armageddon—the Mother of all Wars

Probably the best known word in all of Bible prophecy is “Armageddon.” It is the word many use to refer to the end of the world. While this word has become synonymous in our culture with the end of the world, it is used in the Bible to refer to a very specific event in the last days.

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

- The word Armageddon is made up of two Hebrew words: Har (mountain) and Megiddo (a city in the northern part of ancient Israel).
- The city of Megiddo overlooks a beautiful, large valley known as the valley of Jezreel, the plains of Megiddo, and the valley of Taanach.
- This is the site where the armies of the earth will gather in the last days and face total defeat by the returning King from heaven.

(Rev 19:19-21) *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.*

Prophecy writer Mark Hitchcock says the following: “The campaign or war of Armageddon is the climatic event of the Great Tribulation, when all the armies of the earth gather to come against Israel and to eradicate the Jewish people once and for all. After Jerusalem is captured, Jesus Christ returns to destroy the invading armies and to deliver the faithful Jewish remnant in Petra.”

The Scripture says the “kings of the earth make war against Israel” does that include America?

“What do you think?”

The Millennial Kingdom—Joy to the World!

Both Jews and Christians agree that some day their Messiah is going to come to set up His kingdom and rule on this earth. It will be a time of peace, blessing, and joy that will be interrupted only briefly at the end.

- We Christians believe that Jesus Christ is that Messiah, and that He will return to set up His Kingdom and that we will rule it with Him.
- Jews, on the other hand, believe that a not-yet-known Jew will yet come as Messiah to set up that Kingdom.
- Most Jews are unaware that the requirements of their Messiah make Him identical to Jesus Christ.
- We both, Jews and the Church, believe that when Messiah comes, He will reign over this earth.

(Rev 20:6) Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

The Nature or Conditions of the Millennium

During the millennial reign of Christ, the earth will experience a return to conditions similar to those of the Garden of Eden. It will literally be heaven on earth as our Lord lives among His people.

a) Peace

All wars will cease as the world unifies under the reign of the true King of kings.

b) Joy

When Isaac Watts wrote the song, *Joy to the World* he did not write it to be a Christmas carol. Rather, he penned this song to announce the glorious Second Coming of Christ to rule and reign on this earth. This is a song of the Millennium.

c) Holiness

The Kingdom of God will be a holy Kingdom. Everything in it will be set apart to God for His use. The Land, the City, the Temple, and the subjects will all be holy unto the Lord.

d) Justice and Righteousness

When the Millennial Kingdom begins, earthlings will be part of it. They will still have their human bodies with a fallen nature, capable of sin. However, the administration of Justice will be from the hands of the perfect Messiah.

e) Full Knowledge

The teaching ministry of the Lord and the indwelling Spirit will bring the subjects of the Kingdom into a full knowledge of the Lord's ways.

f) Absence of Sickness or Deformity

Our Ruler will be Ruler and Healer. Christ will heal all diseases and deformities among His people.

g) Universal Worship of God

It appears all the inhabitants of the earth will make pilgrimages to worship in the Temple. Also, it appears animal sacrifices will be reinstated in the Millennial Temple (Isa. 56:6-7; Zech. 14:16-21).

These sacrifices will not be offered to take away sin; rather, they will serve as a powerful memorial to the one sacrifice for sin. They may be observed much like our Communion and Lord's Supper.

Salvation during the Millennium will still be by grace through faith in Jesus Christ because there is "*no other name given . . . whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:10).

Israel as a nation will be brought into the new Covenant which Jesus put into effect at the Last Supper. This covenant, promised to Israel by the prophets, has been graciously shared with the Church during the interim period of Israel's Diaspora and unbelief.

Unfortunately, some, even with this perfect environment and the opportunity to see Christ in person reigning over the earth, will still fail to believe in Him and will rebel at the end. They will follow Satan when he is released for a little while at the end of the Millennium. They will all be destroyed (Rev. 20:7-10).

h) Economic Prosperity

No food stamps, rescue missions, relief agencies in the Kingdom.

i) The Presence of God

The great thing about the Kingdom is the King will be there. God's people will experience fellowship unlike anything we have ever known.

(Mat 26:29) *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*

The Purposes of the Millennium

a) To Reward the Faithful

During the Millennial reign, Christ will award the saints positions of authority based on their degree of faithfulness in this life.

