POLITICS & PROPHECY
A Lawyer's View of the End Times

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Introduction

OVERVIEW

Before diving into the topic of end times prophecy, or eschatology, you should ask the question, “What on earth is God doing?” So many people get caught up in timelines and prophecy charts that they never see what the big picture looks like - meaning, the totality of God’s prophetic plan. The reality is that prophecy is just God’s way of telling us a story. The story has a beginning, a middle, an ending, and a consistent plot line.

The closest any scripture text comes to giving us the overall purpose of the story is Dan. 9:24: “to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place.” Certainly, if you consider everything that is yet to come - including the new heaven and new earth - these are the things God is going to accomplish for His people.

In other words, the goal of this inquiry is not to produce a new or innovative master timeline of the end times - although, admittedly, I have prepared one for you at the end of this book. What I am trying to do here is determine the purposes God will accomplish in the end times, not necessarily when they will occur. We will of course consider a number of timing and sequence issues, but the reasons why things will happen always take priority over the question of when. That is why, optimally, you should look at my timeline last - after you have read the analysis behind it.

Furthermore, I am not going to attempt to show how any long past or recent events have already fulfilled end times prophecies. I am not going to link any end times prophecies with historical chronologies. I will not attempt to identify who the Antichrist was or will be. I will not claim that end times prophecy is literally being fulfilled as we watch. My own belief is that the end times are not far off, as far as world history goes, but as of this writing, we are not there yet. Predicting when the end times will arrive is not why I have undertaken this task, either. Although, again, I will offer a possibility for your consideration - but no, I am not setting any dates.

I have tried very hard to examine the textual evidence multiple times over the years so as to discern what God intends to do free from any hidden agendas. I will fully disclose my assumptions as I go along. I’m not promoting the views of any particular church, ministry, or theological system. I didn’t come up with my basic thesis (next paragraph) until after I researched the material and started putting my findings in writing. I don’t claim to have all the answers. But I think I have arrived at some conclusions worth considering.

Looking at the textual evidence as objectively as I can, I believe God has four primary objectives in mind whenever He gets around to wrapping up history. This book is therefore organized in keeping with these purposes, and not primarily in chronological order or for the purpose of making predictions. I will explain these four purposes more in the next section. These four purposes are:

1) judging and punishing the disobedient nations of the world (especially those which have waged war against Israel, both in ancient and modern times) [Part 2];
2) restoring the land, safety, wealth and hearts of the Jewish people as a nation [Part 3];
3) letting Satan and his agents bring sin to its full fruition in the world, so that Jesus can come and conquer them [Part 4]; and
4) establishing both a preliminary and a final kingdom of Christ so He can rule the present and future world in righteousness forever [Part 5].

Before examining these purposes, I will lay a general foundation for understanding prophecy in this Introduction and in Part 1. This Part 1 may seem tedious to go through, but mastering the information there will help you in processing everything else that is to come.

Additionally, what very few commentators (if any) have addressed about the end times is what the political landscape will look like immediately before, and then following on the heels of, the Second Coming. To say the world is headed for tremendous political upheaval is an understatement. By God’s design, world politics will first be hijacked, and then transformed, by the Antichrist. Globalization efforts will reach their peak and then collapse. Then all of that will be erased to make way for a new world political order that will succeed where the Third Reich failed - to last a thousand years.

Forget all about “top-down, bottom-up and inside-out” models of political change during the end times. This is not going to be a people’s revolution. It’s all going to be top-down when we get to the end. In fact, it’s going to be a colossal clash of kingdoms with more collateral damage in human lives than you have ever imagined. Neither side will be taking any prisoners.

You may not think it wise for me to mix religion and politics, but to me they are the same thing. Welcome to the world of biblical prophecy through a lawyer’s eyes.

WHAT IS GOD DOING?

For the vast majority of commentators examining biblical end times prophecy, the organizing principle is a timeline of some kind. Some of these can be quite intricate, predicting the exact sequence and timing of events for which scriptures give either vague or no time descriptions. For example, many of these timelines are based on a seven year tribulation period divided in half. However, there simply are no scriptures describing which half of the tribulation the seven seals, seven trumpets or seven bowls will occur in. And the scriptural basis even for the existence of a seven year period is dubious at best.

But the mere reliance on a master timeline as a means of understanding the end times is, I suggest, greatly flawed - no matter what it looks like. Rather, understanding the end times comes from an appreciation of the purposes of God that He intends to accomplish.

There are four such key purposes: 1) the judgment of the nations - mostly directed at those which are historical enemies of Israel, but Israel is also among the nations which are judged; 2) the restoration of Israel - in which Israel becomes preeminent among the nations, is the center of world government, peace and prosperity are overflowing, and all Israel remaining when the restoration comes will be saved; 3) the conquest of evil - including the punishment or confinement of the Satanic trinity and the demon hordes and the utter destruction of the beast kingdom; and 4) the establishment of the earthly kingdom of Christ - otherwise known as the Millennium, when Jesus will rule the world from Jerusalem and the saints will reign as part of His government.
I think of prophecy as a jigsaw puzzle, with many pieces all over the place but ultimately interlocking and being part of a single large picture. The question is how to go about solving the puzzle, *i.e.*, finding the correct place where each piece goes. The best way to solve the puzzle is to start with the corner pieces to define the edges of the picture, and then to work your way to the center of. Every piece you place correctly ultimately reduces the number of possible places other pieces can fit, and eventually the picture becomes clear.

The four purposes of God as outlined above are the four corners of the puzzle - this is where we must start. If we get these wrong, nothing else will fit right. These four purposes are all connected to each other - giving us the edges of the puzzle. Thus, the judgment of the nations is connected to the restoration of Israel by the fact that the Gentile nations must be brought low (defeated, in any case, and for some, utterly eliminated) before Israel can be raised up. It wouldn’t do much good for Israel to be raised up if the possibility existed for other nations to overthrow it afterward. That possibility must be eliminated.

The restoration of Israel is connected to the conquest of evil by the fact that the people of God will know true peace only when the forces of evil are destroyed. It isn’t just the governments of men that threaten God’s people, but also the powers and principalities of the air. Namely, Satan and his human agents (Antichrist and False Prophet) and his angelic forces (the demon horde). And since the principal dominion of Satan relates to the governments of this world, his kingdom must be completely overthrown as well as the kingdoms of men before the people of God can be secure.

The conquest of evil is connected to the establishment of the earthly kingdom of Christ by the fact that Satan’s kingdom must be destroyed before righteousness can reign. Unlike the present, when Christ sits at the right hand of God in heaven, when He returns His rule will be absolute and unlimited. Meaning that all inconsistent claims to sovereignty must be eliminated. As long as Satan is free to roam about the world, he will claim an inconsistent sovereignty. So he must be unquestionably restrained during the entirety of Christ’s rule.

The establishment of the earthly kingdom of Christ is connected to the judgment of the nations by the fact that before Christ can rule the world, all other rulers must be subjugated. One of the key attributes of the kingdom of Christ is that all of His enemies will be made a footstool for his feet and His dominion will be worldwide. There will not be any pockets of resistance allowed to exist in some far corner of the globe. All the nations will bow to Christ and acknowledge His kingship. Thus, it is necessary for the nations to be judged before Christ sits on His throne. This, then, defines the edges of the prophetic picture.

Moving to the interior of the puzzle, the four corners are connected in other ways as well. The judgment of the nations is connected to the conquest of evil by the fact that both the world’s kingdoms and the demonic forces must be defeated together to fully conquer evil. It would hardly do to defeat one and not the other and expect to achieve the desired result of world peace.

Similarly, the restoration of Israel and the earthly kingdom of Christ are connected in many ways. Christ’s kingdom will be headquartered in Jerusalem where Israel will be preeminent among the nations. The Golden Age or Messianic Era of Israel will exactly coincide with the Millennial kingdom of Christ. The Church will begin its reign and all Israel will be saved within probably 24 hours of each other, and both will last for the same amount of time. However, Israel and the Church
will never merge institutionally. They will each exist somewhat separately, but cooperate in complimentary fashion for both political and religious purposes.

At the center of everything is Jerusalem. The nations will be judged just outside its walls (i.e., Armageddon), and when Israel is restored, Jerusalem will be its capital. Satan will be defeated when his agent the Antichrist attempts to destroy Jerusalem, the Third Temple will be built in Jerusalem, and the earthly kingdom of Christ will be headquartered (where else?) in Jerusalem.

With this framework in place, we can begin to place other pieces of the puzzle (as indicated on the chart in red). Thus, when all the pieces are placed, they interlock with each other and form a unified picture of the future. With this understanding we can then go back and look at the timing and sequence issues and try to make some sense of them. But keep your priorities straight - God’s purposes are more important than timelines.

See the attached chart of biblical prophecy illustrating these four purposes in Appendix A.

**INTERPRETIVE CONTEXT**

**Four Main Prophetic Views**

For better or worse, there are four principal views of eschatology held by Christians, with many sub-variations and individual perspectives. I say “for better or worse” because it must grieve God there is so much division among His own people about matters He has disclosed to us. He made those disclosures in order to give people understanding, not confusion. God is not divided in His opinion, and He didn’t want His people to be divided in their opinions either.

There are even some branches of Christianity that claim not to have an eschatology, as if avoiding the matter will get them closer to the truth. But the truth is, there are simply too many prophetic scriptures in the Bible - from beginning to end - for any serious student of God’s Word to ignore. If God devoted so much of His written word to prophecy, we ignore it at our peril.

Nevertheless, any way you slice it, many people - many Bible-believing people - are going to be wrong. Each major viewpoint of the end times has many adherents, and each viewpoint is in significant respects mutually exclusive with the others. Thus, no matter which viewpoint is right, a substantial number of believers (if not the vast majority of them) will be wrong. What a shame. And no, I’m not saying everyone who disagrees with me is wrong - I’m simply pointing out that not everyone can be right. If there were only two major views, one could hope the majority would be right, but with so many views out there, only a statistical minority can be right no matter what.

There are four main prophetic views. There are also many less common views, and a large number of minor variations of the major views. The four main views are as follows:

1) **Dispensational** (God works in distinct ways at distinct times with little continuity) - a sub-group of premillennialism
2) **Historic Premillennialism** (the Millennium, or Golden Age, is yet future)
3) **Postmillennialism** (the Millennium has already started, and we’re in it now)
4) **Amillennialism** (there is not now, and never will be, any earthly Golden Age or political kingdom of Christ).
• **Dispensationalists** generally believe in a secret Rapture of the Church before (or midway through) the Tribulation. After the Second Coming there will be a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth. Pre-Tribulation Rapture adherents believe that it could literally happen at any moment. This view is popularized in the *Left Behind* series of books and movies. It is a common viewpoint among Baptists, Pentecostal and charismatic churches, and independent churches. This view is also often (but not always) understood as maintaining a strict separation between Israel and the Church - to the extent that not only do they never mingle, but in fact God has two separate programs for them and He never deals with them in the same way or even at the same time.

• **Historic premillennialists** generally believe the Tribulation could come very soon, but there are a number of things which still need to take place first. The Rapture (so-called) is really just a part of the First Resurrection. It takes place at the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation (not secret and not a separate event). Following this, Christ will rule for 1,000 literal years on earth. Premillennialists (or *premills*) view both the first and second resurrections as physical (*i.e.*, the dead will rise from the grave both times). People who hold this view are scattered among the Protestant and evangelical churches. Historic premillennialism is essentially what premills believed (historically) before Dispensationalism came along in the mid-19th century.

• **Postmillennialists** (*postmills*) generally believe the Tribulation has already happened, and we’re in the Millennium now. Christians will eventually come into political domination worldwide for a period of uncertain duration. People who speak of *ushering in* the kingdom of God typically have this viewpoint. They believe that Christian progress can either speed up or delay Christ’s return. Christ won’t return until political domination happens in the distant future. This viewpoint is also called “Preterist,” *i.e.*, that the Tribulation has already happened (typically around 70 A.D.). This viewpoint is common among churches which consider themselves Reformed or Calvinist.

• **Amillennialists** (*amills*) generally believe the Tribulation is the next major prophetic event to occur, but won’t happen until the distant future, and Christ (or Christians) will never rule the world politically. The amills, together with the postmills, also view the first resurrection as spiritual only (*i.e.*, referring to personal salvation). Plus, there will only be one physical resurrection of both believers and non-believers at the end of time. The cornerstone of this view is that the kingdom of Christ will only ever be spiritual, not physical, during the entirety of history. This view prevails in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches and is probably the most common view.

See the attached chart comparing these four views in much greater detail in **Appendix B**.

These four views form two meta-camps. Both postmillennialists and amillennialists believe that history ends, and eternity begins, when the Second Coming occurs. For postmills, the Second Coming marks the end of the Millennium (because we’re already in it), so there is nothing that comes afterward in terms of earthly history. For amills, who skip the millennium altogether, there is also nothing which comes after the Second Coming in terms of earthly history. For both groups, all that comes after the Second Coming is the Final Judgment and eternity.

That is why you often hear some people say that the Second Coming and/or Armageddon imply the *end of the world*, which in reality simply betrays their postmill or amill viewpoint assumptions.
To premills (dispensational and historic), neither Armageddon nor the Second Coming are the end of the world. History will go on for at least another 1,000 years after them. This is a major departure from the other views. At any point in time prior to the Second Coming, a significant portion of world history remains yet future. This is a future where the topography of the earth, the structure and governance of the nations, the state of affairs of the Jewish people, and the knowledge and influence of Christianity and God’s laws will all be significantly altered from current conditions. In other words, premills believe in a *new world order* prior to and separate from eternity.

One thing many people from all camps will agree with is that the Mayan calendar, the Doomsday Clock, the writings of Nostradamus, and similarly fanciful ideas will play no part in how the end times actually unfold. Mankind is not going to bring about its own destruction, and the earth does not have a built-in expiration date. We are not going to spoil the earth and need to colonize space, and no comet, asteroid or alien invasion is going to destroy the world or produce an *extinction level event* (ELE). Therefore, we don’t need to colonize other planets and make our escape from earth before it’s too late.

If those are the things you expect to happen to the world in the future, your time would be better spent reading science fiction and fantasy books rather than biblical prophecy. Granted, the future is going to see some fantastic events taking place. However, God is firmly in control of the earth and He is going to ensure that His purposes are accomplished. *Only* God controls the future of the world - not natural forces, not an alien intervention, and certainly not humanity. So if you have the idea that we control our own future - sorry, it just ain’t so.

**What Really Drives End Times Viewpoints**

To hear people talk, you might think that theologians pick the point of view that seems to fit the evidence best. In other words, that they examine the scripture texts containing prophetic statements (the evidence) and the sequence of events they describe in an unbiased fashion. Then, the results of this unbiased analysis is what drives people to pick one view over another. *Nothing could be further from the truth.* The fact is, a person’s view of the end times is entirely predetermined by their view of three things:

1) the nature of the divine covenants - mainly, whether they are: a) separate and distinct agreements applying to different groups and/or at different times; or b) installments of a single agreement which all ultimately merge together;  
2) whether the ministry of Christ includes an earthly political kingdom or not, and who will bring it about (God or man); and  
3) the role of the Church in the world (especially whether it merges with or replaces Israel in God’s plan since Christ), and the degree to which God maintains a separate program for Israel compared to the Church.

If you believe the ministry of Christ will always necessarily be limited to the spiritual only (not temporal, or political), then you will tend to view the role of the Church as being concerned with spiritual matters only, and the Millennium as merely allegorical. In other words, you *will* be an amillennialist.

Think it through. When Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (Jn. 18:36), did He mean *only*
at that time, or did He mean it will always be that way? If the second way and not the first, then He will never need an earthly kingdom. And if the head of the Church won’t need it, then how can it be the business of the body of Christ to implement an earthly kingdom? And if neither Jesus nor the Church will ever have an earthly kingdom, what do you need a Millennial eschatology for? But if Jesus’ statement was merely a description of a temporary condition, then it leaves open the possibility for an earthly kingdom.

Some people view the various divine covenants according to the principle of continuity, i.e., that each covenant is a successive chapter in a single unfolding (progressively revealed) relationship between God and His people. Later covenants modify, supersede or control the prior ones. Most people holding this view regard the divine covenants as applying to Christians only, because the Church covenant is the last one to date and it controls or supersedes all the earlier covenants. However, those prior covenants contain a variety of non-spiritual (governmental) terms. These include child-bearing and earthly dominion (Adamic covenant), capital punishment (Noahic covenant), title to the land of Israel (Abrahamic covenant), common law regulations (Mosaic covenant), and the throne of Israel (Davidic covenant).

Now assume all of those divine covenants (and their non-spiritual elements) are primarily directed towards Christians under the Church covenant. If you do that, then you will tend to regard it as not only the right, but the duty, of the Church to bring about the earthly kingdom of Christ (and not merely wait for Jesus to do it) to show its obedience. This work of the Church will gradually bring about (or at least, is intended to produce) an earth completely governed by Christ, both spiritually and governmentally. Logically, people who have this view believe that we are in the Millennium now, because the Millennium is the time when the kingdom of Christ comes to fruition in an earthly sense. Thus, if you have this view of the divine covenants, you will be a postmillennialist.

A consequence of the postmill position (for most people) is that if we are in the Millennium now, then the Tribulation must have occurred in the past. If the Tribulation is past, then the book of Revelation had to be written before 70 AD instead of the usually accepted date of 95-96 AD. Not even postmillennialism upsets the almost universally agreed upon sequence of scripture that the Tribulation precedes the Millennium. Thus, most postmills are also Preterists, i.e., people who believe most end times prophecies have already been fulfilled - primarily, that the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was the culmination of the Tribulation period. Although, admittedly, some believe the Tribulation follows the Millennium (but this is a very minor viewpoint).

Now, however, suppose that the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants all apply primarily or exclusively to Jews and not to Christians. Then you will tend to view all of the various prophecies about the restoration of Israel as literally applying to Jews and not to Christians. Necessarily, you will believe the Church has not replaced Israel in God’s plan, and the destiny of Israel and the Church (while interrelated) are distinct. The restoration of Israel as a nation necessitates the second coming of Christ to inaugurate a kingdom age, in which the kingdom will be physical and political. If you believe this, you will be a premillennialist.

As an historic premill, you will tend to view some of the divine covenants (i.e., the Adamic and Noahic covenants) as applying to non-Christians - that is, to everyone. The ministry of Christ and the role of the Church are mainly spiritual now, but will become physical and political after Jesus comes back. And you will tend to view the Golden Age as something which the Church cannot
bring about on its own current authority, but will require an additional intervention by Jesus. In other words, nothing we do can affect the timing of the Second Coming.

On the other hand, if you are a premill, but you also believe in any of the following, you will be headed in a different direction. First, you believe in a secret Rapture (that the Church will escape the Tribulation before it happens or at least before it gets really bad). Second, that some of the divine covenants no longer apply to anyone, and/or that God maintains a separate program of a “kingdom economy” for Israel even today. Third, you tend to view the Church as having limited or deferred spiritual authority now. Fourth, the present Church Age is an “unplanned period” or a “parenthesis” in God’s overall plan (because He wanted to offer the kingdom to Israel first and see if they accepted it). If you hold to any of these assumptions, it is very likely you will be a dispensationalist.

As a consequence, when a premillennialist, dispensationalist, postmillennialist and amillennialist all read the same scripture texts, they will read them literally or allegorically in keeping with their previously determined theological framework. Everyone claims to be objective, but human nature gets in the way and nearly everyone allows their pre-conceived theology to force a reading of the text in a certain way.

That’s why I revisit the topic of eschatology every few years - to re-examine what I believe, what the texts actually say, and to scrub out as many pre-conceived notions as I can identify. Also, I have tried to be as objective as possible in coming to an opinion on the nature of the divine covenants, the ministry of Christ, and the role of the Church. Whether I have been more or less successful than anyone else, I will let you decide. All I can say is, I have tried my best.

**Why I Am an Historic Premillennialist**

Some of the most fundamental questions to ask when reading the Bible are: Should these words be taken literally (at face value) until contrary evidence shows otherwise? Do these words have any fixed meaning that does not change with time? Were these words actually authored by God and did He exercise great care in selecting which words to use? I answer yes to all of these. If you answer no to any of them, you are hereby advised that these are the assumptions which guide everything that follows. But even if you answer no, read on to see what logical conclusions those assumptions will lead to.

**Divine Covenants**

When I look at the divine covenants, for example, they are clearly directed to distinct groups of people: Adam (and by implication his descendants), Noah and his descendants, Abraham and his descendants, Moses and Israel’s descendants, David and his descendants, and all those who would follow Jesus. The descendants of Adam and Noah include everyone in the world (all others were destroyed in the Noahic flood). Abraham was the father of many nations, but God’s covenant with him extended only to the Jews. The descendants of Israel and David include only Jews. Therefore, I simply cannot read these words of covenant as being directed exclusively and/or primarily to Christians or the Church without doing violence to their plain meaning.

Plus, all the covenants preceding the Church apply to people based solely on biological descent. The
Church covenant has no biological component, but applies to people based solely on an individual choice of faith. This makes the two sets of divine covenants completely distinct - they cannot be merged, conflated, or collapsed together in any way. They are apples and oranges to each other. You simply cannot Christianize a covenant based on biological descent.

Take the Abrahamic covenant as a key example of the problem. True, God told Abraham, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3), and Abraham’s faith serves as the model for Christian faith. However, when it came time for God to speak the words of covenant which actually governed the relationship (i.e., the express terms of agreement), God said they would apply to Abraham and his offspring (Gen. 12:7; 17:7). Not spiritual offspring, but biological offspring. That’s certainly the way Abraham understood what God said. And that is most certainly what the sign of the covenant (circumcision) was intended to convey - biology, not faith.

I do not dispute that certain aspects of Abraham’s life had far-ranging implications for the Church. Those things may be considered as by-products of the covenant with Abraham, but they do not comprise the covenant. As a lawyer I cannot be guided by implications, surrounding circumstances, or spiritual double meanings and archetypes. The interpretational rule is clear: surrounding circumstances are considered only when the text is ambiguous, and here it is not. The only thing that counts is what God actually said, and whether there is any textual basis for understanding those words in any way other than literally.

If Abraham understood the word offspring literally when first spoken, then my assumption is that I must take it literally as well. I cannot adopt a view which treats the words spoken to Abraham personally as having a primary meaning that would only be revealed to others two thousand years later (i.e., that ‘offspring’ refers to Christians, not Jews) when Abraham was long dead. That would render the words spoken to Abraham as deceptive at the time, since God knew what would follow.

Therefore, unless you are a biological descendant of Abraham (through Isaac and Jacob), the terms of covenant between him and God regarding the land of Israel and circumcision do not apply to you. And to make the argument that the Church is actually intended by God to be understood as the offspring of Abraham is to draw in another whole set of assumptions and implications nowhere directly stated in the actual text of the Bible. So I cannot go there. Thus, I cannot view the O.T. divine covenants as applying exclusively and/or primarily to Christians.

Nation of Israel

I have already explained that I view three of the six divine covenants (Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic) as applying solely to Jews or Abraham’s biological offspring. This logically necessitates that I view the nation of Israel as an entity God is not finished with yet, since none of those divine covenants have ended (that is, the land, theocracy and throne of Israel have neither been totally destroyed nor fully restored). Nor is there any textual evidence in the Bible that any of these covenants will terminate before the arrival of the new heavens and new earth. Which means God’s distinct plans for the nation of Israel will continue through the end times period.

This is corroborated by many biblical prophecies concerning Israel which (as we will see later) have simply not been fulfilled yet. These prophecies include such things as the full restoration of the land, Israel living in peace with its neighbors, the fortunes of Jacob being restored, and the temple...
being rebuilt. I defy anyone to show that any of these things have already taken place in any literal sense. Similarly, can anyone deny that the land of Israel, particularly Jerusalem, is as crucial to the world now as it has ever been?

And if these prophecies are not to be taken literally, then I ask, “Is God a great exaggerator, or just a poor communicator?” For if the prophecies are not literal, then it would seem God has a problem finding the right words to convey His actual meaning, in which case He is a pretty pitiful Supreme Being. Or perhaps He simply says a great many things He really doesn’t mean - that He is just talking, you know, evangelistically. But why would the God who knows all things from the beginning to the end need to overstate His case? If that is the God you know, it isn’t the one I know. Thus, I cannot view the Church as having replaced Israel in the prophetic plan of God.

Temporal Kingdom

When I look at how God operated in the Old Testament, and consider that His nature has not changed since then, He strikes me as being very earthy, which is to say, temporal (grounded in physical reality) and political. God’s laws regulated food consumption, urination and waste excretion, sexual activity, diseases, criminal punishment, contracts, property, private wrongs (torts), and all kinds of things physical and temporal.

In fact, as I look at the Mosaic covenant generally, it is as much political and practical, as it is spiritual and moral. The same is true of the Adamic and Noahic covenants, both of which were primarily temporal (dominion over the earth, raising families, eating meat, capital punishment, etc.) and not spiritual. Nobody was spiritually saved by virtue of the Adamic or Noahic covenants. So there is no reason to take any of these covenants in primarily a spiritual sense. Sure, God clothed Adam and Eve after the Fall, and rescued Noah and his family from a sinful world. But neither of these actions either constituted, or altered, the actual terms of the covenants between them.

When Jesus came and died, He did so in the physical world, not as a spirit. That was the whole point - His incarnation as a human being in a body of flesh. Though His death and resurrection accomplished only a spiritual redemption at the time, the promise is that eventually there will be a physical redemption of all believers modeled after the bodily resurrection of Christ. If God is concerned only with spiritual things, then why did Christ receive a new physical body that had nail prints and other scars on it? Why didn’t He just come back as a spirit?

As I look at the O.T. I see other examples of redemption in the physical world being provided for in God’s law: financial redemption (i.e., from debt), redemption of the land, and the physical redemption of people (from slavery or servitude). The evidence to me screams out that God is not merely concerned with spiritual things. If God is concerned only with spiritual things, then why weren’t His laws concerned only with spiritual things? Why would He clutter His laws with all sorts of non-spiritual things He didn’t care about? Thus, I cannot adopt a view of the kingdom of Christ which is merely spiritual, and never temporal or political, in this life.

Earthly Return

It is nearly universally held by Christians that the work and ministry of Jesus Christ is complete and finished. Insofar as the gospel of personal salvation is concerned, I agree. What Jesus did through
His death and resurrection to effectuate spiritual redemption for individuals is indeed a complete and finished work.

However, the Bible nowhere says that the ministry of Christ is limited to the gospel of personal salvation. Yes, that’s what He did when He came the first time. But if that is all Jesus is ever going to do, why does He need to come a second time? Is it to finish or make more complete what He already did? No, by definition, it needs no further work. Therefore, His Second Coming must be for some other purpose, something related to, but separate from, His initial ministry.

If all Jesus is going to do upon returning is collect the saints and take them up to heaven, He can do that without touching ground. If the only purpose of the Second Coming is to tie up the loose ends of Jesus’ First Advent (i.e., give the saints their immortal bodies), then all He needs to do is meet us in the air like it says in 1Th. 4:17. The saints will be changed in the twinkling of an eye (1Co. 15:52) and poof! - it is done. But the Bible says He will touch ground and that He will come back the same way He went up, even to the point of returning to the exact same spot (the Mount of Olives). Zec. 14:4; Acts 1:11. Why would He do that?

A possible response is that He will defeat the forces of Satan - the Antichrist, the False Prophet and their armies. But if that’s all He is going to do, He can do that without touching the ground either. The Bible says He will kill the Antichrist by the mere appearance of His coming (2Th. 2:8). It’s not like there is going to be an actual battle - there will be no heavenly boots on the ground. The armies of heaven are not actually going to engage in personal combat. All Jesus has to do is show up and open His mouth and it’s over, which hardly requires Him to touch ground, since He can do that from the air, too.

Besides, at the time of the end, God is going to create a new heaven and new earth, destroying the old earth. So once the saints meet Jesus in the air, Jesus can slay the Antichrist with the breath of His mouth. Then God can just destroy the old earth and poof! - Satan and the armies of the Antichrist are defeated without Jesus having to touch ground. Certainly God can destroy the earth without Jesus having to stand on it at the time, so there must be something more.

Well, the Bible also says in numerous places that Jesus will establish His kingdom. If this simply refers to heaven or His spiritual kingdom, isn’t that already established? Are we to believe that there is something in heaven or in the nature of the spiritual kingdom that God has not yet established, which can only be done after Jesus comes back, and not before? It only makes sense that there is something undone if it is on earth, and not heaven. Thus, I have adopted a view of the ministry of Jesus which necessitates an earthly (political/temporal) kingdom of Christ which is yet to come.

For all these reasons, I am an historic premillennialist. Additionally, I see the future earthly kingdom as presenting a unique problem from a divine covenant perspective. This must also be addressed before eternity sets in, further distinguishing me from postmillennialists and amillennialists. See the chapter on the Seventh (or Eighth) Divine Covenant, later.

As to why I am not a dispensationalist, that is partially based on the fact I do not view any of the divine covenants as having already expired. Nor do I believe there is any such thing as an unplanned period in God’s plan for human history - it is impossible for anything to take God by surprise. Plus, I reject the idea that God cannot have separate agreements with separate people in
operation at the same time. Yes, God has only ever had one “program” of redemption (through faith alone), and His future earthly kingdom will apply to Jews and Gentiles alike. However, Israel and the Church will always be separate, and God’s covenants with them will both be perpetual and run in parallel, as it were.

My other reasons are based on interpretational concerns. For example, I do not believe a proper interpretation of scripture supports a 2,000 year gap between Daniel’s 69th and 70th weeks, a secret Rapture before the Second Coming, that the Church Age will end when the Tribulation begins, or the Tribulation saints are not part of the New Testament Church. Don’t worry - I’ll explain it all.

**BASIC CHRONOLOGY OF PROPHECY**

**Phases**

**Luke 21:7-28 / Matthew 24:3-31 (“Signs of His coming”) (summary):**

**Phase 1** - First Indications (that the time of the Second Coming is near)
- v. 3-8  False Christs; wars and rumors of wars; famines and earthquakes.

**Phase 2** - Persecution
- v. 9-14  Worldwide persecution of Christians; false prophets; betrayal and apostasy

**Phase 3** - Tribulation
- v. 15-28  Abomination of desolation; great loss of life; false Christs and prophets performing great signs and wonders

**Phase 4** - Second Coming
- v. 29-31  Heavens shaken; sign of the Son of Man; Second Coming; gathering of saints

Matthew 24, together with other scriptures, lays out a basic sequence of events that will take place in the end times. The basic chronology is this -

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PRESENT AGE
TRIBULATION
SECOND COMING
MILLENNIUM
FINAL JUDGMENT
NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH
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Revelation chapters 6-18 basically describe events during the Tribulation. Rev. 19 describes Armageddon and the Second Coming. Revelation chapters 20-22 describe the Millennium, final judgment and new heaven and new earth. The sequence of Mat. 24 is the same, without the last three items, but these are variously described in other New Testament texts besides Revelation. No contrary sequence is anywhere suggested in the Bible.

As to Mat. 24, we seem to be well into Phase 1. All these events are occurring with increasing frequency and severity, namely, false Christs; wars and rumors of wars; famines and earthquakes.

We are probably also well into Phase 2. Certainly the global persecution of Christians is on the rise, and even in the U.S. you can see the religious toleration climate has changed. Academia, in particular, is openly hostile to Christians. Law and government have been semi-friendly to religious liberty, though public support for religion has decreased dramatically ever since 1963 and the U.S.
Supreme Court’s decision in the school prayer case. I believe years from now people will look back to mid-2015 and the high court’s decision regarding same-sex marriage as the time when overt persecution of Christians in America began in earnest. Public pressure is increasing yearly to use the power of legislation to ostracize anyone who opposes the LGBTQ agenda. Don’t be surprised if people who oppose homosexuality are eventually made outlaws.

Note the progression in Mat 24:9-14: Christians will be martyred in some cases (we’re already seeing this in the Middle East), but they will be hated “by all nations.” “And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.” (v. 10.) As persecution steps up, many (if not most) church members - who are Christian in name only and not true believers - will leave the faith to avoid persecution. These, and former friends and relatives of Christians, will inform public officials who the true believers are and sell them out. Eventually, it will become popular to hate Christians as the ones who want to hold society back from its accelerating slide into debauchery.

No, Mat 24:9-14 is not primarily directed to Jews rather than Christians. Why? Because the hatred of the nations will arise on account of “my name’s sake,” meaning the name of Christ. There is simply no way the nation of Israel is ever going to be identified with the name of Christ prior to the Second Coming. Granted, Israel is uniquely identified with the name of Jehovah, which name is also identified with the person of Jesus. Perhaps that explains why the persecution of the ungodly world extends to both Christians and Jews, as is so plainly evident today.

Many false prophets will arise if for no other reason than to fill the vacuum created by people leaving Christianity who still want a form of religion, as long as it doesn’t brand them as someone to be persecuted. In other words, the former nominal Christians will look for new religions to identify with as long as they are not perceived as Christian. Meanwhile, the culture will slide into further lawlessness as the Christian influence in public policy is eventually eliminated. (It was minimized years ago.) It is a logical progression.

Finally (v. 14), “this gospel of the kingdom” will be proclaimed worldwide just prior to the arrival of the Tribulation. Not just the gospel of salvation, but the good news of the coming kingdom of Christ. Again, this is not a Jewish Gospel thing, but rather a proclamation that a new world order is coming - a message which many people will finally be ready to hear. This is the transition before the main transition which is the Tribulation. The Tribulation is the period of God’s wrath which transitions the world from the old world order (rule by the kingdoms of Satan) to the new world order (rule by the kingdom of Christ).

In other words, the end of Phase 2 is when the world will be inundated with the knowledge that God’s wrath is coming, but something better will follow it. No, this hasn’t happened yet. This message is not exactly standard sermon fare up to this point. However, I believe the time for the gospel of the kingdom to be preached is now upon us.

I take the difference between “false Christs” in Phase 1 and “false Christs and false prophets” in Phase 3 to be this: Phase 1 refers to people claiming to have a false key to salvation (e.g., “collective salvation” or liberation theology), or falsely claiming to be sent by God (“I am the Messiah”). In Phase 3, “false Christs and false prophets” is probably a direct reference to the Antichrist and the False Prophet of Revelation, because they are associated with great signs and wonders and the Antichrist will be viewed as a Messiah (i.e., Christ) by his followers. Religious pretenders and false
views of salvation are already plentiful, but the Antichrist and his chief assistant the False Prophet have not arrived on the scene yet.

However, Preterists (postmills) generally believe the Abomination of Desolation already occurred centuries ago, and commonly interpret the other events in Phase 3 so that they have already been fulfilled. In other words, they do not take “false Christs and false prophets” to refer to a future Antichrist and False Prophet.

But to the Preterists, I say this: When Jesus spoke of the Great Tribulation in Mat. 24:21, He said it would be “such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.” If the Tribulation has already occurred, please tell me when in history there was a time of unparalleled trouble that will never be equaled. Really - nothing that will ever happen in the future can possibly match the horrors of the past? The worst time in all of human history is already over? What evidence supports such a claim? What world are you living in?

Phase 4 (Second Coming) has definitely not happened yet. And that’s about the only thing most Christians agree on. Yes, there are some lunatics who think it’s already happened.

In Mat. 24:26, Jesus says, in reference to false messiahs and false prophets, “So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.” I used to take wildness and inner rooms to be general references to a variety of possible places where false religious leaders could hang out. More recently I viewed wilderness in a kind of John the Baptist sense (i.e., “the voice of one crying in the wilderness”), that is, as a possible reference to Judea.

But now I am convinced that in prophecy, wilderness (or desert) is most usually a reference to the Arabian peninsula specifically. Further, an inner prayer room is a standard architectural feature of Islamic structures. When you put these two things together, they have relevance when we begin to look at the Antichrist later.

**THE PROPHETIC CALENDAR**

All time periods given in connection with end times prophecy are as yet somewhat of a mystery, because they are in many cases ambiguous, and because I believe few, if any, refer to past events. Biblical prophecies refer to 70 weeks, 3½ times, 1260 days, 1290 days, 1335 days, 2300 days, and 42 months. All of these time periods require some careful examination.

Common sense dictates that the closer we get to the events prophesied, the clearer we will be able to see what the prophecies all mean. Events have sufficiently progressed so that we can now speak with some confidence as to the nature of the beast kingdom and where the Antichrist is likely to come from. But prophetic time periods and exact sequences are still very difficult to pin down.

Part of the problem is a result of the difficulty inherent in reconciling the time periods scripture provides with each other with any degree of exactness. For example, Rev. 12 twice refers to Israel being nourished in the wilderness, once as a period of 1,260 days (v. 6), and once as a period of 3½ times (v.14). Ostensibly, these two verses are part of a single narrative describing a single event.
A quick fix solution used by most commentators is to treat the time periods in scripture as rounded off, or approximate. For example, you often see people treating 1260 days, 42 months, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ times (i.e., $3\frac{1}{2}$ years) as all being equivalent. Thus, you will see statements to the effect that “a prophetic year has 360 days,” or that “a prophetic month has 30 days,” etc. Of course, the Bible never once actually says either of these.

It is an assumption people make because it is convenient and it avoids having to do the difficult work of reconciling time periods. To me, this assumes God is either incapable of being exact, or that He actually wants to confuse us, both of which assumptions I reject. However, I do accept the assumption that God keeps some things hidden until He is ready to reveal them, which is what controls the understanding of time periods for now.

For comparison, 42 months on the Hebrew calendar is about 1240 days ± 1 day. Thus, 42 months on the Hebrew calendar is always less than 1260 days (a month always being either 29 or 30 days long, being tied to the lunar cycle). A normal Jewish year is 353, 354 or 355 days long, and a leap year (13 month year) is usually 383, 384 or 385 days long.

Since there are some years in the Hebrew calendar with 13 months, $3\frac{1}{2}$ years is not always easy to determine, but is always longer than 42 months. And whether a half year falls at the end of the sixth month, or in the middle of the seventh month, depends on whether that particular year has 12 or 13 months in it. So there is no real way to correlate $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, 42 months, and 1260 days with each other in the Hebrew Calendar.

On the other hand, 42 months on the Gregorian (modern Western) calendar always equals $3\frac{1}{2}$ years and is 1278 days ± 2 days. That is, anywhere from 1276-1280 days, depending on what date you start on and whether a leap year day is included or not. Which means that under that calendar, 1,260 days is always shorter than both 42 months and $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. So, how do we correlate 42 months with 1,260 days and/or $3\frac{1}{2}$ years?

Similarly, many people understand Daniel’s 70th week as referring to a period of seven years, so if the sacrifices are stopped in the middle, that would be a stoppage of $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. But Dan. 12:11 says sacrifices will be stopped for at least 1,290 days, which is always longer than $3\frac{1}{2}$ years under both the Hebrew and Gregorian calendars. How are these to be reconciled? One way to reconcile them is to abandon the seven-year theory, which I will explain later.

Another problem is that the scripture text is actually uncertain in one instance - the several references to $3\frac{1}{2}$ times. I do not believe the scripture is inherently ambiguous when it says days, weeks, months, or years. I take these all literally. But for most commentators, $3\frac{1}{2}$ times is accepted as $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, when the word for year is never actually used in that phrase. The actual Hebrew phrase is “time, times and a time divided”, and the Greek phrase is “time, times, and half a time”. In other words, $1 + 2 + \frac{1}{2} = 3\frac{1}{2}$. Times is not the normal Hebrew or Greek word for year, which leaves me to conclude its meaning is uncertain.

Given the general precision with which God defines time periods - and given that He certainly knows what a year is - God could have used the word for year in the scripture text, but chose not to. Why? Could it be that this is a reference to a solar-based year, rather than a lunar cycle based year (such as the Hebrew calendar)? In other words, that He knew what man would do to the calendar,
and in this one instance, chose to accommodate it? Or is there really such a thing as a “prophetic year”? I have my doubts, but interpreting “times” can be a challenge. For whatever the reason, God seems to be intentionally keeping the meaning hidden for now.

But consider Dan. 4, verses 16, 23, 25 and 32, all of which contain the phrase “seven periods of time.” Dan. 4 is the chapter where Nebuchadnezzar has a dream which is subsequently fulfilled by him being made like a beast of the field for seven periods of time, after which his sanity is restored. I think it is safe to say biblical commentators who take this account as literal universally hold that Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment lasted seven years. In other words, in that context, time = year.

This text is interesting for another reason - it is contained within the part of the book of Daniel that is not written in Hebrew, but Aramaic. Thus, the word time is an Aramaic word, iddan. This may actually be a clue as to its meaning, i.e., the time reference may be something outside of the Hebrew calendar, such as a solar year. Thus, a time measurement that would be understood to the Babylonians but not necessarily correlate to Hebrew time measurement.

This Aramaic word, iddan, is the exact same word used in Dan. 7:25 - “He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.” So, based on this usage, I think the most probable meaning of 3½ times is 3½ years - but not necessarily Hebrew calendar years. Although, even in this light, I cannot be certain. I leave you to decide.

**What Calendar Does God Use?**

The reality is that man did not invent the calendar - God did. God defined a day as one complete cycle of evening and morning, i.e., from sunset to sunset. Gen. 1:5. God defined a week as seven days - six days of work followed by one day of rest. Gen. 1:31 - 2:3. God defined a month as one complete lunar cycle, that is, from one new moon to the next - always 29 or 30 days. Isaiah 66:23.

The Hebrew year has a whole number of months, either 12 or 13, depending on a specific rotation over a period of 19 years (235 months). (Although, the 19 year cycle is a relatively modern invention.) The 13\(^{th}\) month is an intercalary month (i.e., an additional month in only some years). Historically, the Jews have recognized two annual calendars. There is a religious year which begins on Nisan 1 (usually falling in March), and there is a civil year beginning on Tishrei 1, which usually falls in September.

Over time, people have gradually changed all of these basic definitions to suit our purposes. Instead of starting each day at sunset, we define it as beginning at midnight. God defined a week with two days of rest (a weekend), and what most Christians call the Sabbath is actually the first day of the week (Sunday), not the last.

Western civilization has completely divorced the concept of a month from the lunar cycle of new moons by introducing 28 day and 31 day months. And we base the year not on lunar cycles, but on solar cycles, having completely disposed of the concept of an intercalary month. Additionally, New Year’s day was changed to January 1 from dates roughly correlating with the Hebrew calendar (usually September 1, but also sometimes March 1) as used by ancient calendars.
Thus, September, October, November and December are named as the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th months (check your Latin - sept = seven, oct = eight, etc.), but that only makes sense if New Year’s Day is/was March 1. However, those months are the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th months in the current western calendar. The Gregorian calendar that we now use, which incorporates all of these changes, was first introduced in Europe in 1582 and only became effective in Britain and America in 1752.

I point out these things not to give a complete history of the modern calendar, which history is actually far more complicated than I have indicated here. Instead, I merely note that since God gave the Hebrews His calendar, people have redefined the calendar in almost every imaginable way. But just because people have done this, does not mean it is binding on God, or that the actions of mere men have changed the way God keeps time. Biblical prophecies of months and years cannot be read as conforming to a calendar which did not exist when they were first given. At least, that’s the way it seems to me.

Take, for example, Ex. 12:40-41: “The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.” Now, when God inspired the writing of Exodus, did He mean a 365¼ day solar year as Europeans defined it in 1582, or did He mean a lunar-based year as defined in the Pentateuch, so that the very same day meant the same day of the same lunar month on the Hebrew calendar? Obviously, I think, the statement had to make sense according to the calendar that existed when the statement was made.

It kind of gives a new meaning to Job 10:5, does it not? (“Are your days as the days of man, or your years as a man’s years?”) In other words, does God measure time the way men measure time? Or consider Rev. 9:15: “So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind.” On whose calendar? The calendar John used when he received the revelation, the calendar in existence when the killing finally occurs, or on a heavenly calendar separate from these?

The question is, if God is so exact and precise when describing past events, would He abandon that method for a generalized and imprecise measurement of time for future events? Why would God do that? Will God forget exactly how long 42 lunar cycle months is, or be unable to project how long that is in days in the future? Since a lunar month always has either 29 or 30 days, will God forget that 42 lunar months will always be a few days short of 1260 days? Or will God abandon His calendar definitions and adopt the non-lunar-based definition of a month so as to conform to man’s definition in the 18th century? Which option is more likely?

In spite of these difficulties in interpretation, God knows how to tell time. God gave these prophetic time periods to us for a reason, and I don’t think it was to obscure things (he could have just left the time references out). So they must have the ability to convey some useful information. I tend to put more reliance on the numbers of days as being accurate, and the longer the time period, the more flexibility I see being indicated. So I will consistently take the number of prophetic days and weeks as literal. But I could be wrong. You know the problems involved - work it out and let me know!
Part 1 - The Big Picture

THE BATTLE OF GOOD vs. EVIL

The kingdom is coming, the kingdom is coming.

**Gen. 3:14-19** (summary) -
- v. 14 Curse of the serpent
- v. 15 “He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”
- v. 16 Bearing children will be painful, husbands and wives will struggle for power
- v. 17-18 The curse of the ground
- v. 19 The introduction of death into the world

I said before that prophecy is just God's way of telling us a story. Well, this is the beginning of the story. We have in these few verses of Gen. 3 not merely the results of the Fall of mankind, but several of the major themes of the Bible inaugurated, including the key to all end-times prophecy.

You probably already know these verses first introduce the theme of redemption in the Bible. Mankind sins, becomes separated from God, and lives under a curse he cannot remove. But in verse 15, the seed of the woman (referring to Jesus Christ) is predicted to overcome Satan (the serpent). Satan will nip at Jesus’ heels, but ultimately Jesus will step on Satan’s head and crush him. Thus, the theme of redemption and salvation is introduced, with a victory over evil forecast.

What is oftentimes missed is that this epic battle between Jesus and Satan has two main parts. That is, the spiritual side (the Gospel of spiritual salvation) and the temporal/political side (the conquest of evil in the physical world). The Jews living at the time of Christ were familiar with Gen. 3 and knew that the Messiah would conquer evil, so they assumed he would bring salvation and destroy his enemies in the same way at the same time. They never guessed that these would be done separately, by different means, and with a lot of time in between - but neither would I have guessed it.

What I’m saying is that all prophecies of the end times, all prophecies of God’s judgment of the nations, and all prophecies of the conquest of evil are in fact parts of a single narrative. Namely, the conquest of Satan by Jesus and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. These prophecies come at different times through different messengers, and often use different terminology and/or names of the major players. However, they are all parts of the same puzzle piecing together the same picture. You’ve heard of the scarlet thread of redemption that runs through the whole Bible? Well here is the golden thread of the kingdom of Christ that also runs through the whole Bible.

It is like a series of novels by the same author which fit together as a unit. Each book tells its own story, has its own characters, and involves numerous subplots, but each book in the series is part of a larger narrative. Each book forecasts the coming conflict between good and evil which will result in a final climactic battle when the forces of evil are destroyed to make way for the kingdom of Christ. The theme is introduced at the beginning, and all kinds of things happen along the way, but with each book the overarching narrative becomes more clear and more imminent.

Biblical prophecy is like that. There is one story God is telling. Everything that happens along the
way somehow fits into that story. We learn more as time goes by and the more each book of the Bible is read together with the others. Many different characters are introduced along the way, but instead of telling different stories, they are merely the same story looked at another way, in a different context, or from a different point of view, but all pointing to the same ending.

This pattern as used between separate books of the Bible is also repeated within the book of Revelation. The various prophecies of Revelation, especially chap. 6-18, overlap each other and are not all separate. They often cover the same events from different perspectives and are not meant to be read as wholly separate occurrences. Nor are they meant to be understood as happening in the same chronological order corresponding with when they are mentioned in Revelation.

Thus, the red dragon with seven heads and ten horns of Rev. 12 is not necessarily different from the scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns in Rev. 17. One does not necessarily follow the other in time. They are likely the same thing looked at in two contexts, the first with respect to Israel, and the second regarding historic world empires. The same entity is described in different contexts both for emphasis and for giving a fuller picture. Which is to say, each account gives us some new information the other account does not, but they both relate to the same thing.

This same principle applies to separate books of the Bible. Events described in Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation and elsewhere may use different imagery and character names, but they may also relate to the same foretold event, character or entity. Or, as is often the case, they focus on different parts of the same event, character or entity. Once you see the thread that ties them all together, it starts to make a whole lot more sense.

One of the toughest things for people to grasp, for example, is that the First Resurrection (“Rapture”), the great earthquake, the battle of Armageddon, the Second Coming, the conversion of Israel, and the beginning of the Millennium all occur almost simultaneously - if not all on the same calendar day, then surely within a 24 hour period. But when prophecies describe these events, some will focus on what is happening in heaven, what is happening to the physical earth, what is happening to Christ’s enemies, or what is happening to God’s people, depending on the context. Adding to the confusion are multiple scriptures in both testaments referring to these same things from different angles. You have to put them all together like a jigsaw puzzle to make sense of them.

**PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN PROPHECY**

The first key to understanding the big story is to understand who the major players are, and what names they go by - realizing that each of them go by several names. Thus, God goes by several names in the Bible: Elohim (Creator, God), Yahweh (Jehovah, I AM, LORD), Adonai (Master, Lord), El Shaddai (the Almighty), etc.

The same is true for Jesus, who is also known as Yeshua, Emmanuel, Messiah, Christ, etc. Many of these names are actually descriptions or titles rather than a personal name as such. Thus, Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor, Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, the Christ or Messiah, the Branch or the root of Jesse, the morning star, etc.

If you actually thought all these names and descriptions referred to different persons, you would be terribly confused reading the Bible. You would conclude that the Bible has multiple gods and
multiple saviors. A key to understanding is to realize that God has many names and descriptions but they all refer to the same God. Similarly, Jesus goes by many names and titles, but they all refer to only one Son of God, and one Savior.

Well, the same is true for Satan and the Antichrist, each of whom goes by many names. When you see the various names, if you take them all as different persons, you will be confused. When you realize who they really are, clarity will result.

We have seen the story of the Fall (Gen. 3) introducing the character of the serpent. Other portions of the Bible identify the serpent as Satan. See, Rev. 20:2. But the Bible shows us that Satan has many names and descriptions, including Lucifer, serpent, devil, fallen angel, a roaring lion, dragon, father of lies, god of this world, prince of the power of the air, angel of light, etc.

Some other names and descriptions of Satan are less well known because they are allegorical, or symbolic, but these are the ones used in prophecy so you need to know them: son of the dawn, Gog, Beelzebul or Beelzebub (“Lord of the Flies”), Baal, Belial, Abaddon, Apollyon, King of Babylon, etc.

Similarly, the Antichrist has many names and descriptions: man of sin, little horn, the Assyrian, Nimrod, man of lawlessness or the lawless one, son of perdition, the beast, the prince that shall come, the bloody and deceitful man, man of the earth, the mighty man, etc.

So you see, there are all these names and descriptions, but there are only four principal players: God, Jesus, Satan and the Antichrist. The main story is how these four play out in the battle of good vs. evil. Everyone else is secondary. These secondary players each have a unique part to play, but they all contribute to the overall narrative. The trick is not to get sidetracked with all the subplots and lose sight of the overall narrative.

WHO AND WHERE ARE NATIONS IN PROPHECY?

Gen. 10 (summary) - This chapter contains the genealogy of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth born to them after the flood. This chapter is commonly called the Table of Nations. There are 70 nations listed as the direct descendants of Noah. They are the nations into which the world was separated after the Tower of Babel in Gen. 11.

The Table of Nations is the key to identifying historic (ancient) people and places that are named in prophecy. Some place names in prophecy (mostly cities) haven’t changed - they are the same now as they were 3,000 years ago. But a significant portion of them have changed over the years, and others have simply disappeared. Still, it’s amazing how many city names remain unchanged.

The main problem is that most regional and country names have changed over time, so they can be difficult to identify. Except for Israel and Egypt, the Bible doesn’t use modern country names. Instead, places tend to be called by the name of the primary ancestor whose descendants live(d) in that area. Ancestors who are more often than not listed in the Table of Nations.

For example, many prophecies relate to Edom. What/where is Edom? Well, Edom is another name for Esau, the son of Isaac and brother of Jacob. Gen. 36:1, 8. It is used in the Bible to indicate
where the descendants of Esau live. Edom is located east of the Jordan river next to the southern part of Israel, or what is now the southern part of the nation of Jordan. So to help identify names and places (and relationships), I provide two aids: one an abbreviated genealogy, the other a list of locations (in the next section - *Who Is Where*).

**Genealogical Chart**

Noah had three sons, Japheth, Shem and Ham. These are their principal descendants:

- **Japheth** [Japhethites populated most of the western world, *i.e.*, Europe & America]
  - Gomer [Scythians] - AZERBAIJAN & N. TURKEY
  - 3 sons - Ashkenaz, Riphath & Togarmah
  - Magog [Scythians] - AZERBAIJAN
  - Madai [Medes] - IRAN
  - Javan [Greeks] - GREECE & W. TURKEY
  - 4 sons - Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim & Dodanim
  - Tubal [Tibereni] - TURKEY
  - Meshech [Cappadocia] - TURKEY
  - Tiras [Thrace] - BULGARIA

- **Shem** [The Semites dominate the Mideast, but also populated parts of Asia]
  - Elam [Elamites] - IRAN
  - Asshur [Assyria] - SYRIA
  - Arphaxad (Arpachsad)
    - Shelah
    - Eber [Hebrews]
    - Peleg
    - Reu
    - Serug
    - Nahor
    - Terah
    - Abram (Abraham) - [8 sons]
      - Ishmael [ARABS]
      - [12 sons]
      - Isaac
      - Esau [Edom] - JORDAN
      - Jacob [Israel] - ISRAEL
      - Midian (Midianites, or Iraqis) - IRAQ
      - [5 other sons - Jokshan, Zimran, Medan, Ishbak & Shuah]
      - Nahor
      - Haran
      - Lot
      - Moab (Moabites) - JORDAN
      - Ben-Ammi (Ammonites) - JORDAN
      - Joktan [Arabia] - SAUDI ARABIA
      - Lud [Lydians] - EAST TURKEY
      - Aram [Syria] - SYRIA

- **Ham** [The Hamites populated most of Africa]
Obviously the above genealogy, derived mainly from Gen. 10, shows where the various nations first settled after the Tower of Babel. They all spread out from there as time went by and populated the rest of the world. But you may be surprised to realize that: 1) those areas of the world relevant to prophecy are still populated primarily by the descendants of those who first lived there; and 2) many of the really intense rivalries among nations are essentially intra-family disputes.