(Luke 19:17) *And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.*

b) To Redeem Creation

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, God pronounced a series of eight curses. From that time until now, the earth has lived under this curse, as evidenced by thorns and thistles (and by the sweat on your face as you pull them up!). See if you agree with this list:

- Sorrow in conception,
- Sorrow in childbearing,
- Husbands will rule over wives,
- The ground is cursed with thorns and thistles,
- Adam and Eve were to eat herbs and vegetables,
- Earn your living by the sweat of your face,
- Beginning of physical death, and
- Dwell in houses with flat roofs (I added this one to the list)

(Rom 8:19-22) For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

I believe:

- In the Kingdom, all animals will revert back to being plant eaters.
- The wolf and lamb will live together in harmony.
- The child will play next to a poisonous snake.
- Even the desert will bloom with flowers.
- We'll be able to swim with the sharks!

c) To Recognize the Promises of God.

God made three great unconditional, unilateral, eternal covenants that will find their fulfillment in the Millennial Kingdom with the regathered and restored nation of Israel. These three promises are

known as the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant.

1) The Abrahamic Covenant

This is God's promises to Abraham towards his Descendants, Land, and Blessing.

- God promised that Abraham's descendants would become a great nation.
- God promised Abraham that his descendants would be given a piece of land to call their own forever. The land promised includes the modern day nation of Israel and parts of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. This will probably be fulfilled in the Millennium.
- God also promised Abraham that through him and his descendants, the entire world would be blessed. Partially fulfilled through the Life of Jesus and His offer of Salvation, it will be finally and thoroughly fulfilled with the wonderful conditions due to Christ's reign on earth.

2) The Davidic Covenant

This is God's promises to David towards his House, his Throne, and his Kingdom.

- House—refers to David's dynasty or the royal family,
- Throne—refers to David's authority or right to rule, and
- Kingdom—refers to David's realm or political kingdom, which is the nation of Israel.

God made an eternal, unconditional promise to David that someone from his house, or dynasty, would sit on his throne and rule over his kingdom forever. This promise will be fulfilled only when Jesus Christ, Who is in the line of David, sits on David's throne in Jerusalem.

(Ezek 37:22-28) *And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more*

with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

3) The New Covenant

(Jer 31:31-34) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

(Isa 11:9) They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

This promise to Israel contains a threefold promise:

- The forgiveness of sins,
- The indwelling Spirit, and
- A new heart.

Believers today already enjoy these benefits. The specific promises in Jeremiah will find their ultimate fulfillment for Israel in the Millennial Kingdom, when the Jews are restored to the Land with Christ as their King.

d) A Time of Faith

The Millennial Kingdom will be a time of faith, when much of the population will become believers.

- Christ will be in charge.
- No immoral TV programs and movies.
- The university chairs of learning will not be dominated by atheists set to turning the minds of young people away from God. Instead, all education will start from the premise, “In the beginning, God!”
- Art will glorify Christ, nothing offensive.

The Final Revolt of Satan—Satan’s Last Stand

The next time Satan comes along and begins to remind you of your past, remind him of his future. Satan’s future is very bleak. He is doomed to eternal destruction. However, he won’t go down without a fight.

(Rev 20:7-10) 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.

At the end of the thousand years, God releases Satan for a brief period of time, allowing Satan one last shot at world dominion. The Bible says the number of people he deceives is as numberless as the sand on the seashore.

One of the shortest battles in history, God sends down fire from heaven and destroys Satan and his friends. They are cast into the Lake of Fire forever, to join the Antichrist and False Prophet.

The Great White Throne Judgment

Anyone remember Perry Mason? How about The People's Court? Judge Judy? Did anyone watch the trial of O. J. Simpson?

The ultimate courtroom drama will occur someday in heaven in the courtroom of God, when all those who have rejected Him will have their day in court. The Bible calls this episode the Great White Throne Judgment. It is clearly indicated the judgment takes place after the Millennial reign of Christ. It is described in Revelation chapter 20:

(Rev 20:11-15) And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And 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.

a) The judge

The Father leaves all judgment to the Son (John 5:22). The Bible is clear that Jesus Christ is the final judge before whom the unbelieving world will stand.

b) The summons

When the Day of Judgment comes, there will be no place to hide. No “dream-team” lawyers to get the case postponed or thrown out of court. Not able to jump bail, everyone summoned must appear. The dead will be summoned from all kinds of places: the sea, the grave, even hell will give up the dead to be judged. They are therefore the unsaved of all past history.

“It seems as if God is as longsuffering as possible with the unsaved dead. They are in torment in the intermediate state, but they are not in the final place of punishment as yet. Thus, the goodness of God puts off the day of final reckoning until after the Millennium. But though it tarry, it will surely come. The unsaved might well wish to remain disembodied; but their wishes will have nothing to do with facts. They too will come forth in their bodies and will suffer the eternal punishment of God in their bodies.” (*Lectures in Systematic Theology*)

“The White Throne Judgment will be nothing like our modern court cases. At the White Throne, there will be a Judge but no jury, a prosecution but no defense, a sentence but no appeal. Not one will be able to defend himself or accuse God of unrighteousness. What an awesome scene it will be!” (Warren Wiersbe).