For example, the rivalry between Jews and Arabs started as a dispute between the descendants of two half-brothers, Isaac and Ishmael, over who was actually the child of promise of their father, Abraham. Similarly, the rivalry between Israel and Edom (south Jordan) started as a dispute between the descendants of two brothers, Jacob and Esau, over who was actually entitled to the blessing of their father, Isaac. The Ammonites and Moabites (historic enemies of Israel) are the descendants of Lot, Abraham’s nephew, and make up northern and central Jordan today.

When you factor in that Israel was enslaved by Egypt, part of Israel was deported and held captive by Assyria (Syria), the rest deported and held captive by Babylon (Iraq), and all of them conquered by the Medes and Persians (Iran), you begin to see what is going on even now. There are ancient animosities that continue to the present - unabated by time. Furthermore, I have just explained the roots of the entire Mideast conflict in a nutshell. Not coincidentally, those same roots of conflict play an important role in end-times prophecy.

This is for two reasons. First, all of these nations have very long collective memories. The ancient disputes have not been forgotten, rather, they burn like embers waiting to burst into flame. None of the old offenses have been forgiven, either. Second, I am absolutely convinced God wanted things to be this way, and in fact brought about these conflicts Himself so they would bring about certain results that suit His purposes.

For example, when Abraham had Ishmael via Hagar the Egyptian: 1) it was an answer to prayer; 2) Hagar was informed of her pregnancy by the angel of the Lord; 3) Ishmael was sent away from Abraham with God’s blessing; 4) God promised to make Ishmael a great nation; and 5) Ishmael had twelve sons, just like Jacob (Israel). Gen. 16:11; 17:20. Can it reasonably be maintained that these things happened randomly, or that God was caught off guard by any of them?

To me, the evidence is overwhelming. God was under no obligation to do things the way He did. And none of these things happened by accident - God arranged them this way intentionally. The circumstances are such that lingering national conflict would unavoidably result. I therefore
conclude that God wanted to generate conflict, because He certainly knew what would follow as a result of His manipulation of the circumstances.

Similarly, Jacob and Esau were born as twins, with Esau being born first. But with the aid of some clever deceit, Jacob swindled the birthright away from Esau, and then God blessed the swindle. Gen. 25:25, 34; Gen. 27. He didn’t have to do that - God could have had Jacob be born first. So tell me - why did God have Esau be born first and yet have the firstborn’s birthright go to Jacob, unless conflict was the goal?

Similarly, the enslavement of Israel by Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Medo-Persia was all God’s judgment, i.e., God’s idea. These things were certainly not Israel’s idea for itself, and the actions of the other nations is far too orchestrated to be the idea of any other group of men. We’re not talking about conspiracy theories here - we’re talking about divine intervention. Was God so ignorant that He did not know perpetual international conflict would result from this chain of ancient enslavements? Of course He knew. He had to have planned it that way.

So when you see in the news about some latest peace talks in the Mideast, please realize all such efforts are ultimately a farce and a waste. These are divinely appointed conflicts that will only be resolved when one side is virtually eliminated and the survivors are ruled by a common king whom they will all obey. In other words, an all out war to the death, the utter humiliation and conquest of the losers, followed by their permanent subjugation. To think that anything less than this will bring real peace to the Mideast is a delusion.

Biblical prophecy tells us who will win, and who will lose. If you want to find out who, read on.

Who Is Where?

One thing I should explain, before jumping into the list of locations, is the whole point of reference biblically is that Israel, and Jerusalem in particular, is the center of the earth. We call Israel the Mideast, but God calls it the center of the world. Why does God do this? Because the land of Israel, and in particular Jerusalem, is His most favorite place in the world. Don’t ask me why - it just is. Consider the evidence:

Deut. 32:8 - When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God [i.e., the sons of Israel].

Ezek. 5:5 - Thus says the Lord God: “This is Jerusalem. I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries all around her.”

Ezek. 38:10-12 - “Thus says the Lord God: On that day, thoughts will come into your mind, and you will devise an evil scheme and say, ‘I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will fall upon the quiet people . . . gathered from the nations, . . . who dwell at the center of the earth.’”

Acts 17:26 - “And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.”
In other words, God selected where He wanted Israel to settle, marked off the boundaries of that land (see Ezek. 47:13-23), called that the center of the earth, and then arranged where all the other nations of the world should go around Israel to suit God’s convenience. And you probably thought it was all by accident, or merely random.

Accordingly, all directions given in prophecy (unless the context indicates otherwise) are relative to Israel and Jerusalem. The North generally means Turkey, and the extreme North means Azerbaijan, Georgia and the “Stans,” (i.e., Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, etc.). The East means Persia (Iran) and sometimes Iraq. The South means Egypt, principally.

Thus, when Ezek. 38:6 (speaking of Armageddon) refers to many peoples from “the uttermost parts of the north,” it is most likely not a reference to Russia. (Sorry, but both Meshech and Tubal are in Turkey, and “Rosh” means “chief,” not Russia. Ezek. 38:2. More on that under Gog and Magog.)

The East most likely does not mean China, even though it is east of Israel, because no biblical prophecies are ever directed towards China, and China doesn’t show up anywhere in the Table of Nations. In fact, China is never mentioned even once in the Bible.

The South generally does not mean Saudi Arabia, which is usually instead referred to as “the desert,” “the desert by the sea,” or “the wilderness by the sea.” However, the nation of Israel has a long history with the nation of Egypt, and this would be the most likely focus of prophecies regarding the South.

Which brings us to the list of prophetic locations:

Turkey [Ottoman]
- Historic Regions - Hittites, Cappadocia, Lud, Cilicia, Galatia, Lycia, Meshech, Tubal
- Significant Cities - Tarsus, Haran, Antioch, all seven cities of the churches of Rev. chap. 2-4
- Key Prophecies - Ezek. 30:5; 38:2-3; 39:1

Lebanon [Hezbollah]
- Historic Regions - Phoenicia, Geshur, Gebal
- Significant Cities - Tyre, Sidon
- Key Prophecies - Ezek. 26; 28:21-22, Joel 3:4-8; Isa. 23

Israel
- Historic Regions - Canaan, Negev, Amalek
- Significant Cities - Jerusalem, Nazareth, Megiddo, Ashkelon
- Key Prophecies - Isa 10:20; 19:24-25; Jer. 6:8; 31:31-34

Gaza Strip [Hamas]
- Historic Regions - Philistia (Philistines)
- Significant Cities - Gaza
West Bank [Fatah (formerly PLO)]
- Historic Regions - Judah (Judea), Samaria
- Significant Cities - Shechem, Shiloh, Bethel, Hebron, Bethlehem, Jericho
- Key Prophecies - Mat. 24:16; Isa. 1:1; 2:1; Joel 3:1; Zech. 2:12

Syria
- Historic Regions - Western Assyria, W. Mesopotamia, Aram
- Significant Cities - Damascus, Aleppo
- Key Prophecies - Amos 1:3; Zech. 9:1

Jordan
- Historic Regions - Ammon, Moab, Edom, Hagrites
- Significant Cities - Amman, Petra, Sodom & Gomorrah
- Key Prophecies - Isa. 11:14; 34:8-10; Jer. 49:17; Ezek. 25:1-14

Iraq
- Historic Regions - Babylonia, Assyria, E. Assyria
- Significant Cities - Nineveh, Nimrod, Ur
- Key Prophecies - Nahum; Zeph. 2:13; Isa. 13:1-19

Iran
- Historic Regions - Persia, Medes (Media), Elam
- Significant Cities - Tehran, Esfahan, Tabriz
- Key Prophecies - Dan. 8:20; 11:2; Jer. 25:25; 49:34-39; Ezek. 38:5

Saudi Arabia
- Historic Regions - Desert by the sea, Midian, Dedan
- Significant Cities - Medina, Mecca
- Key Prophecies - Isa. 21; Ezek. 30:5; Jer. 25:24

Yemen
- Historic Regions - Sheba
- Significant Cities - Sanaa
- Key Prophecies - Ezek. 38:13

Egypt
- Historic Regions - Mitzrayim, Sinai, Memphis
- Significant Cities - Cairo, Alexandria, Thebes
- Key Prophecies - Isa. 19:1-24; Jer. 9:25; Ezek. 29-30

Sudan & Somalia
- Historic Regions - Cush
- Significant Cities - Khartoum
- Key Prophecies - Ezek. 30:5; 38:5

Libya
- Historic Regions - Put (or Phut)
Key Prophecy Examples

**Ex. 1)** Ezek. 30 speaks of God’s judgment when the day of the Lord comes - “a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.” Ezek. 30:3. “Cush, and Put, and Lud, and all Arabia, and Libya, and the people of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword.” Ezek. 30:5. Who are these nations?

This scripture refers to, in order, Sudan (& Somalia), Libya, Turkey, Saudi Arabia (w/ Yemen and others in the Arabian Peninsula), Libya (again), and most likely the Palestinians (Gaza and/or Lebanon - literally, the sons of the land of covenant). Egypt is also included because the whole context of Ezek. 30 is a pronouncement of a judgment against Egypt. Verse 5 simply lists the other nations that will be caught up in the judgment.

**Ex. 2)** The nations who are said to be judged at the battle of Armageddon are Meshech and Tubal, along with Persia, Cush, Put, “Gomer and all his hordes; Beth-togarmah from the uttermost parts of the north with all his hordes; many peoples are with you.” Ezek. 38:2-6. Who are these nations? The answer: Turkey, Iran, Sudan (& Somalia), Libya, Azerbaijan & N. Turkey and unspecified others most likely including the “Stans.”

**Ex. 3)** Jer. 25:17-26 lists a wide variety of nations upon whom God will pour out His judgment. They are: Jerusalem and Judah [central Israel], Egypt [Egypt], Uz [southern Israel], Philistia (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod) [Gaza and coastal Israel], Edom, Moab and the sons of Ammon [Jordan]; Tyre and Sidon [Lebanon], “the coastland across the sea” [probably Turkey], Dedan, Tema, Buz, “and all who cut the corners of their hair” [coastal Arabian peninsula], Arabia and “the mixed tribes who dwell in the desert” [Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Arabian peninsula], Zimri [probably western Iran], Elam and Media [Iran], “all the kings of the north, far and near” [Turkey and the “Stans” and possibly Syria], “all the kingdoms of the world that are on the face of the earth” [unnamed others], and Babylon [Iraq]. In other words, pretty much the entire Middle East. Less likely, but possible, are Europe, North or South America, southern Africa and the orient.

Once you know the modern equivalents for biblical designations of nations, it’s not hard to figure out who various prophecies are directed towards. Geographically, biblical prophecy is essentially all about propping up and restoring the land of Israel, and tearing down and judging the surrounding nations. As far as God is concerned, Israel really is the Promised Land, and Jerusalem (you might say) is the apple of God’s eye. The evidence strongly suggests that everything significant in prophecy will occur in the Mideast, with Jerusalem as the epicenter.

Aside: As a Westerner, a Gentile and (as far as I know) a Japhethite, I admit to being less than enthusiastic when I was first exposed to the idea that God has some special place in the world He considers to be His favorite. Especially when that place is more special and holy than any other on earth, is very far away, I have never been to, doesn’t seem to affect my daily life in any way, is a place of constant turmoil, and (to my eyes) isn’t that pretty. A bunch of barren rocks and parched ground. I can think of plenty of places which are far more important or desirable to me personally.

But the evidence is overwhelming. I cannot escape the inevitable conclusion. For reasons that are
His own, God has simply set things up this way and I have to roll with it. The Christian hope is pinned to very Jewish prophecies. And if I want to find the truth, I have to come to grips with it.

**PROPHETIC SYMBOLS**

In addition to knowing the main characters and places in the prophetic story, you need to know that some people, or groups of people, are often symbolically referred to as an inanimate object. Here is a list of some common symbols and their most frequent meanings as used throughout prophetic scripture (this is not a complete list by any means):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>Kingdom (nation) or empire</td>
<td>Isa. 2:2-4; Jer. 51:25; Dan. 2:35; Ps. 46:2-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waters / rivers / seas</td>
<td>Gentiles generally, or people of mixed ethnic groups</td>
<td>Rev. 17:1; Ps 72:8; Isa 42:15, 43:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>King or national ruler</td>
<td>Rev. 13:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman / Bride</td>
<td>The people of God, <em>i.e.</em>, Israel or the Church</td>
<td>Rev. 12:17; 19:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harlot / Prostitute</td>
<td>Apostate religion</td>
<td>Rev. 17:3, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beast</td>
<td>An evil nation or empire</td>
<td>Dan. 7:5-7; Rev. 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>Religious followers</td>
<td>Ezek. 29:4-5; Mat. 4:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone / rock</td>
<td>Messiah or Christ</td>
<td>Isa. 28:16; Dan. 2:34-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stars</td>
<td>Angels</td>
<td>Isa. 14:12; Mat. 24:29; Mk. 13:25; Rev. 1:20; 9:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragon / Serpent / Beelzebul</td>
<td>Satan, the “Lord of the Flies”</td>
<td>Rev. 20:2</td>
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</table>

**Key Prophecy Examples**

**Ex. 1** Isa. 2:2 says, “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it.” Jer. 51:25 says, “Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, declares the Lord, which destroys the whole earth; I will stretch out my hand against you, and roll you down from the crags, and make you a burnt mountain.”

These verses are talking about two kingdoms: first, the Millennial kingdom of Christ; second, the kingdom of the Antichrist. Both use mountain as a symbol to represent a kingdom. However (and this is typical of the way prophecy works), the symbology actually functions at two levels. On one level, a future literal kingdom is represented by a figurative mountain.

At the same time, literal mountains figure prominently in the real world working out of God’s plan - such as Mt. Horeb, Mt. Sinai, the Mt. of Olives, etc. As we will see further on, the Jewish Temple Mount(ain), the Mt. of Olives, and the mountains of Israel all are key locations where end times
prophecy will be fulfilled. So on a second level, literal mountains pre-figure the coming kingdom of Christ, which in its final form will be a mountain literally and figuratively.

This also explains why Christ is often referred to allegorically as a stone, a rock, or a cornerstone, as He is individually the foundation for the kingdom (mountain) of God.

Ex. 2) As per Rev. 17:1, the great prostitute (Babylon the Great) is seated on many waters, which we are told in Rev. 17:15 refers to peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. When we see Balaam’s prophecy concerning Israel in Num. 24:7 that “water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters,” we understand this to mean the descendants of Israel (his seed) will be scattered among many nations, foretelling the diaspora.

Thus we see in Ps. 65:5, “O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas,” the obvious reference is to the peoples and nations of the earth. Knowing this symbology, we can also appreciate why God commonly uses the river of life or living waters as a reference to His life-giving spirit, for it nourishes all the nations of mankind. The nations symbolized as seas also explains why believers in God are sometimes characterized as fish, since they live among the nations of the earth but are distinct from them.

Ex. 3) Stars are often used in the scripture to indicate an innumerable amount, typically of someone’s descendants. Joseph’s dream, which caused his brothers to despise and sell him, depicted his brothers as eleven stars who bowed down to him. Gen. 37:9.

But when the Bible refers to stars which are falling or which have fallen, or uses the word stars together with the host of heaven or a similar context, it is talking about angels. Thus, when Judg. 5:20 says, “From heaven the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera,” it is referring to warriors, i.e., the host of heaven, and therefore angels. Satan is referred to as a fallen star in Isa. 14:12-13. The demons, or angels who have been cast out of heaven (or will be cast down to earth), are referred to as fallen stars in Dan. 8:10 and Rev. 12:4.

Thus, when we get to the end of all prophecy and the new heavens and new earth have been established, we should not miss the symbology involved. The New Jerusalem, for example, will be a mountain both literally as a tall physical structure on the new earth and symbolically as the ultimate embodiment of the kingdom of God.

The new earth will not have any seas - both literally referring to the lack of any large bodies of salt water and symbolically referring to the lack of unbelieving nations. When the new heavens are referred to, there is also no mention of stars, which is consistent with there being no need of a literal sun or moon. Symbolically, the absence of any mention of stars is consistent with the absence of any fallen stars, i.e., fallen angels. And among people the concept of descendants (i.e., stars) will no longer have any meaning.

Keep in mind that not every use of a particular word needs to be symbolic. The Bible uses mountains, seas, stars, etc. as ordinary words with literal meanings far more often that it uses them symbolically. You have to examine the context, see if the object is portrayed as being an actor or a person, or as a collection of people, and determine whether the usage is symbolic or not. It takes practice, but the more you do it, the clearer things become.
PARALLELS WITH EXODUS

Nothing God does is by accident. Egypt is often used in the Bible as a type of many kinds of great wickedness, both past (Ezek. 23:3) and future (Rev. 11:8). Similarly, there are parallels between the ten plagues God sent on Egypt in the time of the Exodus and the plagues and judgments He will send on the world in the end times. This is because these plagues (both past and future) are not random punishments, but each carries a specific moral significance. Looking at the past and future divine judgments together gives insight as to the significance of each plague and helps us understand what God is doing.

Note: Here plague refers to a sudden appearance or outbreak of something unpleasant in very large numbers or with unusual frequency, and is distinguished from the term pestilence. The word pestilence is used frequently in Ezekiel, but only once in Revelation (Rev. 6:8) and almost always means a viral or biological disease that spreads rapidly. But a biblical plague is almost always not a biological disease. Plague is commonly used in Revelation, but never in Ezekiel.

1st Plague - water turned to blood. In Ex. 7:14-25 God turned the water of all the rivers (including the Nile), canals, ponds, and pools in Egypt to blood, killing all the fish. In Rev. 8:8, God will turn a third of the sea to blood, kill a third of all sea creatures, and destroy a third of all ships. In Rev. 16:3-6 God will turn the rest of the sea, as well as all the rivers and springs, to blood and kill everything in them.

The interpretation of this plague is given in Rev. 16:6, “For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” In other words, turning water to blood is a sign to those who have shed innocent blood. It is a judgment for it always kills sea creatures which are a major food source for people and also makes the water unusable for navigation or other purposes. Turning water to blood isn’t merely changing its color - it is also changing the consistency of the water, making it thicker.

In ancient Egypt, the Israelites, the people of God, were enslaved and mistreated by the Egyptians. In the Tribulation, Jews and Christians alike will be persecuted and the Antichrist kingdom will wage war against them (Rev. 12:17; 13:7). There will be plenty of bloodguiltiness to go around, and the fact that water will become blood worldwide in the end times shows the extent to which the people of God will be persecuted and innocent blood shed. However, not all of the innocent blood will be shed because of religious persecution. Many millions of people will die just from the wars waged or caused by the Antichrist. (Rev. 6:3-4.)

2nd Plague - frogs. In Ex. 8:1-13 God made frogs come up out of the Nile to swarm the land, buildings and the people, which frogs then soon died and stank. In Rev. 16:13, three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. The purpose of these unclean spirits is to assemble the kings of the whole world for battle. Apart from two instances in the Psalms recalling the Exodus plague, these are the only times frogs are mentioned in scripture.

It highly suggests that frogs are symbolic of unclean spirits. And the purpose of unclean spirits is apparently to stir up wickedness and rebellion. In the case of Egypt, there were undoubtedly many unclean spirits in the land due to the great amount of idolatry present, which provoked the Egyptians into rebellion against the will of God. In the future, the purpose of the unclean spirits will be to stir
up the nations into rebellion so that they will want to wage war against God at Armageddon.

3rd plague - gnats. In Ex. 8:16-19 God turned the dust of Egypt into gnats which covered the land, the people and animals. I think the significance of the plague has less to do with gnats than it does with dust. God made man from the dust of the ground and to dust we shall return, and in a certain sense all men are like dust to God. Gen. 3:19. In Zeph. 1:17 God promises to pour out the blood of mankind like dust when the Great Day of the Lord (Armageddon) comes. I conclude that gnats and dust both symbolize that God will bring the wicked to nothing and obliterate their existence.

4th plague - flies. In Ex. 8:20-32 God sent swarms of flies to cover the land, buildings and people of Egypt, but the land of Goshen (where the Israelites lived) was spared from the plague. The primary significance of this plague seems to be that it was an indication of decay and death. Flies are usually associated with carcasses. Symbolically, flies represented the moral decay and sinfulness leading to death characterized by the Egyptians, but not the Israelites.

Certainly there will be much death and decay in the Tribulation, whether from fish dying in the oceans or people being slaughtered. This will all be brought about because of the activity of Satan and his agent, the Antichrist. It is no accident that another name for Satan is Beelzebul, literally, the Lord of the Flies. Mat. 9:34; 12:24. Satan is the lord of death and decay, whereas God is the God of the living. The Lord of the flies will be on the rise in the end times, and God will judge him.

Actually, I think Satan’s title as Lord of the Flies is a bit of divine humor. In God’s kingdom, the only things Satan can rule over (death and decay) are the things that aren’t good for anything, things no one really wants, and things that won’t exist in eternity. Yet, it’s the best Satan can do. So when it is said Satan is Beelzebul, what he really has is a kingdom which amounts to nothing. Ha, ha.

5th plague - livestock die. In Ex. 9:1-7 God killed all the livestock of Egypt (donkeys, camels, herds, and flocks), but not one livestock animal of the Israelites died. Symbolically, this plague represented a stripping away of man's wealth and substance as a judgment for his sins. In ancient times, wealth was a function of livestock. Both Abraham (Gen. 13:2) and Isaac (Gen. 26:12) were regarded as wealthy in large part because of their flocks and herds.

Now, as in the future, wealth is represented by more diverse goods, such as precious metals, jewels, expensive cloths, costly wood, metals, minerals, spices, wines, foods, slaves, and oil in addition to cattle and livestock. See Rev. 18:12-13. God will not hesitate to take this all away during the Tribulation. Thus, Rev. 18:17 says, speaking of Babylon the great, the great city, “For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.” The things sinful men treasure are not the things God values. See, Matt. 6:20.

6th plague - boils. In Ex. 9:8-12 God causes boils (bumpy, red, pus-filled lumps) to appear on the skin of people and animals. Very unpleasant - I daresay a form of torture. I take the meaning to be this: boils are an outward manifestation (on the body) of the sin and wickedness of the heart. In other words, boils are a sign to the wicked that their spirits are full of vileness, disease and corruption.

Thus we see in Rev. 16:2 that, “harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.” I assume the same thing is going on, i.e., an outward
manifestation of inward wickedness. After all, receiving the mark of the beast is a form of ultimate rebellion against God deserving the most extreme punishment forever. Rev. 14:9-11. It is ironic that acceptance of the mark of the beast on a person’s body will inevitably lead to God marking them on their body as well - and not in a good way.

**7th plague - hail mixed with fire.** In Ex. 9:13-34 God sent heavy hail mixed with fire upon all the open areas so that any man or beast not sheltered died. The Egyptians were pre-warned, so that anyone who wanted to seek shelter could - only those who did not regard the warning perished. The hail did not fall in the land of Goshen, however. An obvious punishment of random death and peril for the wicked while sparing the righteous.

This plague will be revisited in the Tribulation twice. First, in Rev. 8:7 (the 1st trumpet), when hail and fire mixed with blood will burn up a third of the earth. In this instance, no one is mentioned as being killed. Second, in Rev. 16:21, at probably very near the end of the Tribulation (the 7th bowl), when hailstones weighing 100 pounds each will fall on people and kill them. The context suggests that only the wicked will suffer this plague. Although, that could be because the righteous will be persecuted almost to the point of extinction by the time the 7th bowl is poured out.

**8th plague - locusts.** In Ex. 10:1-20 God sent a swarm of locusts on Egypt which covered the land and ate every plant in the entire country so that nothing was left. Essentially, the locusts were an army of destroyers to strip the earth bare - destroyers doing God’s bidding against the wicked.

In Rev. 9:1-4 God will send what symbolically is described as a great swarm (dark cloud) of locusts. In sharp contrast to Exodus, the locusts are instructed specifically not to harm any plants, but only to sting and torture people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. Thus, another army doing God’s bidding against the wicked, but only to torment, not to destroy. And in this case, the locusts are probably not literal, but symbolically represent demon hordes, as is evident from the fact they originate from the bottomless pit, the jail cell for fallen angels. Also, the physical description of them in Rev. 9:7-11 makes it clear these are not literal locusts.

By this time, you have probably picked up on the fact that the future plagues are similar to the historic plagues, and carry similar moral significance, but each one is executed in a distinctly different way than the prior instances. That is why I say there are parallels between the plagues of Exodus and the plagues of Revelation - not that the Exodus plagues will be repeated in the end times.

I think it a true rule to say that God never does the same thing twice in exactly the same way. He is never limited or constrained by the way He has done things before. If we think we can predict the way God will act because of some prior exercise of discretion, we will almost always be wrong. Yes, when it comes to following a law or keeping a promise, God will act in predictable ways. But when it comes to discretionary actions He exercises that discretion differently each time. And the act of imposing judgment in this present life is always discretionary with God, because He always retains the discretion to impose no judgment at all.

**9th plague - darkness.** In Ex. 10:21-29 God covered Egypt with a profound darkness for three days, so that no one could see each other or even get up. However, there was light in Goshen. This works symbolically on two levels. First, the wicked are covered in much sin - the inward darkness is
exposed. Second, the darkness represents extreme separation from God and foreshadows hell as a place of perpetual darkness. Think of hell as an eternal separation from God (not merely as an eternal punishment), and put it together with the idea that God is light (1 Jn. 1:5). Therefore, to be separated from Him is to be plunged into profound darkness, which is inescapably a punishment.

Thus, it should be no surprise that when the Antichrist kingdom arrives, God will plunge it (the kingdom of the beast) into darkness for a time. Rev. 16:10. The scripture doesn’t say for how long. But it is a direct parallel to Exodus and is a judgment on an evil empire for all the same reasons.

In a separate event, the sun, moon and stars will all be partially darkened as a sign to the whole earth that Jesus is ready to return. See Rev. 8:12; Mat. 24:29. Since Jesus will return “with great glory” (Mat. 24:30), most probably meaning with much light, it sets up a striking contrast. The world will be overshadowed with darkness at the point in time when the rebellion against God will be at its zenith. And that is just when Jesus will burst through the darkness with much light to defeat the forces of evil. Don’t tell me God isn’t interested in theatricality.

10th plague - death of firstborn. In Ex. 12:29-32 God killed the firstborn (sons) of the Egyptians and all their livestock, but the firstborn of Israel (who had been protected by blood on the doorposts and lintels) did not die. The purpose of this plague was to deny the wicked the firstfruits of their offspring (the strongest and best). See Ps. 78:51; 105:36.

In the end times, God is going to perform a type of anti-plague. Rather than destroying the firstborn of the wicked, He will save the firstborn of the nations. By this I mean the 144,000 of Israel, discussed at length later. Suffice it to say at this point that the 144,000 will be the firstfruits of Israel, namely, the first among the Jews to turn to Christ. In addition, Israel is God’s firstborn son among the nations. Exo. 4:22. So the symbolism of the firstfruits and firstborn is maintained, but instead of destroying the firstborn of the wicked, God will raise up the firstborn of the righteous.

KINGDOM OF CHRIST vs. KINGDOM OF SATAN

Psalm 83 (summary) - O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God!  For behold, your enemies make an uproar; those who hate you have raised their heads. They lay crafty plans against your people; they consult together against your treasured ones. They say, “Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more!” For they conspire with one accord; against you they make a covenant – the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Asshur also has joined them; they are the strong arm of the children of Lot.

Thrones and Dominions

The common thread throughout all of end times prophecy is the battle between Jesus and Satan, or more properly, between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan. Consider how many times Jesus talked about His kingdom, the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven. [Over a hundred times in the Gospels.] Necessarily, the key players in this battle between kingdoms are nations, governments, and the leaders of nations. Go back and look at Mat. 24:4-14 (which is an overview of the end times) and see how often Jesus refers to kingdoms and nations. (Seven times.)
The war between good and evil will not be won by whoever gets the most followers. Undoubtedly Satan will have the most followers. Even at the end of the Millennium, after Jesus has ruled visibly for 1,000 years, the number of people rebelling against God will be “like the sand of the sea.” Rev. 20:8. The godly people of the world have always been a minority, a remnant. Just think about how many people were destroyed (millions), versus how many were saved (eight), in Noah’s flood. But who wins the war will be whoever establishes their kingdom and overthrows and destroys the competing kingdom forever. This is not merely a war of individuals, or of religious devotees, but a war of kingdoms.

Psalm 83 is a snapshot of this epic battle of kingdoms, itemized by nation. Not all of the nations are named here who will participate in Armageddon, but you definitely get a sense that there is a longstanding, historical outright hatred of the Jews and the nation of Israel which I have already alluded to. You might be tempted to look at Psalm 83 as something that was in the past, but when you realize all the people groups mentioned there comprise the nations of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Arabia, along with the Gaza strip, you see that nothing has really changed since it was written. If anything, the desire to wipe Israel out as a nation and erase any memory of its name is more intense now than ever before in these very same nations, plus others.

We like to think that the world has changed and/or progressed, and it has with regards to technology, taming the earth, and developments in medicine, communication, transportation, etc. But we have to realize none of these are the things that are important to God, and these are not the things driving biblical prophecy. What is important to God is religious allegiance, obedience to His laws, the security and prosperity of His people, and a proper regard for the places and people God favors.

The reality is that the opponents of God and His people, the manner of disobedience to His laws, and the religious influences which blaspheme God or deny His existence, are not things that are new or recent. Instead, they are things of very longstanding and go back to the beginning of history as we saw in Gen. 3. To the extent this opposition has progressed, it has merely changed shape and become better organized - not more morally sound. And there is a very specific pattern in which this opposition has played out, and will play out in the future.

The pattern is this: sinful man starts out unorganized, scattered in his rebellion, and over time finds ways to build upon the rebellion of prior generations to build and organize in opposition to God. God lets this activity come to its full fruition, then takes action to disrupt man’s plans and send him back to the beginning in terms of being unorganized and scattered. Then the pattern repeats. Each time, Satan is the leader of the evil kingdom. Looking at the Bible as a whole, this pattern has, and will, play out in three acts.

Act One: After the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3), opposition to God grows swiftly from the original seed of rebellion, so much so that in the time of Noah, God wanted to blot man out from the earth. Gen. 6:5-7. The result of which was a worldwide flood killing everyone except eight people. But there is no mention of nations or kingdoms prior to the flood, so it would seem that man’s rebellion was commonplace, but largely unorganized.

That changes in the time from the end of the flood until the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11), an interlude which may have been as short as 100 years. That is when God says there is nothing people cannot accomplish once they put their collective mind to it (Gen. 11:6). Here we have the first hint of
organized rebellion, which we might think of as the first iteration of the kingdom of Satan. So God confuses human language, rendering people unable to communicate and forcing them to divide into separate nations for the first time. This language barrier is sufficient to thwart their ultimate organization for millennia.

Act Two: What plays out after Babel is the succession of kingdoms as described in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the layered statue (Dan. 2:31-35), a prophetic vision we will discuss in detail in Part 4. The succession of kingdoms is not merely a lesson in world history, it is the manner in which the kingdom of Satan grows, refines, increases in hostility to God, and increases its domination of the earth. We are nearing the end of this long Second Act, when the ultimate (but not the final) iteration of the kingdom of Satan - the kingdom of the beast - will be revealed.

Meanwhile, with recent technological progress, the language barrier has largely been overcome. People can learn multiple languages quite easily and computers enhance the capability to communicate across languages. Satan will use historical enmities to his advantage and organize various nations of the world into a more or less unified whole (more like a fragile alliance). But it will be enough to launch an all out attack on God, His people and His holy city. At Armageddon, Jesus will crush the kingdom of the beast, annihilate most of the opposition, and institute His earthly kingdom.

Act Three: Following Armageddon, similar to the situation after Noah’s flood, the world population will be depleted and societies will have to start over from scratch. Satan and his demons will be taken out of the way at this time, so no evil kingdom will be organized during this time. Nevertheless, during the Millennium discontent will fester and at its end, Satan will return as community organizer-in-chief and whip up all the malcontents in the world into waging one final battle against Christ and His kingdom.

This will not result in the actual creation of another iteration of the kingdom of Satan, but it will be Satan’s final attempt to seize a kingdom for himself, because as long as he is on the earth that is his goal. But this is the final act, so God will not punish and scatter the disobedient as before, nor will He allow them to grow and organize in the future. Rather, He will at that time render a final judgment, cast the disobedient into outer darkness forever, and eliminate the possibility of any future rebellion.

While this is all taking place, the kingdom of God will play out in four acts. Act One: God chose the nation of Israel to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Exo. 19:6. Act Two: God chose the Church to be a spiritual kingdom. Rev. 1:5-6. Act Three: Jesus Christ will establish his earthly kingdom for a Millennium. Rev. 11:15. Act Four: God will establish His everlasting kingdom with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. Rev. 21. All of which was foretold a long time ago. Isa. 9:6-7. This is discussed in great detail in Part 5.

In the end, the question will not be how many people choose which side. The only question is, whose kingdom will prevail over the other and utterly destroy the opposition?

A Kingdom Religion and a Religious Kingdom

I have so far itemized who the historic and future enemies of God are, which nations are the subject
of foretold divine judgment, and where those nations are located. I have given a brief historical backdrop of why these various nations hate Israel, the people of God, the Promised Land, and God’s holy city, based on intra-family disputes and past conquests and enslavements. But there is more.

All of the nations singled out by the Bible for judgment (other than Israel, which will also be judged) share a current common religious affiliation, namely Islam. It is hard to ignore.

When considering candidates for the kingdom of the Antichrist, it is not the nations of Greece or Italy (Rome) which have sworn to wipe Israel off the face of the earth from time immemorial. It is not Greece or Rome which have hated Jews and Christians alike as infidels to be enslaved or beheaded from time immemorial. It is not Greece or Rome which have desired to conquer and overrun Jerusalem and the Holy Land from time immemorial.

Neither Greece nor Rome have exactly been saintly empires. Both have had their periods of paganism and debauchery (and as we will see, both are among the evil empires in the progression of Satan’s kingdom). But what religion or nation in the world today can possibly compete with Islam for its intense desire to openly and notoriously wage war with the kingdom of Jehovah God? Is Roman Catholicism to be compared with Islam in this regard? [A word of advice to Protestants and Reformed believers: Stop thinking like someone in the 16th or 17th centuries. The Pope is not and will not be the Antichrist. The Roman Catholic church is not the Beast kingdom.]

Neither are the common religious bonds of the Mideast nations surrounding Israel a recent development. These common religious bonds extend well beyond the 1,400 years since Mohammed into the ancient past.

Prior to Mohammed, the kingdoms of Sumer, Mesopotamia, Assyria, Babylonia, and Akkad (modern Iraq, Syria, Jordan and northern Arabia) all worshiped the moon-god. These are the earliest civilizations on earth, so we’re talking ancient roots here. The Sumerian name for the moon-god was Sin, as in the “wilderness of Sin,” and is the root of the word Sinai. The O.T. constantly rebuked the worship of the moon-god (see, Deut. 4:19;17:3; 2 Ki. 21:3,5; 23:5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5, etc.), variously prohibiting the worship of the sun, moon and stars, or the host of heaven.

When the popularity of the moon-god waned elsewhere, the Arabs continued to worship the moon-god and the host of heaven among others. Though they worshiped over 300 gods at the Kaabah in Mecca, the moon-god was apparently the chief deity. In fact, Mecca was originally built as a shrine for the moon-god at least as far back as the 2nd Century A.D. This is what made it the most sacred site of Arabian paganism. Muslims merely co-opted Mecca as a holy site centuries later.

The star and crescent moon symbol often associated with Islam actually pre-dates Mohammed by many centuries. Its use by the Moabites goes as far back as 1300-1400 B.C. It appears in various forms throughout many other Mideast nations in ancient times. The crescent symbol itself is almost certainly derived from the ancient worship of the moon-god. The origin of the star symbol is less certain, but is widely regarded as connected to the worship of the host of heaven. So it is not surprising that the crescent moon adorned the Kaabah in Mecca long before Mohammed’s time.

My research indicates that many, if not most, scholars agree that the use of the star and crescent
moon symbol became popular in Islam during the time of the Ottoman Empire, and that the symbol was borrowed from past uses, rather than invented, by the Turks. For their part, Muslims do not all agree that the star and crescent symbol represent Islam, and many argue that Islam has no symbol. There are, however, eleven Islamic nations which have made the symbol a part of their official flags: Algeria, Azerbaijan, Comoros, Malaysia, The Maldives, Mauritania, Pakistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Am I saying that Islam is really just a repackaged form of the worship of the heavenly host? No, I’m not. Am I saying the star and crescent symbol is a pagan symbol? Not really. Those are interesting arguments, but wholly unnecessary to this discussion and beside the point. I don’t need to assert them or prove them because they are irrelevant to prophetic understanding.

I’m simply saying that the Mideast nations surrounding Israel have a common religious bond that stretches back thousands of years. Starting back in the time of the earliest civilizations on earth, the Mideast nations engaged in widespread worship of the heavenly host. Some worshiped the moon-god, others worshiped the sun or stars. That these practices differed from place to place isn’t as important as the fact that they all involve worship of the heavenly host in some form.

These religious practices obviously morphed over the centuries, and the extent to which they were borrowed by Mohammed or incorporated into Islam I cannot say. It doesn’t matter. These same Mideast nations are all Islamic nations now. So they started out together worshiping the heavenly host centuries ago, and now they all worship Allah. The point is, they have always tracked together religiously at least in parallel, if not in unison.

I believe the net effect of this is that God, who knows the end from the beginning, looks at these nations (and has always looked at them) as more or less a unit. They all have shared animosities towards Israel that run back thousands of years, they have had similar religious heritages and share a present religious commonality. Thus, in the end times God is going to deal with them all in a similar fashion, in many respects identically.

God has pronounced judgments against each Mideast nation individually, but those judgments will all be fulfilled in the same way and the same time at Armageddon. These nations have individual histories and identities, but they have a collective future, if you will.

Should we be surprised that these very same nations today are more and more looking at themselves as a unit, and trying to perfect that concept with an actual international union, an Islamic Caliphate? You may reject the idea of the Mideast nations being a unit based on historical analysis, but the contemporary evidence is harder to shrug off. They clearly want to aggregate under an Islamic confederacy or Islamic republic. More on this when we get to The Coming Caliphate later.

Consider this: All of the nations of the Bible against whom a prophecy of judgment is given (other than Israel itself) are today Muslim. See, for example, Jer. 25:15-29 which lists (in addition to Israel), Egypt, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, Arabia, Turkey, the “Stans,” Iran and Iraq. All biblical prophecies concern nations in Northern Africa, the Mideast, and the parts of Asia from Turkey to Iran, including the “Stans” south of Russia. There are no biblical prophecies against Rome or Europe. Nor any against Russia or the Western Hemisphere.
Can it be any coincidence that the major distinguishing factor of Islam, compared to all other world religions, is the political component? That is, Islam seeks not only individual converts, but to control nations politically, establish its own version of a theocratic state, form a worldwide confederacy of nations (a caliphate), and impose its own version of law and government via Shariah law.

If any present day religion were to be considered a kingdom religion in the political sense, Islam is it. In fact, I will take it farther - Islam is actually a political machine seeking world domination that uses religion as a way to motivate followers and keep them in line. In Islam, religion is the means, not the ends. We have to stop thinking of Islam as merely a religious entity. Spiritual salvation or enlightenment is not the goal. World conquest is the goal, and religion is the engine that gets it there.

[Sorry, postmills - if you’re looking for a kingdom religion on the rise, the present-day Church isn’t even in the running. The coming kingdom of Christ will look nothing like churches do today.]

If you are willing to consider that end times prophecy is essentially about the war between two kingdoms, I’ve got a couple of kingdoms who are good candidates for you to look at. More on both to follow.

So much for the Big Picture. In Part 2, we will see how God is going to bring low the nations of the earth that have set their faces against him and also severely test the people of God, both Jews and Christians. Part 3 will explain how God is going to raise up and use His chosen nation Israel in the remaining time of world history. Part 4 will explore in greater detail who the opposition to God is, and what will become of them. Part 5 will examine God’s plans for the righteous - how He will lift them up, dwell among them and establish them forever.

**Part 2 - Judgment of the Nations**

The kingdom is coming, the kingdom is coming.

Why will God judge the nations of the world? Before the kingdom of Christ can be established, all the forces of evil and participants in the kingdom of Satan which oppose Christ or the people He has chosen for Himself must be taken out of the way and in most cases destroyed. Jesus isn’t going to compete with anyone else for sovereignty - all other sovereigns must be eliminated.

**A WORD OF CAUTION**

The events of Rev. ch. 6-19 are not necessarily disclosed to us in chronological order, and should not be read as a continuous timeline. Many of the events described here overlap time-wise, and in some cases are the same event described from different perspectives.

Two quick examples (spoiler alert!): the great earthquake mentioned in Rev. 6 and Rev. 16 are the same event, not two events separated by all the stuff in chapters 7-15. Similarly, the four horsemen of the apocalypse (first four seals) are an overview of the activities of the Antichrist which are described in more detail elsewhere, not separate events at all - so they are not in chronological order.
There is ample precedent for this elsewhere in the Bible. For example, Gen. 1 gives an overview of the entire creation of the world, including man. But then Gen. 2 focuses only on day six of the creation week, expanding and amplifying the events in Gen. 1, primarily God’s interactions with Adam and Eve. There is no conflict between the two - they are not separate creation accounts merely juxtaposed. They complement and agree with each other, yet present different emphases.

What this tells us is that when God does things, especially really big things, He often does so for several different reasons. By giving us multiple accounts of the same events, He gives us a glimpse of His multiple purposes for doing things. It also tells us that when and in what order God will do things is not nearly as important as what He is doing and why.

This is why we have four gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John), not just one. We don’t read the gospels sequentially (as though the events in Mark followed the events in Matthew). Instead, the gospels give us many of the same events, as well as different events overlapping in time, but written from different perspectives or for different emphases. Again, in this there is no conflict.

Thus, when we get to Revelation, we will see many references to beasts, to earthquakes, to people dying, to war, to plagues, to 144,000, etc. These things will be referred to in separate chapters seemingly separated by a large number of events. They may be referred to separately in the 7 seals, the 7 trumpets, and the 7 bowls. The same term may be applied to more than one object in different contexts. It requires careful study. Don’t assume the same terms always refer to the same person, place or event, and don’t automatically assume they are always different usages, either.

Notwithstanding all of this, if you just look at the seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls in isolation, there does seem to be a progression of severity. The seven trumpets are worse that the seven seals as a group. The seven bowls would seem of necessity to come at the very end of the Tribulation because they are more severe than all the prior judgments, but this may merely be the seven bowls as a group. Whether the seven bowls actually will take place in temporal sequence is not necessary for us to resolve.

**THE SEVEN SEALS**

Rev. 6:1-17; 8:1-5
- **1st Seal** - A rider on a white horse symbolizing conquest.
- **2nd Seal** - A rider on a red horse symbolizing war.
- **3rd Seal** - A rider on a black horse symbolizing famine.
- **4th Seal** - A rider on a ashen (pale) horse symbolizing death.

Since most people consider these first four seals as a group, I will discuss them together. The first four seals are the “four horsemen of the apocalypse,” which are given authority to kill one-fourth of all mankind. That is, one-fourth of the world population will be lost to the sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts as a form of divine judgment. Rev. 6:8. I do not view the horsemen as necessarily indicating a sequence, but merely that they will occur together during the Tribulation.

The first rider has a bow and is given a crown to conquer. This should not be confused with the rider on a white horse described in Rev. 19:11-16, which is Christ. Jesus will come to conquer evil and restore peace, whereas the first horseman will incite rebellion by starting wars. Peace will be
the last thing on his mind. The fact that he is given a crown signifies he will be a king among men. That his horse is white merely means he will be victorious in his conquests (an allusion to the Roman practice of having a victorious general ride into Rome on a white horse).

The second rider will arrive on a red horse, be given a great sword, and will take peace from the earth so people will kill each other. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, but this rider is stirring up trouble and chaos. He is instigating war and wants people to kill each other. These first two riders emphasize different aspects of the conflict that will characterize the Tribulation. The first horse emphasizes victorious conquests, whereas the second horse, being red, emphasizes the intense level of bloodshed to be expected. One-fourth of the world population will die in what will be, historically speaking, a very brief period of time - perhaps as little as 1335 days.

The third rider has a pair of scales in his hand, and a voice says, “A quart of wheat for a denarius” (i.e., a full day’s wage), “three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!” Both the pair of scales and the various economic references signify severe economic distress and in particular, famine (because food will be scarce). Modernly the term Black Friday is used to signify a positive financial event (the busiest shopping day of the year), but historically Black Monday, Black Tuesday and Black Thursday all refer to severe financial crashes. So it should be no surprise the third horse is black.

The fourth rider’s name is Death, and he is followed by Hades (the grave). The fourth horse is pale in color, the color of ashes. They are given authority to kill one-fourth of all mankind by the sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts. The word “they” might just mean Death and Hades, but since the second and third riders have already brought the sword and famine, I take the term to refer to all of the four horsemen collectively.

War and famine are easy to understand, since we have them both in our world today. Pestilence is used only this one time in the whole of the book of Revelation. Unlike the word plague, which we have already discussed (Parallel With Exodus), pestilence means a biological disease. Does this mean the Tribulation will see a worldwide pandemic leading to a (gasp!) zombie apocalypse? Hardly.

Yes, chemical or biological weapons may be used in the Tribulation, but pestilence is only one of four weapons of mass destruction identified, and all of them together account for a fourth of the world, not the elimination of the human race. Nonetheless, pestilence may account for the deaths of millions.

The curious element is the apparent use of weaponized wild beasts to kill people. I can’t quite wrap my head around that one. Are people really going to be killed by stampeding animals or ravenous predator cats? I am quite sure wild beasts does not refer to insects, or birds, or rodents, because such a meaning would be inconsistent with the rest of scripture. As for what is actually in view here, I cannot say.

But if we consider that the judgments pictured in these seals is really coming from God, and that the Antichrist is merely God’s instrument of choice to bring about those judgments, it makes more sense. In other words, the Antichrist isn’t weaponizing wild beasts, God is. This is consistent with other portions of scripture where the creation itself reflects the sin condition of mankind, as when
the land of Canaan vomited out its inhabitants. Lev. 18:25. And I suppose one could easily view the ten plagues against Egypt as instances when God weaponized frogs, locusts, flies and gnats. If He could do those things, why can’t He turn wild beasts against people?

Here is the first clue as to the identity of the riders: they are referred to in a collective sense, as though their missions are all bound together (“they were given authority”). Rev. 6:8. Other clues we will discuss later under the topic of the Antichrist, but here is a preview. Of all the actors described in Revelation, only the Antichrist is identified as one who will conquer many nations, and whose aim is to conquer the world. The book of Daniel, in particular, identifies the Antichrist as someone who will worship a god of fortresses, i.e., a god of war and be a warmonger.

As we will see, various punishments visited on the earth by God during the reign of the Antichrist will destroy much of the world’s food supply - not necessarily because the Antichrist wants food supplies destroyed, but because his actions will provoke that response from God. And the Antichrist is continually depicted as someone who will bring death and destruction, leaving untold casualties in his wake. Thus, all four horsemen are described in terms closely aligned with the activities of the Antichrist - whether by cause, or merely by effect.

So it seems reasonable to me to conclude that all four horsemen of the apocalypse symbolically represent the same person, the Antichrist. I see the four horsemen as each portraying a different aspect of the same person, not as four different people, or four different events. When the Antichrist comes, he will do all the things attributed to the four horsemen. In other words, all these things will come about because of his actions, with the end result that he will bring a fourth of the world's population to their deaths during the Tribulation.

Which leads me to a strange conclusion.

All of the seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls are judgments sent by God. If the Antichrist personally accounts for four of those judgments, it means he is also sent by God. Actually, it’s not that strange. I’ve already shown that the turmoil in the Mideast is all a direct result of the plan and intention of God going way back in history. So even though the Antichrist will be an agent of Satan, God is using him as a tool to bring about a victory by Jesus Christ to inaugurate God’s kingdom on earth. Clever.

• **5th Seal** - Martyred saints crying for vengeance. As we will see, the Antichrist will wage war against God’s people, and many (more likely most) will be martyred. Here the saints that die early on are told to wait for the killing to be complete before God takes His vengeance. This is consistent with various scriptures to the effect that God waits to act until the fullness of time takes place. Or, that God waits to make sure sin reaches its apex, and the time is right, before He steps in. See Gal. 4:4, Eph. 1:10, Rom. 11:25.

• **6th Seal** - Great earthquake, signs in the sky, stars falling to earth, the great day of the Lord. Here we are given a number of visible signs that the great day of the Lord (i.e., His judgment of the Antichrist and his hordes) is imminent. Many earthquakes are mentioned in connection with end times prophecies, but there is one that is the biggest of them all. See Ezek. 38:19 and Rev. 16:18.

In all likelihood, the earthquake of Rev. 6 is the same one described in Rev. 16. Rev. 6:14 says the
earthquake of the 6th Seal will remove every mountain and island from its place. Rev. 16:20 says that as a result of the earthquake of the 7th Bowl, every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. Ezek. 38:20 is to the same effect: all the fish, birds, animals and people on the earth will quake at God’s presence, and “the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground.” The mountains and islands of the earth can only logically be removed once, which indicates these three scriptures all refer to the exact same earthquake.

The 6th Seal is accompanied by signs and wonders in the heavens (a blackened sun, blood moon, and falling stars). Mat. 24:29 indicates these exact signs will happen immediately before the Second Coming. Similarly, the 7th Bowl of Rev. 16 occurs right before the Second Coming. Again, the indication is that these texts all describe the same event.

Finally, the events described in the 6th Seal are called the great day of the wrath of the Lamb. The 7th Bowl says God will make Babylon drink the wine of the fury of His wrath. It is hard to see how the great day of the wrath of the Lamb could be different from “the great day of the Lord,” i.e., the Second Coming. These are likely just two names for the same event. In addition, the 7th Bowl follows the 6th Bowl - which describes Armageddon. In other words, both the 6th Seal and the 7th Bowl occur on God’s “great day,” and both come at the end of the Tribulation. So the two earthquakes must be the same event. All the clues point in the same direction.

It is also interesting that a fig tree is mentioned by analogy in Rev. 6:13, just as in Mat. 24:32-33, indicating a correlation between the two texts. Remember, the Mat. 24 text is specifically about the Second Coming. As for the stars falling from the sky, this is figurative language - numerous gaseous bodies the size of astronomical stars will not literally land on the earth. This is undoubtedly a reference - here and in Mat. 24 - to fallen angels being restricted or displaced from their previous positions or realms and being sent to earth for a destructive purpose. More on this later.

I take the language regarding the mountains being thrown down as possibly both literal and figurative. There is a literal sense in which the earthquake will alter the earth’s topography, and we also see people hiding among the rocks of the mountains, i.e., what’s left after literally being shaken to pieces. But the reference to kings, generals and “the great ones” seeking refuge also indicates that world governments will collapse. The symbolic meaning of a mountain as referring to a kingdom is too obvious to ignore. This is only natural - capital cities and government buildings will undoubtedly be destroyed in the great earthquake. Plus, when Jesus comes to establish His earthly kingdom, all of the other governments, many of which will be distinctly evil, need to be removed.

• 7th Seal - Silence for half an hour and the golden censer. The 7th seal starts with a half hour of silence, followed by an introduction of the seven trumpets, and then a picture of a golden censer representing the prayers of the saints, which is thrown down to earth with fire, thunder, lightning and an earthquake. The references to fire, thunder, lightning and an earthquake in Rev. 8:5 probably refer back to the 6th Seal as a literary device for adding emphasis to the text and do not signify separate events from those of the 6th Seal.

The golden censer would seem to be another word picture of the prayers of the Tribulation saints for God’s vengeance on the forces of evil. The half hour of silence probably indicates great anticipation - that whatever happens next is really significant. However, I take the half hour to refer solely to John’s experience in receiving the vision - not that in the future, when the seals are broken,
there will be a half hour space between the seals and the trumpets. We already know the seals and trumpets are not given in chronological order, so it makes no sense to treat the half hour as part of a future sequence of events. But I could be wrong.

**THE SEVEN TRUMPETS**

*Rev. 8:6-9:21* (summarized below) -

- **1st Trumpet** - *Hail and fire mixed with blood burning up one-third of the earth's land and vegetation.* We know from 2 Pet. 3:7-13 that the earth is reserved for judgment by fire. However, that is a pretty obvious reference to the end of time, when God destroys the present earth completely and creates a new heaven and new earth. Rev. 21:1.

  This judgment is more of a direct parallel with the 7th plague of Exodus, although no one is mentioned as being killed as a result. It appears to be primarily a judgment on the land. However, the fact that hail and fire are mixed with blood signifies it is a punishment visited on those who have blood on their hands. Since one-third of the earth’s land is affected, the bloodguiltiness will be widespread.

- **2nd Trumpet** - *A great mountain thrown into the sea, resulting in the destruction of one-third of all sea life and ships on the sea, with one-third of the sea turning to blood.* Again, I see a possible literal and figurative fulfillment. We know that God turned water into literal blood back in Egypt in the time of Moses (1st plague of the Exodus), so there is no reason to think He can’t do it again on a larger scale. Simply killing one-third of all sea life could release a great deal of blood into the oceans, but that is not all that’s happening here. This is quite possibly a literal conversion of water to blood as a judgment against those who have shed innocent blood.

  It’s also hard to escape the possible symbolic reference to a mountain and the seas, meaning a kingdom and the peoples of the earth, whenever these terms are used figuratively. Under this interpretation, assuming the great mountain is the Antichrist kingdom, it will result in the killing of one-third of the world population upon its destruction.

  However, I do not think the context here suggests a symbolic reading. The context is a destruction of sea life - meaning aquatic species, not people. There is an explicit killing of one-third of the world’s population in the 6th trumpet, so there is no reason to force that reading here. What is being referred to is likely either a tremendous land slide that falls into the ocean, or possibly an asteroid that falls into the ocean.

- **3rd Trumpet** - *A star falls from heaven named Wormwood, turning a third of all rivers and springs bitter, killing many people.* “Bitter water” is essentially poisoned or toxic water, and Wormwood speaks of a form of poison or toxin. Again, the reference to a star and rivers indicates, in a figurative sense, the falling of Satan and the spiritual poisoning of a third of mankind by his deceptions, to the point where these fanatical followers will die.

  Could this 3rd trumpet be a reference to literal rivers and springs? Possibly. As we will see shortly, in the 3rd bowl a third of the rivers and springs will be turned to blood. So it is possible the 3rd trumpet refers to another third of those same waters. If so, water contamination is going to be a major factor in the Tribulation. A lot of people are going to be thirsty and may die as a result, since *rivers and springs* refers to fresh (drinking) water.
Note: It should be pretty obvious that when judgment comes on the earth, environmental disasters will befall mankind, but not because of industrial pollution or greenhouse gases. I have news for everyone - God actually made people as carbon emitters by design, so taxing carbon or labeling it as a pollutant is slapping God in the face. When global environmental disaster comes, it will be by the hand of God and be brought because of moral sin (idolatry and lawlessness), not because man is fulfilling the dominion mandate to subdue the earth and creating carbon emissions in the process.

- **4th Trumpet** - *A third of the sun, moon and stars are darkened.* Possibly a reiteration of the 6th seal and Mat. 24, but I tend to think not. Whether such things will happen on multiple occasions, I can’t say for sure, but the event described here does not have a lot in common with the great day of the Lord. It is curious that here we are told the sun, moon and stars will each be darkened by a third. Not completely darkened or obstructed (as by clouds), but in some other way yet to be revealed. Not the same as the sun being blackened, the moon turning to blood, and the stars falling from the sky as described in the 6th seal and Mat. 24.

I think there are two possible meanings of this judgment. First, it could be a type of darkening in parallel with the 9th plague of Exodus, but I tend not to view it that way. For one thing, the Exodus plague involved utter darkness, and this will not have nearly the same effect. The other possibility is that God is showing He has complete and utter control of the heavenly host, and that they serve Him, not the other way around. It’s a question of who is in charge. I lean toward that view.

- **5th Trumpet (First Woe)** - *A star fallen from heaven is given the key to the bottomless pit, which he opens.* Smoke or a dark cloud rises from the pit, from which come special tormenting locusts who have the power to sting people with their tails like scorpions. They can torment, but not kill, anyone on earth who does not have the seal of God on their foreheads for a period of five months. People will want to die, but God will not let them die. A vivid description of the locusts is given: horses with gold crowns on their heads, human faces, women’s hair, lion’s teeth, iron breastplates, wings, and scorpion tails.

I’ve read a lot of strange interpretations of this text. Some interpret the locusts literally and have tried to draw a picture of all the features on one literal beast. Others interpret the locusts as Muslim hordes wearing military gear. Even supposing Islam is the religion of the Antichrist, there is no reason to start thinking that all the end times prophecies are about Muslims. If you look back at the table of common symbols, the interpretation is actually quite easy.

The star fallen from heaven is Satan. We know this not only because he releases the horde held in the bottomless pit whose one task is to torment the human race, but also because in Rev. 9:11 we are told that he is an angel, he is king over the horde, and his names include Abaddon (Hebrew) and Apollyon (Greek), both of which mean destroyer. Clearly this is Satan.

The locust horde is undoubtedly the demons (fallen angels) who have been sent to the abyss when cast out of people throughout history or have been detained there by God. See Luke 8:31. The abyss is where Satan and his demons will be locked up for 1,000 years after Jesus returns. See Rev. 20:1-3. The Bible only ever speaks of the bottomless pit as a jail for fallen angels. Nobody else ever goes in or out of the abyss. The locust horde must be demons, which means that locusts are to be taken symbolically, not literally.
In modern vernacular, these are the “dark armies” whose coming is foretold in devilish prophecy. As Satan the deceiver sells it, when the dark armies come they will overthrow the tyrant Jehovah. But it will be to no avail. Jehovah will conquer them and punish them forever. Yes, the demon horde will look ugly and scary. Think Indiana Jones style scary ghosts, only worse. But will they be literal/physical beasts? Probably not.

Now why, you may ask, is Satan letting loose his demons so they can torment only the wicked on the earth, and none of the righteous? What does this profit him? Well, the Tribulation is a time of great harvest - that is, human death where the fate of immortal souls is forever determined. It will be a time of great harvest for God - hence the many Tribulation saints who will see Satan’s lies and God’s judgment and turn to Jesus.

But it will also be a time of great harvest for Satan, as many millions of people will not yield to God and die unsaved - just as Satan wants. Misery loves company, and Satan wants to take as many people with him to destruction as he can. If he can have fun tormenting them on their way to hell, why not? That’s just the kind of guy Satan is. Also see Rev. 14:14-20 re: the two great harvests.

Don’t bother trying to convert the five month period into prophetic years, or look for fulfillment in the past. In this instance, five months is five months in the future. As a last point, the only people mentioned in Revelation as having the seal of God on their foreheads are the 144,000 of Israel, so this is likely a reference to them as being spared the torture of the locusts. I take it there will be few, if any, other Christians alive at this time. The scripture simply does not say that all believers at that time will have the seal of God on their foreheads, so I cannot assume it.

• **6th Trumpet (Second Woe)** - *Four angels who were bound at the river Euphrates will be released at an appointed hour, day, month and year to kill a third of mankind.* We are told there is an army of 200,000,000 mounted troops who apparently will do this killing. The job of the angels, apparently, is to rally the troops and spur them to action. The killing will be accomplished by fire, smoke and sulphur coming from the mouths of the horses. We are also told that the people who remain and are not killed will not repent of their idolatry and wickedness.

Whether the four angels are fallen or not is hard to say, and I don’t know that it matters. The angels of heaven, or the “heavenly host,” literally means an angelic army ready to make war. So warrior angels could be either good or evil. It is interesting that they are bound at this place for this specific time and task, but I don’t know why that would make them any more or less fallen angels.

I was taught as a youth that since China was the only nation on earth that could field an army of 200,000,000 men, this must be a prophecy about the coming Chinese invasion. Looking back at it now, I can’t imagine what people were thinking - except that people tend to view prophecy through the lens of their own experience.

Thus, the Revived Roman Empire theory sprang up after the Reformation out of a disdain for Roman Catholicism. Similarly, both China (the supposed king of the east) and Russia (the supposed king of the north) became popular prophecy targets in the 20th century during the rise of communism.

Even though this text (Rev. 9:13-21) nowhere mentions the 200,000,000 men as coming from the “east,” it is often linked with Rev. 16:12 (the 6th bowl) because they both mention one or more
angels and the river Euphrates. But even though China is indeed east of Israel, in prophecy the kings of the east always means the nations between Israel and Iran. China is probably not in view here.

This prophecy, as well as the prior one, is the subject of much conjecture. Much of which centers around the idea that the horses are really modern tanks that poor John just could not adequately describe. This supposedly explains the fire, smoke and sulphur coming from the mouths of the horses.

However, the purpose of this army of 200,000,000 is not to attack Jerusalem or the people of God. Thus, I do not think this is a Muslim horde, or even any human army, because the purpose of the human armies (in a separate battle) is to make war with God and His holy city. This 6th trumpet is something else. It is apparent indiscriminate killing of a third of all mankind, and it makes no mention of a geographic target destination (i.e., Israel). The killing angels come from the Euphrates, but where do they go? Will they find a third of the world population sitting right there in Iraq?

We are also not told where the army comes from. We know where the four angels come from but where does the army come from? A scenario as likely as any other is that the demon horde, the dark army, which could previously only torment, is now sent out to kill. They have a new mission, and the four angels who are released give them their new orders.

I find it curious that v. 20 says the rest of mankind did not repent. It seems to imply that there were no Christians around - just freshly killed unbelievers and surviving tormented unbelievers. Perhaps the Christians have already been killed, and are waiting for vengeance as the Tribulation saints we will discuss later.

Here we are just a little over half way through the judgments and already half of the world population is killed. The four horsemen account for one-quarter of the world being killed, leaving three-quarters. One third of the remainder is killed with the 6th trumpet, leaving half the original amount. The four horsemen (the Antichrist) and the four angels bound at the Euphrates would necessarily be separate actors, since the Antichrist is human, not an angel. So these two accounts of mass death are separate, not the same thing referred to twice.

• **Interlude, or The Second Woe Part 2.** Before the 7th trumpet sounds, we are told of the little scroll (Rev. 10:1-11) and the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:1-14). I discuss the two witnesses in detail later.

The little scroll is held by an angel of great power, having authority over all the earth (land and sea), who calls out in a loud voice. This is followed by seven thunders which speak things John is told not to write down. Then the little scroll is given to John to eat - it tastes sweet but turns bitter in his stomach. Finally, John is commanded to prophesy about many peoples, nations, languages and kings. The little scroll is symbolic of God’s word. It tastes sweet to those who partake of it, but it can have bitter consequences in life. It is likely an allegory of the book of Revelation as a whole.

• **7th Trumpet (Third Woe) - Rev. 11:15-19 - An announcement is made in heaven that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of Christ forever.** The twenty-four elders in heaven worship God, then the temple in heaven is opened, revealing “the ark of his covenant.” In a sense, the 7th trumpet is a statement of what end times prophecy is all about - the establishment of the
kingdom of Christ forever, the judgment of the dead, the rewarding of the servants of God, and destroying the destroyers of the earth. I couldn’t have said it better myself.

Whether the ark of the covenant referred to here is the same as the one from the Old Testament (which is now missing and everyone is looking for), I cannot say. Insufficient data.

We are told in Rev. 10:7 that when the 7th trumpet is sounded, “the mystery of God would be fulfilled.” All of this points to a summation of things, namely, the judgment of the nations completed, Jesus returning, and the establishment of His earthly (millennial) kingdom. So in preparation for that, the next thing the scripture does is introduce us to the Satanic Trinity.

[Here I will skip Rev. Chap. 12-14 as these are discussed in Part 4.]

Rev. 15:1-8 is essentially an introduction to the seven bowls, called the seven plagues in this chapter. We are told that with these plagues the wrath of God is finished. Then we see the Tribulation saints standing by a sea of glass (the “crystal sea”) singing praises to God, followed by the glory of God displayed in His sanctuary, which no one could enter until the plagues were finished.

I take it from these verses that the seven bowls will be poured out near the end of the Tribulation. This is indicated by the fact they complete the wrath of God, and also because the Tribulation saints are no longer under the altar crying out for revenge as they were in the 5th Seal (Rev. 6:9-11). Rather, they are waiting to enter God’s sanctuary, indicating that God is nearly ready to change gears from pouring out wrath to communing with His people.

THE SEVEN BOWLS

Rev. 16:1-21 (summarized below) -

- **1st Bowl** - *Painful sores are inflicted on people who have the mark of the Beast.* This plague recalls the 6th plague of Exodus, namely, the boils. Boils are painful sores on the skin. Like the boils in Egypt, only the wicked are struck with this plague. The plague of boils is an outward sign which symbolizes the corruption and foulness within.

- **2nd Bowl** - *The entire sea is turned to blood and every living thing in it dies.* This judgment is similar to, but separate from, the 2nd Trumpet when one-third of the seas are turned to blood. There would be no point listing one event as impacting one-third of the seas and the other as impacting all of the seas if they were actually the same event. Because the 2nd Bowl is worldwide, it suggests every single nation has serious blood on its hands, so that we may assume Christians and Jews will be persecuted worldwide and not just in the Mideast.

Recall the 6th trumpet, when I suggested that no saints may still be alive when certain things take place. Not because the saints have all been raptured away, but because they will all have been martyred. Most of the seven bowls seem to be worldwide judgments of a most severe nature, so it is possible nearly all the saints (except perhaps the 144,000) have already perished by this point.

Quite frankly, there would be nothing to be gained by trying to survive in the flesh as a believer at
this point, if you are the kind who is inclined to build an underground bunker with seven years of supplies inside. As a believer, there is no way you could survive in the flesh after the First Resurrection (coincident with the Second Coming) because you would be transformed by rapture. Even if you could pass into the Millennium in the flesh as a believer, why would you want to?

• **3rd Bowl** - *Rivers and springs are also turned to blood.* Both the 2nd and 3rd Bowls recall the 1st plague of Exodus and turning water to blood, but this time on a worldwide scale. See Ex. 7:20-21, where not only is the Nile river turned to blood, but “there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt,” suggesting both salt and fresh water were affected. Obviously, if all sea life dies, it eliminates a major food source worldwide. Most everyone on earth will be affected. I also assume all shipping and navigation on water will be stopped as a consequence because, among other things, blood is thicker than water - literally, not just figuratively.

Here we also have the symbolism of turning water into blood explained in verse 6: “For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” So turning water to blood is given as a sign of judgment to those who have shed innocent blood. The fact that after the 3rd bowl all water sources on earth have been turned to blood indicates that all people, or at least all nations, remaining at that time are guilty of shedding innocent blood.

• **4th Bowl** - *The sun begins to scorch people and burn them.* This is a plague not seen in Egypt, which would seem by its nature to be indiscriminate, affecting everyone on earth. So again, perhaps the saints are not around at this time. A literal scorched earth plague.

All the predictions of global warming will finally come true, but not because of greenhouse gases. This global warming won’t be so much a man-made condition resulting from actions in the physical world as it will be a consequence of moral and spiritual failure, *i.e.*, wickedness. The scripture indicates afflicted people will not repent, which is pretty descriptive of global warming advocates today.

God gave mankind the Dominion Mandate (Gen. 1:28) to subdue and rule over the earth, which imposed a duty of stewardship for the earth. But that authority was given to people as individuals and families, not to governments. The Dominion Mandate is the foundation for the concept of private property, and as such gives each family authority to subdue only their own little piece of the planet. Plus, it is a command to *rule over* the earth - not preserve it free from human utilization.

There is no human authority to *save the planet* as such, nor any public or collective authority to take dominion. Planetary preservation is God’s task. He will keep it preserved for judgment against asteroids, alien attacks and man-made environmental disasters. He will bring environmental disasters upon it (water to blood, killing vegetation, scorched earth, etc.) for moral and spiritual reasons. He will also reform the earth and reset its environment (see the 7th bowl below) in preparation for the earthly kingdom of Christ.

Saving the planet is out of the hands of man and in the hands of God. He will deal with it as He wishes. In the meantime, we should worry more about keeping God’s laws than anything else.

• **5th Bowl** - *The throne of the beast and its kingdom is plunged into darkness.* Affected people gnaw their tongues and curse God, but do not repent. This judgment again recalls the plague of
darkness in Egypt for three days (the 9th plague - Ex. 10:20-21). This time, no time limit is given. It also appears not to be worldwide, as it is specifically directed to the throne of the beast and its kingdom. For this reason, I conclude this is a separate event from the partial darkening of the sun, moon and stars discussed earlier.

We have not yet discussed the beast kingdom, which is the kingdom of Satan. Notice how this plague is delivered straight into the heart of Satan’s kingdom, i.e., his throne. I suppose I should mention here that this may not be just a symbolic reference - the Bible actually tells us where Satan’s throne is. Rev. 2:13 places it in the ancient city of Pergamum, on the western edge of modern day Turkey. Does this necessarily mean Turkey will be the headquarters of the kingdom of the beast? We will have to wait and see. Nonetheless, the nature of this judgment suggests that it will need to take place at a specific physical location - the throne of the beast has to be somewhere.

In any event, there are two symbolic meanings here: 1) even the very center of Satan’s power is not exempt from the judgment of God; and 2) this judgment is a foretaste of the eternal outer darkness of hell. A possible third symbolic meaning is that the kingdom of Satan is ever associated with the color black, including such things as a black stone, a black flag, and black clothing - the very opposite of things associated with God, such as fire, light, and the color white. Did you think the black flag of the current enemies of Israel was merely a random choice?

• 6th Bowl - The river Euphrates is dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the east. Three demonic spirits like frogs come out of the mouths of the dragon, beast and false prophet (the Satanic trinity) to perform signs and assemble the kings of the world for war. The battle is referred to as the great day of God the Almighty and the place is at Armageddon. The kings of the east are likely Iran and Iraq. China is not in view here.

Again, I do not see this as the same event portrayed in the 6th trumpet. There, the dark army slaughters a third of mankind indiscriminately and worldwide. Here, the kings of the world assemble to make war against God specifically at Jerusalem. These are two different events. Both the Great Day of the Lord and Armageddon are discussed in much greater detail later. The inclusion of this event among the seven bowls is probably just for emphasis and does not portend multiple battles at Armageddon.

• 7th Bowl (The Great Earthquake) - Lightning, thunder, and the greatest earthquake in the history of the world. The great city is split into three parts, cities around the world fall, every island flees away, and no mountains are found. As if that were not enough, hailstones weighing a hundred pounds fall on people, and the people continued to curse God.

The 6th and 7th bowls appear to be part 1 and part 2 of the same general event - the Great Day of the Lord. In other words, the summing up and conclusion of God’s judgment against the nations. Reading these two judgments together is consistent with Ezek. 38:17-23, which appears to speak of the same earthquake, as it has the same results (the mountains are thrown down and man made structures crumble) and the same timing (in connection with Armageddon). Ezekiel also mentions hailstones.

We have already considered how the great earthquake of the 7th Bowl is most probably the same earthquake described in the 6th Seal (Rev. 6:12-17). See also Isa. ch. 24, especially Isa. 24:19 - “The
earth is utterly broken, the earth is split apart, the earth is violently shaken.” The whole of Isa. 24 is a judgment on the earth, and is an interesting companion to the prophecies of Revelation.

The great city is probably Jerusalem. Jerusalem is referred to as the great city in Rev. 11:8, so I lean towards that interpretation. Plus, the earthquake is so violent that apparently all the cities on earth will crumble and fall - except this one. The great city will only be split into three parts - not destroyed. If there is any city on earth God would spare from destruction, it is Jerusalem.

If the great city is Jerusalem, it will make major changes to the landscape, as we know the Mt. of Olives just to the east of Jerusalem will be split in two and a wide valley created between the two halves when Jesus returns (Zech. 14:4). Ostensibly, the Second Coming occurs right on the heals of Armageddon, so these two rearrangements of Jerusalem and immediate vicinity will occur right on top of each other. Viewed another way, we must assume the great earthquake is the final event of the Tribulation.

Why will God shake the world like this? It will function as a giant reset button. The only comparable event in world history is Noah’s flood, which cracked the earth’s crust, releasing the water below the surface (Gen. 7:11) and creating the oceans. That crack is still visible today (the mid-Atlantic ridge). But the point is, the flood wiped out nearly everyone, washed away all traces of prior civilization, and human society started over.

We know God will not destroy the world with water again, so to wipe the earth clean He has to use an earthquake. (The destruction of the earth by fire is reserved for the very end of history.) As such, the earthquake literally wipes the slate (earth) clean for the Millennium without destroying it. If Jesus is going to establish an earthly kingdom, it only makes sense to eliminate the remnants of the corrupt past. Namely, the temples and mosques of false worship, the buildings and structures of former governments, the institutions of false learning, the accumulations of wealth of the wicked, etc.

Also, by leveling the mountains, it makes much more of the earth’s surface inhabitable and capable of being farmed, etc. Not to mention, the earth’s surface temperatures would be moderated (less extremes). What better way to usher in a time of unparalleled peace and prosperity on the earth?

But what sense does it really make for God to level the entire earth with an earthquake immediately before the Second Coming, only to destroy it by fire immediately after? If God is going to destroy the earth coincident with the Second Coming, why do it twice? It only makes sense if the destruction by earthquake and by fire are separated by a significant amount of time, such as a thousand years.

In fact, the great earthquake levels the earth but does not actually eliminate the present earth (unlike the destruction by fire, which will actually eliminate the present earth). The great earthquake by its nature suggests the present earth will continue for some time afterwards. Therefore, greater attention should be paid to this prophecy, as it logically implies an earthly kingdom of Christ must follow before eternity (and the destruction by fire) sets in. The great earthquake will signify that the earth is ready for new leadership. The rule of the world by nations is over, and the rule of the world by Christ is ready to begin. Thus, the great earthquake is a prophecy of no small importance, and deserves emphasis.
In the totality of history, God will destroy the earth three times: 1) with a flood of water (Noah’s flood); 2) with the great earthquake (the last event of the Tribulation) that will raise every valley, topple every mountain, and make every island flee; and 3) the ultimate destruction of the earth with fire (2 Pet. 3:7, 12). I have heard sermons on the first and the third, but never the second. Why? Most likely it reflects the belief of many (i.e., amills and postmills) that once Jesus returns, history will end and the burning of the earth and heavens by fire will follow swiftly.

But don’t lose the significance of these three destructive events, namely, that each marks a fundamental change in the way the world is governed. And each destruction makes it possible for the next form of world government to be ushered in. Thus, before the flood, the patriarchs were in charge - there simply were no nations or civil governments. After the flood and until the earthquake comes, the world is ruled by nations (our present situation). After the great earthquake, this present earth will be ruled by Jesus Christ for the duration. And after the destruction by fire, God will dwell and reign among His people forever on the new earth. Don’t tell me the consideration of government is a secondary issue in scripture - the governing of the world is what it’s all about, baby.

THE TWO WITNESSES

Zech. 4:1-14 (summary) - I said, “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with a bowl on top and seven lamps on it. And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.” Then he said, “These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”

Rev. 11:3-13 (summary) - God’s two witnesses will prophesy for 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth. They are “the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.” If anyone would harm them, fire comes from their mouth and kills them. They have the power to shut the sky (prevent rain), turn water to blood, and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire. When they have finished their testimony, the Antichrist will kill them and their bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for 3½ days. Those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to them. But after this God will breathe life into them, they will stand on their feet, God will call to them, they will ascend to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies will see it. Then 7,000 people will die in an earthquake and others will give glory to God as a result.

The Most Hated Persons In The World

Have you ever thought about what it would take to be the most hated person in the world? Who would you really have to tick off to be universally hated? It wouldn’t be enough to just offend a particular segment of society, or even a particular nation. You would need to enrage a good portion, possibly even a majority, of the world’s population. How would anyone do that? And why?

Let me make it easy. Which group of people are most likely to develop a seething hatred of an adversary - the people of God, or the followers of the devil? Which of those two groups accounts for a majority of the world’s population? In the end times, will the world be more likely to hate a bad guy or a good guy?

When the Antichrist comes, he will be highly admired and revered. He will succeed because people will want him to succeed. He will occupy a position of world leadership, and people will have no
problem deferring to him, accepting him, and serving his will because of his power. I won’t go so far as to say he will be loved by all, because he will rule with fear - a terrible fear. But he will be terribly popular at the time. The long and short of it is - he will not be universally hated.

Besides, when the people of God are offended, cursed, persecuted and tortured, they tend to offer forgiveness in return. Some will pronounce judgment, and some will resist, of course. But there never has been, and never will be, a universal hatred expressed by the people of God towards their enemies. The followers of Satan, on the other hand, do not hesitate to become enraged at adversaries, to hold days of rage, to issue fatwahs or death threats, and send out assassins willing to blow themselves up. When was the last time you ever heard of a Christian or Jewish Day of Rage?

I suspect the surest way to be nearly universally hated is to offend the ruthless world leader then in power, to offend the worldwide anti-Jehovah religion he supports, and to pronounce judgment against the forces of evil (i.e., the very same leader and religion). If at all possible, do it in a way which is open and notorious (public and in your face). It helps if you can escape capture and be a thorn in the side of the evil world leader for the entire time he is in power. Personally, I can’t think of a more fun and fulfilling job that a person could ever have.

You might think Jesus would be the most hated person in the world, but the fact is when the Antichrist comes to power, Jesus won’t be here on earth stirring up trouble against him. Plus, the followers of the Antichrist are likely to think that when Jesus returns, He is actually going to be on their side! [Discussed later.] The Jews and Christians will of course be hated during the Tribulation, but they will be persecuted and murdered to such an extent they will dwindle in population so their threat will diminish as time goes by. To sustain hatred, you really need someone who can’t be eliminated. Besides, to really generate hatred, you need to put a face on it. Hatred towards a group, or even two groups, is not enough.

Enter the two witnesses.

**What Kind Of Witnesses?**

It is often assumed in popular culture (especially apocalyptic fiction books) that the two witnesses are primarily evangelists. This comes from the common usage by Christians of the term witnessing to refer to sharing the gospel, i.e., evangelism. So if God is sending out two witnesses, they must be evangelists, right? Not so fast.

Evangelism, by its nature, is motivated by love, reaches out to restore the lost, is a ministry of grace, and never uses force or compulsion. But look how these two witnesses operate: fire proceeds out of their mouths to devour their enemies (not figuratively, but literally to burn them to death). They have the power to withhold rain (cause droughts), turn water to blood (a sign of judgment), and smite the earth with plagues at will. They are not your usual ministers of the gospel.

Clearly, the killing of enemies and smiting of plagues is not the stuff of love, charity or grace. This is the stuff of judgment, execution, and extreme prejudice. They are operating in the province of law, not grace - wrath, not mercy, and judgment, not love. The God of the O.T. is alive and well and hasn’t changed (Heb. 13:8).
Most serious Bible scholars at least recognize the two witnesses have all the hallmarks of a distinctly prophetic ministry: men clothed in sackcloth, calling forth fire, and smiting plagues on people. Plus, vv. 3 and 6 explicitly say the two witnesses will prophesy. Their ministry may or may not have a secondary effect of evangelism, but their primary function is something else entirely.

This has lead some people to conjecture that the two witnesses are literally Elijah and Moses (who exercised similar powers), or Elijah and Enoch (both of whom were caught up to heaven and in a sense never died) come back to the earth, or even an unnamed O.T. prophet and a N.T. prophet. But any of these conjectures is foolishness.

God can pick anyone He wants to when the time comes - Elijah, Moses, Enoch and various biblical prophets (from God’s perspective) are nobody special. It was, and is, only God’s power that was ever special. The men are just men, instruments in God’s hands. God can use anyone He chooses - He doesn’t need to bring anyone back to life. God can give any one any powers He wants.

However, there is still the question of what the two witnesses will prophesy about. Is their ministry a call to repentance, like Jonah or John the Baptist (“repent and be saved“)? Are they merely prophets of doom, shouting warnings to the wicked, “woe to you for your evil deeds and thoughts”?

I believe the two witnesses are not merely prophets, they are witnesses in a legal sense. God is holding a great legal trial called the Tribulation (see Dan. 7:10, 26). The result of this trial will be a pronouncement of a verdict (“guilty”), and the execution of judgment culminating in Armageddon. The job function of the two witnesses is to present and announce evidence against the accused (primarily the Antichrist) before God’s court. They aren’t sharing out of love - they are testifying and accusing in the case for the prosecution against the greatest criminals of all time.

In order for them to carry out this task, the two witnesses have to be able to get into the hidden places in order to root out the evil behind the public images, expose it, and confront it. They have to go where evil does not want them to go, and will do anything to stop them from going.

The inner workings of the Antichrist’s empire would remain hidden itself except for the fact that the witnesses will smite the earth with plagues - a very public and open act - as a demonstration they have penetrated the hidden places of evil. This will also serve to expose what they have found, and show that God is superior to the evil masters of the world.

The two witnesses will persist in their mission even when warned to stop and death threats are issued against them. Thus, evil forces will send out assassins, and the witnesses have to be able to defend themselves or they won’t survive. Hence the fire of God which will come out of their mouths to devour their enemies. Oh, I’m sure that will engender a spirit of love and compassion on the part of the Antichrist’s followers.

Further, during the Tribulation the Antichrist and False Prophet will be doing miracles, conducting spectacles and showing many signs and wonders to deceive the nations. Jesus will not be physically present during this time. He will be waiting in heaven to destroy the Antichrist and False Prophet by the appearance of His coming.

So it will be the two witnesses who, at this time, will be the primary counter-force to the Antichrist
and False Prophet. They will oppose them, expose them, and show them to be false. While the Antichrist and False Prophet will dazzle the world with a wondrous show to deceive the nations, the two witnesses will inflict real pain in response.

This will naturally enrage everyone on earth beholden to evil or in league with it. And since most if not all believers in God will perish during the Tribulation, the people in league with evil will be the only ones left. Hence, the two witnesses will truly be the most hated people on earth. Then, when they have finished gathering the evidence they need, God will let them be killed, and how will the world respond? They will celebrate with a giant party to end all parties (no, literally - it will end all parties).

Of course, this is not the end of the story. God will supernaturally raise the two witnesses from the dead in full public view as a special resurrection event. This supernatural event will apparently have a secondary effect of evangelism (Rev. 11:13b), once again showing that God can do more than one thing at a time. And when this happens, the party will end.

In this life, the two witnesses will appear to fail. They will struggle against the Antichrist and False Prophet in a very public way, and will be rewarded by being killed in a very public way. Their deaths will be celebrated around the world. The forces of evil will rejoice that their nemeses were killed by their false Messiah, for they will have been witnesses against him essentially the same length of time the Antichrist will be in power.

Yet, God will visibly and publicly give the two witnesses victory in the next life, foreshadowing the ultimate victory over the Antichrist which must necessarily come very soon.

I can’t help but notice a parallel with Zech. 4:1-14, especially vv. 11-14. I mean, how many different lampstand and olive tree allegories are there in the Bible, and why would God have multiple sets of a pair of olive trees who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth? I therefore conclude Zech. 4 is a reference to the same individuals.

Also note that the two olive trees are called anointed ones, without any indication that this is a reference to Jesus. Keep that in mind when you come across other anointed ones in prophecy, i.e., in Dan. 9.

**ARMAGEDDON**

After all of the trial proceedings that is the Tribulation, after all the witnesses have been called and the evidence presented, there will be a guilty verdict. God will then move to execute judgment on the forces of evil. From their perspective, the forces of Satan and the Antichrist will declare war on Jehovah, His people and His Holy Land, and prepare for battle.

In a sense, the armies of evil will be battle hardened. They will be the principal survivors of God’s wrath poured out on the earth in Rev. 6-18, but they will not have repented. Instead, they will rally their forces and in one grand gesture, attempt to unseat the Almighty from His throne. Get ready for Armageddon.

As we have seen, many persons, places and nations in the Bible are known by several names. So
it is with Armageddon, which is also known as the Day of the Lord, sometimes the Great Day of the Lord or the Great Day of God, the judgment at the Valley of Hamon-gog, the Valley of Jehoshaphat or the Valley of Decision, and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. If you do not realize these are all referring to the same event, with only slightly different emphases, you will be confused.

**The (Great) Day Of The Lord**

The Day of the Lord refers to Armageddon from the perspective of judgment against the enemies of Israel immediately preceding the restoration of Israel. It, along with the great earthquake unequaled in world history, will be the final events of the Tribulation. In effect, the Day of the Lord will usher in the Second Coming, since the close of battle and judgment will be brought about by the return of Jesus Himself.

**Isa 13:1-16** (summary) - Kingdoms and nations in an uproar gather on the mountains. The Lord is mustering a host for battle, from the end of the heavens. The Lord will destroy the land, destroy the sinners, and wipe most people out (make people as rare as fine gold). Every human heart will melt, and their faces will be aflame. The sun and moon will be darkened and the heavens will be shaken. The survivors will flee to their own countries.

**Isa 14:1-23** (summary) - The people of Israel will be restored to their own land and will take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them. The Jews will taunt the King of Babylon (Satan). An account is given of the pride and fall of Satan. The Lord will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, descendants and posterity.

**Joel 2:1-32** (summary) - vv. 1-11: The Day of the Lord is a day of darkness, clouds and gloom. An army is spread on the mountains unlike any army before them, or ever will be. Fire devours in front of them and burns behind them. Weapons arrayed against them do not stop them. They enter the city and climb its walls. Then the earth quakes and the heavens tremble. The sun, moon and stars are darkened.

vv. 19-29: The restoration of Israel described.

vv. 30-32: The sun will be darkened and the moon turned to blood. Some people will escape the Day of the Lord, “and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.”

**Amos 5:18-20** (summary) - “Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!” That is, woe to those who seek to war with God. The Day of the Lord is one of gloom and darkness, and not of light.

**Obad 15-18** (summary) - “The day of the Lord is near upon all the nations.” Jacob will be a fire, and Joseph a flame, and they shall burn them and consume them. Some in Mt. Zion will escape, but “there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau.”

**Zeph 1:1-18** (summary) - God says He will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth - man, beasts, birds and fish. God will judge Judah and Jerusalem because of the remnant of those who worship Baal, those who bow down to the host of heaven, and those who swear by Milcom (Molech). The Day of the Lord is called the Day of the Lord’s Sacrifice. The Lord will search out Jerusalem for unbelievers. The Day of the Lord is called a day of wrath, devastation, darkness, gloom and clouds - a day of trumpet blast and battle cry. “In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.”
**Zeph 2:1-15** (summary) - Judgment is pronounced on Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Canaan, Philistines, the seacoast and the Cherithites (all of these essentially being the Palestinians living in or near the Gaza Strip). God says no inhabitant of those lands will be left. The lands of Moab and Ammon (Jordan) will be laid waste forever. Cush (N. Sudan & Somalia) will be slain. Judgment is also pronounced on Assyria and Nineveh (Iraq), which will be made a dry waste.

**Zeph. 3:8** - “Therefore wait for me,” declares the Lord, “for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.”

**Zech. 13:1-9** (summary) - God will open a fountain in Jerusalem to cleanse the people. Idols and false prophets will be removed from the land. Two thirds of the people will perish, and one third will survive, who will be God’s people.

Notice the common themes of these scriptures about the Day of the Lord:
1) The armies of the nations will gather on the mountains of Israel;
2) It will be a day of great darkness and clouds blocking the sun, moon and stars;
3) Many people in Israel will die, but some will survive;
4) Very few of the nations of the invaders will survive - some nations will be wiped out completely;
5) The invading armies will be destroyed by fire from God;
6) Many of the nations surrounding Israel will be laid waste and made desolate; and
7) Israel will possess and control the former territories of its enemies. Can you say, *West Bank, Gaza Strip* and *Golan Heights*?

**Gog and Magog**

Ezek. 38 and 39 foretell a great battle against Gog and Magog, generally understood to refer to Armageddon. The battle is said to take place in what is variously named the Valley of Hamon-gog, the Valley of Jehoshaphat and the Valley of Decision.

**Ezek. 38:1-23** (summary) - vv. 1-16: A prophecy against Gog, of the land of Magog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and all his allies: Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and Beth-togarmah from the north. After many years these nations will be gathered for war against Israel after its people have been regathered and are living securely in the land restored from war. The invading armies will be like a cloud covering the land, all of them riding on horses, come to plunder Israel.

**vv. 17-23**: God says, “Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants the prophets who prophesied for years that I would bring you against them?” God’s wrath will be roused against Gog, *et al.*, and on that day there will be a great earthquake. All the birds, beasts, fish and men on earth will quake. The mountains will be thrown down and every wall will fall. God will summon a sword against Gog on the mountains, and every man’s sword will be against his brother. God will send torrential rains, hailstones, fire and sulphur against Gog and his armies to destroy them.

**Ezek. 39:1-20** (summary) - God will bring Gog and his host from the uttermost parts of the north against the mountains of Israel. The enemy hordes will fall, and the birds and beasts will devour them. God will send fire on them. Israel will burn the weapons of Gog & Magog for seven years and seize great plunder. It will take 7 months to bury the dead. Gog and his multitudes will be
buried in the Valley of the Travelers, also called the Valley of Hamon-gog. Israel will know that
God is Lord from that day forward, and all the nations will see it. God says, “Speak to the birds and
to all beasts, ‘Assemble and come, gather from all around to the great sacrificial feast that I am
preparing for you on the mountains of Israel.’”

Joel 3:1-17 (summary) - In the days when Israel is restored, God will gather all the nations in the
Valley of Jehoshaphat and enter into judgment with them there for what they did to the people of
Israel. Judgment is pronounced specifically on Tyre, Sidon and Philistia (modern Lebanon and
Gaza). “The day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.” The sun, moon and stars will be
darkened. The heavens and the earth will quake in that day.

Zech. 12:1-9 (summary) - All the nations of the earth will gather against Jerusalem to lay siege to
it. The Lord will strike every horse with panic and every rider with blindness. Judah will be like
a fire in the midst of the nations. God will seek to destroy the nations, but protect the inhabitants
of Jerusalem.

Zech. 14:1-12 (summary) - All the nations will gather to battle against Jerusalem. The city will be
taken and half the people exiled. Then the Lord will stand on the Mt. of Olives and fight the nations,
with his holy ones with him. The Mt. of Olives will split in half - half moving north, half moving
south, creating a wide valley. It will be a unique day - no light, cold or frost. Living waters will
flow from Jerusalem to the east and to the west. The Lord will be king over the whole earth. The
whole land will be flattened except for Jerusalem, which will still “remain aloft.” The Lord will
strike the nations so that their flesh will rot while they stand, and the animals with them will suffer
the same plague. Every man’s hand will be against his neighbor - even Judah will fight against
Jerusalem.

Notice the common themes of these scriptures about Gog and Magog:
1) The armies of the nations will gather on the mountains of Israel;
2) Every man’s hand will be against his neighbor;
3) There will be a great earthquake felt around the world that will change the earth’s surface;
4) Many people in Israel will die, but some will survive;
5) Very few of the nations of the invaders will survive;
6) The invading armies will be destroyed by fire, sulphur and hailstones from God; and
7) The birds and beasts will feed on the flesh of the invading armies and their horses.

The tie-in of these scriptures with the Day of the Lord is unmistakable. Both the Day of the Lord
and the battle of Gog and Magog involve:
1) the judgment of many or “all” of the nations (I have already pointed out which nations are
specifically named, that is, the nations surrounding Israel in the Mideast);
2) nations arrayed on the mountains of Israel against Jerusalem;
3) the destruction of the enemy armies not by man, but by God, and with fire; and
4) the restoration of Israel.

How could these be two different events? How many times is God going to judge all the nations
personally by sending fire upon them on the mountains of Israel as they attack Jerusalem?

There are also noticeable parallels with other scriptures, namely:
1) A great earthquake that shakes the entire world (not just a local event) and levels the surface of
the earth. See the previous discussion of Rev. 16:18 (the 7th bowl).

2) Judgment via hailstones (Rev. 16:21).

3) Signs in the heavens, or the heavens trembling, along with darkening of the sun, moon and stars (Rev. 6:12; Mat. 24:29).

4) The slain enemies of God treated as a sacrificial feast for birds and beasts (Rev. 19:17, 21). See the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, later.

5) The exile of half the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the deaths of many Jews and the role of the tribe of Judah are all discussed in more detail under the Time of Jacob’s Trouble, later.

I find it interesting that this gigantic battle, whether fought in the near term or in the distant future, will be fought by the Antichrist “old school.” With all the technology at our disposal, why are the forces of the Antichrist using soldiers and horses? Where are all the tanks and rockets?

If I were to guess, it would be because the enemy armies don’t want merely to destroy Jerusalem, they want to personally trample on it, in a perverted sense of honor. They will want to urinate on the city, rape its women, and desecrate the city religiously, not merely reduce it to rubble from some remote place. And they will feel it is their duty to do this. Hence, all the wicked will want to be there personally. Merely launching a rocket won’t bring them personal honor.

Some people have speculated that when God sends fire on the armies, this is a reference to an atomic bomb. Rubbish. God doesn’t need a bomb. Fire is used as a symbol for God so often in the Bible (primarily to indicate his holiness) that we might say God is an unquenchable fire. See Mat. 3:12, Luk. 3:17. He’s got it in him. He doesn’t need any assistance from the inventions of man, thank you very much. Now on to more serious questions.

Who are Gog and Magog? Ezek. 38 seems to treat Gog as a person and Magog as a place, literally the place of Gog. Gog is said to be the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. This leads me to believe Gog is the name for a fallen angel, probably Satan.

Eph 6:12, which says that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, authorities and cosmic powers, is rendered in the KJV as principalities, powers and rulers of darkness. The definition of a principality is a state or territory ruled by a prince, so this verse is universally understood as referring not merely to spiritual warfare generally, but angelic warfare specifically.

Hence, a prince in this context is an angel. For example, the archangel Michael is referred to both as a prince himself and as contending with the prince of Persia, which is generally understood to mean he was engaged in angelic warfare with a fallen angel. Dan. 10:13.

Satan is referred to as the prince of the power of the air. Eph. 2:2. Beelzebul (or Beelzebub), another name for Satan, is called the prince of demons, which I guess makes him the chief demon. Mat. 9:34; 12:24. When you put this together with the fact that the throne of Satan is said to be in modern-day Turkey (Pergamum - Rev. 2:13), and both Meshech and Tubal are located in Turkey, all the indicators are that the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal is probably Satan.

If Gog is Satan, it also explains why he is mentioned again in Rev. 20:8 as rallying the wicked in the final battle of history after the Millennium. Since Armageddon takes place before the Millennium, no human could be Gog in both instances. On the other hand, Satan will figure
prominently in both battles.

Of course, there are alternate explanations. Some people think Gog is merely a type of person, or a generic name for the leaders of these battles. However, the indicators for identifying Gog with Satan are pretty strong. Others conclude that Ezek. 38 and Rev. 20 refer to the same event, but this is primarily a view held by amillennialists and postmillennialists because they see no intervening period of 1,000 years that would make them separate events.

If you are wondering where “Rosh” comes in – supposedly signifying Russia as the key national player in this drama - Rosh is the word chief, as in “Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.” Ezek. 38:2. Some translations render the original language as “Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.” I’m not a linguist - I don’t speak or write Hebrew - so I have to defer to others for translation. But it is well documented that the word Russia comes from the word Rus, not Rosh. The idea that Rosh means Russia, as I view the evidence, is extremely thin and speculative.

Part of the mythology that treats Rosh as Russia also treats Meshech as Moscow. But this simply is not true. Meshech and Tubal are clearly historical regions in Turkey. You can easily find them on most Bible maps of the region. Similarly, “Gomer and Beth-togarmah from the north” are also regions in Turkey. And if you look at a map of the Middle East, what country (besides Lebanon) is due north of Israel? Turkey.

Persia, Cush, and Put are, of course, Iran, N. Sudan and Libya. If these are allies with Magog, is Magog more likely to be Russia or Turkey? Is not the area of the earth from Iran to Turkey to Libya and back to Iran essentially the greater part of the Muslim world today, with Israel in the center? Are they not the most unified nations on earth in terms of their hatred of Israel, a desire to conquer Jerusalem, and a hatred of Jehovah? Is Russia truly like any of these?

Conspicuously absent from the list of nations participating in Armageddon is Egypt. Egypt, as noted in Dan. 11:43, will be defeated by the Antichrist, which may explain its absence here, as the battle over Egypt will undoubtedly occur first (Armageddon is by definition the last battle of the Antichrist). Dan. 11 also tells us that N. Sudan and Libya are subdued by the Antichrist, but apparently not militarily defeated by him - they just hand over their sovereignty to him. So when Armageddon comes, those two nations still have their national identities intact. Egypt does not.

One last question remains, namely, where will Armageddon take place? The location is uncertain, because there is no actual place called Hamon-gog now or in the past. It is undoubtedly somewhere in central Israel (“east of the sea”), or possibly just across the Jordan River in Jordan. Some people place it near Jericho (northeast of Jerusalem), others identify it with Megiddo (far north of Jerusalem), still others place it just east of Jerusalem near the Mt. of Olives.

The relevant clues are these: the battle of Armageddon will be an attack against Jerusalem and it will be mounted by many nations. Gog will come from the north, but be joined by forces coming from the east. Rev. 16:12. Joel 3 refers to the place as the valley of Jehoshaphat, which is a historical location immediately east of Jerusalem in Israel. We know that Jesus will defeat the forces at Armageddon when He stands on the Mt. of Olives. Thus, I conclude that the most likely location is immediately east of Jerusalem near the Mt. of Olives.
Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Acts 2:20 - The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

1Th. 5:2-3 - The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them.

2Th. 2:2-4 (summary) - The day of the Lord will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, who takes his seat in the temple proclaiming himself to be God.

Rev. 16:12-21 (summary) - The 6th and 7th bowls, which we already discussed and linked with the great day of the Lord.

Rev. 19:6-21 (summary) -
1) Jesus will come riding on a white horse, clothed in robes dipped in blood, ready to make war.
2) He will be accompanied by the armies of heaven, wearing white linen and riding white horses.
3) Jesus will personally strike down the nations with a sword coming from his mouth.
4) The kings of the earth are all gathered to make war against God.
5) The birds of the air will feed on the flesh of the invading armies and their horses

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb refers to the great day of the Lord from the perspective of the Bride of Christ (the Church) and the vindication of the Tribulation saints. The only actual use of the phrase *Marriage Supper of the Lamb* is in Rev. 19.

But it sounds to me like this is Armageddon. How many times is God going to judge all the nations personally, accompanied by His holy ones, where the enemies of God are all riding horses, and where the birds of the air will devour the slain armies (men and horses)? Is this not the same event described in Rev. 16:12-16 (the 6th bowl) as well as Ezekiel 38 & 39 (Gog and Magog)?

The other N.T. scriptures listed above simply tie in the expectation of the Church with the expectation of Israel, so that they occur at the same time. In other words, when Israel is restored and turns to Christ, the Church is translated (“married”) by Christ. This event is accompanied by all the signs and wonders of the Second Coming - so it must actually be the same event.

Israel and the Church are not merged (they do not become one entity), but the Second Coming fulfills the expectations of both. For the Jews, the Messiah has come as a conquering hero and they accept him as Savior; for the Church, the saints are translated and reign with Christ. Who says God can’t do two things at once?

Thus, Acts 2:20 quotes from Joel 2. 1Th. 5:2-3 refers to the Day of the Lord, and notes that sudden destruction will occur when people are saying “peace and safety.” It’s just a guess, but this feeling of peace and safety may come about because the Two Witnesses who have prophesied against the Antichrist and the Beast kingdom have probably already died at this point. 2Th. 2:2-4 links the Day of the Lord with the Second Coming, and says it will not occur until after the Antichrist is revealed and the Abomination of Desolation occurs. The O.T. and N.T. agree.
Notice one other thing, if you will. When the armies of heaven (consisting of the saints) arrive on the scene riding white horses, they will essentially be a very large, very threatening ... peanut gallery. All the destruction of the enemy forces will be done by Jesus personally. The saints will be there, but all they will do is watch. They will not draw the sword, or fire any weapon.

It is a truth that God never has, and never will, command His followers to take up the sword for the cause of Christ. I say this as someone who believes in, and believes the Bible supports, capital punishment, just wars, and the lethal defense of family and self-defense. But God never authorizes us to wage a religious war on His behalf, a holy war, or a "jihad", to punish religious offenses or to coerce religious conversions.

Yes, God authorized ancient Israel to conquer Canaan. But that was for the purpose of national conquest and the establishment of a civil government. It was not for the purpose of gaining converts or punishing unbelief. God punished the Canaanites for their sins, but He punished Israel for the same things, and in pretty much the same way. By God’s own judgment, the Jews were nearly wiped out, and their homeland destroyed.

By this the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan are distinguished. Satan authorizes his followers to kill unbelievers solely by reason of their unbelief, whereas God has never authorized such a thing, and never will. God punishes only for wickedness, not for mere unbelief. If that doesn’t draw a sharp line between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God, I don’t know what does. Is this a new concept to you? I will elaborate on it later.

**The Great Winepress of God**

**Isa. 63:1-6** (excerpt) - Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah? ... Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress? “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. ... I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”

**Rev. 14:17-20** - Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, “Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe.” So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse’s bridle, for 1,600 stadia.

**Rev. 19:15** - From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

We should also take note of other prophetic scriptures referring to wine and God’s wrath. See, Jer. 25:15 (“Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send
you drink it”). Rev. 14:10 (he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger). Also, Rev. 16:19 (God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath).

A symbolic word picture associated with Armageddon in scripture is the great winepress of God. The fact it appears in both the Old and New Testaments indicates a unity as between what God is doing for Israel and what He is doing for the Church. This is one event and one act of judgment which happens to pertain to them both.

Wine, of course, is a symbolic representation of blood. It is a familiar symbolism with respect to the blood of Christ. For example, Mat. 26:27-28 (And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”) Also see, 1Cor. 11:25 (“This cup is the new covenant in my blood.”)

In prophecy, wine symbolizes the bloodshed which the wicked have caused, and when it is said that they will drink the wine of God’s anger or wrath, it means they will reap what they have sown. That is, since the wicked have shed the blood of God’s people, they will suffer bloodshed when the time of God’s wrath arrives. The winepress symbolizes God’s wrath and the fact He will squeeze the lifeblood from His enemies down to the last drop. So the symbolism is not merely that the wicked will be repaid in kind - they will be crushed like grapes, i.e., utterly destroyed.

People often talk about what it will take to bring peace to the Middle East. Will it take a treaty? Will education, economic assistance, jobs or other government programs do the trick? Maybe we need to hear their complaints and pay damages or provide other remedies? Perhaps persistent evangelism and/or religious revival will make the difference? Wait, I know! We just have to wait for the White House to get its messaging right and start a respectful dialogue.

The answer is that none of these - none - will actually ever work. Peace in the Middle East will not be achieved through negotiation or appeasement. God - when He finally does bring peace to the Middle East - will not be interested in or entertain any notions of negotiation or appeasement. Only the military conquest and utter destruction of the enemies of God, i.e., the enemies of Israel and the true Church, will ever work.

Ultimately, it is not God’s plan to convert the nations of the Middle East and bring personal salvation to them as a means of achieving peace. It is a hard thing to accept, that although God is willing that none should perish and is extremely patient (2 Pet. 3:9), there are very many people who never will accept Him no matter what. Individuals can, of course, be saved - but this will not ever bring international peace.

Only one thing will actually bring peace to the Middle East nations: when God kills all the people of the enemies of Israel. I know this sounds harsh. But this is God’s program. Are you surprised that evangelism is not the key to world peace?

TRIBULATION SAINTS

Rev. 6:9-11 (summary) - The 5th Seal - The souls of martyrs for the word of God cried out for
vengeance. They were told to wait a little longer, “until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete,” who will also be martyred.

Rev. 7:9-17 (summary) - A great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, stood before the throne of God clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Rev. 13:7-10 (summary) - Also it [the Beast] was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain. ... Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

Rev. 15:2-3a - And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.

Rev. 20:4 - Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

According to the humanist belief system, when a person dies that is the end (there is no immortal soul). So upon your death, you are gone, lost. But that is not God’s perspective. To Him, when you die, you are transitioned, either to eternal life, or to eternal death. When a believer dies they are not lost, they are redeemed.

The Tribulation will certainly be a time of great transition - what the Bible likens to a harvest. That is, a massive number of human deaths where the fate of immortal souls is forever determined. It will be a time of great harvest for God when in all likelihood many millions of people turn to Christ. We don’t know how many people will become believers at that time, or how many will be martyred, but the Bible simply says the martyrs alone will be a great multitude that no one can count. Rev. 7:9.

I was taught as a youngster that the Rapture would occur before the Tribulation so the Church would not have to go through it. A supposedly big clue in support of this position was that the Church is nowhere mentioned in Revelation after the letters to the churches (chapters 2-3) and prior to the marriage supper of the Lamb in Chapter 19, when the Bride of Christ (the Church) is presented. In other words, the Church is supposedly never mentioned in the chapters dealing with various judgments on the earth. But this is simply not true.

The word church is nowhere mentioned in those chapters, to be sure, but there are plenty of instances of the word saints. And who are the saints, if not the Church, the Bride of Christ? If you have read other commentaries on biblical prophecy you have probably come across the theory that the Tribulation saints are saved individuals, but they are different from, or separate from, the
Church. I caution you not to accept as truth what is in reality mere conjecture. Let’s see where the textual evidence leads us, first.

The Bible uses the word *saints* and sometimes *holy ones* to refer to individual Christians. We’re *not* talking about heroes of the faith who have been canonized as Saints because they have performed three miracles. The Bible never talks about Saints that way. We are talking about ordinary Christians. Every single Christian.

Early Christians were often called Saints, such as in Acts 9:13, 32, 41. When Saul persecuted the Church, he referred to them as Saints. Acts 26:10. The book of Romans was written to the Saints in Rome. Rom. 1:7. Similarly for the books of Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. But perhaps 1Cor. 1:2 says it best, “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.” In other words, Saints = Christians = Church.