“What do you think about the two preceding quotes?”

c) The evidence

There will be only two pieces of evidence admitted; the prosecution will submit only two exhibits:

- The Books (Rev. 20:12). The lost will be doomed because of their sinful deeds recorded in these books—God’s infallible records containing a detailed, meticulous account of all the works of every unsaved person.
- The Book of Life (Rev. 20:15). It must be a huge book. It contains

the names of every lost sinner who trusted Christ for their soul's Salvation. This Book will be consulted to see if their name is listed or not.

- Hint: If you're at the Great White Throne, you're probably not in the Book! This judgment is not to determine whether those who stand before this judgment are saved or not. All those that are to be saved have been saved and have entered into their eternal state. This is a judgment on the evil works of the unsaved. The believers will be rewarded according to his works, but the unbeliever will be judged according to them.

d) The verdict

The gavel of God will fall, and the lost will have no appeal. The verdict will stand for all eternity. How will you plead? (Many of us have taken the opportunity in this life now to plead the blood!)

e) The sentence

The harshest sentence ever imagined—life in hell forever, without parole, without God.

The length of the sentence is the same for all the lost. However, the Bible does suggest that even in hell there will be degrees of punishment based on the evidence contained in the Books. The good news is that you need not appear at this Judgment. Jesus suffered God's wrath for you on the Cross. You can accept God's pardon for you today!

Lesson Nine

There's a New Worlds Coming!

Isaiah was the first to foretell God's creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

(Isa 65:17) For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

John saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. This was in connection with his vision of the new heaven and the new earth. Therefore, the New Jerusalem comes down to the new earth, not the present earth, for the first heaven and earth passes away (Rev. 21:1).

Rev. 21:1-8 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. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

The Cremation of the Present Heaven and Earth

(Isa 34:4) *And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.*

(Mat 24:35) *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

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

The Creation of the New Heaven and the New Earth

(Isa 65:17) *For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.*

(Isa 66:22) *For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.*

(2 Pet 3:13) *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

(Rev 21:1) *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.*

The Conditions of the New Heaven and New Earth

This will be a place of perfection characterized both by what is there and what is not there.

What will be there:

- The Holy City, the New Jerusalem
- God Himself, dwelling among His people
- The River of Life

What will not be there:

- The sea
- Death
- Sorrow
- Crying
- Pain
- Night
- Sun or Moon
- The Curse
- Sin

The Capital of the New Heaven and New Earth

(Rev 21:10) *And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,*

Read Rev. 21:9-22:5:

- The City is a cube—fourteen to fifteen hundred miles long, wide, and deep.
- Enough space to hold one hundred trillion people.
- It is the size of a continent—floating through space
- The main feature of this city is that it has the Glory of God.
- Jesus has been working on this place for two thousand years. (He made creation in six days. Hello!)

The Citizens of the New Heaven and New Earth

There are three identifiable groups in the New Jerusalem besides God the Father and Jesus the Son:

- Angels
- Church-age believers
- Everyone else from other ages
- Will you be there?

Questions About Heaven

“Will we know each other in heaven?”

We may not really know each other until we get to heaven. Only in heaven, when all the masks and facades are torn away, will we really know one another and enjoy intimate, unhindered fellowship.

“What will we do in heaven?”

- We will worship without distraction
- We will serve without exhaustion
- We will rule without failure
- We will fellowship without suspicion
- We will learn without weariness
- We will rest without boredom

“What kind of body will we have in heaven?”

All of us look forward to our new bodies. Especially those of us who suffer from one or more of the “five Bs of old age:”

- Baldness
- Bifocals
- Bridges
- Bulges
- Bunions

(2 Cor 5:1-2) 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:

Generally, we know that our new bodies will be like the resurrected, glorified body of Jesus. We shall be like Him.

- Christ ate food
- He was recognized by friends
- He was not limited by space
- Jesus walked through walls

God will give every one of His children a glorious, unique, diverse, perfect, new godly body that will never disappoint. One equipped for Eternity.

“How can I be sure I’ll go to heaven?”

You can receive Jesus Christ, right now, as your personal Lord and Savior. God offers you the free gift of Eternal Life. Don’t wait. Receive the Savior now. When you trust Christ, you will immediately have a place reserved for you in heaven. You can be sure from this time on that you will go to heaven either in the Rapture or when the Lord calls you home.

“Are you ready for heaven?”

Trusting Christ as your personal Savior is as simple as A-B-C:

- A. Admit you are a sinner.
- B. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ
- C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.

(Rom 10:9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Conclusion

May God use this study to give you a better understanding of His prophetic program, and lead you to love, worship, and revere Him more deeply.

God bless, Bruce Menzies,
Springfield, Missouri 2014