On the other hand, the Bible never uses the word *Church* to refer to an institution, or an organization. *Church* simply refers to the body of individual Christians or a local group of them. Thus, 1 Cor. 14:33 - “For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the Saints ...” So when Revelation speaks of the Saints, *this is the Church*.

For those of you who may lean toward the Dispensational view that God’s program of salvation for Jews always was, and always will be, separate from God’s program for the Church, note the curious statement in Rev. 15:3. Here we are told the Tribulation Saints will be singing the song of the Lamb and the song of Moses. Wait - what? The song of Moses is distinctly a feature of the O.T. and is part of the legacy of Israel, not the Church. So why are the Saints - either O.T. or N.T. Saints - singing songs from both testaments (*i.e.*, dispensations)? Because in God’s mind, there has only ever been *one program* for salvation - faith is counted as righteousness. Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:22.

And what we see happening to the Saints - the Church - in Revelation isn’t pretty. Rather than sitting in a heavenly observation deck somewhere, behind safety glass in an air conditioned room, the Saints are on the ground suffering plenty. This is summed up in Rev. 13:7-10, where it is said the Antichrist will make war against the Saints. There are a couple of things worth noting from this text. First, it refers to the *endurance and faith of the Saints*, which necessitates they actually suffer the effects of war in order for them to endure.

Second, the Tribulation Saints are numbered among those whose name has been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb. This phrase, before the foundation of the world, should call to mind Eph. 1:4 - “he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him,” a verse universally associated with the Church, the body of Christ. In other words, the people who the Antichrist will wage war against *will be* the Church.

We have the first mention of martyrs for Christ in Rev. 6:9-11. That Tribulation Saints are in view is strongly suggested by verse 11: “Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.” The parallels with other texts relating to the Tribulation Saints cannot be ignored. For example, each of these Saints has a white robe, the same as the Saints
mention in Rev. 7:9, 13, the latter specifically referred to as coming out of the Tribulation. Rev. 7:14.

Another parallel is the implication that the martyrs in Rev. 6 were all killed in the same manner, and thus not likely to be martyrs from prior centuries who would have died many different kinds of deaths. This tracks with Rev. 20:4, referring to martyrs who had all been beheaded and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands, necessitating that the martyrs of Rev. 20 were also Tribulation saints. Rev. 20:4 does not use the words church or saints, yet the context is clearly a description of Christians who will be alive when the beast kingdom rules the world.

Ah, but someone will say, “the Tribulation saints are merely those people who became Christians after the Rapture.” Well, the Bible only says when these people died, not when they became Christians. It is entirely consistent with the text and context of Revelation to understand the martyred saints coming out of the Tribulation as including those who became Christians prior to the Tribulation. The real question is whether there will even be a Rapture before the end of the Tribulation. Since this is a significant topic, I will devote a full chapter to discuss it shortly.

Another curious idea with a wide circulation (supposedly based on 2Th. 2:7) is that the Holy Spirit will be “taken out of the way” prior to the coming of the Antichrist. According to proponents of this view, people cannot be saved during the Tribulation in the same sense they can now. In other words, the entire ministry of the Holy Spirit will be changed and God will be unable to save people by His Spirit. Thus (supposedly), the martyrs coming out of the Tribulation may be saints, but they are not part of the Church, the body of Christ because a person needs to be indwelt by the Spirit to be part of the Church.

Nothing in the text of 2Th. 2:7 even remotely suggests this reading, and it is a prime example of eisegesis - reading something into the scripture that isn’t there. But as this idea is widely taught today, I will also devote an entire section to dealing with the Ministry of the Holy Spirit later on.

For me, it is enough to know that Rev. 20:4 describes the Tribulation saints as those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God.” If that description was given for anyone living in the 11th century or the 16th century, that would be enough to label them a Christian. So the Tribulation saints must be Christians, too. Say it out loud: C-h-r-i-s-t-i-a-n-s. Who else could they possibly be? Saved believers who are saints in Christ but are not part of His body the Church? There ain’t no such thing.

FIRST RESURRECTION

A Resurrection Of The Body

Mat. 24:30-31 (summary) - “Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Mat. 24:36, 42, 44 (summary) - “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the
angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ... Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ... Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

1Cor. 15:12-28, 35-58 (summary) - Resurrection from the dead an essential part of Christian faith. The nature of the resurrected body as a spiritual (immortal) body.

vv. 23-24 - But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

vv. 35-44 - But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel.... But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. ... So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

vv. 51-52 - Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

1Th. 4:13-18, 5:1-11 (summary) - But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. At the coming of the Lord, Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ will rise first, then those who are alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds.

2Th. 2:1-4 - Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, ... that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

Rev. 20:4-6 (summary) - Following the Tribulation, the dead in Christ are resurrected and reign with Him for a thousand years. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

When Jesus returns, He will gather His elect from around the world, both dead and alive, and meet them in the air. Mat. 24:31; 1 Th. 4:17. A core Christian doctrine is the belief in a resurrection of the body. As Paul said in 1 Cor 15:12-19, if there is no resurrection from the dead for Christians, then even Christ has not been raised, and then he makes these statements:

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. (vv. 17-19).

Thus, the resurrection from the dead is a central doctrine of Christianity. There is no life everlasting, no heaven and no hell, unless there is a resurrection of the dead (i.e., an afterlife). But it goes even
deeper than this. In Mat. 22:31-32, Jesus said, “And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”

In other words, it is the very character of God that He is a God of the living, not the dead. In order for this to be true, from God’s perspective, all the past saints must be alive - *there are no saints who are dead to God*. Which is to say, it is the very nature of man that every individual is immortal. Not having an immortal body, but an immortal spirit (which needs a body).

**How Many Resurrections?**

But once you get past this central truth, people disagree about almost everything else. Most Christians agree there will be at least two resurrections, but only premillennialists believe both of these will be physical. Historic premillennialists believe in two physical resurrections, the first at the Second Coming, the second after the Millennium. Dispensationalists believe in a secret Rapture before or during the Tribulation, a final resurrection after the Millennium, and in many cases a separate resurrection of Tribulation saints and/or Old Testament saints coincident with the Second Coming.

According to Rev. 20:4-6, the resurrection which occurs at the time of the Second Coming (Rev. 19) and immediately precedes the Millennium is the *first* resurrection. This, by definition, would seem to eliminate the possibility of *two* resurrections before the Millennium (*i.e.*, the secret Rapture of the Church followed by a resurrection of Tribulation and/or O.T. saints). The First Resurrection involves only the righteous, not any of the wicked. Following the Millennium, after Satan is again defeated and history wraps up, there is a second resurrection when all of the dead are raised, both righteous and wicked, and judgment rendered to each one accordingly. Rev. 20:11-15.

One of the *dirty little secrets* of dispensationalism is the belief in multiple resurrections, but being unwilling to acknowledge this is what they believe. Often the last part of Dan. 12:13 is used as a justification for this belief: “And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.” The key term - supposedly - is *allotted place*. By this, many dispensationalists understand that different component parts of God’s elect, or saved people, will be resurrected and/or stand before God *separately*, each in their own lot.

In other words, that O.T. saints will be raised separately from Church Age believers, and the Tribulation saints will be separately raised from the Church, as well. All of these, according to some dispensationalists, will be raised separately from Millennial saints and/or the wicked at the end of time. Some even go so far as to say the 500 believers brought back to life after Jesus rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:6) constituted a separate resurrection event. Some hyper-dispensationalists even carry this idea to the extreme, by suggesting God will keep Jews and Christians separate in eternity - one on the new earth, and the other in the new heaven.

Then the word games start up. The resurrection of the 500 in 30 A.D. and the resurrection of the Church in the future Rapture are *really* the same resurrection in two parts, we are told. The resurrection of the Church and other saints (O.T., Tribulation, Millennial) are *really* part of the same resurrection in multiple parts, etc. Analogies are made to gleanings, firstfruits and all other kinds of unrelated biblical ideas that have no actual relationship to the concept of *resurrection*. My
advice: stay away from this crap. There are only two resurrection events mentioned in the Bible.

As for the believers brought back to life in 30 A.D., well, they were not resurrected at all. They were merely brought back to life like Lazarus, and then died again like Lazarus. They did not at that time receive their new incorruptible, immortal bodies. They are not now wandering the earth as immortals, nor were they specially taken up into heaven in immortal form before everyone else. Nothing in scripture could possibly give validity to either of those possibilities.

Resurrections Are Physical, Not Spiritual

On the other hand, postmillennialists and amillennialists both believe that the First Resurrection is spiritual only (at the time of each person’s salvation). In their way of thinking, only the second resurrection is physical, taking place at the end of history (when both the Second Coming and the Great White Throne Judgment will occur). Under both of these views, there is no physical resurrection, of either the righteous or the wicked, prior to the end of history. There is only one common physical resurrection for all people. This view is based, in part, on Dan. 12:1-2 and Acts 24:14-15, which simply refer to the resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

According to postmills and amills, the First Resurrection does not involve acquiring a new body of any kind, but simply an awakened spirit. True, the Bible speaks of being made alive when one was spiritually dead (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13), but this eschatological view equates resurrection with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Resurrection is the process by which our present mortal and corruptible bodies are exchanged for immortal and incorruptible bodies. Yet, personal salvation makes no changes to any part of the body.

The whole point of a resurrection is to change the nature of the body. 1 Cor. 15:35-49 (excerpt):

But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ... What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ... It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ... But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

I admit that the phrase spiritual body, taken in isolation, may suggest a body which is ghostly, i.e., invisible. However, there are several reasons why such a reading is not warranted by the text. First, this approach completely ignores the context of what the apostle Paul is explaining. He uses the example of a seed, which when planted in the ground, morphs into a plant that looks nothing like the original seed. But both the seed and the plant are physical. The plant is not invisible. Plus, an awakened spirit cannot exist by itself. Even an awakened spirit needs a physical body to house it.

It does violence to the meaning of words to interpret spiritual body as an awakened spirit apart from any kind of body. The whole discussion in 1 Cor. 15 begins with the question of what kind of body people receive in the resurrection. The context makes it clear that spiritual means incorruptible and
imperishable. But not any less physical, for that reason.

Second, the end of this particular text likens our resurrection bodies with the image of the man of heaven, i.e., the resurrection body of Jesus. Note that following His own resurrection, Jesus was not a free floating spirit, or a ghost, but He had a new physical body. Thus, Mary and Mary Magdalene took hold of Jesus’ feet. Mt. 28:9. When Jesus appeared to the disciples, He said, “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” Lk. 24:39. Thus, the image of the man of heaven was physical, not spiritual only. Indeed, one can hardly regard flesh and bones as anything other than physical matter.

Third, the immediately following verses (1 Co. 15:50-58) continue the discussion of the resurrection in the context of the sound of the last trumpet. So we have four choices: 1) if the First Resurrection is the same as personal salvation, then a trumpet sounds each time (and each time is the last trumpet); 2) the text switches from discussing the First Resurrection in v. 49 to the second resurrection in v. 50 without giving any indication that two resurrections are in view in this text; 3) the purported trumpet sound is merely allegorical and not real; or 4) the First Resurrection cannot be spiritual only. Which choice makes the most sense?

Fourth, whenever the Bible talks about a resurrection, it is referring to a common event for all saved or unsaved people, not a series of one-by-one experiences, i.e., individual conversions. As 1 Co. 15:51 says, “we shall all be changed.” If the First Resurrection is merely spiritual and does not involve the body, then it really doesn’t qualify as a resurrection event at all. “Hey, we had an altar call at church yesterday where people could come to Jesus.” “Really? How many were resurrected?” Plus, need I remind you, the scripture says there are only two resurrections - not one for every Christian.

Fifth, keep in mind that Jesus is the “only begotten son of God.” Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18. How does this relate to the First Resurrection? It has to do with what the scripture means by the term, begotten son. It does not mean that Jesus was created by God, or even that He was procreated. In other words, it is not a reference to Jesus’ birth. Rather, Acts 13:33 tells us, after quoting Ps. 2:7 (which was looking ahead prophetically), that Jesus was begotten when He was raised from the dead. Heb. 5:5 links the term to when Jesus became a high priest, also quoting Ps. 2:7. And of course, Jesus only became our high priest when He was raised from the dead. So the word begotten, when applied to Christ, means resurrected.

Yet Jesus was also - when the Gospel of John was written - the only begotten son of God. What does that mean, except that no one else was resurrected before Christ, and no one else yet has been resurrected after Him? He is the only one (so far). And the resurrection of Christ was physical - the old physical body disappeared, and a new physical body took its place. One thing I know for darn sure is that Jesus was not resurrected when He got saved.

The scripture also refers to Jesus as the firstborn of the dead. Col 1:18; Rev. 1:5. This too, is a reference the resurrection of Jesus. But firstborn means Jesus was the first one to ever be raised from the dead with an immortal body of bone and flesh. And for the time being, until the Second Coming/First Resurrection occurs, Jesus will be the only person this has happened to.
**Timing and Sequence**

The single biggest question regarding the First Resurrection among premillennialists is whether it is part of the Second Coming (end of the Tribulation and not secret), or a separate and secret earlier event (commonly referred to as the Rapture). There are so many confusing and conflicting interpretations of the matter that it is hard to get a handle on it. Whose interpretation can you trust?

To resolve this question, I propose to go to the scriptures, exclude all interpretations of men, and put aside (to the greatest extent possible) any predispositions or presuppositions I might have about the matter.

But, how can I (or anyone) do this? I suggest the following methodology (see if you can come up with a better one): 1) pull out all the scriptures regarding the Rapture and/or First Resurrection; 2) list them in the order in which they are found in the Bible (to be as unbiased as possible); 3) note all references indicating either timing or sequence in connection with the same; 4) look for patterns and/or inconsistencies in timing or sequence references; 5) group consistent texts with each other and separate inconsistent texts to determine, first and foremost, whether the scriptures as a whole are describing one event, or more than one event; and 6) determine from those groupings how many events are described and what the characteristics are of each.

Here is the complete list of relevant scriptures, most of which I have reproduced or summarized at the beginning of this chapter: Mat. 24:29-31, 36-44; 1Cor. 15:12-28, 35-58; 1Th. 4:13-18, 5:1-11; 2Th. 2:1-12; Rev. 20:4-6. Ancillary (possibly related) scriptures include: Dan. 12:1-12. Commentators have used many other texts to make arguments bolstering their point of view, but these are, to the best of my knowledge, the only texts expressly and directly on point. So before we consider tangents and sidetracks, let’s first deal with the obvious texts which, I assume, will be the most relevant - and the most important.

Here are all references to timing and sequence contained in the above scriptures:

**Dan. 12:1-12** - The Tribulation is described as lasting 3½ times, and “at that time” “many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

**Mat. 24:29-31, 36-44** - After the Tribulation the sun and moon will be darkened, and then Jesus will return on the clouds of heaven. There will be a loud trumpet call, and at that time His angels will “gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

**1Cor. 15:12-28, 50-58** - “In Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.” “We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”

**1Th. 4:13-18** - “We who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”
2Th. 2:1-12 - “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, ... that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”

Rev. 20:4-6 - “I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.”

As we examine these scriptures, it is not clear (by any method I can determine) whether Dan. 12:2 refers to the beginning or end of the Tribulation, or even whether it merely refers to the end times in a general way. Thus, I regard this text as generally unhelpful in determining a precise sequence of events. Actually, this should be no surprise. The farther away something is in time, the fuzzier it looks through the lens of prophecy. Clarity comes from being nearer. And Daniel was written well over 500 years before any of the N.T. writers.

The sequence of Mat. 24 is pretty clear: Tribulation, then trumpet, then gathering the elect. Some have suggested that because the elect are gathered “from one end of heaven to the other” it means the elect have already been raptured and are waiting in heaven. But you have to read this text together with Mk. 13:27, which is another account of the exact same teaching of Jesus, that “he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.” In other words, the saints have not already been taken off the earth.

Others, mainly hyper-dispensationalists (or extreme dispensationalists), take Mat. 24 as referring to believing Jews or Tribulation saints only, and then declare that this scripture is wholly inapplicable to the Church. In this view, only the writings of Paul pertain to the Church - all other N.T. writings don’t really apply. That’s a convenient way to avoid having to come to grips with the truth of when Christians will be translated and given their immortal bodies. Plus, we’ve already considered the problems inherent with multiple resurrection events. And also textually, when Jesus says He will gather His elect, it is the same Greek word Paul uses in Rom. 8:33 to refer to the Church (“God’s elect”). So then gathering the elect comes after the Tribulation.

The sequence of 1 Cor. 15, except for Christ who has already been raised (as firstborn of the dead), is that the resurrection of the saints will occur at the Second Coming. Again the resurrection is associated with a trumpet sound, but not just any trumpet - it is specifically the last trumpet. By this I assume the text is an implicit reference to the seven trumpets of Rev. 8:6-11:19, the last of which will sound at the end of the Tribulation, not its beginning or middle. However, I will comment on the trumpet question in more detail in the next section. True, the 1 Cor. 15 text refers only to the resurrection of dead saints, however (see next paragraph) ...

1 Thess. 4 makes it clear the translation of saints who are alive will follow, not precede, the resurrection of dead saints. Although, I see no reason why both events cannot occur on the same day, perhaps only moments apart. This text also links the First Resurrection/Rapture with the Second Coming (“we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord”) and a trumpet sound - specifically, the trumpet of God (again, more on this later). The necessary logical consequence of which is that the translation of living saints cannot precede the Second Coming.
his text, written by Paul, is one of the chief scriptures relied upon to support a secret Rapture event. But note that if this is what 1 Thess. 4 refers to, then Christ must come twice in the future (i.e., a Second Coming = Rapture, followed by a Third Coming = what everyone else calls the Second Coming). Because what v. 15 refers to as the coming of the Lord is interpreted by dispensationalists to mean the Rapture. That is, Jesus only comes part way down to earth, meeting us in the air. Then He immediately takes us all back into heaven so He can come all the way down to earth seven years later and stand on the Mt. of Olives. By what interpretive method is the coming of the Lord not understood to be the Second Coming? By a darn sloppy interpretive method, that’s what.

2 Thess. 2 links both the Second Coming and the gathering of the elect to a single day which comes after the revealing of the Antichrist. Again, we have the same interpretive issues as with 1 Thess. 4 (When is the next coming of the Lord not the Second Coming?). However, if you take the text at face value, its meaning is clear. The First Resurrection follows the revealing of the Antichrist, thus, comes after the Tribulation.

I’m sure somebody will read this text as meaning Jesus will come immediately after the very moment the Antichrist is revealed (i.e., at the beginning of the last 3½ years). But I take it as indicating Christ’s return after the time of the Antichrist (i.e., the end of the last 3½ years). Because we already know it is the mere appearance of Christ’s coming that destroys the Antichrist. And the Antichrist will not be destroyed immediately after the very moment he is revealed. We always have to read every scripture in the light of all other scriptures.

Rev. 20 indicates that the Tribulation saints will come back to life at the beginning of the Millennium, which as we already know from many other texts will follow the Tribulation. It also precludes the possibility these saints will be resurrected separately from the saints of the Church who died prior to the Tribulation (who many claim will have been raised previously), since the Tribulation saints will be raised in the first resurrection. If their resurrection is first, and it follows the Tribulation, then how can the resurrection of Church saints precede it?

I see no inconsistencies between the above texts whatsoever. They are each perfectly consistent with a single chronology: First the Antichrist is revealed and he reigns for 3½ years, then Jesus will return on the clouds of heaven with a loud trumpet sound. Then His angels will gather the elect from everywhere they may be (alive or dead, whether Church or Tribulation saints), raising the dead in Christ first, then translating those saints who are alive. Then, all of these will meet Jesus in the air, and then rule with Him for 1,000 years.

Inasmuch as all scriptures are consistent with a single chronology, what they are describing is not two or more events, but a single event coincident with the Second Coming. May I suggest at this point if you read the above texts and conclude they are describing more than one event, you are reading something into the texts that isn’t there. Remember, sometimes the scripture looks at the same event from multiple perspectives. Just because some scriptures focus on Jesus’ defeat of the Antichrist and his armies, some focus on what is happening in heaven (specifically, the 7th Trumpet), and the scriptures we have just reviewed focus on what happens to believers, does not mean these things cannot all happen simultaneously. God can handle it, folks.
THE RAPTURE QUESTION

“We know that when he appears, we shall be like him.” 1 Jn 3:2. At the First Resurrection we shall all be changed and receive immortal bodies, and at that time we shall be like Jesus. But, if at the Rapture Jesus gathers His own silently and secretly, how can anyone say that He has appeared?

So where does the belief in a separate and secret Rapture come from? I say secret, because any resurrection of the dead or translation of living saints coincident with the Second Coming will most definitely not be secret. When Jesus comes again, every person on earth will see it, and if believers are caught up to meet Jesus in the air, it will be part of the most non-secret theatrical event in all of history.

Belief in a secret Rapture, however, holds that Christians will be translated into their immortal bodies silently, without notice, and without any signs in the sky. No one will see them leave. Rather than returning to earth immediately to assist in the conquest of the Antichrist, believers will be in heaven until the Second Coming occurs 3½ or 7 years later. Or so we are told.

Arguments For

Let’s look at a number of common arguments made to support the idea of a secret Rapture prior to, and separate from, the Second Coming:

1) The Church has to be taken away because the Holy Spirit is going to be removed during the Tribulation. This argument is based on 2 Th. 2:7 which says, “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.”

The argument goes like this: The “he” who is taken out of the way is the Holy Spirit. The context of the verse is that the Antichrist will be revealed after the Holy Spirit is removed, meaning it must occur at the beginning or mid-point of the Tribulation (but in any event not at the end). Since the Holy Spirit will never leave believers (Eph. 1:13), if He is removed, then it can only happen if the Church (all believers) are removed first. Thus, the removal of the Holy Spirit necessitates a prior Rapture event.

If you’ve ever studied logic, you know that if the premise for an argument fails, then all the conclusions which follow it must also fail. Here, the premise is that the Holy Spirit can, and will be, removed from the earth for a time in the future. So if that premise fails, the whole argument for a secret Rapture being necessary fails. And that premise does fail, as I address in some detail below (Things That Will Not Change - Ministry of the Holy Spirit). Let me skip the analysis here and state the conclusion: all that is meant by 2 Th. 2:7 is that the Antichrist will not be revealed until God decides to allow it pursuant to God’s own timetable. Nothing more.

Do you really think, if this verse was intended to mean the Holy Spirit (part of the Godhead) would have a radical change in ministry such as this, it would be stated in such an oblique fashion? With the real meaning unstated and only inferred with wild leaps of logic and uncorroborated assumptions? If something this important was going to happen - the removal of one person of the Trinity from man’s presence - wouldn’t God (in inspiring the writing of the scriptures) state it clearly and unambiguously, make it obvious, and repeat it elsewhere in the Bible? Why take
something this huge and cloak it in veiled language in only one place?

The Holy Spirit will never be removed from the earth, and the very idea that God would do something like this is absurd. Why is it absurd? Because it requires that the people referred to as Tribulation saints will be saved, but without the Holy Spirit - a non-sequitur that goes against all sound Christian doctrine. Plus, if the argument is pressed to its logical conclusion, the Tribulation saints aren't really part of the Church, but form a separate group of believers who will get to heaven but not be part of the Bride of Christ. May I just say, there is not a single shred of textual evidence to support such a position in the Bible. Don't get suckered by this line of reasoning.

2) The Church isn't mentioned in Rev. Chapters 4-18 when all the bad stuff is going on. Thus, the argument goes, because the Church is never mentioned in the chapters devoted to describing the Tribulation, it must not be around (on earth) during that time. True, the word church isn't used, but the words saints and believers are interchangeable with the word church conceptually. So when Revelation talks about the saints, these are the Church. I have already addressed this idea in detail in the discussion of Tribulation Saints, so that should be enough to settle the matter.

3) Mat. 24:36-44 is a description of the Rapture. Here is an excerpt of that text: “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ... Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.”

This text is often combined with 1 Th. 5:2: “For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” The argument goes something like this: since the event is described as coming suddenly without notice, it indicates a secret Rapture event. This is confirmed by the “one will be taken and one left” language, which is repeated for emphasis.

Reading these texts in such a manner is sloppy interpretation in the extreme. The Mat. 24 text refers to the coming of the Son of Man. 1 Th. 5:2 refers to the day of the Lord. Both of these, in instances too numerous to rehearse here throughout the entire Bible, refer to the Second Coming. It is a strange hermeneutic which understands these phrases to mean the Second Coming 98% of the time, but in these two instances to understand them to mean a secret Rapture instead.

We know what the day of the Lord means. This is not an unfamiliar phrase with multiple meanings. It always means the Second Coming. And to interpret the coming of Jesus to mean only a secret Rapture, when Jesus doesn’t actually come to the earth at all but only meets believers in the air (at 1,000 feet - 10,000 feet - 100,000 feet?) and then to immediately return to heaven is cheating. How convenient, when we can interpret the coming as either the Rapture (when Jesus doesn’t come to earth) or the Second Coming (when He does), depending on what we want it to mean! That isn’t bringing clarity to the text, rather, it brings confusion.

So what are we to understand, then? That the Second Coming will come suddenly, and no one will know when? That’s exactly what these texts mean. But won’t people know when the Tribulation is going to end - won’t they just have to count seven years from its beginning to know when Jesus will return?
Frankly, that assumes a lot. It assumes, among other things, that the Tribulation is not only seven years long, but that people will be able to calculate it with mathematical precision. But as I will show in my examination of Daniel 9 in the next chapter, there isn’t going to be any seven year peace treaty, Daniel’s 70th week is most likely a literal seven days long, and the exact duration of the Tribulation is never stated anywhere in scripture. Even my best guess (and that’s all it is) that the Tribulation will last about 1335 days is not something I can claim as a fact. No one knows, and will not know even when it is imminent, the exact day Jesus will return.

Oh sure, we have various time periods (See Appendix C) of 1,260 days, 1,290 days, 42 months, 3½ times, etc. given for various end times prophecies, but scripture never says these will all run concurrently. I’m sure these will overlap to some extent - but we cannot say exactly to what extent. Nothing in scripture limits God to any time period for the length of the Tribulation that can be calculated down to the day. People will able to discern the season, but no one will be able to calculate the day or the hour. And that’s all Mat. 24:36-44 and 1 Th. 5:2 mean.

Think! How long is a season, in real life? About 91-92 days. What is a prophetic season? About 91-92 days. So when the Second Coming is really near, it will probably seem imminent. But when it comes, it will still come all of a sudden, not gradually. It will take people by surprise. Mt. 24 has nothing to do with a secret Rapture.

4) **The Tribulation is about Israel, so God won’t deal with the Church at that time.** Ah yes, the old God can’t do two things at the same time argument. It’s the same logic that says believers can’t be translated (raptured) at the Second Coming because in the Rapture we will meet Christ in the air (true), but at the Second Coming Jesus will touch down on Mt. Zion (also true). And, according to this argument, doing those two things at the same time doesn’t make any sense.

According to who? Is there some great logical or scriptural inconsistency with raptured believers meeting Jesus in the air and then immediately coming to earth with Him? No. Is there some great logical or scriptural inconsistency with God dealing with Israel and the Church at the same time? No. The inconsistency, to the extent it exists, exists only in your head.

The whole organizational structure of this book assumes that in the end times God will do four things at the same time: judge the nations, restore Israel, conquer evil, and establish an earthly kingdom. Dan. 9:24 assumes that the prophesied 70 weeks will be used by God to accomplish six things at the same time. See *The Sum of All Things* below for more on Dan. 9:24. So, can God deal with both Israel and the Church during the Tribulation if He wants to? Sure He can. Why would anyone believe in a god that is so puny he can only do one thing at a time?

People who believe God can’t or won’t deal with Israel and the Church at the same time typically also believe the beginning of the Church covenant either put the Mosaic covenant into suspension or brought it to a termination. In other words, God’s Church program displaced His program for Israel, either temporarily or permanently. But as I show in my essay, *No Part of the Mosaic Covenant Has Ended*, the Mosaic covenant is eternal, and was not affected by the beginning of the Church covenant.

5) **Strange interpretations.** To be sure, there are other arguments made for why there will be a secret Rapture, many of which fall into the category of strange interpretations.
One of my favorites is based on 2 Th. 2:3, which says that the day of the Lord will not come “unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed.” In other translations, the word for rebellion is translated as falling away or as apostasy. But lo and behold, that word, as used in some German translation of the Bible, when translated back into English, means departure. And departure, as everyone should know, means Rapture, so what the verse really means is that the day of the Lord cannot come unless the Rapture occurs first.

Surely, this is one of the weirdest convolutions of logic and interpretation I have ever heard. The very idea, that for us to know the true meaning of a text, we should translate the original Greek language into German, and then translate that translation into English, is ridiculous - especially when the original text is available for us to translate directly into English.

If the proponents of this argument are right, then why not translate the Greek into German, then translate the German into Spanish, the Spanish into Russian, and then translate that into English? That should get us even closer to the original meaning of the text, right? Or perhaps we should use Ukrainian instead of German? Just to say it is enough to contradict it.

But on a substantive level, the word departure is like the word deviation, which can have various meanings, depending on the context, whether relating to statistics, navigation, optics, or ideology. So the word departure can refer to an ideological departure, not necessarily a navigational departure or a physical leaving. Reading 2 Th. 2:3 as referring to a secret Rapture is not merely misleading, or erroneous, it is deviant.

6) There is one additional “major” argument in favor of a secret Rapture, namely, that the Church isn’t destined for God’s wrath which will be poured out in the Tribulation. I’m going to discuss this subject in detail in the next section (Will The Church Be Spared?), so let’s skip it for the moment.

**Arguments Against**

Now let’s consider the flip-side. We have already seen how belief in a secret Rapture necessitates a belief in some untenable positions, such as Tribulation saints who must become Christians without the Holy Spirit and who aren’t really part of the Church or the body of Christ. Or that the coming of the Lord refers to two separate comings. Another logical consequence of a secret Rapture is that there will be separate resurrections for the Church saints and the Tribulation saints, when the Bible never says any such thing.

Here are some additional problems created by belief in a secret rapture:

1) Certain things must take place before the Rapture which necessitates that it comes at the end of the Tribulation. For example, 1Co. 15:23 clearly links the resurrection of the saints with the Second Coming. “But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.” Note: There is no separate treatment of Church saints versus Tribulation saints. It is simply those who belong to Christ are resurrected at his coming. And His coming, of course, comes at the end of the Tribulation.

Another key clue comes to us by way of 1Th. 4:13-18. That text tells us in what order the saints will be caught up to meet Jesus: the dead rise first, and then the living are translated. 1Th. 4:15
specifically says, “that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.” In other words, no believers alive at the time can be raptured (translated) before the dead in Christ are resurrected. If 1Co. 15:23 is true, then the dead will not be raised until the Second Coming, and if 1 Th. 4:15 is true the rapture of living saints cannot precede this.

Thus, the Rapture and the First Resurrection both have to occur at the time of the Second Coming. It’s not that difficult, people.

2) The translation or rapture of the saints is inextricably linked with the last trumpet. “We shall all be changed ... at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised.” 1 Cor 15:51b-52. Note that these verses link the Rapture (we shall all be changed) and the First Resurrection (the dead will be raised) to the same trumpet call. In other words, the Rapture and the First Resurrection must occur at the same time, and in reality they are the same event. There is simply the First Resurrection, which also includes the translation of living saints. But what about the trumpet(s)?

We have already seen that the 2nd Coming is associated with a loud trumpet call. Ask yourself why 1 Cor 15:52 refers to the trumpet as the last trumpet. It is because there are other trumpet calls that the Second Coming follows, namely, the seven trumpets of judgment, which all take place during the Tribulation. The only way the trumpet of 1 Cor. 15:52 can be the last trumpet is if it follows the seven trumpets of Rev. 8:6-11:19. If the trumpet call of the Rapture occurs before the end of the Tribulation, it won’t be last trumpet.

Yet some people (mainly Dispensationalists) dispute that the last trumpet of 1 Cor. 15:52 (supposedly concerning the Rapture) is either the same as, or follows, the 7th Trumpet of Rev. 11:15-19 (at the end of the Tribulation). Let’s look at the matter carefully. There are five scriptures relating to this issue:

Mat 24:31 - “And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

1 Cor. 15:51b-52 - “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”

1 Thess. 4:16 - “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”

Rev. 10:7 - “in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.”

Rev. 11:15 - “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.’”
It is a fair question to ask, How many trumpets are we talking about? Clearly, the two scriptures in Rev. 10 and 11 refer to the end of the Tribulation, since they speak of the mystery of God being fulfilled, and the kingdom of Christ as having come. Indeed, if what I have said about the First Resurrection so far is true, then all of these trumpet blasts necessarily come at the end of the Tribulation.

Yet, much is made of the fact (by some) that 1 Thess 4 refers to the trumpet of God, which supposedly links up with the trumpet in 1 Cor. 15, whereas the other trumpets are sounded by angels, not God, so they cannot be the same. If the angelic trumpets occur at the end of the Tribulation, the trumpet of God must sound at some other time. So the reasoning goes.

But this is a distinction without a difference. Mat. 24 makes it plain that Jesus will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call. Who is actually blowing the horn? It doesn’t matter. Whoever actually blows the trumpet is doing so at God’s behest, which makes it God’s trumpet. Just because 1 Thess. 4 calls it the trumpet of God doesn’t mean God is doing the blowing. It just means God wants a trumpet to sound, and He is causing it to happen. So all of the trumpet calls listed above are trumpets of God - as if the actions of any of the angels is by the angel’s own will.

Which leaves us with the initial conundrum. If the last trumpet of 1 Cor 15 comes before the seven trumpets in Revelation as part of a pre-Trib Rapture, in what possible sense can it be said to be the last? Doesn’t Occam’s Razor apply here - the simplest solution is usually the best? Why make it unduly complicated? If God says it will be the last trumpet, He knows how many trumpet blasts there will be and He knows how to count them. And clearly, the last trumpet comes at the end of the Tribulation.

3) The Bible limits resurrections of the dead to two, so it does no good to posit a theory which requires three. By definition, the purpose of the Rapture (according to its proponents) is to take the Church out of the way before the time of God’s judgment on the earth. Of necessity, as the previous scriptures show, the Rapture requires that the First Resurrection immediately precede it (although perhaps only by a few seconds). But then we also know that a great many people will turn to Christ during the Tribulation, and there will be a great number of martyrs during that time.

What happens to these Tribulation saints? If the Rapture precedes the Tribulation, are they left unresurrected at the Second Coming, as if to say they are not really part of the Church (not entitled to reign and rule during the Millennium)? That is a view held by some. Yet, such a view plainly contradicts Rev. 20:4, which clearly includes the Tribulation saints as among those who will rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years. “I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

Or, alternatively, are the Tribulation saints resurrected at the Second Coming, which introduces an additional resurrection into the mix? That is, three total resurrections, with the first at the time of the Rapture (at the beginning of the Tribulation), the second at the Second Coming (at the end of the Tribulation), and the final resurrection after the Millennium being a third. Curious, isn’t it, that belief in a secret Rapture requires three comings of Jesus, and three resurrections as well?
Yet the Bible clearly teaches there will only be two resurrections, not three. Rev. 20:5, 13. To get around this, I have heard some commentators claim the saints raised from the dead at the Rapture and the Second Coming are really part of a single resurrection, just in separate parts. Oh, the word games people play! Can we please just acknowledge that events occurring seven years apart are not the same event?

Some commentators argue that the Rapture only relates to living saints, not the dead in Christ, so it is not a resurrection event at all. But 1 Th. 4:15-16 clearly says the dead in Christ will rise first. The living saints cannot be translated unless and until the dead are resurrected. So it does no good to argue they are separate events if you cannot have the one without the other.

**Will The Church Be Spared?**

The argument is commonly made that the Church simply cannot go through the Tribulation (and must be raptured first) because God has promised numerous times the Church will be spared from His wrath. This is based primarily on 1 Th. 1:10 (“Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come”); 1 Th. 5:9 (“For God has not destined us for wrath”); Rev. 3:10 (“I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world”) and additional scriptures.

But that doesn’t necessarily mean the saints are absent when God’s wrath is poured out. When God sent the plagues against Egypt, Israel was largely spared, but they weren’t removed from the situation. And in some cases, such as when the Nile River was turned to blood, it wasn’t just for Egyptians - everyone was affected. There was no “Jews only” exemption zone on the river banks.

And if the Tribulation saints are (by definition) going to be on earth during the Tribulation, how are they any different from the rest of the saints? In other words, why won’t they also be spared from the time of God’s wrath? Clearly, some of the saints are going to see the wrath of God poured out during the Tribulation while they are still in their mortal bodies.

**Discipline v. Wrath**

We must also be careful to distinguish between God’s wrath and His judgment or discipline. The purpose of God’s wrath is the destruction of His enemies. The purpose of God’s discipline and judgment is for the correction and ultimate good of His people. But when God’s discipline comes it often feels destructive, sometimes resulting in the death of people, even though it is not designed to destroy, but to build up.

There are plenty of instances in the Bible where the people of God have suffered as a result of God’s judgment. All Israel except for Joshua and Caleb were condemned to die in the wilderness as judgment for the disobedience of the people. Num. 26:65. Discipline or wrath? All Israel suffered defeat at the battle of Ai because of the forbidden treasure of one man. Joshua 7. Discipline or wrath? The righteous (Daniel and his three friends) were deported to Babylon right along with the wicked when Israel was conquered. Discipline or wrath?

What shall we say to the Tribulation saints who will be beheaded for the testimony of Jesus? Discipline or wrath? When a righteous person dies, does he go to destruction? No. When an unrighteous person dies, does he go to destruction? Yes. Does the one case look any different than
the other to a third party? Not necessarily. When a person dies a horrible death for any reason, can
we say for certainty they went to destruction or not? Only God knows. So too, when Christians are
put through the fire, how it looks to us is not necessarily how God sees it. From God’s perspective,
He never loses a believer.

A common Christian fairy tale, as I like to call it, is that God is going to treat the Church better in
the future than God treated Israel in the past or will treat Israel in the future. We know from history
that God judged Israel for its sins, the end result of which was the destruction of the Temple (twice),
displacement from the land (twice) and dispersion among the nations where Jews were almost
universally mistreated.

We know that in the coming Time of Jacob’s Trouble (discussed later), before God regathers and
restores the nation of Israel, He will first subject that nation to an even greater time of testing, when
Jerusalem will be attacked, significant portions of Jerusalem will be destroyed, and thousands of
Jews will perish. When the restoration finally comes, only a minority remnant of the nation will
survive and be saved. And yet, the scriptures repeatedly tell us that God’s love for Israel endures
forever, Jerusalem is His most holy place, and Israel will continue to be the most favored nation on
earth for all time. But to human observers, the time of Jacob’s Trouble will look like God’s wrath.

*Judgment of the Church*

So why is it, when God plainly tells us that “it is time for judgment to begin at the household of
God” (1 Pe 4:17), most Christians shrug that statement off as a form of spiritual discipline of
individuals in the present age only and do not regard it as an end times scripture?

What, you don't think the Church will be judged by God? Most, if not all, of the Christians alive
in the Tribulation will suffer horrible deaths. This includes all Christians entering the Tribulation,
ot just people becoming saints during the Tribulation, since there won't be any prior Rapture of
believers. All the edifices and structures (physical and organizational) of religious institutions will
be shaken and turned into rubble in the great earthquake.

Everything the Church has ever built or organized will be destroyed - not by the Antichrist, but by
God Himself. Cathedrals, seminaries, temples, denominations, colleges, you name it - all man-made
structures and institutions will be wiped away. All true believers will be translated at the Second
Coming, so only the pretenders will be left alive in their mortal bodies when Jesus returns. (Only
unbelievers will enter the Millennium in their mortal bodies.) And Jesus isn’t going to use any of
them to build His Church. He will literally start the Church over from scratch and leave all
organized religion that came before in the dust. Still don’t think the Church will be judged?

Many Christians rightly perceive that Israel was selected and defined after the flesh (i.e.,
biologically), but the Church was selected and defined after the spirit (on the basis of faith). But
then they wrongly assume that for this reason, Christians will be spared the types of earthly
judgments that Israel suffered (which are supposedly after the flesh). If I may say, it is a type of
spiritual superiority complex to think that just because we are citizens of heaven, we are less liable
to suffer the deprivations of this world.

That certainly isn’t what the scripture teaches. We suffer with him in order that we may also be
glorified with him. Rom. 8:17. For the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake. Php 1:29. We kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass. 1 Th. 3:4. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 2 Tim. 2:3. But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 1 Pet. 2:20. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. ... Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. Rev. 2:10.

I find it difficult to get around the plain meaning of Mat. 24:9 - “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.” Who is the “you” if not the Church? Was Jesus speaking to Tribulation saints when He spoke those words? We have already discussed the fact that Tribulation saints will be beheaded during the Tribulation, and these saints are the Church.

Oh wait, we’re back to the old argument that Mat. 24 only relates to the Jews again, aren’t we? So, what? Since the time of Christ, Jews have been persecuted, but Christians have not? Do I have to list here the many persecutions, oppressions, tortures and martyrdoms imposed on Christians throughout the ages? I’d rather not, because they are so obvious.

What should be our attitude toward these Christians of the past? Well sure, you had to go through extreme suffering and testing even to the point of death, but that’s because it was only discipline for your good. When we modern-day Christians get to the end, God is going to let us avoid all the really bad stuff and skip to the end. Because at that time, dying for the sake of Christ will be an aspect of God’s wrath. Everybody knows being beheaded is wrath, but being burned at the stake is only discipline. Is that really what you believe in - a double standard - whereby past Christians had to suffer but Christians living in the end times won’t have to? Where do you find that in your Bible?

Separating the Sheep from the Goats

Rather than promising the Church will be spared the trials of the Tribulation, prophecy clearly indicates Christians will suffer greatly during that time due to persecution. “[The Beast] was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain.” Rev. 13:7-8. Naw, that can’t possibly refer to the Church, can it?

If, as Rev. 20:4 notes, the people ruling and reigning with Christ are those Christians who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands, then it means they had to be there, during the Tribulation, right in the thick of things. Or, to put it bluntly, not exempt, not removed from the situation, and not taken away.

You may protest: But these are only the people saved after the Church is raptured. The Bible never says that. It never says when these people who are yet to be beheaded became saved, nor that these consist only of new believers. So, don’t assume. And don’t teach your assumption as truth.

Commentators spend so much time trying to figure out why the Church should not go through the Tribulation that they miss the potential benefit (from God’s perspective) of going through it.
Namely, that it will be a form of testing to see if each person’s faith is genuine.

The scripture says that,”not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel.” Rom. 9:6. Also, “no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.” Rom. 2:28-29. Why, you may ask, will God require the Jews to go through the time of Jacob’s Trouble and end up saving only a minority remnant? Because, as Romans tells us, not all physical Jews are spiritual Jews. It just may be that the time of Jacob’s Trouble is not so much designed to punish Israel, as it is to separate the sheep from the goats, as it were, and to thin the ranks to those whom God chooses.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” Mt 25:31-32. “As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats. ... I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.” Ezek 34:17, 22-23.

Now consider this: Not all people who claim to be Christians truly belong to Christ. How many people among the many millions of churchgoers, church members, clergy and staff are true believers? Dare I say it? Only a minority remnant. You heard me. And deep in your heart, you know it, too. “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” 2 Tim. 2:19. But, the organized church is full of iniquity, is it not?

Isn’t that a key principle of the Parable of the Ten Virgins - that not all who name the name of Christ are truly His? “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ... the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’” Mt 25:1-2, 10-12.

Might this not be a reason for the Church to go through the Tribulation - to winnow the grain and separate the wheat from the chaff? Mat. 3:12. Friends, there’s a lot of chaff out there. “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” Prov. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:5-6. Wouldn’t you welcome the opportunity to share in suffering for the sake of Christ? Php. 3:10; 1 Pet. 4:13. No? What’s the problem?

God has not destined the Church for wrath (that is, for destruction), but He has destined it for discipline and judgment. The same as He has done for Israel, as Jews and Christians are both under the same general standard. If you don’t believe this - if you think Israel deserves to be disciplined because of its sins, but the Church gets a pass - it is a subtle form of anti-Semitism.

In Deut. 30, God set before Israel a choice between life and death. Follow His commands and live. Disobey His laws and die. Is not that same choice before Christians today? Is the worldwide Church today following the laws of God? Do Christians today even know what the laws of God are?
Why shouldn’t they be judged? Where does the Bible ever say Christians (or the Church) will not be judged in this life? Getting a pass from eternal judgment doesn’t entitle anyone to get a pass from earthly judgment.

Swallow your pride and admit that the Church as a whole has sinned as least as great as Israel has, in essentially all of the same ways. The Church that the scripture speaks of - without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish, clothed in white and presented as the Bride of Christ - isn’t the amalgamation of all people who call themselves Christians today. That Church, the holy one without blemish, is only the remnant which passes through the time of testing with their faith intact. No one gets a free pass to avoid earthly suffering.

**Part 3 - The Restoration of Israel**

“Then the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.” Ezek. 37:28. When the kingdom of Christ comes, the restoration of the nation of Israel will play a central role. What, you think it will all be about rewarding the Church? Again I say, the Christian hope is pinned to very Jewish prophecies.

**PROPHECY OF THE 70 WEEKS**

**Dan. 9:24-27**

“A fair number of commentators view this portion of Daniel 9 as providing a long-term view of end times prophecy from Daniel’s time (6th century B.C.) until the end of the Tribulation. For the reasons stated below, I do not think this is correct. Nor does it correlate with events in the first century A.D., or with the history of Israel past. Yes, the prophecy probably concerns the Tribulation period, but as I see it, only a very short period of 490 literal days, for reasons I will explain in a moment.

I have already suggested that Dan. 9:24 is a key to understanding the end times in general, in that it describes the overall purposes God will accomplish. But that does not mean the prophecy was intended to describe events occurring soon after Daniel’s lifetime, key events in the first century A.D., nor that the prophecy spans the entire Church age.
What Dan. 9 really tells us is that God will use the nation of Israel in a powerful way in the end times, and in particular, the events that will immediately precede (or inaugurate) the ultimate restoration of Israel. In fact, Dan. 9 gives us a crucial piece of information found nowhere else - the events that will get the Tribulation period started.

This is a very difficult text to understand, mainly because in many ways it seems to relate to past events (the crucifixion of Christ in 30 A.D., and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.). However, those events do not fulfill the stated purposes of the text if taken at face value (i.e., “to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place”). Nor do past events fulfill the stated chronology of 70 weeks (either 490 days or 490 years).

Yes, the death and resurrection of Christ made atonement for iniquity and inaugurated His spiritual kingdom. But while the ministry of Christ negated some of the effects of sin (eternal death), it did not actually end sin, because sin is still very much with us. Neither did it seal up vision and prophecy (the book of Revelation came after the death of Christ, and quite possibly followed the destruction of Jerusalem), nor anointed any place as being “most holy.” Those are things which clearly have not yet been fulfilled.

This leads many to adopt a “double fulfillment” theory, i.e., that this text applies both to the past and to the future. I believe “double fulfillment” is a fairly common theme in biblical prophecy, but it is hard to credit Dan. 9:24-27 with any kind of past fulfillment at all, since no one has ever explained an historical 490-day or 490-year sequence which tracks with the events described in the text.

At most, Christ’s death and Jerusalem’s destruction are a foreshadowing (or a type) of events yet to happen, insofar as Dan. 9:24-27 is concerned. There has most certainly never been a 7 year peace treaty with Israel which was broken halfway through that has ever occurred in the past. So the possibility of an actual past fulfillment is out of the question - a foreshadowing is the most we’re going to get from Christ’s death and Jerusalem’s destruction. Of course, this exact situation has led many people to adopt a “split theory” concerning Daniel’s 70 weeks, i.e., that most of the prophecy has been fulfilled, but the last week is still in the future, with a gap of at least 1900 years in between.

**The “Day-Year” Theory**

Virtually all Bible commentators assume that because this text uses a word for “weeks” which means “sevens,” therefore the 70 weeks are really 490 years (i.e., not literal weeks). Let me suggest that what is driving this interpretation is the assumption, not the text.

In Dan. 9, “weeks” is in fact the normal, regular Hebrew word for weeks. It’s true, the word means a heptad, which is just a series or group of seven, but that’s what a week is. A week is a series of seven days. It always has been. There is absolutely no textual evidence that a week equals seven years.

There seem to be two basic factors driving this common assumption: 1) people cannot believe the events described could happen in so short a time as 490 literal days; and/or 2) people are expecting an interpretation which has a past fulfillment. In fact, I will put it stronger than that - many people have a deep-seated personal need to show that they have a basis for predicting when the Tribulation
will come. And the key to prediction is the ability to find some key anchor points in the past that the prediction can be measured from. Which requires some identifiable past fulfillment events.

This objective is usually attempted by taking all the day-based prophetic time periods in the book of Daniel and converting them to years. Thus, the 2,300 days from Dan. 8:13-14, the 1,290 days from Dan. 12:11, and the 1,335 days from Dan. 12:12, all become 2,300 years, 1,290 years and 1,335 years. I can’t help thinking that people are trying to dig out secret knowledge and hidden truths - as though they could ever discover what God has truly kept hidden.

However, it is quite evident to me that God never intended to tell us (before the fact) when the Tribulation will begin - only how to recognize it when it actually arrives. Thus, all efforts to calculate when the Tribulation will begin are in vain. Plus, all predictive models are to be avoided, as are all interpretive methods supporting them. I have therefore unbounded myself from these expectations.

The Gap Theory

Immediately upon making the (unfounded) assumption that Daniel’s 70 Weeks are really 490 years, you are faced with the reality that: 1) the Tribulation has neither started nor finished yet; and 2) there is therefore no possible series of past events which can fulfill the entire 490 years. Ok, yes, this is the starting assumption for premills and many amills.

Obviously, if the 490 years have been entirely fulfilled at any point in history, then the Tribulation must also be in the past, not the future. Preterists and many postmills believe this exact thing. Because this possibility involves a lot of historical analysis, I will address this belief separately, under Troubling Inconsistencies and The 70th Week, below.

I suppose, theoretically, we could be somewhere in the middle of the 490 years at this moment, but I’ve never even heard of anyone who thinks that way. If that were true, then we ought to be able to look back and mark the date when the 490 years began to run, right? But we cannot.

Which leaves only two other possibilities. First, the entire 490 years is still future (which no one wants to believe, because I mean, well, we have to be closer to the end than that, don’t we?).

Second, the 490 years was partially fulfilled in the past, but the completion of it is still future. Necessarily, any such partial fulfillment scenario also assumes the time clock for the 490 years isn’t running at the moment. In other words, there is a gap (of indeterminate length) between the earlier partial fulfillment and the final fulfillment. Which means we are in the gap period now.

The gap theory is popular with dispensationalists, because their whole viewpoint regards the present Church age as a form of unintended or parenthetical gap in God’s master timeline between the first and second comings of Christ. Sorry, but I just cannot postulate that God did not intend for the Church age to occur or that it is merely a parenthesis in His master plan, as though God was not fully aware of how events would play out. Everything God does has a specific purpose and He knows all things in advance. In fact, the gap theory is plainly contraindicated by Hos. 6:1-2, which we will examine later.
But the main problem is the gap theory - for dispensationalists - means that God offered the kingdom (meaning Christ’s earthly kingdom) to Israel at the time of Jesus’ First Advent. (No, the scriptures never actually say God did this. It is derived solely from interpretational inferences and assumptions.) Then God supposedly waited to see what Israel’s response would be, and decided to withhold the kingdom from them until the end of the Church Age. As if the prophetic program of God, or the effectuation of His will, depends at any time on man’s response.

So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa. 55:11).

But if God is truly omniscient (and He is), then He knew what Israel’s response would be long before the kingdom was offered to them, and God would have planned for that rejection long in advance. There are no contingencies in God’s plan, no hypothetical situations, and He never needs a Plan B. God never needs to interrupt what He is doing, or suspend any of His planned actions. Everything God does is right on schedule - a schedule set from the beginning of the world.

Besides, whenever scripture indicates a time period, I am not aware of any instances when a “gap” is included. Gaps are what you get when men can’t figure out how God did, or will do, things. Objectively, the text makes no mention of a gap - how can we presume one?

Granted, there are plenty of instances when prophetic scriptures jump from past or present to the future without so much as a textual whisper that many years are being leapt from one phrase to the next. I have covered many of those scriptures in this book, such as the visions of Daniel 7 and 8, and essentially all of the visions of past world empires (usually described as beasts of one sort or another) which are given to us as a means of describing the future Antichrist.

However, none of these leaps of many years - what may be called a “gap” - occur within the confines of a stated period of time. For example, the vision of Daniel 7 refers to a time period of three and a half times, but the entire stated period occurs after the implied gap between the third and fourth beasts. There is no gap within the three and a half times. Similarly, Daniel 8 refers to 2300 days, but again this entire time period occurs after any implied gap and there is no gap within the 2300 days. So if there is a gap within the 70 weeks of Daniel 9, it would be a unique instance in scripture which is out of character with all other prophetic time periods in the Bible.

But hey, if you like gaps, I’ve got one over here that’s a doozy - and it’s on sale! In fact, you can stretch this gap to be as long as you like, even millions of years. Guaranteed to make creationists and evolutionists both happy! It’s the unstated and non-existent gap between Gen. 1:1 and Gen. 1:2, and it won’t be available for long, so act now! Another fine product of Specious Interpretations, Inc.

**Weeks of Years**

Also, there are instances in the Bible when a prophetic day equals a year, but when these occur, God specifically says, “one day equals one year.” For example, in Num. 14:34 God tells Israel they will spend 40 years in the wilderness according to the number of days they spied out the land of Canaan, “a year for each day.”
In Ezek. 4:5-6, God tells Ezekiel He will punish Israel the same number of years as the number of days He has Ezekiel lie on his side. “For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment.” So when a prophetic day equals an actual year, God doesn’t leave it to implication, inference, innuendo or interpretation. He just comes right out and says it.

God is perfectly capable of telling us when a prophetic day equals a year if He wants to. What reason is there for assuming a day-year theory when God has not said so? Nothing in the text of either Num. 14 or Ezek. 4 suggests an intention to state a general rule that a prophetic day always equals a literal year. Rather, the fact that these are the only two instances of day/year equivalence in all of biblical prophecy suggests they are in fact the exception to the rule that a prophetic day is a literal day.

There is exactly one place in the Bible which makes an explicit reference to weeks of years - Lev. 25:8 - which is a non-prophetic scripture. This text defines the year of Jubilee as seven weeks of years, or 49 years. “You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years.” See how plain and unambiguous that is? There is no need for interpretation.

Don’t read the seventy weeks of Dan. 9:24 as if the verse says, “Seventy weeks are decreed about your people. You shall count seventy weeks of years, seventy times seven years, so that the time of the seventy weeks of years shall give you four hundred ninety years.” The verse doesn’t say that. Nor does it mean that.

Is there any reason to suppose that Dan. 9:24 and Lev. 25:8 should be read and interpreted similarly? No. Neither the context nor the subject matter of these verses are similar. You might as well draw a parallel between Dan. 9 and Mat. 18:22 (“seventy times seven”), which also has no similarity of context or subject matter, simply because both texts can be multiplied to get 490 of something. But that’s just absurd.

If you want to draw a parallel between Dan. 9:24 and any other scriptural text, I would suggest Gen. 1. In Gen. 1, we are presented with the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days. Some people would have you believe these cannot possibly be literal 24-hour days - each “day” must be hundreds or thousands of years long. But look at the text. Gen 1:5 - “And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” Gen. 1:8 - “And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.” This phrase is repeated for every single one of the six days of creation.

In other words, the text of Gen. 1 is telling us exactly how long each day was - one evening and one morning. It is here that God defines what a day is, and it has only ever been 24 hours long since. What - you think God forgot how long a day is by the time Daniel was born? What kind of God do you believe in, who says day=centuries in Gen. 1, and day=year in Dan. 9 - who says one thing and means another? What kind of God do you believe in, who can’t tell time, or who can’t find the right words to tell us what He really means?

**Days of Future Past (Troubling Inconsistencies)**

To understand the full extent of the sloppiness (and folly) of any interpretation of Daniel’s 70 Weeks
which places its fulfillment in the past, we need to lay out in detail the time line of the prophecy.

Here is the essential time line:

1) The time line begins with the issuance of a word or decree to restore and (re)build Jerusalem.
2) Seven weeks later, a person chosen by God (an anointed one) will respond to the decree for the purpose of doing the restoration work.
3) For sixty-two weeks after his arrival, this person will begin work on “squares and moat,” that is, the moat and some building foundations.
4) At the end of the sixty-two weeks, the people of the prince to come (i.e., the Antichrist) will destroy Jerusalem and “the sanctuary.” The result will be that the restoration is stopped, and effectively amount to nothing (“cut off and have nothing”).
5) The Antichrist will make a covenant “with many” for one week - most likely a cease-fire, possibly a treaty.
6) But midway through this last week, regular (daily) sacrifices are stopped by the Antichrist. This completes the seventy weeks.
7) Notice that the Abomination of Desolation is “decreed” to follow these events, but the text does not say when.

Now, if we are to use a consistent and rigorous method of interpretation, all the days in the above time line must correspond to years. Not just in the aggregate, but with each of the particulars. That is to say,

1) The work to restore Jerusalem will not begin until 7 weeks of years (49 years) after the decree to rebuild is issued. That’s a long time to wait for a response.
2) The person chosen by God to restore Jerusalem will work on the project for 62 weeks of years (434 years). It’s not simply that 434 years will transpire between when the rebuilding begins and the anointed one is cut off. First, the work itself must continue for the entire 434 years. Second, the person who starts the rebuilding is presumably the same guy who is cut off - those are not two different anointed ones. So you need to find an anointed one who lives for almost 500 years.
3) When the anointed one is “cut off,” it could mean that he is killed, or it could just mean that the building project is stopped. But in either event, it means that after the total rebuilding period, nothing gets built except for the laying of a few foundations. Be reasonable - Does it actually take 434 years to dig a moat and pour some foundations?
4) Everybody (it seems) is looking for a future seven-year peace treaty. But what that really means is the Jews will regain control over the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and will begin offering sacrifices. They may or may not get the Temple rebuilt, but they will at least have a functioning sanctuary. And then we are supposed to believe the enemies of Israel are going to wait a full 3½ years before doing something about it? Yeah, right.
5) Some people understand the Abomination of Desolation to occur at the midpoint of the 70th week, but this is plainly contradicted by Dan. 12:11. “From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days.” In other words, if a seven-year Tribulation period is assumed, then the Abomination of Desolation occurs at the end, not the middle. But do you see the problem?
6) If Daniel’s prophetic days are really years, then that means (per Dan. 12:11) it will be 1,290 years from the middle of the 70th week until the end of the 70th week. Either that, or you end up with an inconsistent interpretation - taking some days as literal days while taking other days as actual years, both of which come from the same book and the same prophet. Don’t be sloppy! Tsk, tsk.
Now, how do people try to fit Daniel’s 70 Weeks to historical events? By being extremely sloppy. Let’s start with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. Nehemiah, it is usually asserted, is the guy who responds to the call to rebuild. When was the decree issued? By King Cyrus, we are often told, who issued a decree to rebuild in Ezra 1:1-4, around 515 BC (that is, according to bishop Ussher’s chronology). Nehemiah began to rebuild in 454 BC, and from 454 BC until the crucifixion of Christ in 30 AD is 483 years (or 69 weeks of 7 years). Presto, zappo, the time line fits!

Let’s itemize some of the glaring defects of this scheme, any one of which arguably renders the whole scenario void for not fitting Daniel’s prophecy.

1) The decree of Cyrus was to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, not the city. So his decree can’t possibly be referred to in Dan. 9.
2) Besides, the decree of Cyrus fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah, not Daniel. Ezra 1:1.
3) The decree of Cyrus was also answered by Ezra, not Nehemiah. Ezra neither waited 49 years to respond to Cyrus’ decree, nor did he rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Plus, using Cyrus’ decree pushes the time line out too far (see below).
4) It was 61 years between Cyrus’ decree and the time when Nehemiah started to build, not 49 years.
5) According to Daniel’s prophecy, the 7 weeks (supposedly 49 years) following the decree are part of the overall 70 weeks (490 years). But to make the historical time line “fit,” most people count the 490 years as beginning with Nehemiah’s response, so the 49 (actual 61) years from Cyrus to Nehemiah are outside of (in addition to) the 490 years. Which makes the actual time line from Cyrus to Christ 544 years, not 483 years. And that, of course, no longer fits Dan. 9.
6) Nehemiah responded to the decree of King Artaxerxes, not Cyrus.
7) Granted, the decree of Artaxerxes was approximately 483 years before Christ, but now we have completely eliminated any possible 49 year response period. That is, Nehemiah’s response to Artaxerxes was immediate - he did not wait for 49 years.
8) Also, this interpretation eradicates any distinction between the first 7 weeks and the next 62 weeks. Instead of having a 62 week (434 year) building period following a 7 week (49 year) response period, we have a 483 year building period with an effective response period of zero. That isn’t what Daniel’s prophecy says.
9) Of course, neither Nehemiah nor his building project actually lasted either 434 or 483 years. According to Neh. 6:15, Nehemiah’s restoration of the walls took only 52 days (literal days - not years)! How can that in any way be consistent with either 62 weeks or 69 weeks?
10) Nehemiah’s efforts were not limited to squares and moat, either. He actually finished rebuilding the city walls. (Neh. 6:15). Granted, what the ESV translates as squares and moat, the KJV translates as street and wall, and the NASB renders as plaza and moat. But do any of these translations support an interpretation of Nehemiah’s efforts as being cut short and coming to nothing?
11) Most past fulfillment scenarios consider Christ to be the anointed one who is cut off with nothing. Yet, the ESV, KJV and NASB all use identical language to identify the special person who responds to the call to rebuild Jerusalem and the person who is cut off, treating them as one individual. Yet, no one argues that Jesus was involved with the rebuilding of Jerusalem at any point, or that he responded in any way to the decrees of Cyrus or Artaxerxes. Nor can anyone argue that Nehemiah lived until the time of Christ.
12) Dan. 9:26 suggests that the anointed one will be cut off and Jerusalem destroyed at the same time - “And after the sixty-two weeks [i.e., the 69th week], an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” All of this happens before the 70th week begins. But in history (if Jesus is the anointed one), these
were 40 years apart (Messiah cut off - 30 A.D. vs. Jerusalem and the Jewish temple destroyed - 70 A.D.).

It’s one thing to suggest a gap between the 69th week and 70th week in Daniel 9. But to suggest a 40 year gap is built into the consummation of the 69th week in its own right is not even remotely plausible. Nothing in the text or any standard method of textual interpretation can support such a reading. To do so completely destroys the meaning of a week. Indeed, such a reading suggests that while all the other 69 weeks of Daniel 9 are literally seven years long, the 69th week is $7 + 40 = 47$ years long. That, my friend, is a fatal inconsistency.

Additional Problems

And if you want to be historically accurate, there are other problems to contend with. First, the decree of Cyrus is dated by modern historians (remember, bishop Ussher lived 400 years ago) at around 538 BC, not 515 BC. Second, the rebuilding of Jerusalem by Nehemiah is now commonly dated at around 445 BC, not 454 BC. This means the time from Cyrus’ decree to the death of Christ was 567 years, not 483 years. The time from Cyrus’ decree to Nehemiah’s response was 93 years, not 49 years. And the time from Nehemiah until Christ was 474 years, not 483 years.

Is accuracy important to God, and therefore to us? Well, this is the same God who measured the time from the giving of the promises to Abraham until the Exodus from Egypt as 430 years, to the very day. (Exo. 12:40-41). So yes, I would say accuracy is important to God, and therefore to us as well.

Plus, I find it strange that the moment of Jesus’ greatest triumph (his death and resurrection) should be referred to prophetically as being cut off and shall have nothing (Dan. 9:26), as though He was prevented from accomplishing His goal. Nothing could be further from the truth. In what possible sense could this statement ever be applied to Jesus? Granted, Isa. 53:8, referring to the Messiah, predicted that He would be “cut off out of the land of the living.” So yes, cut off arguably means killed. But the real issue is whether Jesus could ever be said to have nothing for his efforts after having been killed. The anointed one of Daniel? Sure, he will die a failure, not being able to complete rebuilding Jerusalem. But in no sense was the death of Jesus a failure.

And no, I do not subscribe to the outlandish theory that because Christ was rejected by the Jews at his First Advent, he therefore was denied his earthly kingdom at that time, and in that sense it can be said he came away with nothing. Jesus said right from the outset that his kingdom was not of this world (Jn. 18:36). He was denied nothing, and he had no unfulfilled expectations.

I also urge you to consider the translation of the Hebrew word mashiach in Dan. 9:25-26. Everybody knows mashiach means Messiah, right? Not exactly. Mashiach is used 39 times in the entire Old Testament. The ESV renders it in English as anointed or anointed one all 39 times. Both the KJV and NASB translate mashiach as anointed or anointed one 37 times, and as Messiah only twice. Both of those translations appear in Dan. 9:25-26 and nowhere else in scripture. Given the prophetic and highly symbolic context of Dan. 9:24-27, it is hard to avoid concluding that translating the word mashiach as Messiah in those instances is mostly driven by interpretive assumptions, not the text.
Let’s not forget that virtually all past fulfillment scenarios assume the anointed one in Dan. 9:25-26 is Jesus. If the assumption that it refers to Jesus is wrong (and I believe it is wrong), all past fulfillment scenarios fail. Commentators tend to be snobby here, holding that a *Christological* interpretation (*i.e.*, that the anointed one must be Jesus) is best, *as if* all prophecy must relate to Jesus and such interpretations are automatically preferred over any non-Christological approach.

However, nothing in the text demands that the *anointed one* must be Jesus. Certainly, there are other people in the Bible who are anointed ones (such as Saul and David, and in prophecy, the two witnesses of Rev. 11). Remember when we discussed the Two Witnesses and I told you to remember that they were anointed ones? I hate to say it, but preferring a *Christological* interpretation of Dan. 9 is just one more example of reading assumptions into the text, rather than deriving an interpretation from the text.

So, believe what you want to, as far as whether the 70 weeks of Dan. 9 have been partially fulfilled (to the extent of 69 weeks) in the past. But according to objective facts, and any consistent hermeneutic, no past chronology fits the prophecy. Unless you simply ignore all the verses that prove inconvenient to the theory, of course. But ask yourself - why are so many people so heavily invested in an historical interpretation that doesn’t square with history? Is their interpretation controlling the narrative, or is the narrative controlling the interpretation? Exegesis, or eisegesis?

**The 70th Week**

So far, our inspection of the day-year theory of Dan. 9 has been limited to past *partial* fulfillment. Partial fulfillment advocates usually also believe that the so-called 70th week (*i.e.*, a 7 year Tribulation period) is still in the future. Yet, there are some (*i.e.*, Preterists) who believe the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation were all *completely* fulfilled by 70 AD.

It’s easy to understand why people might have held to these beliefs in the early part of the Christian era. There were 600 years (roughly) between Daniel and Christ, so it is possible that some or all of Daniel’s prophecies were fulfilled in that time. And in fact several of Daniel’s prophecies concerning the empires of Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome actually were fulfilled by the time of Christ. This is not in dispute. However, nothing requires *all* of Daniel’s prophecies to have been fulfilled during that time, just because *some* of them were.

Making the same kinds of arguments regarding Revelation are tougher, simply because we have much less possible fulfillment time to work with - two or three decades, at most. That is, if the prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled in 70 AD, it doesn’t leave much time between when the book was written and when it was fulfilled - if indeed there was *any*. Many scholars believe that Revelation was written around 95-96 AD. If that is true, then *none* of the prophecies of Revelation could have been fulfilled in 70 AD, and still be regarded as prophecies.

On the other hand, if Revelation was written before 70 AD, then fulfillment at that time could have been possible - *theoretically*. But our perspective on when and how prophecy is fulfilled changes according to our place in history. If I try to put myself into the shoes of someone who lived a thousand years ago, it might seem pretty convincing that Israel was dead as a nation. I might be tempted to accept the idea that the atrocities and devastation Israel had already suffered were as bad as anything could ever get.
But with the Holocaust, followed by the re-emergence of Israel as a nation in 1948, Israel is no longer dead as a nation, and the recent atrocities seem every bit as bad as the old ones. In short, it is no longer plausible that Mat. 24:21 was fulfilled in 70 AD. “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.” How can anyone argue that what happened in 70 AD was the worst possible period of turmoil the world has ever seen - or ever will see? It’s just not a credible claim.

The question is always whether the proposed fulfillment scenario fits the prophecies exactly. Vague similarities and spiritual types are not enough. The prophecies of both Daniel and Revelation contain some pretty specific time periods. Either a proposed fulfillment fits the time periods exactly, or it isn’t a fulfillment. Yes, I recognize that spiritual types and double-fulfillment scenarios do exist. But if someone claims that an historical event is the final and complete fulfillment of a prophecy, it better be an exact fit. No sloppiness is allowed. God is exact and precise, and He never guesses.

Obviously, if Dan. 9 has been completely fulfilled, then all of the events taking place in the 70th week must already have happened. Specifically, that a holy place, or sanctuary, will exist in Jerusalem, that daily or regular sacrifices (presumed to be in progress) will be stopped, and the Antichrist will desecrate (make desolate) and destroy the sanctuary and the city. Could these prophecies already have been fulfilled? And if so, wouldn’t it be patently obvious to everyone?

Preterists often point out that in fact, the temple was rebuilt after Daniel's lifetime, which temple (the Second Temple, or Herod’s Temple) was desecrated by Antiochus IV Epiphanes and eventually destroyed by Emperor Titus. Do we have a credible fulfillment scenario here? Go back and re-read Dan. 9:24-27 carefully. The prophesied destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary are described as coming at the close of the 69th week. The stopping of daily sacrifices doesn’t occur until midway through the 70th week. The Abomination of Desolation occurs sometime after that (1,290 days later, according to Dan. 12:11).

In other words, the most natural reading of the prophecy is that the destruction of the city and sanctuary come first, the daily sacrifices are stopped later, and the Abomination of Desolation comes last.

So the initial problem is that the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV happened in 167 B.C., and the destruction of the same temple by Titus occurred in 70 AD. In other words, they happened in reverse order from what Daniel foretold - the supposed Abomination of Desolation comes first, instead of last.

A second problem is that at no point in the past was there a 7-day cease fire or 7-year peace treaty which was broken halfway through, and daily sacrifices stopped. That is a necessary element in fulfilling Daniel’s prophecy. Thirdly, none of the historical events line up with an interlude of either 1,290 days or 1,290 years as required by Daniel.

No matter how much ambiguity you may find in Dan. 9, once you assume all the events have already occurred, it should be straightforward and relatively simple to show how all the aspects of the prophecy have been fulfilled as predicted. But you can’t do it based on historical events so far. I can’t do it. No one can. Past events simply do not fit the prophecy.
Don’t be suckered into thinking that just because someone at some point slaughtered a pig in the Jewish temple, it must be the prophesied Abomination of Desolation. Remember, Jesus spoke of the Abomination of Desolation “spoken of by the prophet Daniel” as being still future in 30 AD. (Mat. 24:15). So how can what happened in 167 BC already have fulfilled Daniel’s prophecy when Jesus made that remark? It can’t.

For many Christians and Muslims alike, tradition holds that the Antichrist will make a seven year peace treaty with Israel that will be broken mid-way through, thus identifying a Tribulation (first 3½ years) and a Great Tribulation (second 3½ years). However, tradition is not scripture. The brutal and honest truth is that nowhere in the Bible is a seven-year Tribulation period or a seven-year peace treaty actually (that is, literally) mentioned.

If, in fact, there is to be any 7 year peace treaty, Dan. 9:27 is the sole scriptural basis for such a thing, and it requires making a lot of unfounded assumptions. Namely,

1) that the anointed one in Dan. 9:24-27 actually refers to two people, not one, the second of which is Christ;
2) that the 483 years preceding the crucifixion fulfilled the chronology of the first 69 weeks (when clearly they do not);
3) that when God specifies a time period it may include an un-expressed and undefined interlude of thousands of years (the gap between weeks 69 and 70); and
4) even though God has expressly said when a day is to be taken as representing a prophetic year in other instances, in Daniel’s prophecy He leaves it completely unstated and to be derived solely by supposition.

Yikes! And people actually anchor their view of the entire end times on this belief!? Why would anyone build an entire eschatology on such a shaky foundation? It is madness, I say. If indeed the Tribulation is to be seven years long, then there ought to be at least one other reference to that fact somewhere in the Bible. But, no.

Revelation only ever refers to 42 months, 1260 days, or 3½ times. There are no seven year periods in Revelation. Further, there are exactly three mentions of “seven years” in all of biblical prophecy:

1) Gen. 41, concerning Pharaoh’s dream of the seven good years followed by the seven years of famine;
2) Elisha’s prophecy of seven years of famine in 2Ki. 8; and
3) Ezek. 39:9, to the effect that people will burn the weapons of the defeated armies of the Antichrist for seven years after Armageddon.

The Bible never explicitly mentions a seven year Tribulation or a seven year peace treaty. Ever. When people talk about these things as though they are facts, it is based purely on fabrications, er, I mean, assumptions. Eisegesis, not exegesis.

The Beginning Of The End Time

I suggest that Dan. 9:24-27 may actually refer to 490 literal days yet in the future. They clearly tie into the Tribulation because of the Abomination of Desolation (see also Mat. 24:15), but the 490 days mentioned here most likely immediately precede the Tribulation or consist of the first part of that period.
I see no textual basis for rejecting a 490 day chronology (70 literal weeks). Practically, if the Empire State Building could be built in 410 days, why couldn’t the groundwork for the rebuilding of Jerusalem (literally, just the “squares and moat”) be substantially in progress in 434 days? I take squares and moat to essentially mean that excavations have been made and perhaps that foundations have been poured, but that’s all. (Apparently, Jerusalem does have a moat near the Jaffa gate.)

The text never says rebuilding will be complete or that anything more than the excavations will have been made when the prince who is to come destroys the city. In fact, the text says the effort to rebuild will come to nothing, which suggests that no structures will actually be erected. So what is it exactly about a 434 day excavation project that makes it an unreasonable interpretation?

A close look at v. 27 also reveals that the last sentence is not directly stated to be completed within the 70th week. That is, the “wing of abominations” and the “one who makes desolate” are not said to be consummated in the 70th week. The use of the word “wing” suggests being carried away, and with speed. Thus, the “wing of abominations” infers it will follow the 70th week quickly, or perhaps begin in the 70th week, but nothing says it will be completed in that week. Stopping the sacrifices after 486½ days could simply start the running of the 1290 day period of Dan. 12:11. See Appendix C in this regard.

So I see Dan. 9:24-27 being interpreted something like this:

70 weeks are given to Israel and Jerusalem to wrap up some big things in God’s plan (to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place). 7 weeks after an order is given to rebuild Jerusalem, a righteous leader will appear. He will work to rebuild the city in troubled times for 62 weeks, only digging the moat and the city foundations, but in the end his efforts will come to nothing. The followers of the Antichrist will destroy Jerusalem and the temple at that time. War will come suddenly, and the invaders will desecrate the city. The Antichrist will make a multilateral pact to cease hostilities for a week, and for half that time Jewish sacrifices and offerings will be stopped. Then, hating the holy things of God and acting quickly, the Antichrist will desecrate Jerusalem and set up the Abomination of Desolation until he is finally conquered.

Many people look for the inauguration of a seven year peace treaty with Israel as the reference point by which they will know the end times have begun - others think the Rapture will be the sign. For me, I look for two things as the key indicators that the end times have begun: 1) an event which triggers an order to rebuild Jerusalem (such as a destruction of the mosques currently on the Temple Mount, or a military attack on the city); and 2) the formation of the beast kingdom of ten nations (see the discussion of the beast kingdom later on).

The mere fact the events in Dan. 9 are so clearly made prominent in prophecy leads me to believe the issuance of an order to rebuild Jerusalem is when people will be able to look each other in the eye and say, “The end times are here.” Actually, the main time marker used to compute dates in scripture is the stopping of the sacrifices, but that is the end of the beginning. The beginning of the beginning comes when the decree to rebuild is issued.
The beast kingdom will likely take a while to fully develop, and its arrival will precede the arrival of the Antichrist, as he will come up afterwards and replace three of the initial rulers. So this may be in progress well in advance of the rebuilding project and may be the first thing we will see. But at the time, when this occurs, people are likely to chalk it up to politics as usual and shrug off its importance. Nonetheless, from God’s perspective, and to those who are perceptive, such events will be obvious birth pangs. Mat. 24:8.

The order to rebuild Jerusalem will be the inauguration of the end times. The event triggering a rebuilding is likely to come quite suddenly, and when it comes it will be unmistakable. It will also start the running of the end times clock in a way the gradual formation of the beast kingdom will not, because it is attached to a specific time period. The other major time marker for prophetic purposes is the Second Coming. And to speak in terms of the birth pangs analogy, the Second Coming is when the baby will be born.

THE REGATHERING OF THE JEWS


The restoration of Israel in the end times is foretold in numerous scriptures throughout the O.T. I have listed only some of the principal texts above. They are so extensive that I will not reproduce all of them here except in summary fashion below. But I want you to see that this is not a passing thought found in only one or two texts. It is a pervasive theme of the Bible.

The Root and the Graft

The restoration of Israel as a nation is important because it shows that God has not forgotten about Israel, “switched” from Israel to the Church, or merged the two together. When people consider Israel and the Church to be merged, it always means that the Church takes over and Israel goes away, i.e., that the Church replaces Israel in prophecy. Merge is code language for replace. In contrast, I want to emphasize that Israel is important in the prophetic future and is not replaced or superseded by the Church.

Take Rom. Chap. 11, for example, which starts out with the statement, "God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite ..." In fact, the whole chapter, while explaining how Gentiles have been grafted into the “olive tree of God” (i.e., the chosen people of God), affirms that Israel has not been cut off from the tree. According to Rom. 11:17-18:

But if some of the branches were broken off, and [Gentiles], although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root [Israel], but the root that supports you.

Therefore, if the Church does not support Israel, then it cannot replace it, either. The grafting process does not convert the cultivated olive tree (to use the metaphor of Romans) into a wild olive tree. As anyone familiar with horticultural grafting knows, the graft is an add-on, not a replacement.
In other words, among the chosen people of God, Israel is primary, the Church is secondary, and nothing in this respect has changed since the Church came along. See Rom. 11:23-24:

And even [Israel], if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if [Gentiles] were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

God is not done with Israel as a nation yet. Jesus did not come to obliterate the distinction between the nation of Israel and the Church. Furthermore, God has prepared from the beginning of the Church, to re-integrate unbelieving Israel back into the olive tree. Thus, Rom. 11 foreshadows the turning of Israel to Christ in the end times. As if to put the matter to rest, Rom. 11:26 says, “all Israel will be saved,” and v. 29 says, “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” These verses are intended to be understood literally, taken at face value. Don’t denigrate them by forcing an allegorical interpretation upon them.

The idea that the Church has become the Israel of God, and God's future plans for Israel and the Church are one and the same, is an idea held by postmillennialists and amillennialists to fit their narrative of the supremacy of the Church. Besides ignoring the clear instruction of Rom. 11, it is based on a wrong understanding of God’s covenants with man throughout history. This view conceives of the divine covenants all applying to believers only, and therefore constitute successive chapters in a single “progressively revealed” covenant.

However, the divine covenants (other than the covenant in Christ), according to the scriptures, apply to those who made them at the time and their physical descendants. Therefore (as I said in the Introduction), some of the covenants apply to everyone and others apply only to the Jews. Only the covenant in Christ applies to Christians (or the Church), per se. For purposes of the present discussion, we will adopt the view of the premillennialists - otherwise, none of the prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel have any future importance and there wouldn’t be any point discussing them.

**Hallmarks of the Regathering**

The regathering of the Jews is the second phase of the restoration of Israel (after the firstfruits of Israel - the 144,000) and is important for three reasons (national, spiritual, political):

1. it means the restoration of the full extent of Israel’s territory (i.e., land);
2. it means the spiritual renewal of the Jewish people who will eventually follow Jesus; and
3. it means the destruction of all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

But first, a little history. After the judges, Israel had only three kings for about 120 years as a unified nation. After Solomon’s death, the kingdom divided into two parts, each with a separate kingly line - the 10 northern tribes, commonly called Israel; and the southern two tribes, commonly called Judah. Each of these were separately conquered and taken into captivity - Israel by the Assyrians about 721 B.C., and Judah by the Babylonians around 606 B.C.

In 586 B.C., Jerusalem was destroyed. Around 538 B.C., Zerubbabel started to rebuild the temple, completed by Ezra beginning in 458 B.C., and Nehemiah followed around 445 B.C. to rebuild the
city walls. The Temple Mount was expanded and fortified by King Herod about 20 B.C. These stood until 70 A.D., when Jerusalem was utterly destroyed and the Jewish people were scattered among the nations. No Jewish king has reigned over the nation of Israel since the Babylonian deportation. And in spite of the formation of the state of Israel in 1948, the Jews remain largely scattered among the nations today.

Most of the O.T. prophets wrote during the time between 721 B.C. (the first deportation) and the rebuilding of Jerusalem by Nehemiah. So one thing to watch for is prophecies relating to the rebuilding of the temple by Nehemiah (the Second Temple), and the return of the Jews from deportation. This initial return of the Jews to Jerusalem is not the “restoration” of Israel. Neither is the formation of the state of Israel in 1948. Why? Because neither of these past events signify:

1) the turning of the Jews to Jesus spiritually;
2) restoration of the full extent of the Promised Land (we’re talking real estate here); or
3) the destruction of all surrounding hostile nations.

I encourage you to read all of the texts cited above to see just how pervasive this theme of restoration is in the O.T. You can easily see why the Jews in Jesus’ time were expecting a conquering king, rather than a suffering savior. They were looking for the restoration of Israel, which obviously hadn’t happened yet. And it hasn’t happened since, either.

The following are some representative scriptures relating to the regathering of the Jews:

Return of Jews to Palestine

Deut 30:1-5 - “And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, ... then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. ... And the Lord your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it.”

Jer. 23:3 - “Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.”

Jer. 32:37 - “Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety.”

Ezek. 34:12-13 - “As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land.”

Restoration of the land

Ezek. 28:25 - “Thus says the Lord God: When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they shall dwell in their own land that I gave to my servant Jacob.”

Ezek. 36:24 - “I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.”

Ezek. 37:21-22 - “Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own
land. And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel.”

Ezek. Ch. 45-48 - Detailed measurements are given to Ezekiel for re-allotment to the tribes of Israel. “When you allot the land as an inheritance.” Included in these measurements is a *metes and bounds* description of the entire Promised land, like the kind used in legal descriptions for deeds today. Ezek. 47:13-23.

**Spiritual renewal**

Jer. 32:38-39 - “And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.”

Ezek. 36:26-28 - “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules ... and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”

Rom. 11:26 - all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.”

**Destruction of hostile nations**

Joel 3:19 - Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the people of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.

Zeph. 3:15, 19a - The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil. ... Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors.

Zech. 8:7 - Thus says the Lord of hosts: behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country.

Zech. 14:12-13 - And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. And on that day a great panic from the Lord shall fall on them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other.

Precious little is overtly stated as to when the regathering of the Jews will happen. We can infer that the regathering will most likely occur at the beginning of the Millennium, because multiple texts refer both to Israel being ruled by Christ, and the surrounding nations being judged, all about the same time. However, Rom. 11:25-29 indicates it will happen after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. That is a highly probable reference to the end of the Tribulation (see discussion below).

Ezek. 38:8-12 overtly suggests, and other texts imply, that the regathering will begin (but not be completed before) Armageddon. I say this because Gog and Magog will attack Israel when the Jews already “have been gathered from many nations” and “are living securely” in unwalled villages. In other words, some measure of restoration will come before Armageddon, principally the physical (or geographical) regathering of the Jews. If there is a seven year peace treaty with the Antichrist, this may be the time of *living securely*. But more likely, this refers to the time since 1948 when the Jewish people regained their status as a nation-state.

However, the Bible never says that the Jews will turn their hearts to Christ prior to the Second Coming. Therefore, it is most probable that the spiritual renewal of Israel will not come until after
the Second Coming, if not in fact on that very day. This is a necessary implication of the 144,000 of Israel who by definition are the first part of the nation of Israel to turn to Christ. The rest of the nation will not turn to Christ until after the 144,000 have finished their task (i.e., after the Tribulation). Similarly, the direct rule of Christ and the covenant of peace will come after Armageddon, not before. So I am not convinced the regathering precedes Armageddon since all these things should happen at roughly the same time.

The regathering will undoubtedly take some time - How quickly can the Jews all return to the Promised Land? It may unfold in stages instead of all at once, and may be ongoing while other things are happening. God never says the various events which are prophesied will not overlap each other. Be wary of end times charts and graphs that show one event stopping before another event starts. One thing we do know is that a remnant of Israel will be sheltered and nourished in the wilderness for 1260 days (Rev. 12:6), ostensibly during the reign of the Antichrist, so once he is defeated, that particular remnant will probably return to Israel very quickly.

But one thing is for certain - the regathering of the Jews in its full prophetic sense hasn’t happened yet. The formation of the civil state of Israel in 1948 wasn’t it. Otherwise, the Gaza Strip and West Bank would not be in Palestinian hands, the spiritual renewal would already have occurred, and the hostile nations around Israel would be destroyed. Clearly these things have not yet taken place.

FIRST AMONG THE NATIONS

**Isa. 60:10-12** - “Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in my wrath I struck you, but in my favor I have had mercy on you. Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste.”

From our discussion of Rom. 11 (the root and the graft), you should have picked up on the idea that God singled out Israel among all the nations of the world for His special pleasure. This was first disclosed to Abram in Gen. 12:2-3. “And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

This promise was reiterated to Jacob in Gen. 27:29 and Gen. 28:13-14. But of course, when these promises were made to Abram and Jacob, no nation of Israel yet existed. But upon its exodus from slavery in Egypt, the nation of Israel was birthed into existence, and God finally revealed His full intention for the nation. “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Exo. 19:5-6.

This meant that of all the nations, Israel was singled out for special blessings if it obeyed God, and special curses if it disobeyed. **See, Deut. 28:1-68.** In a very real sense, Israel’s history is just one big example of to whom much is given, much shall be required. **Cf., Luk. 12:48; 1Co. 10:11.**

We need not recount here all the various struggles of Israel as a nation with idolatry and other sins. Suffice it say that the destruction of the nation in the event of its disobedience (and what we
generally refer to as the *diaspora*) was foretold long in advance. “And the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other. ... And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot.” Deut. 28:64-65.

So too was the eventual restoration of Israel as a nation foretold right from the very beginning.

“And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ... The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. ... And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you. ... And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down.” Deut 28:1, 7, 10, 12b-13a.

Keep in mind that even though Deut. 28 is phrased in terms of a conditional *if*, God does not prepare for contingencies that will never occur. So you might as well read the verses above as, “*When* you faithfully obey ...” Looking at this prophetically, the status of Israel as the most favored nation is no mere possibility, it is a *certainty*. 

**Spiritual Rebirth**

One of the things that makes Israel first among the nations of the world is it has long been foretold that one day “all Israel will be saved.” Rom. 11:26. Such a prophecy has never been uttered with respect to any other nation.

**Jer. 31:31-34** - "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt .... But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.”

This text is quoted in Heb. 8:8-12. Many commentators take Hebrews to mean that the Jeremiah text was fulfilled by the covenant in Christ. But this is not what the Hebrews text says. Hebrews cites Jeremiah solely for the proposition that the Mosaic covenant had faults, and needed to be upgraded. "For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second." Heb. 8:7. Hebrews does not say that Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled, and how could it? I must conclude that Jeremiah's prophecy has not been fulfilled.

Besides, what evidence can anyone produce to show that "they shall all know Me" is a present reality? Knowing what we know about Israel and the Church, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, etc., can anyone really say that either Christians or Jews, as a group, have an intimate knowledge of the law of God within them? That all people are right now so familiar with God that no one needs to be taught about Him? Are theologians looking at a world other than the one I'm looking at? I discuss this concept in greater detail in the essay, *No Part of the Mosaic Covenant Has Ended*. 
Similarly, in Jer. 32:36-41, after promising to regather the Jews, after which Jehovah will be their God, and they will be His people, God says, "I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me." Has any of that happened yet? Really? Where is the evidence?

Or what about Ezek. 34:25-28?

"I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. ... And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid."

Tell me please, exactly when this scripture was fulfilled. I'm sure the Jews are just dying to find out that they have no security concerns whatsoever concerning other nations from here on out. Of course Ezekiel has not been fulfilled! It is still in the future.

So what do we take from this? The scripture plainly indicates there is yet to be another divine covenant which will do things the prior divine covenants have not done, namely, to provide for the spiritual rebirth of the nation of Israel. Not the nations of the world, but only Israel as first among the nations. I'll look at these prophecies again when I discuss The Seventh Divine Covenant, later.

**Isa. 66:7-9** - “Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth?” says the Lord; “shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb?” says your God.

Recall from our earlier discussion that Jesus said wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes and famine, were all “but the beginning of the birth pains.” Mat. 24:8. Up to this point, we have not really considered what it is that will be birthed. Yes, in a sense, the nation of Israel will be reborn. But that isn’t the only birth taking place.

This is perhaps best explained in Rev. 12:5, a text we will consider in more detail later, which is a symbolic picture of the nation of Israel giving birth to Jesus, who will rule the nations with a rod of iron. Given the context of events yet future, it is an obvious reference to the Second Coming, not the First Advent. Yet, Jesus will not again undergo a human birthing process as a baby. Rather, I take Rev. 12:5 to mean that Israel will give birth to the Millennial kingdom of Christ - the real baby being born here - a physical kingdom which will start with the core constituency of a spiritually reborn nation of Israel.

Isa. 66 then, is a description of the rebirth of Israel, namely, that a nation of believers (all Israel which remains after the Tribulation, i.e., an unbelieving remnant) will be spiritually born in a single day. The Second Coming will be so evident, so obvious, that none can deny it, and all Jews who survive the Time of Jacob’s Trouble will recognize and accept Jesus as their Messiah in an instant. Thus will Isa. 66:7-9, Rev. 12:5 and Rom. 11:26 all be fulfilled together.
Notwithstanding the glowing terms in which the rebirth of Israel is described in scripture, the transition from Israel's current status of being scattered among the nations to the ultimate goal of ushering in the Messianic Era (a/k/a the Millennium) will not be an easy one. The scripture also indicates in several places that the transition will be costly in human lives and be a great distress or travail for the survivors. Commonly this period of time is referred to as Jacob's Trouble (referring to Jer. 30:7 in the KJV) because it speaks of a time of unusual distress in the future history of Israel just prior to its rebirth.

The Time of Jacob’s Trouble

**Jer. 30** (excerpt) - For behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the Lord, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it. ... Thus says the Lord: We have heard a cry of panic, of terror, and no peace. ... Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it. ... I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished. ... I have dealt you the blow of an enemy, the punishment of a merciless foe, because your guilt is great, because your sins are flagrant. ... The fierce anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intentions of his mind. In the latter days you will understand this.

**Jer. 31** (excerpt) - Thus says the Lord: “The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, the Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” ... For thus says the Lord: “Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, ‘O Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel.’” I have heard Ephraim grieving, “You have disciplined me, and I was disciplined, like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for you are the Lord my God.”

**Zech. 12:2, 7-8** - “Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah. ... And the Lord will give salvation to the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not surpass that of Judah. On that day the Lord will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem... .”

**Zech 13:7-9** - “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,” declares the Lord of hosts. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones. In the whole land, declares the Lord, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people’; and they will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’”

**Zech 14:2-3** - For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle.
Mat. 24:15-21 - “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.”

Rev. 12:13-17 - And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

The context of all of these scriptures quoted above makes clear that each of them refers to the great day of the Lord (the Second Coming) and the days immediately preceding it, but with special reference to what Israel will go through as a nation in that time, that is, Jacob’s Trouble.

Jer. 30 establishes the foundational concepts: God will make a full end, or complete destruction of the nations gathered for battle against Jerusalem. God will not utterly destroy Israel, however. For them, God will execute punishment in just measure, implying that a remnant will be spared. This punishment will be inflicted because of Israel’s great guilt and flagrant sins. Jer. 31 makes explicit what the prior chapter only implies: that there will be a remnant of the nation of Israel, and that they will find grace and rest in the wilderness. This wilderness is likely to be an area south or southeast of modern Israel. Whether it will be in modern Jordan or Saudi Arabia is impossible to say.

Zech 12 elaborates further that Jerusalem will be besieged, but God will give protection to the house of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem (which is on the northern border of historical Judah). Zech. 13 indicates that the remnant of Israel will be a third of the people and the rest will perish. Those who survive will be tested by fire. These are the Jews who will survive the Tribulation, enter into the Millennial kingdom, and then become believers in Christ. Zech 14 indicates that half of the residents of Jerusalem will be forced into exile - presumably in the wilderness referred to in Jer. 31. The other half will enjoy God’s protection in the city as per Zech 12.

Mat. 24 highlights the time of the most intense persecution, when the distress of Jacob will be at its highest point, namely, when the Abomination of Desolation is set up. However, the Tribulation will likely have been well under way by this time. This text also dispels the notion that the group of exiles will consist of the 144,000 of Israel. As we will see later on, the 144,000 consist 100% of virgin males, whereas the group described in Mat. 24 includes pregnant women and nursing mothers. So, the exiles and the 144,000 are two completely separate groups of people.

For this reason also we may conclude that the Jews in exile will be non-believers in Christ. That is, the exile occurs during the Tribulation, but will not consist of the 144,000 people who will be the only Jews to become believers during that time. The rest of the Jews will not become believers until
after the Second Coming.

Rev. 12 describes the exile of the remnant of Israel in symbolic terms, and having them find shelter and protection in the wilderness for 3½ times (ostensibly, 3½ years). The serpent (Satan) is described as pursuing the woman (Israel) with a flood (possibly referring to an army), but the earth swallows the flood and Israel is spared. Then, Satan turns to make war with the rest of her offspring who hold to the testimony of Jesus, which I take to mean Christians.

Curiously, the offspring of the woman, who is undoubtedly national Israel, are described as Christians. Is this a symbolic reference to the Church, i.e., Gentile believers? Not likely, since scripture never elsewhere commingles national Israel and Gentile believers. More likely it refers to believing Jews, but we already know Israel as a nation will not acknowledge Jesus until after the Second Coming. That leaves the 144,000 of Israel, who will in fact turn to Christ during the Tribulation, as the most probable group in view here.

Thus, I conclude that what Rev. 12 indicates is the Antichrist will pursue the remnant of Israel until he is thwarted in that effort by God’s special protection, at which point the Antichrist will turn his attention to the 144,000 instead. For his part, the Antichrist will know that both Jews and Christians are part of the chosen people of God, so he will ultimately pursue both with the same hatred. Although, since most of Israel will be as yet unsaved during the Tribulation, the Antichrist’s zeal will burn especially hot for Jews who are also Christians.

I believe this explains why, in Islamist teachings, America is the Great Satan, and Israel is the Little Satan. In spite of America’s current state of spiritual decline and apostasy, to Islamists it represents Christianity, which is the greater threat to Islam and deserves the greater condemnation. These would likely be reversed, if Israel were all saved during the present age. But the 144,000 Jewish believers will have two strikes against them, as it were, in the mind of the Antichrist.

Notice that the flight of the remnant of Israel is described as being given two wings of the great eagle. This is a pretty direct allusion to Exo. 19:4, where God described Israel’s Exodus from Egypt as “I bore you on eagles wings and brought you to myself.” Given the parallels we have already seen between the Exodus plagues and the plagues of the Tribulation, this should be no surprise. For that precise reason, some see the description of the earth opening its mouth and swallowing the flood as another allusion to the Exodus account, namely, the crossing of the Red Sea.

However, in the crossing of the Red Sea the earth did not swallow the water, rather the water flooded the Egyptian army, so the allusion is less than obvious. It requires you to think of the Egyptian army as the flood and the Red Sea as the “earth” which swallowed the flood. Perhaps a better match would be Korah’s rebellion, where the earth opened up its mouth and swallowed 250 rebellious men who refused to enter the Promised land. Num. 16:32. This occurred just after the spies returned from their first look at Canaan, which is still in the general time of the Exodus.

In either event, the imagery used in Rev. 12 is suggestive of the Exodus. It indicates that when the Tribulation comes, God will again use miracles and supernatural means to protect the people of Israel from their enemies in a time of great trial for the nation, just as He did at the time of the Exodus. However, given that only one-third of Israel is likely to survive the Tribulation, it is easy to see why this period of time will be called the time of Jacob’s Trouble. Even as God will judge
the Gentile nations, Israel will not be an innocent party in all of this. Israel has a national sin debt which must be paid, and the Tribulation is when God will collect on that debt.

If you think this is out of character for God, it isn’t. Even in the Millennium, when all of surviving Israel is saved, God will still be collecting on this same sin debt.

**Ezek. 44:6-12** (excerpt) - “Thus says the Lord God: O house of Israel, enough of all your abominations ... You have broken my covenant, in addition to all your abominations. ... But the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment ... Because they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn concerning them, declares the Lord God, and they shall bear their punishment.”

**The Time of the Gentiles**

**Luke 21: 24** - Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

**Rom. 11:25** - a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

**Rev. 11:2** - the court outside the temple . . . is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

We have seen how the grand plan of God for the nation of Israel is that it will enter the Tribulation unsaved and under attack. Many in Israel will be killed and Jerusalem will likely be destroyed at least in part, but a remnant of one-third of the nation will be sheltered and protected by God until the Tribulation ends. At that point, Jesus will return and all Israel (remaining at that time) will be saved and acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of David. As we will see later on, the 144,000 of Israel will be the first among the nation of Israel to turn to Christ during the Tribulation itself.

Meanwhile, Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentile nations throughout the Tribulation for 42 months. Thus, those parts of Jerusalem which the Jews now control will be taken away from their control in the Tribulation. Logically, this trampling will terminate with the fulfillment (or conclusion) of the time of the Gentiles and the time when “the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” In other words, when the Tribulation ends and Jesus returns, the Jews will retake Jerusalem and the Gentiles will be booted out.

Which raises an interesting question: If the time of the Gentiles will *end* with the Second Coming, when will (or did) it *begin*? Don’t jump to any hasty conclusions. Don’t assume the time of the Gentiles will start when the Tribulation starts. Just because the Gentiles will trample underfoot the city of Jerusalem for 42 months, does not mean that is when the time of the Gentiles begins. In fact, I suggest it began much farther back in history.

Consider the history of nations for all of human history. From the creation until the tower of Babel (a space of about 1760 years) there were no nations at all. For another 800 years roughly, all the
nations were equal before God. True, God promised to make Abraham’s descendants a special nation around 1975 B.C. or so. But Israel wasn’t really birthed as a nation - in a political sense, anyway - until the Exodus from Egypt around 1450 B.C. I would also argue that Israel did not actually become a *special* nation chosen by God until He announced His intention in that regard in Exo. 19:5-6 (immediately before the giving of the Mosaic law).

From the point of the Exodus (or if you prefer, the giving of the Mosaic law) Israel became truly special and all nations were *not* equal before God. That special status is eternal, in keeping with the eternal purposes of God and the eternal nature of the Mosaic covenant. However, two events occurred which thrust the Gentiles into a period of ascendancy. *First*, at the crucifixion in 30 A.D., the veil in the Jewish temple was torn from top to bottom, signaling that access to God had been thrown open to the Gentiles. In other words, the Jews no longer had superior access to God compared to other nations. They were (and are) still God’s treasured possession, but their access to God was no longer preeminent.

*Second*, Jerusalem and the Jewish temple were destroyed by the Romans (a Gentile nation) in 70 A.D. Again, this did not alter the relationship between God and Israel, but as a practical matter it has denied the Jews complete control of their homeland, the city of Jerusalem, and their most holy place (the Temple Mount) ever since. Sure, the Jews have regained much of their homeland and portions of Jerusalem since 1948, but even today they are not able to exercise complete control over them. In a real sense, there are Gentiles (Palestinians and Arabs, etc.) occupying portions of the Promised Land.

This trampling of the Gentiles will continue until such time as Israel will be restored politically (a reestablishment of the throne of David), return to the land to the full extent, and embrace Jesus as their Messiah in a spiritual rebirth. Thus, beginning with the Second Coming, Israel will become chief among the nations not only in the eyes of God, but in the eyes of the world. This status will continue until the end of history.

The intervening period between Israel’s dispersion in 70 A.D. and its future restoration, I suggest, is *in its entirety* the time of the Gentiles. One could even argue the time of the Gentiles began with the crucifixion, since that is when the time of the Gentiles began *spiritually*. There frankly aren’t too many other choices left. If the time of the Gentiles is only 42 months, then whose time is the period in history from the cross to the Tribulation?

Oh wait, I know what you’re thinking. You’re thinking this is the Church Age. You *are* aware that this phrase, *Church Age*, is nowhere used in the Bible, right? That it is just someone’s opinion as to how God has organized history? Although you’ve probably heard it all of your life, so you just accept it. But, let us rather see what the scripture says.

There is abundant evidence in the New Testament that the so-called Church Age is in fact the *time of the Gentiles*. Prior to the crucifixion, Jesus sent the twelve disciples out with this instruction: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Mat. 10:5-6. However, *after* the crucifixion, Jesus told the remaining eleven disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” Mat. 28:19.

At His ascension, Jesus told the same group, “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea
and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8. “The gospel ... is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” [i.e., Gentiles]. Rom 1:16. So, what started out as a plan of redemption for Jews only was expanded to all nations. And that is just a foretaste of the expansion of the theocratic laws of Israel yet to come. [See the discussion of the Eighth Divine Covenant later on.]

Although introduced conceptually at the cross, the spread of the Gospel to all nations was not immediate, but took several years. Initially, the Gospel was confined to Israel, and many of the early churches were comprised mainly of converted Jews. Word of the gospel gradually spread to the Gentiles. Acts 11:1; 15:23. Paul (a Jew) was eventually appointed a special apostle to the Gentiles. Rom. 11:13; 1Tim. 2:7. Eventually even Peter got with the program and realized the times of the Gentiles had been ushered in. Acts 10:34-35; 11:18.

But don’t take my word for it. There’s no reason to leave a matter such as this to mere implication when the scripture speaks plainly about it.

**Heb. 9:1-9 [summary]** - The Mosaic law had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. The tabernacle had a first section called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place. The priests go regularly into the first section, but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year. “By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age).” Heb. 9:8-9.

In other words, according to Hebrews, the present age began at the crucifixion, or to be more precise, when the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom, at the point when Jesus breathed His last on the cross. Mk. 15:37-38. By this event, the way into the Most Holy Place was opened literally. Symbolically, access to the presence of God was no longer limited solely to the high priest, via the Levitical priesthood, or limited to the nation of Israel. Access to the presence of God had been thrown open to all people.

According to Mat. 24:3, before Jesus was crucified, the disciples asked Him, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?” But Jesus didn’t respond to the question by talking about His death, or the close of the age of Israel’s prominence. Instead, He talked about the next age to come (after His death) - the age we are now in. Jesus talked about birth pains, tribulation, the abomination of desolation, and after that, signs in the heavens. In other words, things which are still future.

He concluded His response to the initial question by saying, “Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Mat. 24:30-31.

Thus, the answer to the question, “When will be the close of the age?” is the Second Coming. Not the beginning of the Tribulation, but the end of it. That Jesus is talking about the Second Coming and not any secret rapture event is made clear by His reference to the fact the entire world will see Him coming on clouds with power and great glory, and that is when the present age will close.
But we already know that the Second Coming is when the times of the Gentiles will be concluded. Luk. 21:24. Ergo, the age which began with the crucifixion and will end with the Second Coming is in its entirety the time of the Gentiles. Scripture nowhere indicates there will be more than one age in the time between the crucifixion and the Second Coming.

Call it the Church Age if you want, but if you think the Church Age is going to end when the Tribulation begins, think again. When the Tribulation comes and you’re still here on planet earth, will you remain steadfast in your faith? It kind of gives a new meaning to Mat. 24:12-13, doesn’t it? “And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

What comes after the time of the Gentiles, a/k/a the Church Age? Why, the age of the kingdom, of course. To Jews, it is the Messianic Era. To Christians, the Millennium.

**THE MESSIANIC ERA**

**The Golden Age of Israel**


Similar to the scriptures relating to the regathering of the Jews, the scriptures relating to the Messianic Era (a/k/a the Golden Age) are extensive and comprise a major theme of the Bible. The list of principal texts above is illustrative, not exhaustive. I encourage everyone to read them all fully, and to seek out others I have not shown. For purposes of this discussion, I will only treat them in summary fashion as in the prior section.

The Golden Age is simply that period of time following the regathering of the Jews in which:

1) there is unparalleled peace and safety;
2) there is unparalleled prosperity and a re-habitation of the land; and
3) Israel will be foremost among the nations of the world, which is to say, the throne of David will be restored, and Israel will no longer be a reproach among the nations.

Many of the scriptures relating to the regathering of the Jews also relate to the Golden Age, as the two concepts are necessarily related to each other. Practically speaking, this Golden Age is the same as the Millennium, but from a distinctly Jewish perspective. The Millennium is how the same period is viewed from the perspective of the Church. These are not in conflict or in competition with each other, but are two sides of the same coin, which must be understood together to get the whole picture.

The following texts relate to the Golden Age of a restored Israel. As you examine them, ask yourself: 1) does God exaggerate? and 2) have any of these really happened yet? You might even ask a third question: If God knows all things from the beginning to the end, why would He make all these prophecies concerning Israel as a nation if He just intended it to be replaced by the Church?

**Peace and Safety**

 Isa. 11:6 - The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.  

**Ezek. 34:27** - they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them.  

**Zech.8:4-5** - Thus says the Lord of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.

### Unparalleled prosperity

**Isa. 65:21-22** - They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.  

**Ezek. 34:26-27** - And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase.  

**Ezek. 36:10-11** - And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it. The cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt. And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful. And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before.  

**Ezek. 39:25** - “Therefore thus says the Lord God: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name.”

### A king in Zion

**Amos 9:11-12** - “In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,” declares the Lord who does this.  

**Micah 4:1-3** - It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations afar off.  

**Zech 14:8-9** - On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter. And the Lord will be king over all the earth.

### Reversal of Some of the Effects of the Flood

**Gen. 9:2-3** - The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.  

**Isa. 11:6-9** - The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.  

**Hos. 2:18** - And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and
The Noahic flood and the Noahic covenant which followed brought a number of changes to the earth. The seas were undoubtedly expanded (or raised) due to the falling of the vapor canopy above the earth and the release of waters from below the earth (Gen. 7:11). Rainfall and clouds became the new normal (instead of a mist rising from the ground), and capital punishment was authorized. The rainbow was set in the clouds as a promise never again to flood the world, and mankind was authorized to eat meat in addition to plants for the first time.

This last item not only changed the human diet, it completely transformed the relationship between men and animals. “The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every [animal].” So not only did men hunt and eat animals, but now some animals also hunted people for the purpose of killing them. This is not how things were before the flood. The main reason Noah could get all the animals on the ark is that there was no enmity between them and man at the time. Apparently, God is going to remove this enmity between people and animals in the Messianic Age, at least to the point where no animal will again pose a danger to people.

The scripture does not explicitly say so - so I am extrapolating here - but it is possible people may also stop eating meat and return to a vegetarian diet. These things seem to me to logically go together. But I could be wrong. As I will emphasize later, no - this will not reverse the curse of the ground, or eliminate any of the other effects of the Fall, as that happened more than 1650 years before the flood. But the new relationship between people and animals is definitely something to look forward to.

Let’s consider life spans for the moment. You may be familiar with Ps. 90:10 (a Psalm of Moses) to the effect that “The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty.” And of course you know what is a normal life span now. But life spans before the flood were considerably longer, extending over 900 years in some cases. Thus, Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Jared and Methuselah all lived over 900 years, with Methuselah the longest at 969 years, who also died in the year of the flood.

It appears that along with other reversals of the effects of the flood, life spans will rise, perhaps even to pre-flood levels. Speaking of the Golden Age, Isa. 65:20, 22 declares, “No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, ... for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.” Since some trees are capable of living several hundred years, I take this scripture to mean that’s how long people will live in the Golden Age.

**Topographical Changes**

The onset of the Messianic Era will bring not only spiritual, political, relational and environmental changes to the earth, it will bring a number of key topographical changes as well. Most of these changes will relate to the land of Israel and surrounding areas in the Middle East.

Let’s start with the obvious one - the great earthquake which marks the end of the Tribulation. Rev. 6:14 says that as a result of the quake, every mountain and island will be removed from its place. Rev. 16:19 says that, “The great city [i.e., Jerusalem] was split into three parts [although apparently
only a tenth of Jerusalem will fall - Rev. 11:13], and the cities of the nations fell [i.e., completely].” The next verse adds, “every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found.” It is on the basis of these verses I have concluded that essentially everything built by man will be thrown down so Jesus can inaugurate His new world order with a clean slate. Any earthquake strong enough to remove mountains is strong enough to topple any man-made structures.

The N.T. is not alone in referring to this quake. Ezek. 38:18-20, in describing the consequences of Armageddon, notes that “On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. ... [T]he mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground.”

But that isn’t the only topographical change coming. Several others are mentioned in Zech. 14. Verse 4, speaking of the Second Coming, notes that “On that day [Jesus’] feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.”

Concurrently, according to Zech. 14:10, “The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its site ...” See also Isa. 40:3-4, “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.” Both literally and symbolically, the mountains of Israel will be made flat, but Jerusalem itself will be raised up.

This passage in Isa. 40 is often understood as having been fulfilled by John the Baptist, because it is specifically quoted in reference to John in Lk. 3:4-6, as well as the other gospels. However, I suggest this is an obvious instance where double fulfillment applies. I say this mainly because Isa. 40 tells us exactly what it means to make a straight road in the desert, namely, you have to make the land flat before the road can be made straight. And this plainly did not happen in the time of John the Baptist. Yes, John was a voice in the wilderness, but no, the land around Jerusalem or Israel was not made flat.

I think this helps explain why John and Jesus disagreed about whether John was the Elijah who was to come or not. Jesus said John was (Mat. 11:14), but John said he was not (Jn. 1:21). It’s easy to assume Jesus was right and John was wrong, but it is also possible that Jesus meant John had partially fulfilled prophecy, whereas John meant he had not completely fulfilled prophecy. In any event, I believe the flattening of the land of Israel, based on Zech. 14:10 and other scriptures, will literally occur at some future time.

Finally, Zech 14:8 says that, “On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea.” In other words, water will flow from Jerusalem in two directions - west to the Mediterranean, and east to the Dead Sea. To get a fuller picture of the water flowing eastward, we must turn to Ezek. 47:1-5, which describes water flowing from underneath the threshold of the temple to the east. The river is described as ankle deep 1,000 cubits from the temple, knee deep at 2,000 cubits, waist deep at 3,000 cubits, and too deep to pass at 4,000 cubits (about 6,000 feet) downstream.

The use of the term “living waters” in Zech. 14 should immediately call to mind verses in Jeremiah
to the effect that God is the fountain of living waters (Jer. 2:13; 17:13) and Jn. 4:10 & 7:38 where Jesus also claims to be the source of living water. In each instance, living water refers to the healing and restorative power of God. The fact the living waters will flow outward from the Messianic Temple foundation indicates the absolutely unique and unending favor of God poured out on Jerusalem. When all these things take place it will be a time as close to the perfection of heaven that mankind will ever experience on this earth.

It should therefore be no surprise that the living waters flowing into the Dead Sea will have a healing and restorative effect, as per Ezek. 47:8-9:

“This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea; when the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh. And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes.”

The Dead Sea is so named because it currently has such high mineral content that no fish or wildlife can survive in its waters. But all this will change when Jesus returns. Ezek. 47:12 goes on to say, “And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”

One other topographical change worth noting is mentioned in Rev. 16:12, although this one occurs during the Tribulation and not afterwards. Namely, “the great river Euphrates and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.”

I think what makes all these topographical changes important is that they - along with the changes which will be made to the relationship of mankind to the animal kingdom, the rebuilding of society and all social institutions from scratch, the restoration of Israel and the defeat of its enemies, and the establishment of a worldwide government, theocracy and religion - show the extent to which Jesus, upon His return, will be lord and master over the whole earth. Not one aspect of life on this planet will escape His being in control of it, and all things will be altered to suit His pleasure.

All these changes will be brought about to show His mercy and goodness, His provision and care, and His everlasting dominion. Thus, the waste and uninhabitable places such as deserts and mountains - with a few exceptions to serve as reminders of His judgment - will be made flat, filled with vegetation and wildlife, and yet the wild beasts will not prey upon mankind. There will be universal peace worldwide - not a tense standoff or temporary cessation of hostilities - but a genuine and lasting peace because old rivalries and hatreds will literally disappear.

Most of the topographical changes to the land of Israel seem designed to increase its prosperity and habitability. Jerusalem, being God’s chosen place to show His favor, will remain aloft as a visible reminder of its prominence in all the world. I am sure the Temple Mount, a/k/a God’s most holy mountain, will remain raised up for that same reason. Zech. 14:10.

Finally, I am struck by the fact these topographical changes, in particular, highlight the absolute necessity that the kingdom of Christ will be established on this earth, i.e., the present world. These
changes are not referring to the new earth to be created, since that earth will be perfect and need no alterations. Further, topographical changes - described with precision and detail (including measurements) - are not things which are given to allegory or spiritualizing. These things will be real, physical, and part of human history. The kingdom is really coming. To earth.

REBUILDING THE JEWISH TEMPLE

**Ezek 40-44** (summary) - Ezekiel is shown visions of a temple with many precise measurements. He is given the dimensions of rooms, courts, gates, the thickness of walls, the size of the altar, etc. The exact floor plan does not concern us here. Overall, the temple area is 500 cubits square (Ezek 42:15-20). The cubit used is specifically stated to be a “long cubit,” namely a regular cubit and a handbreadth (Ezek 40:5), or 20"-24" inches. So the whole temple area is given as between 833 and 1,000 feet square.

**Dan. 9:27** (summary) - The Antichrist will stop Jewish sacrifices and offerings, and then commit the Abomination of Desolation in the temple of God.

**Zech. 6:12-15** (summary) - The man whose name is the Branch will build the temple of the Lord, and will sit and rule on his throne. He will sit on the throne both as priest and as king, and bring peace between the two offices. And those who are far off will come and help to build the temple of the Lord.

**Rev. 11:1-2** (summary) - Rise and measure the temple of God, but not the outer temple court because it will be trampled under foot by the nations for 42 months.

**Importance of the Jewish Temple**

The rebuilding of the Jewish temple is very closely linked both to the restoration of Israel and the Messianic Era. The rebuilding of the temple is important because it is the place from which the Messiah (Jesus) will rule the earth as the seat of his kingdom. The rebuilding of the temple also signifies that the enemies of Israel have been conquered and their presence removed from the land.

In the history of Israel, there have been two temples (not including the tabernacle, or tent used prior to that), both of which stood on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The First Temple was built by king Solomon, which was destroyed in 586 B.C. after Israel was deported to Babylon. The Second Temple, sometimes called Herod’s temple, was originally built around 538-515 B.C. and later modified by Herod just prior to the birth of Jesus. This Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. as prophesied by Jesus (Mat. 24:1-2). The temple has not been rebuilt since then.

In 691 A.D. the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim shrine, was built on the Jewish Temple Mount. A mosque was added to the site in 705 A.D. and was rebuilt several times. The present Al-Aqsa Mosque dates to 1033 A.D. The point is, the Jews will never rebuild the temple any place other than the original Temple Mount, so it cannot be rebuilt until the Muslim structures come down and/or the Muslims release control over the Temple Mount. If those Muslim structures had not existed, the Third Temple would most likely have been built already.
Our concern here is whether biblical prophecy foretells the building of a Third Temple, often identified with Ezekiel’s vision of the temple in Ezek. 40-44. Several O.T. prophets wrote during the time between 586 B.C. and the rebuilding of the temple by Zerubbabel and Ezra. Example: Haggai 1:1-15, referring to the rebuilding of the second temple. We are not interested in these prophecies here, nor in Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of the second temple, because none of these past events signify the inauguration of the Messianic Era or the Millennium.

The possible rebuilding of the Jewish Third Temple is hotly debated. Some common objections are as follows:

First, the finished work of Jesus regarding the way of personal salvation needs no physical temple. The physical temple was, in fact, obsoleted by Christ. My answer is: yes and no. Christianity requires no physical temple, true enough. But Jesus did not obsolete the Jewish temple. The temple never was, and never will be, for Gentiles or for Christians. Just because Christians need no temple does not mean the Jews need no temple. Ezekiel 40-48 makes it clear that in the Millennium, the Jews will minister to Christ in the temple, not for personal salvation, but as a national purpose. Plus, the Millennial temple will serve a governmental purpose, not merely a religious purpose.

Second, a rebuilding of the temple by the Jews implies a return to the sacrificial system of the Mosaic law. Aren’t they supposed to be turning to Christ in the end times? My answer is: yes and yes, but irrelevant. Yes, all Israel entering the Millennium will be saved. Yes, animal sacrifices will resume in the rebuilt temple. However, these animal sacrifices have nothing to do with personal salvation or following Christ. Recall Ezek. 44 (quoted a few pages back) - there is a sin debt that national Israel owes for past idolatry. This will require the Jews to furnish certain religious services the Gentiles will not also need to perform, as a punishment. It has nothing to do with salvation.

Third, in this time of political volatility and dispute over the control of Jerusalem, how could the Jews rebuild the temple where Islamic structures now stand? My answer is: well, that’s why there is going to be a war. The ancient hostilities are not dying down, they are coming to a head. The Jews desperately want to resume the full practice of Judaism and they are tired of waiting. The nations surrounding Israel want to eradicate the Jews and they are tired of waiting. Eventually, they are going to slug it out against each other. Who strikes first, I can’t say. But at some point sacrifices on the Temple Mount will resume (no matter how briefly), and Jerusalem will be attacked.

Why Rebuild the Third Temple?

I believe there are five principal reasons why the Jewish temple will be rebuilt a third time in Jerusalem in the future:

1) the temple prophesied in Ezekiel 40-44 has never yet been built;
2) there must be a temple of God in order for the Abomination of Desolation to occur;
3) numerous scriptures refer to a restoration of daily sacrifices which has not occurred yet;
4) when Jesus establishes His earthly kingdom, He will rule it from the temple in Jerusalem; and
5) Israel cannot be restored as the most favored nation unless the temple is rebuilt.

1) Ezekiel’s Prophecy. The fact that Ezekiel’s vision of the temple of God is measured and defined so minutely suggests a physical structure, not merely a spiritual or allegorical one. To the same effect is the fact that measurements are given in long cubits, an historical building or construction
term. If Ezekiel’s temple was intended by God to be allegorical or spiritual or heavenly only, there would be absolutely no purpose in giving its detailed and precise measurements in common human construction terms. God does not intentionally mislead.

Plus, the idea that Ezekiel’s temple is actually a vision of heaven is strictly ruled out by Rev. 21:22, which clearly states the New Jerusalem (heaven) will have no temple in it. I will not, and I urge you not to, read any scripture in a way which necessarily contradicts another scripture. Logically, if heaven will have no temple, then Ezekiel cannot give us a prophecy of a heavenly temple.

In any event, the visions of Ezekiel taken as a whole are entirely incompatible with John’s visions of the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will be 1,500 miles square and just as tall, to be located on the new earth. The city will have twelve gates named for the tribes of Israel, but no land will be apportioned in their names. In Ezekiel’s visions, not only is there a temple which is precluded by Revelation, but the city of Jerusalem itself is only 4,500 cubits (under two miles) square instead of 1,500 miles.

Ezekiel foresaw the land of Israel being re-parceled out among the tribes, with the boundaries described in standard metes and bounds terminology (just like a property deed) - all in reference to existing landmarks on the current earth. Also, he saw a river flowing south through the Arabah into the sea - again using current landmarks, things that will not likely exist on the new earth. So how can the visions of Ezekiel possibly refer to the new earth and the New Jerusalem (i.e., heaven)?

It is also a historical fact that no temple in Jerusalem ever had the dimensions specified in Ezekiel. I’m amazed at how detailed the measurements are in the vision. Exact measurements of walls, gates, circumferences, wall thicknesses, the altar, chambers and buildings, etc. None of which line up with the measurements of the Second (Herod’s) Temple. Further, the river flowing from the temple to the Dead Sea as described in Eze. 47:1-5 is definitely something that has not happened yet. So that part of Ezekiel’s vision cannot pertain to the Second Temple either.

Plus, Ezekiel’s description of the division of the land, with its Holy District and tribal divisions, has never even remotely been fulfilled yet. All of which reasons lead me to irrevocably conclude that Ezekiel’s vision of the temple will be fulfilled in our future, most likely during the Millennium.

So, the question is simply this: If no past temple fits Ezekiel’s vision, and heaven won’t have a temple, why did God give the vision to Ezekiel unless it was a blueprint of a physical structure yet to be built? I also assume that God, being omniscient, knowing all things from the beginning to the end of time, has no need to postulate hypotheticals, prepare for unforeseen contingencies, or make plans He will never actually use. If God made specific, detailed plans for a temple that hasn’t been built yet, it’s because at some point He actually will fully utilize those plans.

2) The Abomination of Desolation. Dan. 9:27; 11:31 and 12:11 all make reference to the Abomination of Desolation. Mat. 24:15 and 2Th. 2:4 are to the same effect. These texts are all part of prophecies primarily related to the future Antichrist and not to past events. We have already discussed Dan. 9:27. The other texts will be treated in the next section on the *Abomination of Desolation*, which should be read together with this section.

The point is, you can’t have a future Abomination of Desolation unless the temple exists in which
it will take place. To say there will be no future Jewish temple is equivalent to saying there will be no future Abomination of Desolation. Look, the Abomination of Desolation must either be future, or past. If not future, then that leaves you with only the past option. Meaning, all the prophecies about it have already been fulfilled, even to the point where the Tribulation must already have happened (i.e., in 70 A.D.). Which of course is the Preterist position.

Yet, Mat. 24:21 says that the Tribulation will be “such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.” Can it be seriously contended the troubled times of 70 A.D. will never be equaled, and that nothing in the future could ever be worse than that? Or is Mat. 24:21 one of those verses we are supposed to spiritualize because Jesus didn’t really mean for us to take His words literally?

Plus, Mat. 24:15 treats the Abomination of Desolation described in Dan. 9 as a future event during Jesus’ First Advent. Granted, the destruction of the Second Temple followed that by 40 years, but the events of 70 A.D. are not usually cited as when the Abomination of Desolation occurred in past fulfillment scenarios. Usually, when people claim that event has already happened, they point to the defiling of the Second Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes IV in 167 B.C. But there’s no way Jesus would have regarded that as a yet future event. So we must assume Jesus’ words have not yet been fulfilled.

3) Resumption of Daily Sacrifices. The verses already cited make reference to the future stopping of Jewish daily sacrifices. That’s great, except there haven’t been any Jewish daily sacrifices since Herod’s temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. So in order for them to be stopped in the future, they first have to be resumed. And before the sacrifices can be resumed, the temple has to be at least partially rebuilt, or at the very least space for it has to be cleared, on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

The Jews aren’t going to resume sacrifices without a rebuilt holy of holies, or at minimum a “clean” space on the Temple Mount where the holy of holies would go. And the Jewish holy of holies can only be built on the Temple Mount. Trust me, there are Jews in Jerusalem at this very moment who know the exact spot on the Temple Mount where the holy of holies must go. There is only one place such things can occur. Which is to say, the Jews do not consider themselves at liberty to move the holy of holies from its historic location. They are obligated to rebuild it where God first placed it.

Further, it’s not a question of whether the daily sacrifices should be resumed from a Christian perspective. The Jews will want to resume them, and they are the ones who will build the Third Temple. The Jews have no reason to believe the Mosaic sacrificial system has been abrogated. To them, the Mosaic laws are still in effect and they are just waiting for the opportunity to resume that sacrificial system. And they have good reason to believe this - the Mosaic covenant is, by its terms, eternal.

Also, when I discuss the timeline of end times events in Appendix C, you will see that there are two primary time markers from which all events in the end times are measured: the Second Coming, and before that, the stopping of regular sacrifices on the Temple Mount. This is an event of no small significance in the end times. It marks, as far as I can tell, when the Tribulation will begin. The stopping of sacrifices - not the Abomination of Desolation which follows it by 1290 days - is the key time marker in scripture.
4) The Temple as a Seat of Government. As Zech. 6 makes clear, upon the return of Jesus, He will sit on the throne located in the temple of God both as priest and as king. We will consider this further when we examine the Millennial kingdom. But the point is, the future temple will have a governmental purpose which has nothing to do with sacrifices or atonement.

It’s easy to get lost in the discussion about sacrifices and miss the whole point of what the original purpose of the temple was. The temple, and the tabernacle before it, were the places where the glory of God, the very presence of God, dwelt. That situation lasted, ostensibly, until the Jerusalem temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. Ever since, the physical presence of God, or the shekinah glory, has not been manifested anywhere on earth. Which makes perfectly logical sense for the time in which Christ is absent from earth, seated at the right hand of the Father. Eph. 1:20; 1 Pet. 3:22. But upon Jesus’ return to earth, all this will change and He will need a physical place (a building) in which to dwell.

Thus, at Jesus’ death, the temple veil was torn from top to bottom. Once the Holy Spirit had been sent, the presence of God indwelt every believer, and believers have become the temples of God ever since. While that ministry of the Holy Spirit will undoubtedly continue after Christ’s Second Coming, there will be an added dimension which we currently lack. Namely, the presence of God will once again be manifest in physical form, i.e., the person of Jesus. This will not alter or replace the current ministry of the Holy Spirit, it will simply be an additional factor.

Consequently, wherever Jesus dwells after His return will necessarily be a temple. Since Jesus will be the embodiment of the presence of God, His house will be God’s house. And God’s house is, by definition, a temple. It was said of Jesus in His First Advent that He had “nowhere to lay his head.” Mat. 8:20, Luk 9:58. We have no reason to suppose this will be true of Jesus’ Second Advent. In that time, He will be king of the world and He will need a place to govern from. That place will be the temple in Jerusalem, which will again be the house of God simply because Jesus will live there.

5) Israel’s Restoration Demands It. Allow me to here observe that (according to my prior discussion) the present age - the Church age, or the time of the Gentiles - began with the rending of the temple veil at the time of Christ’s crucifixion. The prior age began with the giving of the Mosaic law on Mt. Sinai which included the temple regulations and the institution of the Levitical priesthood.

All iterations of the Jewish temple to date - the tabernacle, the First Temple and the Second Temple - were constructed during that prior age before Christ’s First Advent. Not only that, but the beginning and end of the age itself are marked with the creation and destruction of the temple. Do you really think this was all by accident? That the rise and fall of the Jewish temple just happens to coincide with historic ages as a matter of random chance?

So too when Jesus returns, the temple that He builds will mark both the beginning of the kingdom age and the restoration of Israel as first among the nations. I daresay the existence of a Jewish temple and the preeminence of Israel among the nations of the earth are so intertwined that neither can exist without the other. So if Israel is to be restored, the temple must be rebuilt, and if the temple is rebuilt, the restoration of Israel must accompany it.
Driven To Rebuild

The Third Temple will not be built by Christians, but by the Jews. Common Christian beliefs that any physical temple was obsoleted by Christ will play no part in the decision whether to build a new temple. Rather, it will be driven by Jewish beliefs. And the prevailing belief among rabbinic Jews is that in the Messianic Era (the Golden Age), the Messiah will come and a Third Temple will be built.

It’s an interesting read to see how the various Jewish factions (Orthodox, Conservative, Reformed) view the resumption of O.T. sacrifices. Conservative and Reformed Jews tend not to want to resume such sacrifices, even if a temple were rebuilt, because they see them as antiquated and/or nullified by the passage of time. However, Orthodox Jews generally hold that in the Messianic Era, most or all of the O.T. sacrifices will resume, at least for a time.

Perhaps not surprisingly, there already exist organizations and groups in Israel whose purpose is to see to it that a Third Temple is built and sacrifices resumed. Notable among these are the Temple Institute and the Temple Mount Faithful (officially, the Temple Mount and Eretz Yisrael Faithful Movement). The Temple Institute has been engaged in the development of actual temple ritual objects, garments, and building plans suitable for immediate use in the event conditions permit its reconstruction.

Both of these organizations regularly petition for approval to enter the Temple Mount. So far, for obvious political reasons (to avoid antagonizing the Muslims), the Israeli government has not responded favorably. To illustrate how volatile this issue remains, just a couple of days before Rosh HaShanah in 2019 (late September), the Israeli Sanhedrin wanted to perform an actual animal sacrifice on the Mt. of Olives for the first time. What they ended up doing was only a re-enactment with prepared meats - not an actual sacrifice. But the response of the Israeli government was that they could do none of these things anywhere “in view of” the Temple Mount for fear of a violent reaction by Muslims.

We have to realize how important the rebuilding of the temple is to the Jews. First, all Jews, whether Orthodox, Conservative or Reformed, are still looking for Messiah. Whether they foresee the resumption of sacrifices or not, they associate rebuilding the temple with the coming of Messiah. Thus, rebuilding the temple can be a way to anticipate or possibly hasten the Messiah’s coming.

Second, all Jews realize that rebuilding the temple will not happen until they control the Temple Mount - something they desperately want to do. In their minds, whoever controls the Temple Mount will control Jerusalem and all of Israel.

Just as the Muslims view a mosque as a form of control over the areas where it is built (think of the mosque at “ground zero” in New York) to show their dominance, Jews view the rebuilding of the temple as essential so they can claim victory over their enemies and be able to proclaim it to the nations. The rebuilding of the Jewish temple is the ultimate in international bragging rights.

The desire of the Jews is not going to simply go away because of a little political instability. They will not be put off because they can’t get at the Temple Mount now. If anything, political volatility is not going to diminish in the future, it is going to intensify, and the Jews know this. The seeds of
the disputes between Jews and Arabs, Israel and its neighboring nations, go back 4,000 years (back to Abraham). Another decade, another century, or even another millennium isn’t going to change what the present generation, or any future generation, will want to do.

The parties will continue to press against each other until something breaks. Any stability achieved will be momentary - this conflict is inevitably coming to a head. And as that process unfolds, volatility will favor the unexpected, the radical change. Just because Muslims have controlled the Temple Mount for 1400 years means nothing other than all things eventually come to an end.

Overall, as I examine the scriptures, I believe the Third Temple will not actually be completed until after Christ returns. However, that’s not to say the Jews won’t try to get it started earlier. I tend to put together the verses regarding the Abomination of Desolation and the starting/stopping of sacrifices to conclude that the Jews will make a future first effort to rebuild the temple. This effort may or may not succeed, that is, be completed. It may be the rebuilding effort prophesied in Dan. 9:27 which is cut off before completion. Still, this unfinished effort may have the effect of at least clearing the Temple Mount area, and that may be enough to start the regular sacrifices.

The Jews will likely seize any opportunity to rebuild, such as a catastrophic event destroying the Muslim structures on the Temple Mount due to military conflict. It doesn’t matter how or why the Temple Mount has become cleared, whether from destruction by Zionists or by a wayward rocket launched from a Muslim area. And no matter why the Jews try to rebuild the temple, the Muslims will oppose and resist it.

In any event, Rev 11:2 says the temple will be overrun by the nations for 42 months. So there has to be a temple existing for that to happen, or at the very least, access to the Temple Mount. We know from history and Jewish teachings that sacrifices can never resume until the Jews have access to the place where they believe the Holy of Holies once sat. No other place will suffice, not even some place on the Temple Mount other than where the Holy of Holies sat. Whether it is necessary, or possible, for the Jews to actually erect a structure on that spot during the Tribulation, we do not know. It is likely they will make an attempt to do so, but that effort may be stymied in part or in full, and in the event a pre-millennial temple is ever built, it is likely to be short-lived.

I tend to put together the other scriptures from Ezekiel’s vision and regarding the Messianic kingdom (Zech. 6), so that upon His return, Jesus will rebuild or complete the temple according to God’s blueprint. He will then use the temple as His seat of government - but it will still be a temple because He is there. I think it likely that whatever the Jews build on the Temple Mount during the Tribulation, if anything, will be a mere footnote in the eventual annotated history of the Third Temple to be built by Christ.

This temple, since Jesus will already have returned, will never suffer the indignation of the Abomination of Desolation and will last a thousand years. Nor can any temple built by Christ after the nations are conquered be trampled under foot by the nations for 42 months. Jesus will not return until after those things take place. So anything He builds will not be compromised or defiled.

Ezek. 43 does tell us that the glory of the Lord will fill the temple Ezekiel saw. I don’t see how this could happen in the present age before Christ’s return. God is not going to display His shekinah glory in this Church Age. But after the Second Advent, this is not necessarily a problem, as God
(in the person of Jesus) is going to be visibly present. And wherever Jesus goes, the glory of the Lord will be there, too. In fact, we can count on it, if we consider this prophecy concerning Israel in the Messianic Era:

The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. Isa. 60:19-20.

ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

**Dan. 8:11-14** (summary) - The regular burnt offering was taken away from the Prince of the heavenly host, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. “For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?” “For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.”

**Dan. 9:27** (summary) - The Antichrist will stop Jewish sacrifices and offerings, and then commit the Abomination of Desolation in the temple of God.

**Dan. 11:31** - “Forces from him [the Antichrist] shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

**Dan. 12:11** - “And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days.”

**Mat. 24:15-28; also Lk. 21:20-28** (summary) - When Jerusalem is surrounded by armies, then its desolation is near. The abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel will come, and then there will be great tribulation unlike any before or after in history. For the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short. False Christs and false prophets will arise. Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled.

**2Th. 2:4** (summary) - The Antichrist (man of lawlessness) will take his seat in the temple of God and proclaim himself to be God.

We have mentioned the Abomination of Desolation many times, but have not yet defined it. The Abomination of Desolation is something that is always mentioned in the context of a desecration of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. An *abomination* is something shameful: something that is immoral and/or disgusting. *Desolation* means to make something empty, uninhabited and deserted. In the context of the temple, it implies that it will be laid waste in a shameful or immoral way.

For the desolator, it implies that the proper resident of the temple (God) and the caretakers of the temple (priests) have been displaced and overthrown. For the Jews, it means the temple will be made unclean, the laws of God violated, and a false god will occupy it.

The prophecy of the Abomination of Desolation is a classic example of a “double fulfillment”
prophecy, being mentioned in both the O.T. and N.T., and having both a past and a future fulfillment. The past fulfillment was still future when the prophecy was written, but it is long past for us today. (No, I don’t think the book of Daniel was a forgery written in the second century B.C.)

The past fulfillment concerns the actions of one Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a regional king who ruled from 175 - 164 B.C. over the ‘Syrian section’ of Alexander’s empire, which included Jerusalem. Antiochus killed 40,000 Jews and sold 40,000 more into slavery. He robbed the temple of all its treasures (gold and silver implements, etc.), and placed an idol of the Greek god Zeus in the sanctuary. He sacrificed a pig (an unclean animal) on the altar and spread its blood around the sanctuary. He even forced the Jews to worship Bacchus, the Greek god of pleasure and wine.

Antiochus further prohibited the reading of the scriptures and forbade the practice of circumcision which God commanded to Abraham. And, he stopped the daily sacrifices in the temple on December 25, 167 B.C. for a period of three years. Sacrifices resumed when Antiochus died in battle in 164 B.C.

I have not read anywhere that Antiochus sat in the temple and proclaimed himself to be God there. But he did have coins of the realm minted with his portrait on them along with the inscription, “God Manifest” (referring to himself).

Antiochus IV certainly did commit a type of Abomination of Desolation in the Jewish temple. However, no period of either 1,290 days or 2,300 days as Daniel prophesied can be correlated with him. Nor any periods of either 1,290 years or 2,300 years. No historian has ever shown how these time periods would apply to Antiochus IV.

Additionally, when Jesus talked about the Abomination of Desolation in Mat. 24:15, He treated it as a future event in the context of the sign of His returning and of the close of the age. He specifically referred to Daniel’s prophecies about the event as something that hadn’t happened yet. And at the time Jesus spoke, Antiochus IV had been dead for 194 years. So the Abomination of Desolation cannot have been completely fulfilled by Antiochus IV.

Also be careful not to associate the Abomination of Desolation with the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. It’s true the temple was laid waste due to its complete destruction, but nothing Emperor Titus did can be reckoned as stopping regular sacrifices mid-way through a peace treaty or ceasefire, nor did he sit in the temple and proclaim himself to be God. Remember, this was the second time the temple had been destroyed (the first was in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians), and that event had nothing to do with the Abomination of Desolation either. Destruction does not equal Abomination. Additionally, the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. fulfilled the prophecy of Jesus (Mat. 24:2), not Daniel’s prophecy.

Which means that when 2Th. 2:4 tells us the Antichrist will take his seat in the temple of God and proclaim himself to be God, this must yet be a future event. And as mentioned earlier, this can hardly happen unless there exists a Jewish temple in the future which he will desecrate.

Do not be like the scoffers who will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” 2Pe. 3:4. Just because the rebuilding of the Third Temple hasn’t happened yet, and just because it doesn’t look
possible now, doesn’t mean it won’t happen exactly as God has predicted.

THE 144,000 OF ISRAEL

Rev. 7:1-8 (summary) - Four angels are standing at the four corners of the earth (presumably representing north, south, east and west) holding back the four winds of the earth that are about to blow. Another angel comes from the rising of the sun, having the seal of God, and calls to the first angel, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” Then John heard the number of those to be sealed - 144,000 “from every tribe of the sons of Israel.” Then, each tribe is listed, with 12,000 coming from each tribe.

Rev. 14:1-5 (summary) - Jesus is standing on Mount Zion, and with him are the 144,000 “who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.” John hears a voice from heaven, sounding like the roar of waters, loud thunder, and harpists playing harps singing a new song before God, the four living creatures and the elders. “No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.” The 144,000 are described as virgins (“not defiled with women”), they follow the Lamb wherever he goes, they have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God, and no lie was found in their mouth “for they are blameless.”

We have seen in this Part 3 how God will restore Israel, regather the Jews, usher in a Golden Age and provide for the rebuilding of the Jewish temple. Now we will get a glimpse of how God is going to begin the process of turning the hearts of the Jews towards Him during the Tribulation. In fact, the 144,000 will be sealed and turn to Christ in all likelihood at the very beginning of the Tribulation, because we are told they will be sealed before the earth or the sea or the trees are harmed by the judgments of the 7 seals, 7 trumpets, or 7 bowls.

We have in Rev. 7 and 14 the account of 144,000 bond-servants of God who will follow the Lamb wherever He goes, selected evenly from the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. These two texts refer to the same group of people: in each instance, there are 144,000 people sealed by God on their foreheads and acting as His bond-servants. These cannot be different groups of people.

The difference between the two texts, and the reason they are separated by several chapters, is that we have a before and after picture of the 144,000. In Rev. 7, we see the 144,000 when they are called by God and first set apart near the beginning of the Tribulation. In Rev. 14, we see the 144,000 triumphantly standing with Jesus after the Tribulation - because only after the Second Coming will Jesus stand on Mt. Zion. What happens in between is more implied than overtly stated, but they are all probably going to die.

Why Are They Sealed?

The scripture doesn’t say what the 144,000 will do, or what their function is, except to say that they are firstfruits to God and the Lamb. Rev. 14:4. Since all of the 144,000 are Jewish, this strongly suggests that the 144,000 will be the first among the Jews to turn their hearts to Christ, and this will happen during the Tribulation itself. This is what I view as the first phase of the spiritual restoration of Israel.

Logically, it implies that the rest of Israel will not turn their hearts to God at this time, but will
follow after the Tribulation. I mean, the firstfruits have to be first. This correlates with what we have already indicated about the spiritual renewal of the Jews during the Messianic Era (a/k/a the Golden Age, i.e., the Millennium). Namely, that only a third of the Jews will survive the time of Jacob’s Trouble and enter the Millennium. Those that do will be spiritually reborn in a single day at the Second Coming. This will be the second phase of the spiritual restoration of Israel.

The concept of firstfruits is a common one in scripture. The concept applies to the first reaping of the harvest, the first produce collected each season (oil, wine, honey, etc.), and the first born son of every family. In each case, God regards the firstfruits as the strongest and the best, and He regards it as due to Himself (as an offering).

Two quick examples: 1) Cain and Abel - Abel brought the first born of his flock and the fat portions; Cain only brought “fruit of the ground” - no firstfruits, no choice portions. God accepted Abel’s offering, but not Cain’s. Gen. 4:3-5. 2) The tenth plague - when God struck down the first born of Egypt, He took away their firstfruits. Ps. 78:51; 105:36.

There are also spiritual firstfruits. Paul referred to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits of the Spirit. Rom. 8:23. Jesus is referred to as the firstfruits of those who will rise from the dead (because He was the first to do so). 1Co. 15:20, 23. For this reason Jesus is also called the firstborn of the dead. Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5. The early Christians were called the firstfruits of those who believe (because they were first). 2Th. 2:13; Jam. 1:18. And so we have here the firstfruits of Israel - the first to turn their hearts to Christ.

This does not mean there will not have been individual Jews who turned to Christ before this. As I will elaborate on later, in prophecy God always deals with Israel as a nation, in a corporate capacity. Israel’s future restoration, its future new divine covenant (Jer. 31:31-34), its future salvation, all pertain to Israel as a nation. It’s not about individual Jews. The 144,000 serve a national purpose.

Popular culture and some commentators assume the 144,000 are evangelists whose mission is to gain converts during the Tribulation. However, this is not stated anywhere in the text, nor is it to be implied. There are a couple of factors mitigating against it. I have already mentioned that scripture elsewhere indicates the Jews in general will not turn their hearts to Christ until the Messianic Era. In addition, it would be strange for God to pick 144,000 Jews to evangelize the Gentiles - it doesn’t make any sense - unless you discard the idea that the 144,000 are actually Jewish (see below).

True, there are numerous scriptures in which it is promised that Israel will be a light to the Gentiles (i.e., the nations). Lk. 2:32; Acts 13:47; and Isa. 42:6, 49:6, 60:3. But Israel as a nation won’t be a light to the nations until after the Second Coming. Ah, but some will say, the 144,000 are that light. Except the Bible never says this. I have heard some argue the Tribulation Saints will likely be converted as a result of the activity of the 144,00. This argument is largely based on textual proximity. That is, the Tribulation Saints are mentioned in Rev. 7:9-17, verses which immediately follow the first mention of the 144,000 in Rev. 7:1-8.

First off, we have to acknowledge there is no express textual connection between these two things. Does this textual proximity imply a logical connection? Remember, in the original Greek, there are
no chapter divisions, nor even any verse designations. All those little markers we take for granted have been inserted artificially, and only since 1300 A.D. or so. So the whole book of Revelation just runs on, jumping from topic to topic without any breaks. I’ve already shown that the events described in Revelation are not necessarily in chronological order. Sometimes they overlap, sometimes not. Whether they do or not is not always easy to tell.

So if the 144,000 aren’t going to evangelize the Gentiles and the Jews aren’t going to convert, as it were, they probably won’t evangelize anyone. Although, it is possible they could share the gospel with the Jews and no one will believe as a result. It wouldn’t be the first time in history such a thing has happened. And I’m not saying it’s impossible for the 144,000 to evangelize the Gentiles - they might. It’s just the evidence for that is really thin, and solely a matter of inference.

What I expect will happen is that the 144,000 - whether they openly evangelize or not - will be well known in the world. They will be visibly marked by God, their presence will be public and most likely spread around the world, and will probably cause a stir in Jewish circles as a result. So even if no one converts at the time, there will be a strong collective memory of the 144,000 when the survivors of the Tribulation enter the Millennium.

When Jesus returns, the Jews will draw upon this collective memory, and put it together with a recognition that Messiah has come. This will cause the Jews to then turn their hearts to Christ en masse shortly thereafter. See Rom. 11:25-29; Isa. 66:7-9.

The fact that God seals the 144,000 with His name on their foreheads suggests a protective measure. Protection against what? Certainly, the judgments God inflicts on the earth during the Tribulation. In other words, God will not harm these people while He is punishing others around them. Rev. 7 clearly indicates the 144,000 are sealed in order to be protected from the four winds of the earth that are about to blow destruction. The four winds that are under the control of God and sent by Him.

Apparently this includes protection from the torture of the locusts of the 5th trumpet, which are only allowed to torture those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. Rev. 9:4. Since scripture makes no reference to any group other than the 144,000 of Israel as having the seal of God on their foreheads, Rev. 9:4 probably refers to them. We can also infer that if the locusts can torture anyone other than the 144,000, there may not be any other Christians alive at this time.

We don’t know how long the 144,000 will remain on the earth, but we can fairly imply God is not going to immediately take them up into heaven. They would not need to be protected from God’s judgments if they are going to immediately leave. No, they are sealed because they are going to stick around at least for a short while and need protection during that time. It is simply their job to pave the way for the regathering of the Jews.

But the implication seems to be that the 144,000 will nevertheless not live securely or in safety. Notice the text never says how long the 144,000 will be on the earth. Their time may be very brief.

The question is whether the 144,000 will also be protected from being killed or tormented by the Antichrist and forces aligned with him. Some commentators take the fact that the 144,000 will stand with Christ on Mount Zion as evidence they will survive the Tribulation unharmed. Since the sealing of God is a protective device - designed, apparently, to be an obvious counter-sign to the
mark of the beast - this is a possibility.

But the immediate impact of having the seal of God on their foreheads - a very visible sign they won’t be able to hide - will be to mark them as anti-Antichrist. It will be equivalent to having a target painted on their backs. The followers of the Antichrist will know exactly who these 144,000 are, and target them for elimination.

By referring to the 144,000 as being purchased or redeemed from the earth, Rev. 14:3-4 confirms this possibility. That is, they will pay a blood sacrifice by their own deaths at the hands of others in the same sense that Jesus purchased our salvation, i.e., via martyrdom.

If this is true, then when the 144,000 stand on Mount Zion with Christ, it most likely refers to a post-first resurrection event. But the text is simply not clear on this point. The one thing we do know is that the 144,000 signify God isn’t done with Israel as a nation yet, even in the Tribulation. That’s why the 144,000 are not part of the Church or any Protestant sect - these are truly Jews for Jesus.

**Who Are They Really?**

Most of the conflict in interpretation of these texts centers on who these people really are. Are they Jehovah’s Witnesses? Are the 12,000 from each tribe of Israel literal or figurative? I see no reason to avoid the obvious - I go with literal. This is not an instance of the use of symbolic language. Language does not have to be symbolic in order to be prophetic.

This is what we are told about the 144,000: 1) they are each among the sons of Israel; 2) each of the twelve tribes of Israel will be equally represented in the group; 3) each of them is a virgin (“who have not defiled themselves with women”); and 4) no lie was found in their mouths “for they are blameless.”

From this we can safely conclude each of the 144,000 will be: 1) a biological Jew (not necessarily a religious Jew, an Israeli citizen, or someone who thinks of himself as Jewish); 2) male; 3) probably, but not necessarily, of legal age (at least 20 years old); and 4) unusually virtuous.

Given the current cultural decline of the world, the fact that God will be able to find 144,000 celibate men who do not lie, who will all turn their hearts towards Christ in very adverse times of severe persecution, is nothing less than remarkable. This is not going to be achieved by any human effort. This can only be the miraculous work of God.

We already know that because the 144,000 are firstfruits among the Jews, they will be chosen for a special purpose. The fact that they are blameless and referred to as virgins further suggests they will be consecrated for a holy purpose unto God, and probable martyrdom, for they are unusually pure. I don’t know why God should be concerned with whether these men are virgins or not, but it calls to mind the ceremonial uncleanness observed under the Mosaic law when a man had sexual relations. Lev. 15:16-18; Deu. 23:10.

Now let’s consider the possibility that each of the 144,000 will be a biological Jew. Some think it is humanly impossible to trace the tribal lineage of all physical (genealogical) Jews, therefore, the scripture cannot be taken literally. But human possibilities do not limit God. We have to remember
that God doesn’t keep records like we do. He knows the biological ancestry of every person ever born even when we do not.

Others think the 144,000 refers to “spiritual Jews,” i.e., the Church. This view is promoted by postmillennialists, amillennialists, and Jehovah’s Witnesses - many of whom take not only Israel figuratively, but also take the number 144,000 figuratively (non-literally) as well. We have already discussed whether the Church will become the new Israel, and rejected the idea based on the scripture.

As for those who take the 144,000 number figuratively (such people always assume the real number will be greater, not less), they commonly assume these people have a significance other than the limited one indicated in the text. The 144,000 are not spared from the Tribulation, they are not caught up to heaven, and they won’t have any special place in eternity. They don’t necessarily do anything. They are firstfruits for the nation of Israel - that’s all. Which requires that they all be Jewish.

And then there is the matter of determining Jewishness. There is a longstanding tradition (via the Halakha) that Jewishness is determined not by one’s father, but by one’s mother. Although, there is a minority report, as it were, which is even older, that Jewishness is determined by one’s father. Both sides have citations from the O.T. scriptures and rabbinic writings to back up their claims.

What people fail to take into account is that God has His own way of doing things. He has His own rules for determining Jewishness and He keeps His own records. All throughout the O.T., God defined the nation of Israel as the sons of Israel, and every major counting (census) event only included the males. See Num 1:2-3, Ex 19:3-6, ad infinitum. All of the genealogies of the Bible trace the male line alone. Even the genealogies of Jesus are this way, although I know that won’t factor in as to how Jews identify themselves. But these texts in Revelation are not about Jewish self-identity - we want to know how God operates.

Biology follows the law of genetics (a child inherits equally from both parents). Whereas, for legal purposes - meaning inheritance and ethnic identity - under the Mosaic law (and the law of nature) a child takes solely from the father, and nothing from the mother. As proof I offer the five daughters of Zelophehad (Num. 27:1-10). The sisters had no brother, so no one could inherit their father’s estate, and they came to Moses for a legal ruling (not wanting to be disinherited). The matter was solved by requiring each daughter to marry a man from their father’s tribe so the inheritance would effectively go to their husbands.

What else does this text stand for, if not that the sons inherit everything, and the daughters nothing? Zelophehad’s estate did not go to the daughters, but to their husbands. Therefore all women under Mosaic law have nothing to pass on to their children. And what is ethnicity, if not an inherited nationality? Thus, ethnicity is determined by the male line alone. I examine this idea in much more detail in the essay, Biblical Genealogies and the Law of Inheritance. And you would think that if anyone would determine their ethnicity according to the Mosaic law, it would be the Jews.

Utilizing this biblical law of inheritance, Christians are adopted as sons of God, not sons and daughters. It may not be politically correct in our culture, but the fact that God will choose only males and no females to make up the 144,000 is perfectly consistent with His program. This is the
way God operates. Plus, the Bible says, right there in Rev. 7:4, that the 144,000 will all be from among the sons of Israel. All of the 144,000 of Israel will be male, and their Jewishness determined by the male line.

I say the 144,000 will probably all be at least 20 years old because all of the censuses taken in ancient Israel (except for one) only numbered males of that age. See Num. 1:2-4 and Exo. 30:14. The reason given is that these are the men who comprised the national army - all those “who are able to go to war.” Num. 26:2.

The one exception was in Num. 3:39-43, when the Levites (who were excluded from the general census) numbered all males from one month old and upward in exchange for the first born of Israel at that time (who were also numbered from one month old and upward). This census was not a counting of the army, but the firstfruits of the nation who had been redeemed from the tenth plague of Egypt.

Because of the close connection of the 144,000 and the firstfruits of Israel, it is entirely possible the 20 year age threshold will not apply. However, it’s hard to see how the sealing of an infant or a child will accomplish the purposes for setting apart the 144,000 (as those who have turned their hearts to Christ), especially since it will immediately put them all at great personal risk. Plus, the celibacy of the 144,000 will hardly be a virtue if they are merely too young “to be defiled by women.”

The only other thing I will mention here is that the names of the twelve tribes of Israel in Rev. 7:5-8 are not all the same as the sons born to Jacob (Israel) in the book of Genesis. Eleven of the names are the same, but in the place of Dan, Joseph’s son Manasseh is named instead. I don’t know why, and I’m not sure anyone does. There are speculations, of course, that the tribe of Dan committed an offense against God He will not forget. But this is mere speculation. The text simply does not explain why.

What we can conclude is that God knows who these true descendants of Israel really are. And even if I am wrong in my assessment of the rules of ethnicity, given the current competing strategies for determining Jewishness among the Jews themselves, it is safe to say that a lot of people who think they are Jewish (genealogically) really aren’t because they have mis-traced their lineages. And, correspondingly, a lot of people who don’t think of themselves as Jewish really are.

Both systems for determining Jewishness cannot be equally right in the sight of God. So when the 144,000 of Israel are selected and sealed, a lot of people are going to be surprised, regardless.

**Anglo-Israelism and the True Jew**

In Rom. 2:12-29, Paul argues that although the Jewish people are a holy nation, who received God’s holy laws, and observed circumcision as a sign of the promises of God, none of these things by themselves are enough to redeem the soul of any individual Jew. He makes the case that redemption is a matter of the heart, not genealogy, or training, or cutting of the flesh, and he closes with this:

> For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the
By which words Paul merely meant to convey that in order to be redeemed, all people (Jew and Gentile alike) need to seek to have the heart of a Jew (i.e., to have faith after the manner of Abraham), and not merely follow the Mosaic law, but to do what was right in God’s eyes.

But oh, how this statement has been twisted and perverted through the years. Some see in these verses: 1) the total obsolescence of biological and genealogical Jewishness; and/or 2) an opportunity via a profession faith to step into the shoes of the biological Jews and obtain for themselves the benefits of the promises God made to Abraham, Israel and David.

As a result, there is a fairly common mythology concerning the prophecy of the 144,000 (and the future regathering of Israel in general). This myth revolves around the idea that what is really involved is the special sealing of Christian saints, since (according to this myth) they are the true Jews.

If one accepts this premise, it is a small step to draw into the discussion the historical fact that western civilization is largely the outgrowth of the progress or spread of Christianity (as if that has anything to do with prophecy). It is but another small step to associate the spread of Christianity with the Anglo-Saxon people (because we’re so special, don’t you know). The next thing you know, you have taken a leap off the cliff of rationality thinking that the Anglo-Saxon people are ethnically the lost ten tribes of Israel. Consequently the scriptures pertaining to the regathering of Israel primarily concern Britain and America.

According to this mythology, when the ten tribes of Israel other than Judah and Benjamin (along with fragments of Simeon and Levi) were deported by Assyria in 722 B.C., they became what was later known as the Scythians and/or Cimmerians who are ancestors of the Celts and Anglo-Saxons. Thus, the British and American people are the true biological descendants of Israel.

This view was popularized by Herbert W. Armstrong of the Worldwide Church of God and is currently championed by the Philadelphia Church of God. Armstrongism, as it is also known, teaches that although the throne of Israel passed to Judah and the line of David, the birthright (or blessing) of God passed to Joseph. From him the blessing passed to Ephraim, with the promise that he should become a multitude of nations, i.e., the Anglo-Saxon peoples.

Similarly, the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) teaches that its members are either by genealogy or by adoption all made members of the tribe of Ephraim. In addition, it is not uncommon, but usually only on an unofficial basis, to see this teaching crop up in either Presbyterian or Baptist churches which hold to a Reformed tradition.

It is true (the evidence for which I will not go into here) that if you study the speeches, sermons and writings of the American founders, you will indeed find a conspicuous thread concerning Israel. Namely, that the founders in the Colonial period saw the settlement of America as establishing a new Israel, that North America was the new Canaan, or that particular towns were like a New Jerusalem.

Much of this talk was metaphorical, coming as it did from a variety of sermons using O.T. texts to motivate the settlement of America and to seek divine blessing for the settlers’ endeavors. Some
of it was based on postmillennial theology, coming as it did from various sermons, to the effect that by their efforts the colonists would help establish the kingdom of God in a new land. However, precious few, if any, of the colonists thought they were actually physical descendants of Israel.

The concept of physical descendancy has an entirely different basis. You have to ask yourself - what advantage is there in being a descendant of the lost tribes of Israel? I suggest that receiving favor in settling a new land has nothing to do with genealogy, so the motivation must be something else entirely. In my view, the purported advantage has to do with claiming God’s special favor among all the nations and playing the host for the future seat of world power. In other words, future bragging rights and political superiority.

Under the Abrahamic covenant, the physical descendants of Abraham (through Israel) are entitled to the Promised land - generally understood to be the current land of Israel and Palestine. Under the Davidic covenant, the physical descendants of David are entitled to sit on the throne of Israel. If the British and Americans are really the descendants of Abraham and Jacob, then they will share in the eventual allocation of the most choice land in the world during the Millennial kingdom. They will be closest to the throne from which Jesus will rule the world, and share in the prominence of Israel as the most favored nation in the world.

Which beliefs make people say the most absurd things, such as: America has replaced Israel as the Promised land of God and/or that the New Jerusalem will be built in America. (Again, we’re talking about real estate, here.) That England or America will be the seat of the Millennial kingdom of Christ. That the throne of England is actually the throne of David (even though the throne is not part of the birthright). Or that when people join a particular sect they become Israelites and can demonstrate a genealogy tracing back to ancient Israel.

I regard such sentiments in the same way as I do folklore about the Holy Grail (the cup used by Christ at the Last Supper). According to the folklore (but not the scriptures), the Holy Grail will give a person physical immortality in this present life. If you know anything about the teachings of Jesus regarding eternal life, you know that such ideas are a complete perversion of the concept of eternal life that He taught. Well, that’s the way I view Anglo-Israelism - a complete perversion of the benefits and reckoning of the physical descendants of Israel.

Never mind that there is no support in the Bible whatsoever for the idea that the location of Jerusalem or the Promised land have been, can or will be moved to North America. Never mind that David and his descendants, being of the tribe of Judah, are not even part of the supposedly lost ten tribes. Never mind that the Davidic covenant only applies to the male line (which rules out the Queen of England) and was terminated in Jesus Christ. Never mind that the claims of Jewish descent by Anglo-Saxons cannot be demonstrated by any scientific method ever attempted.

But the whole idea that the ten tribes were ever lost in the first place is a myth. Yes, the ten tribes were scattered in the diaspora - no more or less than all of the tribes of Israel. Yes, the original descendants of Israel were undoubtedly partially intermingled with people of other nations through intermarriage over the centuries. We have already discussed the difficulties in tracing Jewish ancestry for genealogical purposes. But if you really want to know what happened to the northern ten tribes of Israel after being invaded by the Assyrians, this is what happened: they moved south to Judah and joined their fellow Jews there.
As soon as Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded, he took
courage and put away the detestable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and
from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, and he repaired the altar
of the Lord that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the Lord. And he gathered
all Judah and Benjamin, and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were
residing with them, for great numbers had deserted to him from Israel when they saw that
the Lord his God was with him. 2 Ch 15:8-9.

And the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel presented themselves to
[Rehoboam] from all places where they lived. For the Levites left their common lands and
their holdings and came to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons cast
them out from serving as priests of the Lord. ... And those who had set their hearts to seek
the Lord God of Israel came after them from all the tribes of Israel. 2 Ch 11:13-16.

But to claim that an entire population group, derived principally from the descendants of Japheth,
not Shem (two of the sons of Noah), has somehow been converted not just to Semites, but to Jews
in particular (2,500 years after the Assyrian deportation) is just preposterous. It strains all credulity.
Don’t get caught up in this snare.

So no, the 144,000 of Israel are not going to be gathered solely or principally from the Anglo-Saxon
(British and American) people. No, the prophecy of the 144,000 does not portend the complete
conversion of the British or American people. No, the British and American people have not been
specially selected by God to usher in the Millennial kingdom. No, America has not replaced Israel
geographically for prophetic purposes.

The prophecy of the 144,000 of Israel has not been placed in the Bible so that any existing group
of people who call themselves Christians can feel good about themselves as the ancestral chosen
people of God in their conception of the Millennial kingdom of Christ. If God wants to select the
physical descendants of Israel for some special purpose, His plans are not going to be influenced by
any pretended claims of ancestry. God will not be fooled. Gal. 6:3, 7.

**Part 4 - The Conquest of Evil**

The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” Ps.
110:1. Before the Millennial kingdom can be inaugurated, Christ must first make all of His enemies
a footstool for His feet. So now let us look at who those enemies are in detail.

**THE BEAST KINGDOM**

**Dan. 2:31-45** (summary) - Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, has a dream of a statue having a head
of gold, chest of silver, a mid-section of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay. A
stone, uncut by human hands, strikes the feet (breaking them), then the whole statue crumbles to
dust, and the stone becomes a mountain filling the whole earth. Daniel then interprets the dream,
which is discussed below.

**Rev. 17:3, 7-14** (summary) - This vision takes place in a wilderness, where a woman is sitting on
a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names having seven heads and ten horns. The beast “was, and
is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction," which causes unbelievers to marvel at it. The seven heads are said to be seven mountains, and also seven kings, “five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while.” Then the beast is said to be an eighth (mountain/king) and that it also belongs to the seven, and goes to destruction. The ten horns are said to be ten future kings who receive authority “for one hour” together with the beast. The ten kings are of one mind and hand their authority over to the beast, who will make war on the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them.

**The Historical Context - Naming the Empires**

We have seen how history has been, and will be, a long continuous battle between God and Satan. Eventually it will be slugged out at Armageddon between Jesus and the Antichrist - although that is not the final end. We have shown how this conflict is a battle between two kingdoms, each of which has certain nations aligned with it. Now we will examine the kingdom of Satan as it prepares for Armageddon in more detail. This kingdom has key personalities (the Satanic trinity) which we will look at later. First, we will consider the multi-nation confederacy that will take the lead in waging war for Satan, represented in the Bible as a beast kingdom.

There are four beasts described in Revelation, one of which is unlike the others (Rev. 13:11-18), which we will examine under the heading of the False Prophet. So let us set that one aside for now. The other three beasts are as follows:

1) a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and a crown on each head (Rev. 12:3);
2) a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, a crown on each horn, and blasphemous names on its heads (Rev. 13:1); and
3) a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 17:3).

The first thing to realize is these are all the same beast, viewed from different angles, not to confuse us, but to present a complete picture of what God wants us to know. The similarities are too striking to refer to different subjects.

All the beasts have in common seven heads and ten horns, which is intended to give us an overview of the kingdom of Satan - looking both to the past and to the future. The crowns on the heads and the horns indicate that each of these represents a nation or empire. The color red and the blasphemous names tell us the character of the beast, which is murderous and hateful of God.

Rev. 12, by calling the beast a dragon, a symbol associated with the devil, focuses on the Satanic nature of this kingdom. Rev. 13 focuses on the human leader of the beast, the one who rises from the sea. Rev. 17 describes the beast in terms of an international confederacy that the Antichrist leads. This is where we will start, because ch. 17 tells us who/what the beast is.

Rev. 17 is an overview of a great drama played out by three main players: the beast, the great harlot, and the kings of the earth. All three players are corrupt and destined for destruction. In short, the kings of the earth will commit immorality with the harlot, the beast will destroy the harlot, the kings of the earth will weep and mourn and suffer, and the beast will be destroyed by Christ.

The great harlot is a city of commerce, made rich from "filthy lucre," or ill-gotten gain, which the
nations will freely engage in trade with. The beast is a confederation of nations that will destroy the city of commerce and wage war against the chosen people of God. The kings of the earth represent other nations not part of the confederation.

Now let’s look at the nature of the beast more closely. We know from v. 3 that the beast is scarlet, is full of blasphemous names, and has seven heads and ten horns. Verse 8 tells us that the beast was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit (or the abyss). In other words, the beast is dark, evil and under the control of the one who is king of the abyss, namely Satan.

Verses 9-14 tell us that the seven heads are seven mountains (governments, empires, or kings). See Dan. 2:45. Of the seven, five have fallen (are no longer in existence), one exists at the time the book of Revelation is written, and the one who is to come for a short time is a future kingdom. The beast kingdom is both an eighth king, and one of the seven. This is very important.

The ten horns are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, who receive authority for “one hour,” and who give their power and authority to the beast to destroy the great harlot and wage war against the Lamb (Jesus).

What we have here is a historical overview of the beast kingdom in the timeline of world history. This is juxtaposed with a description of what the final version of the Satanic kingdom will look like when it arrives. In other words, we have two views of the beast presented together: 1) how the kingdom of Satan fits in with known empires in the history of the world; and 2) what the final empire will look like to those who are alive at the time.

The precedent for the historical description is Dan. 2:31-45, Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a statue representing successive kingdoms in world history. The statue had five sections or layers, from top to bottom: head of gold (Babylon), chest of silver (Medo-Persia), mid-section of bronze (Greece), legs of iron (possibly Rome or a later kingdom), and feet of iron mixed with clay (final kingdom).

We know the head of gold represents Babylon because Daniel himself says so in Dan. 2:38. Babylon was immediately followed by the empires of Medo-Persia and Greece, universally acknowledged by commentators as the silver and bronze layers. When we get to the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay, that’s where opinions diverge.

Part of the split in opinion is based on whether one counts the statue as having four layers, or five. That is due primarily to Dan. 2:40-41, which seems to use the word it as a single pronoun referring to both the iron and iron mixed with clay layers of the statue as the fourth kingdom. “And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay.”

Thus, some commentators see the iron legs as Rome and the feet as the Revived Roman Empire come back to life. Others see the iron legs as Rome and the feet referring to the final kingdom which is not Rome. Still others consider the iron legs to refer to a kingdom after Rome and the feet of iron and clay to be a revival of this other empire. In this last view, no part of the statue refers to
However fascinating this mystery may be, it is not necessary for us to resolve it to understand what God’s plan is. We will have plenty of opportunity to consider the historical references to past kingdoms as we progress through this discussion. I will, however, make one assumption as we continue to examine Rev. 17. Namely, that Daniel’s vision, since it has five layers, relates to five kingdoms, not four. Whether the fourth and fifth kingdoms are the same kingdom repeated (i.e., come back into power) is a possibility I will leave open.

In any event, the significance of the dream is this: all these world empires have opposed God. The fact that they are all part of one statue, and not separate statues, indicates they are all merely different stages of the kingdom of Satan. There is a progression here, which in any scenario culminates in a final kingdom which is yet future. Identifying it will require us to look at other scriptures.

But the progression in time is regressive in quality. That is, the kingdoms degrade, or decline, with respect to each other over time. It is a variation of the law of entropy applied to world empires. The law of entropy (the 2nd law of thermodynamics) means that all things lose energy/ order/ information over time. In other words, all physical things degrade. Well, here we have a vision of a statue representing succeeding kingdoms which degrade as time goes by. In other words, governmental or societal entropy.

However, I suggest this is not really a natural process. From God’s point of view, each of these kingdoms degrades morally compared to its predecessors. From Satan’s perspective, each successive kingdom is growing more wicked, which means he is perfecting over time the implementation of an evil empire. Thus, the last kingdom will be worst - the most evil. Keep that in mind as we go along.

The vision ends with a stone originating not with man, but by implication with God, destroying the whole statue and then itself becoming a mountain filling the whole earth. The stone is Christ, who will defeat the final world empire of Satan, and thereby destroy the whole history (or legacy) of the kingdom of Satan represented by all the prior kingdoms. Christ will then establish a worldwide kingdom (represented as a mountain) in their place which will last forever. That is the point of the vision, and we got there without having to identify the legs or the feet of the statue.

When we compare Dan. 2 with Rev. 17, we see the historical backdrop has been expanded to seven kingdoms (seven heads/ mountains/ kings), and we are specifically told there is an eighth which is also one of the seven. So, to the five kingdoms of Dan. 2, Rev. 17 adds the kingdoms of Egypt and Assyria which preceded Babylon, and one additional kingdom yet in the future from the perspective of the first century A.D. A total of eight kingdoms. Seven different kingdoms, but one which repeats, for a total of eight.

From God’s perspective, these are the only kingdoms that count for prophetic purposes because these are the ones with which God’s chosen people had direct interaction - captivity, slavery, deportation, tyrannical rule, persecution, etc. Why we are not concerned with other world empires is explained shortly.
If we look at these kingdoms at the time Rev. 17 was written, five had fallen (in order: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece) and one was contemporary with the writer John (i.e., “now is”), meaning Rome. Neither the seventh nor the final kingdom had yet come in John’s time.

But the fact that the eighth kingdom is also one of the seven, tells us that one of the fallen kingdoms will come back into world dominance in the end times. This is the meaning of the kingdom that “was and is not, and is about to come.” Not from John’s perspective (i.e., only one of the first five kingdoms), but from the perspective of the end times (any one of the seven kingdoms). Of the seven kingdoms or empires, one that used to exist was destroyed and will arise again. This will be unprecedented in history, catch everyone by surprise, and amaze the world.

Remember - the purpose of the vision of Rev. 17 is to give us a historical overview of the beast in the timeline of world history, juxtaposed with a description of what the final version of the Satanic kingdom will look like when it arrives. So our task at this point is twofold: 1) fully identify all the players (which means identifying the seventh kingdom); and then 2) identify to the extent possible what the final version of Satan’s kingdom will look like (i.e., identifying the eighth kingdom).

If you have ever read a commentary or explanation of Rev. 17, chances are that you have come across this interpretation, which is probably the most prevalent view: Rome is the sixth kingdom, and the final kingdom (the seventh kingdom) is a Revived Roman Empire. Sometimes this interpretation is based on a “seven hills of Rome” idea that has no basis in John’s vision. But the view I have just described only accounts for seven kingdoms. The problem is that even though the beast has seven heads, the whole point of the vision is that there are in fact eight kingdoms to be accounted for. One of the seven heads comes back, not one of the six.

In other words, there are seven kingdoms in world history of particular interest, all of which pass away. But one of those seven comes back into world prominence unexpectedly - which is unexpected largely because none of the other historical empires ever came back. So it does no good to postulate an interpretation which identifies only six kingdoms, and has one of those come back. The whole interpretation is missing an entire kingdom. It does not account for all of the data. Therefore, it cannot be correct.

**The Missing Kingdom (7th Empire)**

We know the first six kingdoms of Rev. 17 were Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. When it comes to identifying the seventh kingdom of Rev. 17:9-10, we have three principal clues:

1. it will be religiously connected to the prior six kingdoms, because the great harlot (a symbol representing the anti-Jehovah religion of Satan) sits on all seven kingdoms;
2. it will arise after Revelation was written (first century A.D.), but before the end times; and
3. it will remain only a little while.

The likelihood that the seventh kingdom has already arisen by the present day is very great.

Because of the “Israel and Jerusalem are the center of the world” perspective of biblical prophecy, there are a great many kingdoms and empires in world history we simply don’t care about prophetically. For example, we don’t care about African empires other than Egypt. Nor Asian
empires beyond the Middle East, such as India, China, Japan, Mongolia, or Russia. Nor any European empires apart from Greece and Rome, such as the Dutch, Spanish, French, German, or British empires.

Prophetically, we only care about Middle East empires or empires whose dominions included the land of Israel and Jerusalem, and which arose after the Roman empire. Thus, we don’t care about the Hittite empire, which was before Christ. What we are looking for is a post-Roman empire which controlled Jerusalem and most or all of the land of Israel, and which may have had a significant connection with the Jewish people. Although, because Israel would have been dispersed as a nation when the seventh empire arose, the connection to the Jewish people may have been slight.

Fortunately, that whittles down the available options to two: the Muslim Caliphate of Mohammed and his immediate successors in the 7th and 8th centuries, and the Ottoman empire which fell in 1924. Both empires were essentially Muslim driven, and both were Caliphas. The Ottoman Empire was headquartered in Turkey. The original Caliphate under Mohammed was headquartered in Arabia (Saudi Arabia - Mecca).

My main concern is based on Rev. 17:10, which says that the 7th empire will “remain only a little while.” The original Caliphate started by Mohammed and his immediate successors (the Rashidun Caliphate) lasted only from 622 until 661 A.D. It covered all of Arabia, northern Libya and Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. It was extended from 661 through 750 (the Umayyad Caliphate) to include Spain, Portugal, the rest of North Africa, Afghanistan, Pakistan and a few of the other “Stans.”

The Ottoman empire did not go as far east or west as the prior Caliphate, but included all of Turkey, Greece, and some of the Balkans. When the Ottoman empire began is a matter of some dispute among historians. Some say 1299, some say 1453 (the conquest of Constantinople, formerly Byzantium, and now Istanbul), and others put it at 1517. Regardless, the duration of the Ottoman empire, somewhere between 407 and 625 years long, is hardly a short while.

Just for comparison with other prophetically significant world empires, northern Israel was deported to Assyria in 722 B.C., the southern tribe deported to Babylon in 586 B.C., and before 516 B.C. Israel was sent back home by the Medo-Persian empire. Greece took over the world around 334 B.C., and by 64 B.C. Rome was in power. Egypt lasted longer than any of these, but the average duration of an empire was only a couple hundred years.

Thus, it is hard to see how the Ottoman empire, lasting 407-625 years, can be regarded as lasting only a short while. The Rashidun Caliphate, on the other hand, lasted only 40 years, and covered all of the necessary territory to fulfill prophetic expectations. In the end, I don’t know that it matters. I’m not going to stake my life on one Caliphate versus the other. They are both Muslim caliphates, they both covered Israel and most of the Middle East, and they both came after Rome. So, we have a pretty good idea what to look for if either of them revives in the future.

**The Coming Caliphate (Final Empire)**

Much ink has been spilled over identifying the final kingdom, most of it erroneously directed at naming a Revived Roman Empire, which will supposedly rear its ugly head once more and be the
engine of the Antichrist to persecute the saints. Thus, much focus in past decades has been on Europe, and the European Community as the final kingdom.

This is what we know about what the final kingdom will look like:

1) it will be one of the prior seven kingdoms or empires;
2) it will consist of ten nations who will join together in a confederacy;
3) the ten nation confederacy will eventually be led by the Antichrist (but not right away);
4) the confederacy will make war against the people of God; and
5) the confederacy will destroy a great commercial city identified with an anti-Jehovah religion.

The identification of the Revived Roman Empire with the papacy, the Vatican and Roman Catholicism, was historically born out of Protestant Reformation animosity. Much effort has been put into either identifying Rome as the beast because it is a city supposedly set on seven hills, or mountains, or looking for another city set on seven mountains.

But the Bible never says the beast is a city, nor that it is a city set on seven mountains. The great harlot is a city - not the beast. What Rev. 17 says about the beast is that it consists of seven kingdoms or empires, which are each characterized as mountains metaphorically, not geographically.

I can find nothing in the Bible suggesting that Rome will be the kingdom which comes back. Nowhere in the Bible does God concern himself prophetically with Europe (that is, by pronouncing judgment against it). The book of Daniel refers several times to the kingdoms of Greece and Rome by inference (that is, metaphorically as layers of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream statue), but never pronounces judgment against them by name. They are simply lumped in with the various empires whose legacy will be conquered and erased by Christ.

Greece is mentioned by name only 5 times in the Bible, none of which are judgmental. Rome is mentioned by name only 9 times in the Bible - all of which are merely location references (“so-and-so went to Rome”) in the New Testament. There simply are no biblical prophecies against Rome.

Nothing in the history of Europe suggests, while the Church is certainly in decline there, that Europeans want to kill or persecute all the Christians or Jews, attack Jerusalem or destroy Israel. To the contrary, the history of Europe is one in which its people waged wars to protect Jerusalem (i.e., the Crusades). Nothing suggests Europeans want to destroy the commercial centers of the world (remember, the beast will destroy the great harlot, a commercial city).

Yes, I am aware that anti-Semitism is on the rise worldwide, particularly in Europe. Much of which is undoubtedly attributable to the extensive migration of Muslims to Europe in recent years. But what I’m really talking about is a matter of degree. Of all the people in the world, who hates Jews more - Europeans generally, or Muslims generally? But really, to be more pointed, who hates Jews more - the Papacy, or Muslims? It is no contest. It ain’t Rome, folks.

Not only are there more than ten members of the European Community, but the various countries hardly want to give their power to a single leader - far from it. If anything, European nations are pulling back from unification, as Europe is on the brink of falling apart (not on the rise as a world power). Take Brexit (Great Britain leaving the European Community), for example. My point is
made. Further, while they have their faults, Europeans are hardly hell-bent on waging war against Jews or Christians when compared to other parts of the world.

Muslims, on the other hand, expressly hate and want to kill all Christians and Jews as infidels, and want to destroy Jerusalem and eradicate Israel. Muslim terrorists have repeatedly attacked commercial centers of the world (especially New York City), and are openly hailing the coming of the 12th Imam or Al Mahdi (the Muslim Messiah), who will lead a Muslim international confederation of nations known as a Caliphate.

The Caliphate will have two main objectives: conquer the world, and impose Shariah law. In fact, many Muslims now openly admit they are doing everything they can to hasten the formation of a Caliphate, or Khilafah. Go to www.khilafah.com and read all about building a global movement for an Islamic Caliphate.

If a Muslim Caliphate is formed, will the nations give their authority to a single ruler to exercise on their behalf? Well, that’s what the Mahdi is - the ruler of the caliphate on behalf of all Islam. And not coincidentally, the Mahdi will, by Islamic self-description, embody all of the characteristics, goals and methods of the Antichrist as described on the Bible. So the likelihood of a Muslim Caliphate being the final kingdom of Rev. 17 is very good.

I could spend a lot of time speculating about where the Caliphate will be headquartered (where its capital will be), but frankly, I don’t think it important. Does it matter which Muslim kingdom will arise again: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Arabian, or Ottoman? The activities of the caliphate and the nations which decide to become members are what’s important. And we know what to look for so we will be able to recognize it when it appears. That’s probably enough. Although, it is not likely to be Egypt, which will be conquered by the Antichrist. Dan. 11:43.

Considering the evidence so far, let’s ask a question. As between a Revived Roman Empire and a revived Islamic Caliphate, which of them:

1) is more likely to be one of the prior seven kingdoms or empires? Rome - 1 chance in 7. Islam - 5/7 chance (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Arabian, or Ottoman)
2) is actively moving towards setting up a multinational confederacy held together by a common religion?
3) is actively moving towards setting up a multinational confederacy to be lead by a single leader?
4) is more likely to make war against the people of God (Jews and Christians)?
5) is more likely to act to destroy a large city of world commerce?
6) has a record of murderous persecutions?
7) is on record as being hateful of Jehovah God?
8) has a Messiah which matches the biblical description of the Antichrist, and views the Christian Messiah as their embodiment of Satan?

Numerous commentaries identify the Antichrist kingdom with apostate religion, which is often further identified as apostate Christians. Look, I know God will judge the Church (1Pe 4:17), but in the big picture, the grand historic battle between God and Satan is simply not going to be waged against backsliding or false Christians. The stakes are much higher than that. There are worse evils than people who call themselves Christians but aren’t. Much worse.
THE GREAT HARLOT

Rev. 17:1-6, 15-18 (summary) - This text gives us these clues about the great harlot:
1) the dwellers of earth have become drunk with her wine;
2) she sits on the beast in a wilderness;
3) she is also said to be sitting on many waters, i.e., peoples, nations and languages;
4) she wears purple and scarlet clothes, and is adorned with gold, jewels and pearls;
5) she holds a gold cup of her abominations and impurities;
6) she is drunk with the blood of the saints martyred for Jesus;
7) she is hated by the beast, which will make her desolate and burn her with fire;
8) she is a great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth; and
9) she has written on her forehead, “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations”

Rev. 18:1-24 (summary) - This text is a continuation of this same vision about the downfall of Babylon the Great:
10) she is a dwelling place for demons and every kind of unclean animal;
11) merchants of the world have grown rich selling things to her;
12) she traffics in human slavery;
13) her destruction will come in a single day;
14) the smoke of her burning will be visible from the sea; and
15) in her will be found the blood of prophets, saints, and all who have been slain on earth.

Here we will examine the remaining portions of Rev. 17 & 18 as they pertain to the great harlot. As already stated, the kings of the earth will commit immorality with the harlot, the beast (the kingdom of the Antichrist) will destroy the harlot, and the kings of the earth will weep and mourn after her. The great harlot is a worldwide city of commerce, made rich from ill-gotten gain from the nations of the earth.

Now let’s unlock the vision. The symbolism of the harlot is false religion - not just error (like some cult), but the greatest false religion in the world promoted by Satan. The biblical term “mother of prostitutes” undoubtedly means that the harlot has spawned many false religion offshoots. But the modern vernacular also applies - as in “the mother of all false religions,” being the biggest and the baddest false religion of them all.

This false religion plays host to demons and is full of uncleanness. “Abominations” suggests this false religion hates Jehovah God, and this is confirmed by the fact that it murders the saints of God. This anti-Jehovah religion is influential with many kings, or leaders of nations. It has deluded many people worldwide (i.e., made them drunk). This anti-Jehovah religion controls much worldwide commerce, consuming many goods, displaying great wealth outwardly, and is associated with Babylon. What religion could this possibly be?

But we have other clues. The harlot “sits” on many waters at the same time it “sits” on the beast. The harlot and the beast are both seen in a wilderness, most often associated in prophecy with Arabia. Interestingly, Arabia is surrounded by many waters. Arabia has oil wells which, if attacked, would burn and the smoke would rise and be visible from the sea. Arabia displays great wealth outwardly, traffics in human slavery, and is a major center of commerce.
But most importantly, Mystery Babylon is both a false religion and a city. And Arabia has a city which, in addition to meeting the commercial specifications of Revelation, is also home to the religious center of one of the world’s largest religions, Islam. Yes, I’m talking about Mecca.

Keep in mind that as we look at candidates for Mystery Babylon, there are many cities which have international influence, engage in illicit trade and commerce, traffic in human slavery, are places of great wickedness, and are either seaports or are close to an ocean. But how many of them are actually the seat of a major world religion, connected with one of the seven historic world empires, and are also located in a desert wilderness?

If you’re wondering, Rome is about 55 miles from the sea, and Mecca is about 40 miles inland. But only one of them is surrounded by desert. Besides, as between the two, which has more influence commercially and politically now? Which one has the blood of the saints on its hands - recently? Granted, *historical Rome* might be a tempting candidate for Mystery Babylon, but in the present world it isn’t even a close second place.

Rev. 17:16 says the beast will hate the harlot and burn her with fire. If the beast is an Islamic caliphate, and the harlot is a city which is the spiritual heart of Islam, why would the caliphate attack Mecca? Of course, the question is the same if you are talking about a European confederacy attacking and destroying Rome. The immediate reasons won’t be apparent until it happens.

The simple answer is that God will put it in the minds of the leaders of the confederacy to do this.

> And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire, for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. Rev. 17:16-17.

There are some further observations we can make about a Muslim caliphate and Mecca in this regard. There is a centuries old division between Sunni Islam and Shia Islam. A key Sunni group is the Wahhabi sect which is primarily in Saudi Arabia, where Mecca is located. A key Shiite group is the Twelvers sect (the ones who are devoted to promoting the arrival of the 12th Imam, or Al-Mahdi), who tend to be concentrated in Iran, Iraq and Pakistan.

The two groups don’t get along well. They could struggle for control of the caliphate, or they could struggle for control over Islam itself. There is actually a substantial history (which I will not elaborate on) of Muslims attacking and causing disruptions in Mecca, in which Iran has featured prominently, even very recently. Whatever the reasons may turn out to be, it will be God’s plan for it to happen that way.

Even Satan will not be able to prevent a schism among his followers. It goes to the fact that the final empire of Satan is said to be made of iron and clay - which don’t mix. The final kingdom will be unstable because of internal conflicts between two major factions. That’s why the ten horns will receive power along with the beast for only “one hour.” They simply won’t be able to hold the confederacy together long term. They have a brief purpose in God’s plan, and then they’re no longer needed.
It goes back to what Jesus said in Mat. 12:25-26, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?” The point being that Satan’s house is divided against itself, and his kingdom will not stand. Only God’s kingdom is undivided. Only God’s kingdom will stand.

THE SATANIC TRINITY

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Satan wants to be like God so much - actually, he just wants to be God - that he will create his own unholy trinity of personalities in his bid to oust Jesus from the throne and take over the world. Joining Satan in this trio will be the Antichrist and the False Prophet. I will discuss the Antichrist in great detail, so he will be examined separately in the next section. Here, we will consider the other two members.

Satan

We have already mentioned Satan in connection with the end times on numerous occasions. He is a pretty familiar character.

For instance, we know that he started this epic battle between himself and Jesus way back at the time of creation in Gen. 3. We know that Satan goes by many names and descriptions, including Lucifer, serpent, devil, fallen angel, a roaring lion, dragon, father of lies, god of this world, prince of the power of the air, angel of light, son of the dawn, Gog, Beelzebul or Beelzebub (“Lord of the Flies”), Baal, Belial, Abaddon, Apollyon and King of Babylon, among others.

And we know that Satan is into kingdom building, since the battle of good and evil is a war between kingdoms. Satan has certain powers, and innumerable followers, but the one thing he wants that he doesn’t have is sovereignty - the right to rule heaven and earth - and he desperately wants it. I have already referenced the scripture that says Satan has a throne. Rev. 2:13. Satan simply wants to rule.

Isa. 14:12-27 - We see this kingdom desire clearly expressed in Isa. 14, which provides us both with some back story on Satan, and a prediction about him. Verses 12-14 recount how Satan, “O Day Star, son of Dawn” was cast out of heaven for committing five sins of pride:

“I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God;
I will set my throne on high;
I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.”

But then comes the prediction: “But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit. Those who see you will stare at you and ponder over you: ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms?’” Isa. 14:16.

Note that for this prediction to come true, Satan will have to become a man. How/when will this happen? It is a reference to the Antichrist, the human embodiment of Satan, which is to say, the Antichrist will be possessed by him. This is confirmed in vv. 24-27, which the ESV calls “An
Oracle Concerning Assyria,” but what is actually a prophecy against the Antichrist (the Assyrian).

“I will break the Assyrian in my land, and on my mountains trample him underfoot; and his yoke shall depart from them, and his burden from their shoulder. This is the purpose that is purposed concerning the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations.”

If this sounds familiar, it should. It refers to Armageddon, as it relates to a battle concerning the whole earth and all nations, where God defeats an army on the mountains of Israel (“my land”).

Now just tuck this little tidbit in the back of your brain for later: if the Antichrist were really a wayward Jew, an apostate Christian, or the Roman Pope, would God refer to him as the Assyrian?

**Rev. 12:1-17** - This text gives us further insight regarding Satan. The chapter starts out describing a pregnant woman in heaven, “clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” This should immediately call to mind Joseph’s dream in which the sun, moon and eleven stars (his parents and eleven brothers) bowed down to him. Gen. 37:9. Joseph, of course, is a twelfth star - the woman in Rev. 12 is therefore unmistakably symbolic Israel.

A great red dragon appears, with seven heads, ten horns, and a crown on each head. The dragon is Satan, but the description intertwines Satan personally (dragon) and the beast kingdom (seven heads and ten horns). In a story that should also sound familiar, the woman gives birth to a son who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron - the child is Jesus. See Ps. 2:9. The dragon pursues the woman, but she is given refuge in the wilderness for 1260 days. Satan pours water out of his mouth to drown Israel in a flood (i.e., with Gentile armies), but Israel escapes. This makes Satan furious, so he makes war against the saints of Jesus. Jesus, meanwhile, is caught up to God and His throne.

Let’s flesh out the rest of the vision. The flood intended to drown Israel is a future invasion of Israel. Israel escapes, or at least a third of it will (Zch. 13:8-9), meaning a remnant of Israel will survive the invasion. This remnant will seek refuge for 1260 days, most likely a reference to Jerusalem being trampled underfoot by the Gentiles for 42 months. Rev. 11:2. During this time, Satan will persecute the people of God elsewhere, and Jesus will not be physically present when this happens. We have already discussed this scripture in the context of the Time of Jacob’s Trouble.

In the middle of this vision we are told that Satan is cast down to earth, and that he takes a third of the stars in heaven (i.e., angels) with him. Satan and his demons engage in angelic warfare against the heavenly host led by Michael. “Therefore, rejoice O heavens and those who dwell in them,” referring to martyred saints. But, woe to the earth and sea (peoples of the earth), “for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” Rev. 12:12.

There are a number of significant indications that this prophecy is yet future. The main characters, Israel, Jesus and Satan, are all referred to in historical terms - but this just tells us who they are for identification purposes (since symbolic language is being used). It does not mean that the events happened in the past.

Thus, we start out identifying Satan with the beast kingdom - which does not exist yet (at least, not in its final form). The son will rule the nations with a rod of iron - which hasn’t happened yet, as it is a term descriptive of the earthly kingdom of Christ. Israel will seek refuge in the wilderness for
1260 days - future, not past. Satan will wage war with Israel - a future war. Jesus is caught up to heaven - meaning, he will not be present when these things occur, *i.e.*, during the Tribulation. And the devil knows his time is short - when has that happened in the past?

The logical conclusion of which is: when Satan and a third of the angels are cast down to earth, this is a future event. But aren’t Satan and the demons already cast out of heaven? Here we get into the concept of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd heavens, as referenced in 2Co. 12:2. First heaven = the atmosphere; second heaven = outer space; and third heaven = spiritual realm.

In Isaiah, referring to a past event, Satan was most likely cast out of the third heaven, down to the second or first heaven. Isa 14:19. My guess is first heaven - I don’t have any reason to think fallen angels can space travel. I assume fallen angels are not zooming around the universe - there is no one to tempt, torment or possess out there, and God is not going to let them simply roam freely and escape His justice. They may have some ability to fly, as it were, but if God is letting them travel through outer space, I can’t imagine why.

But whether Satan was originally cast down to first or second heaven, Satan will in the future be cast further down to the earth itself, “woe to the earth and sea.” When this happens, Satan will be furious, and he will begin in earnest to stir up trouble among the nations. Thus, we have to put together the last verse of Rev. 12 with the first verse of Rev. 13. “And he [Satan] stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast [the Antichrist] rising out of the sea.” So Satan is going to be cast down to earth, and he is immediately going to get to work.

Final note: It is an interesting “coincidence” that a third of the angels were and/or will be cast out of heaven with Satan, and many of God’s judgments are also dispensed in thirds. Thus, the first four trumpets all dispense judgments on a third of the people, a third of the land, and third of the waters, etc. A third of mankind is killed in the sixth trumpet. Is there a correlation? In other words, will God dispense His judgments in this proportion *because* of the proportion of angels that fell? I can’t say for sure, but it seems too coincidental to be random.

**False Prophet**

*Rev. 13:11-15* - Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

Unlike the Antichrist, who is referred to by many names throughout the Bible, the False Prophet is mentioned only three times in Revelation, and is described only here in Rev. 13:11-18. It doesn’t help that this text in Rev. 13 makes no mention of the False Prophet by name, simply referring to “another beast.” But it is clear in Rev. 16:3 (dragon, beast and false prophet) and Rev. 20:10 (devil, beast and false prophet) that these are three distinct persons or entities.
The False Prophet arises from the earth, whereas the Antichrist arises from the sea. Rev. 13:1. Satan, at the end of Rev. 12, is standing on the sand of the sea. I get the picture that Satan is standing with one foot in the water, and another on the sand. So the first image we should get from this is that Satan is the origin of both beasts - both the Antichrist and the False Prophet.

The fact the False Prophet is from the earth means he is a man, not an angel. Beyond that, I don’t know what else. There is no obvious implication that “the earth” refers to any specific geographic region. It is not a direct reference to the Holy Land. There is no reason to think he will be a Jew, as far as I can tell. Although, if the Antichrist arises from the sea (meaning the Gentile nations), and the False Prophet from the land, it is at least possible that he might be a Jew. I can’t say for sure.

The False Prophet is said to have two horns like a lamb - not that this beast looks like a lamb in general. We are not told what this beast looks like in general - just that it has two horns. The fact he speaks like a dragon is a pretty direct statement that he will speak on behalf of Satan. “Like a lamb” probably signifies a religious role, which is supported by the next few verses.

Horns usually refer to kings or leaders, but here it is uncertain why there are two horns instead of one. The two horns may mean nothing other than the False Prophet is a pretend religious prophet who will have a leadership role in Satan’s anti-Jehovah religion.

Alternatively, if the False Prophet is a leader of Islam, the two horns may represent its major factions, Shiite and Sunni. In that case, the False Prophet would do what no one else in history has ever done - unite the two factions of Islam and lead them both. Thus, the two horns are part of the same beast, and the False Prophet wields them together. Although, we know from prior references to iron and clay and not getting along together (referring to the final beast kingdom and the factions of Islam), that this alliance will likely be very fragile and not last very long.

We are then told what kinds of things the False Prophet will be able to do, to deceive the nations. He will make everyone worship the beast whose mortal wound was healed. This is more likely a reference to the beast kingdom having a wound (i.e., being defeated) which was healed (i.e., reviving its empire) than it is to the Antichrist as a person. That’s because the person of the Antichrist will not have multiple heads, one of which will be healed.

This is an allegorical passage, so the reference is probably to be understood metaphorically. Nonetheless, given Rev. 13:8 (everyone will worship the first beast, the Antichrist) and what we will see shortly concerning the image of the beast, it may well refer to the Antichrist personally, or it could have a double application to both.

The False Prophet will exercise the authority of the Antichrist in his presence, perform great signs, and make fire come down from heaven. It is reminiscent of the priests of Pharaoh, who were able to duplicate some of the ten plagues of Egypt, in order to convince people not to believe Moses (and by implication, Jehovah God). Similarly, the False Prophet will use these techniques to deceive the nations. Just because someone performs signs and wonders doesn’t mean they are from God.

The False Prophet will cause an image to be made of the beast that was wounded, give it breath, make it speak, and cause it to kill people who refuse to worship the beast. I don’t know that it matters here whether the worship of the beast is directed to the Antichrist personally, or to the
kingdom which he leads. The kingdom is the kingdom of Satan, and the Antichrist will be possessed by Satan, so it amounts to the same thing.

But we should note that the image is made in order that it can speak. When we compare this with the breath of Jesus (a word of command), we see that one breathes to speak lies and deceit, the other breathes to speak truth and judgment.

Here again we have a key indication that this in fact the kingdom of Satan. People will be killed solely for unbelief, that is, the refusal to worship. It is reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar, who killed people in a fiery furnace for refusing to worship his statue/idol of gold in ancient Babylon. Dan. 3. It’s amazing how consistent Satan is. He has a motif, and he sticks with it. Belief in the anti-Jehovah religion will be coerced - people will not be given a choice.

Much speculation has been made of what the image of the beast will actually be like. Will it be a statue? Some suggest this refers to the black stone in the Kaabah at Mecca. Since the image is said to have breath and to speak, I tend towards a statue - it’s hard to attribute those things to the black stone. Plus, Satan will likely stick to his motif (set by Nebuchadnezzar).

It has been common for biblical commentators to label the False Prophet as a leader of apostate Christianity. It is hardly to be imagined. Even on their worst day, would an apostate Christian do the things the False Prophet will do? Make an image (i.e., idol), kill people who refuse to worship it, and all the while pretend to be a Christian? What would be the point of pretending to be a Christian?

Why would Satan ever want to use Christianity - any form of Christianity, no matter how apostate - to further his kingdom objectives? Wouldn’t Satan want to use a religious vehicle that was the exact opposite of Christianity in every way possible? To promote a religion that stands for everything Christianity opposes, and to oppose everything Christianity stands for? How could apostate Christianity ever serve that purpose? I just don’t see how apostate Christianity can be in view here.

The universal motif of Satan is to deny Christ - why would he want his agent (the False Prophet) to pretend to promote Christ? At this point in time the charade will be unmasked, and there will be no need to hide what he is doing. The kid gloves are going to come off. Satan and his followers will simply come out and oppose Christ in every way possible.

Now let’s look at the relationship between the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Although both persons are intimately connected with both the beast kingdom and Satan’s false religion, it seems that we have a division of labor between them. The Antichrist is generally portrayed as more of a political and/or military leader - the king who rises up to lead the beast kingdom into battle, whereas the False Prophet is portrayed more as a religious leader. They are two, but they act as one (the False Prophet exercises the authority of the Antichrist). In this relationship is another clue.

What entity in the world today, of all the entities in the world, is both a political machine bent on world domination and a religious faith devoted to accomplishing that political purpose? What world entity has both political leaders and religious leaders making laws? What world entity has suicide bombers motivated by religious devotion to accomplish political ends? What world entity has religious leaders who can issue death sentences? How many world religions have the main purpose
of establishing a worldwide theocracy (*i.e.*, government)? Is there more than one?

**The Mark of the Beast**

*Rev. 13:16-18* - Also [the False Prophet] causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.

*Rev. 14:9-11* - And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”

The Bible doesn’t directly say the *mark of the beast* is the mark of the Antichrist - it is something to be inferred from the clues. The Bible says it is the mark of the beast, in the textual section talking about the *second* beast, not the first. However, the word for beast here is non-specific, so it *could* be the mark of the Antichrist, the mark of the False Prophet, or the mark of the beast kingdom. But it occurs in the *context* of the False Prophet. Does it matter? What are the clues?

A key purpose of the mark of the beast is to lock up commerce. “No one can buy or sell unless he has the mark.” *Rev. 13:17*. So the mark will exclude people from the marketplace. Initially, this will likely be just large or international transactions, but as the beast kingdom expands its power, its grip will clench tighter and tighter until even local economies will be affected. There is going to be a strong peer pressure thing going on - people will know who does and does not have the mark. As time goes by, fewer and fewer people will not have the mark, so they will be easy to spot. As politicians like to say, a consensus will grow.

The question is: Who is likely to impose a commercial restriction - the political leader, or the religious leader? Probably the political leader. That’s what they do.

But the mark will also be the mark of a *man*. *Rev. 13:18*. So the mark will probably *not* be a mark solely of the beast kingdom. Which leaves two choices - a mark of the Antichrist, or a mark of the False Prophet. It will probably be the mark of whoever’s likeness is imitated in the statue that the False Prophet will commission to have built. So, whose likeness will it be?

All indications are that the False Prophet is a second-fiddle to the Antichrist. He will be able to exercise the authority of the Antichrist *in his presence*, but not away from it. So the False Prophet needs the Antichrist to exercise power, but the Antichrist doesn’t need the False Prophet to do the same. Which portrays the False Prophet as the chief cheerleader for the Antichrist. So, as between the two, whose image is most likely to be exalted? The Antichrist.

The overall inference is that the mark of the beast will be the mark of the Antichrist.
The mark of the beast will “be marked on the right hand or the forehead.” Will this be a microchip imbedded under the skin? A UPC scanner bar code printed on the skin? Hardly. First of all, the mark of the beast is intended to be visible, not concealed. (That rules out a microchip.) Secondly, although the mark will have an obvious commercial impact, it probably won’t be a symbol of commerce, i.e., a bar code.

The mark of the beast, as I see it, is an outward indication that the person who has it worships the beast and his image. It will therefore be a symbol of religious and personal devotion and loyalty. Its primary meaning and significance will be religious, not commercial. It will tell the world if you have submitted to the beast, or if you are an infidel. That’s what it is for. It will have a commercial impact, but commerce won’t drive the configuration of the mark itself.

The mark of the beast will be a badge of honor to the devotees of the beast kingdom. But what about others? Will the mark be something that the police will come around forcing on people? One day there will be a knock on the door, the police will force you on your knees, and then give you the choice of accepting the mark or being immediately executed? That is certainly a possibility.

Rev. 13:16 says the False Prophet will “cause” everyone to receive the mark, but does that necessarily mean people will be coerced into receiving it? Probably. The pattern we’ve seen in Satan’s kingdom is that he is not content merely to have you either accept the mark or become an outcast. Not having the mark will prove you are an unbeliever, and Satan’s motif is that unbelievers are killed. Satan doesn’t believe in choices - he’s not in this game to give people options.

What is the mark of the beast? The mark of the beast is the name of the beast or the number of its name. Rev. 13:17. Verse 18 also says, “let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast.” So clearly, a number is connected with the mark of the beast. Traditionally, this has been understood as the number 666.

What is actually in the text of Rev. 13:18 in Greek, as far as we know, are the letters Chi Xi Sigma. I say “as far as we know,” because no one has the actual original manuscript written by John - all we have are copies dating hundreds of years later. But let’s assume, for the moment, that these are the letters in the verse.

What is odd is that the text does not have numerals, or numbers, which are different from the letters. Nor is the number spelled out (i.e., six hundred sixty-six). Rather, Greek uses letters as numbers, similar to Roman numerals, and you just add up the values. Thus, in ancient Greek, Chi = 600, Xi = 60, and Sigma = 6, producing a total number of 666.

This has led to many years of endless speculation about who the Antichrist will be. Commentators taking someone’s name, rendering it in Greek, then treating the letters as numbers and adding them up. I guess everyone wants to be someone who “has wisdom,” Rev. 13:18. Using this system, people have labeled Hitler, Emperor Nero, and every imaginable villain of the moment as the Antichrist.

But is this really what God wants us to do? To engage in the practice of gematria? [Gematria is the system of assigning numerical value to a word or phrase.] Isn’t the message of Rev. 13:18 for the people who are alive at the time, and not everyone before the Tribulation gets here?
Some commentators have advanced the theory that what John actually wrote were not Greek letters at all, but Arabic characters forming the Basmalah (Name of Allah). According to this theory, Islam has no identification number, as such, but it does have a descriptive name - the creed of Islam. And since the mark is a name, and a name in the Bible is often a description (or creed), the Basmalah could well be the mark of the beast.

Here is a table showing, for comparison purposes, standard Greek letters, the Codex Vaticanus copy of Revelation, and the Basmalah (with the crossed swords of Islam added):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Greek letters: Chi Xi Sigma</th>
<th>The text in the Codex Vaticanus</th>
<th>The Arabic Basmalah with crossed swords of Islam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

To advance this theory, we must assume that copyists of the scripture did not recognize the characters in the original manuscript (and perhaps John himself did not know what he was writing), so they used the closest Greek letters they could find instead.

I am not convinced this reasoning is correct, because it assumes too much. For his part, John did not write in Arabic script, because it was not invented until several hundred years after his death. I don’t know why God would have revealed something to John he could not accurately understand or write down in his own language. Does God ever communicate with people that way?

Then you also have to assume the crossed swords of Islam would be added to the mark, even though they are not words or letters. It is just a non-alphanumeric symbol. What is that doing in there? And then to jump from a number to a name to a creed logically - it’s just too much. How many layers of symbology do we have to cut through at one time, just to get the meaning of the text?

My conclusion is this: the mark of the beast is an identification mark of a man who has not been revealed yet. We cannot possibly know the meaning of the mark in advance. We’ll just have to wait for him to be revealed, and then the mark will be obvious. What difference would it make knowing the mark in advance anyway? Does anyone really think God intends for us to figure out who the Antichrist will be before he comes on the scene and is revealed?

**THE ANTICHRIST**

We have mentioned the Antichrist so many times in our discussion so far that, in a way, we already know him. However, we have to examine the particular texts dealing with him most directly, to get a more complete picture of this important figure in biblical prophecy. Since we have some familiarity with him, it gives me the opportunity to start in Daniel rather than Revelation, because as we will see, the Antichrist is not just a N.T. character. For example, we have already seen him in Isa. 14. But in Daniel, he is a central character of the whole book.
The Twin Visions of the “Little Horn”

**Dan. 7:1-28** (summary) - We have here another succeeding kingdoms vision of Daniel (similar to Dan. 2), this time of four kingdoms preceding the kingdom of Christ, each described as a different kind of beast. In Daniel’s vision, these four beasts each come out of the sea (i.e., from the Gentile nations).

The first beast looked like a lion with eagle’s wings, which was then set on two feet like a man and a man’s mind was given to it. The second beast was a bear, raised on one side and having three ribs in its mouth. The third beast was a leopard with four wings on its back and also having four heads. The fourth beast was terrifying and strong, with iron teeth, and it trampled what was left with its feet. The fourth beast also had ten horns, with another little horn rising up that plucked three of the first horns out by their roots, and the little horn had the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things.

This was followed by a vision of the Ancient of Days sitting on His throne in judgment. The books were opened, and because of the words spoken by the little horn, the fourth beast was killed and burned with fire. The first three beasts had their dominion removed, but their lives were prolonged for a while. Then the son of man came, and was given dominion and a kingdom, that all people, languages and nations should serve him. His kingdom is everlasting, and will not be destroyed.

Daniel is told, as part of the vision, that each beast is a kingdom, that the little horn will make war against the saints, but when the Ancient of Days arrives, the little horn will be defeated, and the saints will possess the kingdom. Daniel is also told that the horns are all kings, and the little horn will put down three kings, “change the times and the law,” and be given authority for 3½ times. But the court will sit in judgment, his dominion will be removed, and he will be destroyed.

**Analysis:** This vision follows the pattern of Rev. 17 and Dan. 2, namely, an historical overview of the beast kingdom in the timeline of world history, juxtaposed with a description of what the final version of the Satanic kingdom will look like when it arrives. But here, the focus is on the leader of the kingdom, the Antichrist. Thus, we have two views of the Antichrist presented together: 1) how he fits in with certain known emperors in the history of the world; and 2) how he will come to power in the final version of the Satanic kingdom.

The entire purpose of the vision is to provide information about the future. When the vision was given, only the first beast had arrived, though the second would come yet in Daniel’s lifetime. For us, the first three beasts are all past. But these are all merely historical backdrop - context, if you will - to present a more complete picture of the Antichrist who is yet to come. The purpose of the vision is not to tell us about the past, nor will it have been fulfilled in the past. The past is merely context - but context with clues - and that is all.

The first three beasts are clearly identified as Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. The lion with wings should immediately suggest a similarity with the iconic statues found in ancient Babylon of winged lions. The whole bit about being set on two feet and given a man’s mind is a patent reference to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, being made like a beast and then having his right mind restored. Dan. 4. The four headed and four winged leopard is a dead giveaway for Greece, which split into four parts after Alexander died.
Medo-Persia is the bear, raised on one side because the alliance between Media and Persia was unequal - Persia was the stronger. The three ribs probably denote conquests of the empire - Medo-Persia conquered Babylon (Iraq), Egypt and Lydia (Eastern Turkey). The three ribs also probably foreshadow the final beast kingdom, since we are told just three verses later that the Antichrist will uproot or conquer three kingdoms from the eventual Caliphate.

The fourth beast has commonly been identified with Rome, but beginning in v. 7, there is a mention of the fourth beast having ten horns, which immediately suggests a still future kingdom, as historical Rome never had ten kingdoms or kings. Plus, the ten horns are not ten kings who rule one after the other in succession, but all at the same time in the final beast kingdom. So it is irrelevant how many emperors historical Rome had in succession for purposes of identifying the fourth beast.

The purpose of this vision is not to identify all important world empires. It only identifies those empires which are important to the identification or background of the Antichrist as a man.

Identifying the fourth beast as the Roman empire past and/or future is not supported by the evidence. There are too many parallels with Revelation to ignore. The fourth beast is different from all the rest - it has ten horns, and a new horn (a man) utters great boasts. God sits in His judgment seat and the books are opened; meanwhile the beast is slain and given to the burning fire. Finally, the Son of Man (Jesus) comes and receives His everlasting kingdom, and all the nations serve him. How can any of this possibly refer to the Roman empire, or any past kingdom?

The fourth beast in Dan. 7 is the beast kingdom of Rev. 17. That the little horn is the Antichrist is confirmed in Daniel’s description of his activities, which parallels Rev. 17 and Rev. 13 exactly. What we learn that is new is that the Antichrist - the little horn - arises after the ten kings of the caliphate nations, and then he uproots (conquers, or subdues) three of the initial ten kings. There is a very strong possibility that these three kings are Egypt, Libya (Put) and N. Sudan (Cush), since Daniel later informs us the Antichrist will subdue these very nations. Dan. 11:43.

We also see in v. 25 that the Antichrist will rule for 3½ times - not 7 years, roughly corresponding to the 42 months noted in Rev. 13:5.

Dan. 7:25 indicates the Antichrist will make “alterations in times and in law.” In other words, he will change the calendar or the way that certain events are observed in the calendar, and change the system of laws governing nations. Here, we could expect something like the imposition of Shariah law, the institution of prayers five times daily facing east, and the observation of a non-Western calendar and/or a lunar-based calendar, such as, e.g., the Islamic calendar.

Rome (the civil empire) and Roman Catholicism (the supposed apostate church) have never adopted whole calendars or systems of law contrary to what the world has already known. Nor are they holding calendars and laws in reserve to foist them on everyone when they come to power. Islam - yes, that is exactly what they want to do. But the Romans - there is nothing for them to overthrow, or radically change. The Western calendar (Gregorian calendar) is the Roman calendar, and many of the laws of Western culture came from Roman law (such as the Justinian Code).

Verse 23 says the fourth kingdom will devour “the whole earth” and tread it down and crush it. This is similar to the language in Rev. 13:3 and 13:8, which say the whole earth will follow the Antichrist
and worship him, and Rev. 13:7, which says the Antichrist will have authority over “every tribe and people and tongue and nation.” Altogether, identification of the Antichrist as the little horn is pretty clear cut.

When it comes to identifying the Antichrist, it is apparent that Rome is irrelevant. The Antichrist will not come from Rome or be a European. Rome is never mentioned in the vision as pertaining to the background of the Antichrist. What is the relevance of the other three kingdoms? Well, Babylon and Medo-Persia are today Iraq and Iran. What about Greece, you say? Funny you should ask ...

The Second Little Horn Vision

Dan. 8:1-27 (summary) - In chapter 8 we have Daniel’s vision of the ram and the goat. It takes place in Susa, in the province of Elam (i.e., Iran). Daniel sees a ram standing on the bank of a canal, having two horns, one higher than the other. The ram charged west, north and south, and became great. Let’s cut to the chase - the ram is Medo-Persia (Iran). The two horns again refer to Media and Persia, with Persia being the greater of them (the higher horn). The ram conquers west, north and south from the border of Iran, meaning, Babylon (Iraq) and Turkey (west), the Balkans (north), and Israel and Egypt (south).

Next, a male goat comes swiftly from the west across the earth, having a conspicuous single horn. The goat struck the ram and broke its two horns, and cast the ram down. The goat grew in strength, but when it was strongest, the single horn was broken off and four horns grew up in its place pointing to the four winds of heaven. Again, this should sound familiar. The goat is Greece, and the large horn is Alexander the Great, who conquers Medo-Persia and dies at a young age. Then the kingdom is divided among four successors, who each have a division of the empire going in four directions.

At this point in the vision, surprise, a little horn came out of one of the four horns of the goat. It grew exceedingly great towards the south, the east, and the glorious land. It grew even to the host of heaven, and threw some of the stars in heaven down to the ground. It even grew as great as the Prince of the heavenly host.

Then, the regular burnt offering was taken away from the Prince of the host and his sanctuary was overthrown. The little horn will take over a host and the burnt offering “because of transgression.” The little horn will throw truth to the ground and prosper. Finally, Daniel is told that the time it takes from the time the burnt offerings are taken away until the time the sanctuary is restored will be 2,300 days. Occurring sometime in this interval will be the “transgression that makes desolate.”

Analysis: In keeping with the biblical pattern, this vision consists of two views of the Antichrist presented together: 1) how he fits in with certain known emperors in the history of the world; and 2) where he will come from when he rises to power in the final version of the Satanic kingdom.

We already know from our discussion of the Abomination of Desolation - clearly referred to in this vision - that this vision was not fulfilled with Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Plus, Daniel is plainly told the vision pertains to the end times in v. 17 (“the time of the end”), v. 19 (“the appointed time of the end”), and v. 26 (“many days from now”).
Let us now interpret the rest of the vision. The little horn is the Antichrist. Even though Antiochus did not completely fulfill this prophecy, he was still a type of its ultimate fulfillment. Thus, what we know about Antiochus can tell us something about the Antichrist. One of the things we know is that Antiochus came from (and ruled over) the Seleucid division of the Greek empire, one of the four horns of the goat. The Seleucid division consisted of western Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, and major portions of Iraq and Iran.

Thus, it is likely that the Antichrist will come from this same region of the world. In other words, not a European, not a Jew, and from what is today most likely a Muslim nation. Now, if this is not what we are supposed to take away from this vision, then what is it for? Most certainly, the little horn came out of one of the four horns of the goat. If not the Seleucid horn, then which one? Remember, the Antichrist is called the Assyrian in Isa. 14 - and this is not for nothing.

The little horn grew great like Jesus, causing stars (angels) to fall from heaven. See? It’s the same story throughout the Bible. The little horn grew towards the south, east and Israel (the glorious land), which are all directions from the Antichrist’s point of origin. If you start in Syria, where do those directions take you? To Egypt, Iraq & Iran, and Israel. If you reverse the directions measuring from Israel, the Antichrist will come from the north and west (western Turkey is a prime suspect, along with Syria).

Finally, as we know, the Antichrist will commit the Abomination of Desolation, taking away the daily sacrifices and overrunning the Jewish temple.

Then we are given the time period of 2,300 days from when the sacrifices are taken away until the sanctuary is restored. Actually, if you just forget all about the day-year theory and forget about looking for fulfillment in the past, the prophecy isn’t very cryptic. (Scholars have tried for centuries to find a 2,300 year or 2,300 day period in the past that would fit this prophecy, and there just isn’t one.)

If you take the 2,300 days literally, it is roughly ten days shy of 6 years and 4 months according to the modern calendar. Within that time period, the Antichrist will stop daily sacrifices in the partially rebuilt temple, commit the Abomination of Desolation 1,290 days later, and overrun Jerusalem for 42 months. Then Jesus will return on the heels of Armageddon, following which He will build the Third Temple in its final earthly form. When the temple is completed, the sanctuary will be fully restored, and daily sacrifices will resume again. All this will take 2,300 days. Someone remind me - what’s the big mystery again? See Appendix C for how I think this will sort out.

The Man of Lawlessness

2Th. 2:1-12 (summary) - This text is a strong confirmation of what we have already learned about the Antichrist. The Antichrist is here described as the man of lawlessness and the son of destruction (v. 3). That it is the Antichrist we are talking about is made clear in v. 4, where he is said to oppose and exalt himself over every other god or object of worship, and will take his seat in the temple proclaiming himself to be God. This is a clear reference to the Abomination of Desolation, so the Antichrist is in view.

After a couple of cryptic verses (vv. 6-7) which I will discuss in a minute, we are told in v. 8 that
the lawless one will be revealed, who Jesus will kill with the breath of His mouth at the appearance of His coming. This is consistent in every way with our discussion of Armageddon, and the fact the Antichrist will be killed at the Second Coming by Jesus personally by a figurative sword coming out of His mouth (i.e., a word of command). Rev. 19:15.

At this moment you might recall Eph. 6:17 (the sword of the Spirit is the word of God), Heb. 4:12 (the word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword), and Rev. 2:12 ("The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword").

This backdrop tells us clearly what the imagery is: Jesus merely shows up, gives a command, and it is as if a sword comes out of His mouth to do its work. This sword is the breath of God, or the word of God (since Jesus is God). And here the word of God has a double meaning, for it is both the person of Jesus and what He says. All the different imagery pieces of Jesus being the logos and the Word, even Gen. 1 when God spoke and it was so, all come together to reinforce each other. It is the same picture, described from different perspectives.

Finally, 2Th. 2:9-12 tell us that the coming of the Antichrist is by the activity of Satan, accompanied by false signs and wonders (the activities of the False Prophet), confirming things we already know. We also read that the followers of the Antichrist will be strongly deluded, so they will be condemned for taking pleasure in unrighteousness. Not only will it happen this way, but it will happen this way because God wants it so. The delusion will be sent from God. The Antichrist will deceive, but God will delude. Which I take to mean God will allow the nations to believe the lies of Satan, and He will let them believe Satan’s lies willingly.

Here I want to go back and focus on the Antichrist as the lawless one. The Antichrist is not “anti-Christ” because he will be the man who would not be saved, but because he will be the man of lawlessness. God will not punish or condemn people because of unbelief, but because of wickedness. The nations will rage against God because of the constraints of His rule, not because they will protest God’s savior. The world will not be judged for its failure to accept Christ, but for its refusal to obey God’s law. Are you starting to see a pattern here?

Now let’s pick up vv. 6-7. “And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.” Too much ink has been spilled on misinterpreting these verses, most of it suggesting God is going to change the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the end times. Yeah, I don’t see it in these verses either.

Let me offer a simple explanation: Satan is eager to get on with his plans. He would rather reveal the Antichrist sooner than later. But God does things when the fulness of time runs its course (Luk. 21:24; Rom. 11:25; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10). “The mystery of lawlessness is already at work” simply means that Satan has had things in motion for a long time - since the beginning. He has been fomenting a world religion hostile to God ever since Gen. 3, but especially since Babel.

We have already seen that at some point in the future, Satan will be cast down a second time (Rev. 12). This is when he will be unleashed, as it were, and allowed to bring his plans to fruition by stirring up trouble in the whole earth (i.e., the Tribulation). The one who restrains him (the Antichrist) now, and who will be taken out of the way, simply refers to an agent of God. This agent
is likely to be an angel, whose job is to make sure Satan doesn’t get started too early, and who will only unleash Satan when God commands it.

This text additionally confirms that the Church will go through the Tribulation. It’s funny that these verses should be cited by dispensationalists as evidence for a pre-Tribulation rapture. The whole import of vv. 1-4 is that the Second Coming, the translation of the saints (i.e., the first resurrection) and the Day of the Lord will not occur until after the “rebellion” (i.e., inauguration of the beast kingdom) comes first, the Antichrist is revealed, and he commits the Abomination of Desolation. I don’t know how it could be said any plainer.

**Rev. 13:1-10** (summary) - As we come to this text, everything in it should now be familiar. There is a beast (the first beast) rising out of the sea, signifying that it is from the Gentile nations. It has ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on the horns and blasphemous names on its heads. Clearly, this is the beast kingdom of the Antichrist, the beast kingdom of Rev. 17, showing its relationship to seven prior world empires orchestrated or controlled by Satan (the seven heads). And in its last phase, the beast kingdom has ten national leaders who will form a confederacy of evil (the ten horns and ten crowns).

However, unlike the other beast kingdom descriptions in Revelation, the beast here looks like a leopard, with the feet of a bear and a lion’s mouth. Again, this is a clear reference to Dan. 7, where the leopard, bear and lion all refer to Greece, Medo-Persia and Babylon, respectively. The inference is that this beast partakes of the nature of those prior three kingdoms in some particular way, that is, more so than rest of the seven historical empires. It likely means the beast empire will come swiftly (like a leopard), trample many (feet of a bear), and roar loudly (mouth of a lion).

The beast kingdom is given the power, throne and authority of the dragon, Satan. One of the heads of the beast seemed to be fatally wounded, but it healed, and this amazes everyone. Again, this comes right out of Rev. 17, referring to the fact that one of the prior kingdoms in the line of seven before mentioned, will revive in the end times and surprise everyone because no fallen kingdom has ever revived like this before. This will cause the whole world to follow the beast kingdom and worship both Satan and the beast kingdom.

In v. 5, the beast is given a mouth to utter great blasphemies against God for 42 months. This is the Antichrist - the individual mouthpiece for the beast kingdom. The Antichrist blasphemes God and His dwelling, that is, the heavenly places and those who live there (Jesus, who sits at the right hand of God). Blasphemy is essentially slander against God - not merely saying things that are insulting to religion, but things that are false about God, and which impugn God’s reputation. Blasphemy is telling lies about God. And the Antichrist will be very good at telling these lies.

Then the beast kingdom and the Antichrist are permitted to persecute Christians and conquer them. They are given authority over every tribe, people, nation and language, and everyone on earth will worship them except for the saints whose names have been written in the Book of Life. Verse 10 ends with, “Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.” Again, nothing new here. Just a confirmation that the saints of God will endure much in the Tribulation - most or all will be killed, and probably suffer terribly, until Christ returns and puts things back in order.
A God of Fortresses

Dan. 11:36-12:4 (summary) - Dan. 11 is a very detailed prophecy which runs all the way from Darius the Mede (in Daniel’s time) up through the Antichrist. I will not here analyze vv. 1-35 which were largely fulfilled in history, including a substantial section directly pertaining to Antiochus IV Epiphanes which could have a double fulfillment. Instead, let’s start at v. 36, where the prophecy clearly speaks of the end times. Here we will gain several valuable insights into who the Antichrist is and how he will operate.

Verses 36-39 place us in a familiar context: the Antichrist is a king who does as he wills. He exalts himself above all other gods, and speaks astonishing things against the true God. He will prosper until his time has run its course. This much we already know.

Then we are told he will pay no attention either to the gods of his ancestors, nor to the one (i.e., the god) beloved by women. He will honor the god of fortresses instead of these with much wealth. Thus, there are three gods we must identify: 1) the ancestral gods of the Antichrist; 2) the god beloved by women; and 3) the god of fortresses.

Who are the ancestral gods? The term for god here is non-specific, i.e., the word itself is not the name of any particular god. It is the general term for deities, and hence does not point towards Jehovah as the god being mentioned. It therefore suggests that the gods referred to are the various pagan deities formerly worshiped in the region from which the Antichrist comes (Turkey, Syria, parts of Iraq and Iran). Likely candidates are the 300 or so gods worshiped in Arabia before the time of Mohammed. These are the gods the Antichrist will ignore.

The statement that the Antichrist will pay no attention to “the one beloved by women” has often been read as though it said, “he will pay no attention to the love of women.” In other words, some commentators have suggested the Antichrist will be a homosexual. This is not what the text says. The context is that he will not regard the god beloved (or cherished) by women. That is, he will spurn what women value, and the god who values women. The usage of the word one in this part of v. 37 indicates that a particular god is in mind, rather than the general ancestral deities.

The fact is many areas of the Middle East were at one time or another Christianized, including portions of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq (Kurds, Chaldea), Egypt (Coptic Christians) and Turkey. All seven of the churches to which letters were written in Rev. 2 & 3 were located in what is now Turkey. It is likely that the one beloved of women refers to Jehovah God. It was Christianity that brought liberation and freedom to the Middle East centuries ago, and it is Christianity that has done more for women’s rights than any other religion. And the Antichrist stands opposed to all of this.

Perhaps you thought the religion beloved by women is Islam. The religion which requires women to cover themselves from head to toe in a burka, which often forbids them to drive, which prevents them from being in public without a male escort, and which kills women if they insult a man. The religion which treats women as property, and allows for harems. Oh yeah, that’s the religion universally loved by women all over the world, all right.

The statement in Dan. 11:37 that “he shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all” does not mean the Antichrist will be an atheist. The Antichrist is acting on behalf
of Satan, and the last thing Satan wants to do is eliminate all gods, because he wants to be worshiped as God. He simply wants to eliminate all other gods besides himself. And in his mind, the Antichrist will value one thing above all others: the god of fortresses.

Thus, the Antichrist will value a god of war over the gods preferred by his ancestors and the God cherished by women. Recall when we looked at the four horsemen of the apocalypse (first four seals of God’s judgment) that the Antichrist was portrayed as someone who worships a god of war.

Verse 39 goes on to say he will deal with the strongest fortresses (i.e., other world powers) with the help of not just any foreign god, but this foreign god of fortresses to wage war against his most powerful enemies. To motivate his forces, the Antichrist will give to his followers the spoils of military conquest - “He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.” All prior crusades and military campaigns will pale in comparison to what the Antichrist will do.

Can we look to history to inform us as to who this god of fortresses might be? There have been many religious wars and conflicts over the millennia, but which religions have engaged in war for the sake of war?

The Jews formerly engaged in wars to establish their homeland 3,000 years ago, but not much since then. The modern nation of Israel has engaged in several wars since 1948, but never (to my knowledge) for the purpose of advancing the Jewish religion. Roman Catholicism used to maintain armies and/or wage wars for various purposes, but not for the last several hundred years. Islam has engaged in numerous wars over the centuries, often gaining converts by that method.

Of these, only Islam is active in military conflicts today for religious purposes. Is this a passing phase which will eventually vanish, or a core element of Islamic theology that will endure? How many religions are there, which advance themselves by military means? Is America advancing its military interests for religious purposes? Don’t make me laugh. America is so post-Christian ....

The remainder of Dan. 11 (vv. 40-45) describes a particular military campaign the Antichrist will wage in the end times. To summarize, the Antichrist is specifically called the king of the north, which in all likelihood refers to Turkey or Syria, not Russia, as previously discussed (Armageddon). He battles with, and conquers, the king of the south, meaning Egypt, and apparently also subdues Libya and N. Sudan. Libya and N. Sudan are not said to be defeated by the Antichrist (as Egypt is), but they will “follow in his train,” meaning he will lead them.

News from the east and north (Iraq, Iran) will alarm him and he will go with great fury to “devote many to destruction.” It is clear that the Antichrist will not only worship a god of fortresses, he will in fact be a prodigious warmonger.

We alluded to it earlier, and here it is. Dan. 7:24 said the Antichrist will uproot and replace three of the kings which are part of the beast kingdom. Dan. 11:43 tells us who they are most likely to be: Egypt, Libya and N. Sudan. Dan. 8 told us the Antichrist will understand riddles and ascend to power with cunning, which could explain why Libya and N. Sudan follow in his train without having to be defeated militarily.

However, the text specifically states “Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites” will
be delivered from out of the hand of the Antichrist at that time. It’s curious, that those regions when combined line up perfectly with what is today known as the country of Jordan.

Additionally, the Antichrist will overrun Israel (the “glorious land”), and tens of thousands will die. “And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.” Dan. 11:45. This undoubtedly refers to his eventual encampment outside Jerusalem and his inevitable defeat by Jesus. Consequently, the glorious holy mountain could either be the Mt. of Olives, for reasons discussed earlier re: Armageddon, or it could be the Temple Mount (what other mountain would be both glorious and holy to God?).

Dan. 12:1-4 opens with a brief statement recounting the Tribulation, deliverance for those whose names are written in the book of life, and the resurrection of the dead. It closes with the statement, “Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” Is there any more apt appraisal of the days in which we live? What with the rapid expansion of scientific knowledge and technology, data accumulation and data storage, are we not living in a time of unparalleled increase in knowledge? And what are modern transportation systems, if not the means by which people run to and fro?

Finally, I will simply point out here, but not discuss except in Appendix C, the three time periods specified in Daniel ch. 12:

1) It will take $3\frac{1}{2}$ times until “the end of these wonders,” the endpoint of which will be “when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end.” vv. 6-7.

2) “From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days.” v. 11.

3) “Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days.” v. 12.

OPPOSITE WORLD OF PROPHECY

We have mentioned Christianity and Islam many times already, but now it is time for a brief comparison. Both Christianity and Islam have very detailed and specific end times eschatologies, based on their respective sacred writings and a long tradition of interpretation. In some significant respects these two eschatologies are essentially a point-by-point antiparallel to each other. That is, all the bad guys in Christian prophecy are the good guys in Islamic prophecy, and vice versa.

Hence, the Muslim Messiah (al-Mahdi, or the Mahdi) is the biblical Antichrist, meaning the Muslim savior is the Christian main villain. Similarly, the Muslim anti-Christ (ad-Dajjal, or the Dajjal) is the biblical Messiah, meaning the Muslim main villain is the Christian savior (although in Islam he is perceived as a very Jewish Messiah). The upshot of which is that the biblical Jesus is the Muslim anti-Christ.

At this point you might be wondering how Jesus Christ can be the “anti-Christ” in Islam. Well, here we have a distinction in terminology. First of all, Christ simply means messiah. When the Bible says Jesus Christ, it means Jesus is the Messiah. Similarly (but in opposite world), when Muslims claim the Mahdi is their Messiah, it means he is their Christ. Therefore, the person who opposes the Mahdi, to Muslims, will be an anti-Christ. And the person who will oppose the Mahdi is Jesus.

But there is more. Muslims “believe in Jesus,” as it were, as a prophet before Mohammed, but they deny that Jesus is God or the son of God. That still leaves room in Islamic theology and eschatology
for a person called Isa, which is the Arabic name for Jesus. Isa is supposed to be Jesus who comes back to assist the Mahdi in implementing Islam worldwide. In other words, Isa (to Muslims) is what Christians call the False Prophet. The Muslim Jesus (Isa) is the opposite of the biblical Jesus.

Confused yet? You are supposed to be confused. From Satan’s perspective, confusion and deceit are the whole point. Rev. 12:7. Thus, Muslims believe in a Messiah figure who will usher in a golden age, but a golden age of Islam. Muslims believe in the return of Jesus (clever!), but only as Isa, a subordinate to the Mahdi to promote Islam. Muslims believe in both the biblical Antichrist and the biblical False Prophet (Mahdi and Isa), but to them these are both good guys. And, the biblical Messiah is the Muslim anti-Christ (the Dajjal).

• Christians view Jesus Christ as waging war against the Antichrist; Muslims view the Dajjal as waging war against the Mahdi. (The same actors, and the same war.)
• Christians believe the Antichrist will use false signs and wonders to deceive; Muslims believe the Dajjal will use false signs and wonders to deceive.
• We have seen how the Antichrist is likely to be a Muslim; Muslims believe the anti-Christ (anti-Mahdi) will be Jewish.
• Christians believe Jesus Christ is the promised Jewish Messiah. Muslims also believe the Dajjal is the promised Jewish Messiah, which will only confirm to them that he is evil!

These antiparallels are too striking to be mere coincidence, or an accident. No other religion compares, or anti-compares, with Christianity in this way. I conclude there must be an overriding design in all of this. Since Islam came along later, it must have been intentionally designed to be the opposite of Christianity, as well as a substitute for Judaism.

Consider the many ways in which Islam copies Judaism. Both Ishmael and Jacob had twelve sons who became tribal and national leaders. The descendants of Ishmael and Jacob are still litigating who is the son of promise of Abraham. What religion besides Judaism practices circumcision? Islam. What religion abstains from eating pork besides Judaism. Islam. What religion observes a lunar-based calendar besides Judaism? Islam. Do you think it mere coincidence that Muslims believe Mohammed ascended to heaven on the Jewish Temple Mount, and that both Islam and Judaism consider Jerusalem to be a holy city rightfully belonging to each of them?

Do you really think all this is mere random chance? I tell you, Islam is desperately trying to undermine all of the claims of the Jews and Judaism which make them special and unique in God’s program for humanity. It is the goal of Islam not merely to eliminate the Jew, but also to replace them as God’s chosen people. Is it not obvious? And on top of that, Islam has adopted an eschatology which mimics Christianity while turning it inside out. In these ways, Islam seeks to destroy both Christians and Jews. Res ipsa loquitur - the thing speaks for itself.

All I can say is, Christianity and Islam cannot both be right. Only one will win out in the end. It would be great to watch this whole thing play out as a spectator. Unfortunately, at least on earth, there will be no spectators. There will be no fence-sitting, no neutral ground, and no observation decks. Everyone will be forced to choose a side. In fact, I think that’s the whole point.
THE ABYSS (BOTTOMLESS PIT)

Lk. 8:30-31 - Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.

Rev. 9:1, 2, 11 - And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. ... They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.

Rev. 11:7; 17:8 - And when [the two witnesses] have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them. ... The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction.

Rev. 20:1-2 - Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized ... Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him.

The reason we are considering the abyss (bottomless pit) in detail at this point is because we have already discussed Armageddon, when the forces of evil are defeated. Further, we have looked at the Satanic Trinity in some detail. What is now left to consider is what happens to each of the members of the Satanic Trinity immediately after Armageddon.

Rev. 19:20 tells us that at Armageddon when the satanic forces are killed by Jesus, the Antichrist and the False Prophet will be captured alive and thrown into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. In other words, they are immediately committed to hell. Compared to literally everyone else in the world, they get to start their everlasting torture a thousand years earlier! It couldn’t happen to two more deserving guys, really.

But Satan is treated differently. He is cast into the abyss with a great chain, and the abyss is shut and sealed over for a thousand years. Thus, he is imprisoned where he can do no harm to anyone on earth, but not forever.

Interestingly, there is no further mention of the demonic angels. Revelation does not directly say whether they go back into the abyss with Satan, or end up in the lake of fire with the Antichrist. What happens to them? I can only assume they are no longer free to plague mankind during the Millennium, because the very nature of the kingdom of Christ precludes their presence. Most likely they will spend the thousand years in the abyss, and eternity in the lake of fire, along with Satan. See, Mat. 25:41.

Neither is there any further mention of the bottomless pit after Rev. 20:3. We are told that Death and Hades are both thrown into the lake of fire in Rev. 20:14, but no mention is made of the abyss. What happens to it? We don’t know.

The purpose of the abyss, or bottomless pit, appears to be primarily to hold fallen angels (demons) until they are released either as a judgment on the earth or to face judgment themselves. Thus, we
see in Lk. 8:31 that the demons possessing the man from Gerasenes implored Jesus not to send them to the abyss.

I take it they made this request because being in the abyss would imprison them and keep them from wreaking havoc in the world on behalf of Satan (which they would want to continue). They may also consider the abyss to be an unpleasant place (possibly a place of darkness), although I can find no indication in scripture that the abyss is a place of torment.

The abyss seems to be simply a prison for angelic beings. We have already seen in Rev. 9 (the 5th Trumpet) that in the Tribulation the dark armies of Satan (i.e., demon hordes) will be released to torture people for five months. These are, I would guess, all the demons who have been cast out of people and into the abyss since the First Advent. It may possibly include other fallen angels cast into the abyss directly from heaven by God.

Rev. 9:11 indicates that Satan, the king of the demons, is also “the angel of the bottomless pit.” So he rules over the inmates of the abyss, but is not imprisoned by it himself at this time. At the same time, he cannot release his demon hordes until God gives him the key, which he does not now have. Rev. 9:1. So when we are twice told that the beast “rises from the bottomless pit” (Rev. 11:7; 17:8), this is probably a reference to demonic activity in each case.

Where is the abyss? Based on Lk. 8:31, the abyss must be a place that presently exists, and this is consistent with the scriptures in Revelation. However, I do not expect it to exist once the new creation gets here. At that time, all who are wicked - including the fallen angels (presumably) - will inhabit the lake of fire for eternity. “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’” Mat. 25:41. There will be no need for a temporary prison such as the abyss.

Does the abyss have a physical location or is it solely in a spiritual realm? No one can say. My guess is that it exists in the spiritual realm, similar to Paradise. It is hard to conceive that any place on earth could be truly bottomless, or that any earthly location could be inescapable for an angel. If it were on earth, its location would have to be kept a secret, and frankly I don’t think God has any hidden vaults on the earth. Although the grave is sometimes referred to as being under the earth (Eph. 4:9; Ps. 63:9; Php. 2:10), I am not aware the abyss is ever described that way.

The abyss could potentially exist in the heavens, which is to say, outer space (second heaven). But this is pure speculation, and God is not limited to physical phenomena. That is, He does not need a physical place to hold fallen angels any more than He needs an atomic bomb to defeat the Antichrist. God is perfectly capable of confining demons anywhere and anyway He wants. The location of the abyss and the key that will unlock it are known to God alone.

**FINAL BATTLE AND JUDGMENT**

**The Last Hurrah**

**Rev. 20:7-10** - “And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad
plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the False Prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

We see here in Rev. 20 the final chapter in the narrative of the battle between good and evil, in which God defeats Satan and his followers at every encounter, and now for the last time. Satan, and presumably his demon host, will be let out of the abyss to reap in the final harvest of unbelievers, as it were. They will muster the wicked and surround Jerusalem, a large multitude, but be destroyed by fire sent from heaven. Then Satan will be sent directly to the lake of fire forever.

There are some similarities between this battle and Armageddon, but there are also some key differences and the two battles are not the same. First, there is clearly stated to be a 1,000 year period intervening between them. Second, when mentioning the nations around the world in this final battle, there is no mention of a beast or a beast kingdom. Satan has been out of commission for a thousand years, so there has been no false religion empire exercising authority over the earth in his absence. And he is not going to recreate that kingdom at this time.

Satan will need to go out and deceive the nations personally because prior to his arrival there will be some persistent unbelief, but it will be unorganized. Satan will become the greatest community organizer ever seen, stirring up trouble where there had been none, just to foment a revolution and attempt to overturn the present system (i.e., the kingdom of Christ).

Gog and Magog will be involved again, but as we have seen, Gog is probably Satan, and Magog is probably his followers. There is no necessity that Gog and Magog can appear only once in history, and that the two battles should be collapsed into one, as the amillennialists and postmillennialists believe. Just because God uses fire to destroy the enemy both times doesn’t mean the two battles are the same. Fire is part of God’s nature - it signifies His holiness - what else is He supposed to use to defeat the enemy? Swords?

So Satan is going to rally forces to battle God twice, and lose both times. The first time, Satan will attack Jerusalem because it represents God’s favor, control of the Holy Land, and dominance over the Jews. The second time, he will attack Jerusalem because Jesus will have been visibly reigning there for 1,000 years. Satan will want to unseat Him and take over the worldwide throne Jesus established. In other words, this is Satan’s final grab for power - he has nothing else left.

A common question is why people will willingly revolt after a thousand years of having it so good.

We have already discussed how all believers alive when Jesus returns will be caught up in the air to meet Him and receive immortal bodies. That event essentially inaugurates the Millennium (excepting only that Jesus will first defeat the Antichrist and his armies). Logically then, only unbelieving people will remain to enter the millennial period in their mortal bodies. All future children for 1,000 years will be born to these people. I will examine in more detail who will enter the Millennial kingdom under the heading of The Nature of Kingdom Government, below.

We know that the glory of the Lord and the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth during the Millennium, so undoubtedly a great number of people will turn to Christ at that time. It will also
be a time of unparalleled peace, prosperity, and a rest from wickedness. It may, in fact, be the only time in history when a majority of people on the face of the earth are believers - although that is not a given, since in the final battle the number of people siding with Satan will be “like the sand of the sea.” Rev. 20:8. Even in the Millennium, true believers may only be a small minority of the world’s population, a remnant. We just don’t know.

But that is exactly why I believe God wants to use the Millennium to show us that even in that condition, man’s sin nature is sufficient to corrupt huge numbers of people. Even when all the Satanic and demonic forces of this world are held in abeyance, men will still tend towards sin. No one will need to claim, “the devil made me do it.” Men will do evil all by themselves, and then God will show us that we were always that way from the beginning. But for the grace of God, we never had a chance.

We need to keep two key facts in mind regarding the Millennium: 1) For all the peace and prosperity which will abound, the curse of the ground will still remain. The key consequence of which is, all men will still have a sin nature and be born separated from God; and 2) Notwithstanding that Christ will likely impose a worldwide theocracy during the Millennium, God never has, and never will, force people to believe and accept Him. “Free will” will remain unaffected, the key consequence of which is, some - perhaps many - will not accept him.

When you take into account that birth rates and longevity are both likely to go up during that time, there will be a population explosion and even a minority of unbelievers will still number in the many of millions. After all, when the Millennium ends and Satan rallies his forces to battle God in the final war, who will those people be, except unbelievers living in the time of the Millennium?

The people living at the end of the Millennium will have heard, and learned, about Armageddon - but they won’t have lived it, or remember it, personally. To them, it will be what the Crusades are to us - long ago and far away. Somebody else’s war. Although there will probably be plenty of people around to warn them, they will simply not see that they are playing out the same scenario a second time, with the same result.

And why will they rally against God at the end? Because they will have been living under the rule of Christ with a rod of iron, and they’re going to be darn sick and tired of it. Today we complain that evil never relents. You beat back an evil trend (gay marriage, abortion, religious persecution, abridgement of rights, etc.) and you think you’ve done something good when it just comes back again. And in coming back, it is harder, nastier, more militant, pushing the envelope farther out, gaining traction, becoming legitimized, pounding relentlessly.

Imagine, if you will, a world in which that is reversed. Sounds great, right? But one man’s ceiling is another man’s floor. For those who do not believe, the overwhelming weight of the rule of iron by Christ will be oppressive. Imagine trying to open a simple little brothel and instead of following all past experience, you get shut down permanently. The prosecution of the wicked will increase, more firmly resisting evil, rooting out its causes, pushing compliance farther and farther, punishing wickedness harder, pounding relentlessly.

For the wicked, there will be no escape from the kingdom of Christ, “the oppressor.” They will see only one way out - and they will make good on it as soon as their leader arrives. And what’s really
funny is that since the knowledge of God’s word will cover the earth, everybody will know what is coming. Even the wicked will be familiar with Rev. 20:7-10 which will simply operate to enhance their anticipation of Satan’s release from prison and his “second coming.” They won’t be caught by surprise when it happens - they’ll be counting down the days until he arrives.

Consequently, there is not going to be a shortage of people who Satan will be able to whip into a frenzy to seek revenge against the “tyrant God,” as Satan will spin it, following the Millennium. They will live under the manifold blessings of God in this life for a thousand years, and resent it. Isn’t human nature wonderful?

**Great White Throne and The Second Resurrection**

**Dan. 12:1-4** - “And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. ... And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

**Mt 25:31-46** - “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’. ... Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ ... And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

**Rev 20:11-15** - “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

After the final battle between Christ and Satan, and all the enemies of God are defeated, there must be a final reckoning going into eternity. But before that can happen, everyone who has ever lived in the history of the world must be raised from the dead in order to stand for judgment, and then sent to either heaven or hell (the lake of fire). This is the second resurrection. How many resurrections are there? There are two. Rev. 20:5-6. No, the Rapture is not a third. We have already covered this.

The second resurrection occurs after the Millennium, and your chances then are - actually, it’s not a matter of chance at all. Your judgment will depend solely on whether you have accepted God’s offer while alive, or rejected it. Thus, everyone - absolutely everyone, without exception, who has died ever, and who did not participate in the First Resurrection, will participate in the second resurrection. Those who died not in Christ from the beginning of the world will be raised to suffer the judgment of the second death, i.e., the lake of fire. Those who died in Christ after the First
Resurrection (during the Millennium) will be raised to life eternal, i.e., heaven. Simple.

This final judgment will take place before the Great White Throne. God is seated on the throne, and we are told that earth and sky flee from His presence. This indicates that the throne is in heaven rather than on earth, and/or at the time of judgment the present earth and heavens have already been destroyed in preparation for the new heavens and new earth. Once we reach the white throne judgment, there is no further need of the old earth.

 Judgment is rendered according to what is written in books, which I take to mean books of account, for they contain the record of every deed committed by every person. There is no indication how many books are involved, but apparently there is only one book of life. The book of life, in contrast to the others, is not a record book, or book of account, of deeds. All it has in it is a list of names. If your name is on the list, you get a pass and your deeds are not taken into account. I take it to be implicit that the book of life is much smaller than the other books.

And so we have an end times account of the ultimate redemption of the saints purchased by the blood of Jesus.

Notice two things. First, it is a hard thing to understand, but God punishes only for wickedness, not for mere unbelief. Mat. 13:41, 49. God will not answer prayers because of unbelief (Mat. 17:20), and Jesus did not perform miracles because of unbelief (Mat. 13:58). He also chided people for their unbelief (Mk. 16:14), and people will not enter God’s rest because of unbelief (Heb. 3:19). But God does not condemn or punish for unbelief. God condemns and punishes because people are ungodly (i.e., sinners, law-breakers) and unrighteous. Rom. 1:18, 5:6; 2 Peter 3:7; Jude 15. There’s a difference.

Let me dwell on this point for just a moment, because popular Christian teaching often holds that the “greatest sin” is unbelief, and people will not enter heaven because of unbelief. Not what the scripture says.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. ... Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous. Rom. 5:12-14, 18-19.

Get the point? It was Adam’s sin (so-called original sin, i.e., the Fall) that brought to all mankind death and condemnation. In other words, if I may interpret, a person is not condemned because of anything they did not believe. All people are initially subject to condemnation because they are born separated from God. This separation and the resulting condemnation occur before any person ever makes a conscious or unconscious decision what to believe or not believe. True, you can escape this situation through belief in the Gospel - but unbelief; as such, didn’t put you in that situation to begin with.
Thus, the scripture does not say that the books are a record of who has not believed. The books record who has sinned, and we know from scripture that all have sinned. There are no innocent people in the eyes of God. Everyone is guilty. Even the deeds of the righteous will be written in the books of account - their deeds will merely be ignored.

Second, the book of life does not record the good things anyone has done. This is not a balancing test. God is not going to weigh the good against the bad. Nothing we can do, from God’s perspective, can overcome the sin in our life. I know some believe that from God’s perspective we can do nothing good in the flesh, but that’s not what is going on here. We can do good things, but they can never overcome, erase, cover up, or atone for the sins we have done. So they simply don’t count. The only thing that counts is whether the blood of Jesus covers your sins or not.

The other thing that we learn from the Revelation text is that following the Great White Throne judgment, death and Hades itself are forever abolished. “The last enemy to be destroyed is death,” (1Co. 15:26) and “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1Co 15:54). As Jesus said in Rev. 1:18, “I died, and behold I am alive forevemore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.” “Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.” Rev. 20:14. I will elaborate on this further later.

**The Judgment Seat of Christ (“Bema Seat”)**

**Mat. 12:36-37** - “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

**Mat. 16:27** - “For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.”

**Rom. 14:10, 12** - “For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ... So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”

**2 Cor. 5:10** - “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

**1 Pet. 4:5** - “but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”

**Rev. 11:18** - “The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”

The idea of the judgment seat of Christ, a/k/a the Bema Seat, comes from the use of the Greek word *Bema* in Rom. 14:10 and 2 Cor. 5:10, which is translated as *judgment seat*. Apparently, the word *Bema* has two historical contexts. First, it was used to describe the seat of athletic judges at the Isthmian games in Grecian times. Second, it was used to describe the raised platform where a Roman magistrate sat to make pass judgment.

But the concept of the Bema has been transmogrified by some commentators into a so-called *doctrine of rewards*. Essentially, this doctrine holds that believers in Christ will not appear at the
Great White Throne judgment ("GWT"), as it is reserved exclusively for the wicked. However, believers will appear before Christ at a separate judgment (the Bema seat) for the purpose of receiving rewards. These rewards are largely undefined, but they will include crowns, which the recipients will cast at Jesus’ feet upon receiving them. See, Rev. 4:10.

Those who hold to this doctrine emphasize that no punishments will be meted out at the Bema seat, only rewards. These rewards will be based on the righteous deeds (only) of the saints in this life, whereas the judgment of the wicked will be based on their rejection of Christ. The Bema seat will occur either immediately after the Rapture (majority position) or the Second Coming (minority position), but in either event before the Millennium. So essentially, the doctrine of the Bema seat holds there will be two judgments of the dead, not just one.

There are so many obvious holes in this supposed doctrine, I hardly know where to begin. **First**, let’s start with the most obvious: the Great White Throne judgment is not limited to the wicked only. We have already seen that the Book of Life (in which the names of all believers will be recorded) will be present (and used) at the GWT. There is no reason to have it there, if only the wicked will be there - it is a mere useless surplusage. But consider this: if the Bema seat occurs before the Millennium, when will the people who believe in Christ during the Millennium be judged? Huh? Answer: at the GWT. There is no other option. Yes, believers will be part of the GWT.

**Second**, scripture never says the wicked will be judged for rejecting Christ, that is, the sin of unbelief. I wish we could get rid of that heretical teaching forever! I have already explained how Satan judges people for unbelief, but God does not. God judges people for sins they have committed - and everyone has. Plus, everyone without exception is born into unbelief - it’s not a choice! And it’s not as if the scripture is ambiguous on this point.

"The dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done." Rev. 20:12. "For the Son of Man ... will repay each person according to what he has done." Mat. 16:27. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done ..." 2 Cor. 5:10. "For you will render to a man according to his work." Ps. 62:12. “Each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.” 1 Cor. 3:13. Are you getting the picture? Judgment will be based on deeds, not belief.

**Third**, just because different words are used to describe the judgment of the living and the dead by God (Jesus), does not mean they are separate events. What have I consistently said throughout this entire book? There are many names for God and Jesus, but there is only one God, and one Messiah. There are many names for Satan and his chief henchman, but there is only one devil, and one Antichrist. So what if the words Bema seat and Great White Throne are different? That does not mean they are separate events.

**Fourth**, I think people have an entirely wrong view of crowns as rewards for believers. The scripture speaks of the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8), the crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4), and the crown of life (Jam. 1:12; Rev. 2:10). I don’t believe any of these are actually physical crowns. A spiritual crown describes an attribute of the person wearing the crown. In other words, in eternity, believers will epitomize righteousness, glory and life. These attributes will “crown” people in the sense of describing what they are like, that is, how God sees them. They are not physical objects.
Granted, Rev. 4:10 describes how the twenty-four elders in heaven will fall down before God and cast their crowns before His throne. But this in no way describes all believers. I take it the twenty-four elders - who I assume are the patriarchs of Israel and the twelve apostles - will have special crowns signifying that they are, in fact, special (i.e., among the twenty-four elders). How this gets interpreted to be a general principle of crown casting is just, well, sloppy interpretation.

In sum, I see no reason why there needs to be two judgments of the living and the dead, instead of one. God is certainly capable of judging everyone at the same time. He won’t get confused, or judge someone the wrong way. All the fundamental assumptions of the doctrine of rewards (as commonly taught) are simply erroneous.

DEATH, HELL AND THE LAKE OF FIRE

The lake of fire is the final destination for all people who, in the entire history of the world, did not have righteousness imputed to them after the manner of Abraham (prior to the First Advent) or through the ministry of Jesus Christ (after the First Advent). The lake of fire is a place of judgment and torment, and eternal separation from God.

The lake of fire was designed originally for Satan and his demons (Mat. 25:41; Rev. 20:10). The lake of fire will also punish all those whose sins have not been covered by the blood of Christ (Mat. 13:41,50; Rev. 20:11-15; 21:8). The lake of fire is conscious torment, viz., Mat. 13:50 “furnace of fire…weeping and gnashing of teeth;” Mark 9:48 “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched; ” and Rev. 14:10 “he will be tormented with fire and brimstone.”

The lake of fire is eternal and irreversible. Rev. 14:11 “the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever and they have no rest day and night;” Rev. 20:14 “This is the second death, the lake of fire;” and Rev. 20:15 “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

The lake of fire, like several major prophetic characters and events already mentioned, goes by several names in the Bible. The key names are hell, the lake of fire, the lake of fire and sulphur, and in some translations, Gehenna. Because the word hell tends to be ambiguous - it can be defined as either the grave, or as the eventual lake of fire - I will generally avoid using that term here. For clarity, I will use lake of fire to refer to eternal judgment and punishment - what many people commonly refer to as hell.

Whenever I use the terms Sheol (Hebrew), Hades (Greek), or Death, I am referring to the grave only - the place where the wicked dead await the final judgment. Paradise, on the other hand, is where the righteous dead await the final judgment. The secular (non-biblical) connotation is that the grave is where souls go to await final disposition to either heaven or hell. However, this does not mean that Death and the grave are neutral places in the Bible.

The biblical concept appears to be that when a person dies, their fate is not only immediately determined, but they also enter a place of either rest or torment. Thus, in Lk. 16:23 a man in Hades is said to be in torment. In Lk. 23:43, Jesus tells one of the men crucified along with Him that he will be together in Paradise that same day. Paradise (a/k/a Abraham’s Bosom) is a place of comfort and rest. Lk. 16:22-23.
It tells you something about Greek mythology when you realize the Greeks only had one word for the grave, Hades. To them, Hades was where all the dead went - there was no alternative. Talk about having no hope - to the Greeks, everyone is destined for torment. Only in Christianity do we have an alternative grave, Paradise. Thank God we won’t ever have to visit Hades.

Some people take 2 Cor. 5:6-10 to mean that when a Christian dies (is “absent from the body”) that he immediately goes to heaven (“present with the Lord”). The text does not actually say this, however. It only says that, “while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.” The text also says that all men must receive a reward, good or evil, for what was done while alive (“in the body”). But this refers to the judgment seat of Christ which occurs at the end of history, not when every person dies, as we have already seen.

What is absolutely sure is this - when people die, their souls are not in some sort of spiritual limbo, where their eternal destinies are yet to be determined, as though it were an open question at death. In other words, the Bible does not support the concept of Purgatory. I suspect Purgatory was invented by the Roman church as a way to extract money from parishioners to try to bribe an unbelieving relative’s way into heaven. Of course, any such attempt is pointless. A person’s eternal destination is irrevocably fixed at the moment of death.

Properly speaking, Paradise is not the same as heaven. What we call heaven is really just the New Jerusalem which is yet to come down from the sky and sit on the new earth, neither of which has been created yet. Rev. 21:1-3.

Similarly, Sheol and Hades are not the same as the lake of fire. Rev. 20:14 tells us that Death and Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire - so they cannot be the same thing. I am not sure the lake of fire even exists yet, as the first mention that anyone is actually thrown into the lake of fire is Rev. 19:20, speaking solely of the Antichrist and False Prophet after Armageddon.

Luke 16:26 informs us that there is a great gulf, or chasm, fixed between Paradise and Hades. I suspect this must also be true of heaven and the lake of fire - they won’t be able to see each other or communicate with each other. I used to conceive of this great gulf as mystical, or spiritual, but it is possible that it just means a very great distance. A very great distance measured in astronomical units such as a light year or parsec.

In other words, the lake of fire could be a distant planet - or not - but in any event it will be a real physical place. Every indication in scripture supports this idea. Do you think that the lake of fire is merely a metaphorical concept? Or that God would not really subject people to unrelenting everlasting torment? Then why does the Bible use such specific, vivid language describing the lake of fire? Outer darkness. Everlasting torment. Burning sulphur. Weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. If you don’t take these words at face value, I could almost conclude you aren’t taking God seriously.

Heaven, as we call it, will simply be a new earth - a planet. Why not the same for the lake of fire? A planet like Venus, perhaps. A planet located close to a star, full of sulphur, burning with heat, shrouded in clouds resulting in darkness. I don’t know, of course, but it is possible. Heaven is not going to be a place with no floors or ceilings where we just hang suspended in empty space. We are not going to be cruising from galaxy to galaxy. We are going to live on the new earth.
Similarly, the lake of fire is a physical place - just one that can never be left. No one will be able to escape. The inmates of the lake of fire will not be able to break out and travel elsewhere. It is a place of eternal confinement, off by itself away from God and the new earth. Rev. 21:23 says the new creation will not have either sun or moon, but it says nothing about stars or planets. It’s just a thought.

I conceive of the lake of fire as a relatively small, dark, crowded place, where a substantial amount of the torment will come not just from the environment per se, but from the fact that every one will be tormenting his neighbor, and be tormented by them. Imagine a place where it is so crowded people will be tripping over each other everywhere they go.

It will be a place the Bible calls “outer darkness” (Mat. 22:13; 25:30). They can’t even escape each other, must less the place. Always having people in the way, never getting any time or space to oneself, never having a moment alone. As the scripture says, the wicked shall not have any rest (Heb. 3:11, 18; Rev. 14:11).

Constantly hearing people weeping, wailing, gnashing teeth, moaning, groaning and screaming. I can imagine people yelling out, “for cryin’ out loud, just please everybody shut up for a second!” But no, the howling just continues unabated. Not just in the distance, but right next door. It’ll be enough to drive everybody crazy.

And since heaven will be a place of eternal light where there are no sun or moon, there will be no days as such. No nighttime or daytime markers of the passing of time. Well, wouldn’t the lake of fire be the same way (except for the eternal light part)? Dark all the time, no nighttime or daytime markers of the passage of time. No time of rest and no sleep - because sleep would give the ability to escape the din for a while. But there won’t be any escape, not even unconsciousness. Just a constant awareness, a continual immersion, an everlasting baptism in pain and agony with no relief in any sense of the word. Youch! That sounds like hell.

**Part 5 - The Kingdom of Christ**

*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* Mat. 6:10.

The kingdom of Christ is what everything is about. Jesus, the Bible, God’s will, man’s purpose, the universe - the meaning of everything is tied to the coming kingdom. So it makes sense that we should take care to find out everything we can about the nature of that kingdom.

**THE SECOND COMING (SECOND ADVENT)**

*Zech 14:1-5, 12-15* (summary) - Jesus stands on the Mount of Olives, which splits from east to west creating a large valley. The holy ones come with him to do battle with all the nations. The flesh of the people who wage war against Jerusalem will rot as they stand. Same for the horses and other beasts. The wealth of surrounding nations will be plundered and returned to Jerusalem.

*Mat. 24:29-31, 36-44* (summary) - For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. After the great tribulation, sun and moon will be darkened, and the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven. Jesus will appear on the clouds,
with a loud trumpet call, and gather His elect from the four winds. Plus, no one knows the day or hour.

**John 14:3** - “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

**Acts 1:6-11** (summary) - “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” As Jesus ascended in a cloud, He will come again in a cloud. “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

**2Th. 2:1-12** - The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ will not occur, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed. This Antichrist will be killed by the appearance of the coming of Christ.

**Rev. 19:11-21** - A rider on a white horse, King of kings, Lord of lords, who comes to judge the nations. The armies of heaven follow on white horses. He will strike his enemies and rule with a rod of iron. At the Great Supper of God, birds will feast on the flesh of the nations arrayed against God. The beast and False Prophet will be thrown alive into the lake of fire.

The Second Coming, a/k/a the Second Advent, is one of the most foundational doctrines of Christianity. It, like the resurrection from the dead and life everlasting, is a key hope of all Christians and a core belief of the faith. The Second Coming serves three basic purposes:
1) Jesus comes to finalize the judgment of the world by conquering the Antichrist personally;
2) Jesus comes to redeem His Church (that is, transform the bodies of all believers), both alive and dead; and
3) Jesus comes to inaugurate His kingdom reign on earth (including the restoration of Israel).

The conquest of the Antichrist was discussed earlier regarding Armageddon and the Great Day of the Lord. The redemption of the Church was discussed under the topic of the First Resurrection and is treated in detail there. The inauguration of the earthly kingdom is discussed under the topic of the Millennium, which I will come to shortly. Here, we will examine the manner and timing of the Second Advent, and why it is so important.

The Second Coming of Christ was predicted by Him both in Mat. 24:29-44 and John 14:3, “I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” It was also foretold by the angels immediately following Jesus’ ascension (Acts 1:11). It is a fairly common theme in Paul’s epistles as well. But its origins trace much farther back, certainly to Zech. 14:3-4, where it is said that the Lord will do battle with the nations and stand on the Mt. of Olives.

But it goes back even farther, at least as far back as Isaiah 9:7 (written over 700 years before Jesus). “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.”

You see, the very concept of the Messiah, as prophesied throughout the O.T., is that of a conquering king who will sit on the throne of David and rule the world. That is why the Jews, in the time of Jesus’ First Advent, kept expecting Him to conquer Rome and establish His earthly kingdom at that
time. They did not realize what God was doing, namely, splitting the kingdom of Christ into the spiritual and the physical, and establishing each of them at different times. They expected that these would both happen at once, and so they missed what God was doing.

But just because Jesus came the first time solely to establish the Church and not to overthrow Rome, does not mean the Jews were entirely wrong, or that God’s plans for a physical kingdom had changed. The biblical concept of a Messiah still requires, as it always did, that Jesus would at some point conquer the nations and set up His kingdom in a physical sense. That is why the Second Coming is such a crucial doctrine of the faith - it is part and parcel of the ministry of Christ, which cannot be complete without it.

The apostles knew this to be true because they asked Jesus, just before He went up to heaven, whether this was the time He was restoring the kingdom to Israel. Acts 1:6. They knew at that point the establishment of a physical kingdom was absolutely essential to God’s plan. They only saw it in terms of restoring Israel, but they knew there was something undone.

However, Jesus had not yet even finished with the inauguration of the Church (as the Holy Spirit had not yet been sent). So He told them about the coming of the Holy Spirit and deferred the kingdom question with the statement, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.”

In other words, Jesus did not deny that He would restore the kingdom to Israel. He simply deferred answering the question, as if to say, “It isn’t time for you to know the answer to that question yet.” Perhaps it was even that He could not answer the question, because no one knows the day or hour of his coming except the Father alone, not even the Son. Mt. 24:36. If anything, Jesus’ answer would seem to be a confirmation that He would return to restore Israel, rather than a denial of it.

The manner of the Second Coming is this:

1) Every eye will see him, even those who pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth will wail over Him. Rev. 1:7. The phrase, every eye will see him, even those who pierced Him is interesting, because all those who crucified Christ are dead. The phrase recalls Zech. 12:10, speaking of the nation of Israel, that “when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child.” Also see, Jn. 19:37.

This suggests that Israel will have a collective memory and remorse for their part in the crucifixion. The Jews will recognize Jesus as the firstborn son they rejected, and will feel regret. Perhaps this will help to trigger their turning to Christ after this. But the phrase can also mean that to God, all people have an eternal spirit which remains after the body dies. So even the physically dead will know that Jesus has returned.

The fact that all the nations of the earth will mourn or wail at the Second Coming should be obvious. All of the faithful will likely be dead at the time, leaving only the unbelieving masses to witness Jesus’ return. They will, of course, be painfully aware that all the hope and trust they have placed in the beast kingdom (by accepting the mark of the beast), the Antichrist and the dark armies has been seriously misplaced and in vain. They will realize that all of their denials of the divinity and power of Christ have been wrong, and like it or not they will be under His direct rule here on out in
spite of their efforts to defeat Him. Not a very happy prospect, if you have spent your life in defiance of Him.

2) **The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens. Jesus will appear on the clouds, with a loud trumpet call, and come in great power.** Mt. 24:30-31. At the First Advent, when Jesus came to the world as a baby, certainly some people did take notice of him, but for the vast majority of people on the earth, His appearance was unnoticed. Not so the Second Advent, when everyone will take notice. This will be the greatest theatrical event in all history, and no one will be able to deny it. Nor will anyone be able to say they didn’t know it had happened.

I don’t assume this means everyone on the globe will have a direct line of sight, for that would seem to be impossible. However, with all the attending signs of His coming - clouds, strange stuff happening with the sun and moon, a loud trumpet blast - I conceive everyone on earth will know something big is happening when it happens. Not just that they see it on the news, but all men will see and hear for themselves that something very unearthly is happening.

As for the sign of the Son of Man, Mt. 24:29 says that “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” But v. 30 continues, “Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man.” In other words, the sign of the Son of Man follows these other heavenly signs - they are not one and the same. I take it that the appearance of Jesus is the sign of the Son of Man - Jesus Himself is the sign.

3) **It will be a unique day, neither day nor night.** Zech 14:6-7. We already know that immediately preceding the appearance of Jesus, probably only by minutes or hours, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Well, I guess that’s as good a way as any to describe a day when daytime and nighttime are jumbled up.

But the full text of Zech 14:6-7 is worth looking at. “On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost. And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light.” Like I said - grand theater for a grand entrance. And why not?

4) **Jesus will gather His elect from around the world, both dead and alive, and meet them in the air.** Mt. 24:31; 1Th. 4:16-17. We have here described the First Resurrection, which some people view as the Rapture, and others view as part and parcel of the Second Coming. I am in the second camp, for reasons explained previously. Regardless, this is the event in which believers are translated, that is, given new bodies which will not die and are incorruptible.

Notice that there is a kind of up and down thing going on. First, the saints (the dead in Christ and then those who are alive) are caught up from the earth and meet Jesus in the air, which I take to be mid-descent on His part. Then, the saints follow Jesus the rest of the way so that when He touches ground, all the saints will be with Him, riding white horses, no less. Zech. 14:5; Rev. 19:14.

One of the arguments put forth by dispensationalists in favor of the secret Rapture is that it supposedly makes no sense for believers to go up to meet Christ, only to immediately come back to earth. Therefore, the First Resurrection cannot happen at the same time as the Second Coming (so the argument goes). I frankly don’t know why this should pose a logical problem.
How does it make any more logical sense for believers to be translated, go all the way up to the third heaven, and wait around doing nothing until they are needed to return with Christ? Strictly speaking, God can do this deal any way He likes - both are within His power. But which way has He revealed in His word?

5) Jesus will touch down on the Mount of Olives with His followers with Him on white horses, to conquer the nations. Zech 14:3-4. Rev. 19:14. OK, so now we have a location. Jesus isn’t going to return to earth just anywhere randomly, but He will come specifically to the Mt. of Olives, which is on the doorstep of Jerusalem. Convenient, since the enemies of God will be waiting on the mountains around Jerusalem. That way, they can all get together.

Don’t miss the fact that when Jesus returns to the Mt. Of Olives, it will not only be in the same manner as when He ascended into heaven (in a cloud, standing up), but it will also return Him to the exact spot from which He ascended to heaven. “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” Acts 1:11. Nothing about His return will be random.

We are also told that “On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.” Zech. 14:4. So when Jesus returns, He will not only shake the sky, but split the earth.

6) Jesus will personally defeat the Antichrist and throw him and the False Prophet into the lake of fire. 2Th. 2:8; Rev. 19:20. I have already mentioned that Jesus will kill the Antichrist by the mere appearance of His coming. A word will go forth from His mouth like a sword, and fire will come down to destroy the armies of the Antichrist. The saints won’t have to lift a finger. I have also already discussed how the Antichrist and False Prophet will be immediately thrown into the lake of fire, and Satan locked in the abyss. And this is how the Second Coming will come to a close.

Although, we can expect that there will be a substantial aftermath of this event. Those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons wielded by the enemies of God and burn them for seven years, so that they will not need to take wood out of the field or cut down any out of the forests. They will seize the spoil of those who despoiled them, and plunder those who plundered them. Finally, all the multitude of the armies of the Antichrist will have to be buried in the Valley of the Travelers, in Israel. Ezek. 39:9-11.

7) No one knows the day or hour except the Father alone. Mt. 24:36. This is a rather strange statement, given that Jesus said He and the Father “are one.” Jn. 10:30. Doesn’t Jesus know what God the Father knows? Now, yes. But when the statement was made, Jesus was in His human form, in which He had laid aside certain attributes of divinity. Phlp. 2:6-7. No, I don’t think members of the divine Trinity keep secrets from each other.

Now, as to timing, 2Th. 2:1-12 makes clear that the Second Coming will not occur until after the Antichrist is revealed. Since the appearance of Jesus results in the immediate defeat of the Antichrist, his coming must be at the very end of the Tribulation.

If you’re thinking people will be able to figure out when Jesus will return by knowing how long the
Tribulation is, that won’t necessarily be easy to determine. Will the Tribulation be seven years or 3½ years long, and is that on the Gregorian or Hebrew calendar? Actually, in my opinion that answer is more likely 1290 days or (my favorite) 1335 days as per Dan. 12:12. Then again, it could even be the 2300 days of Dan. 8:13-14. Wait - this was supposed to be easy! No wonder Jesus said no one knows the day or hour.

Even the very next scripture (Mat. 24:32-35) in the lesson of the fig tree, tells us that people will know when it is time for these things to take place, but it’s not very helpful. “When you see all these things, you know that he is near.” See all what things? By the time anyone sees the sign of the Son of Man, it will already be over. More likely, Jesus meant that when you see the Abomination of Desolation, you’ll know things are near. Sooo - you might be able to figure it out, but only if you are alive at the end of the Tribulation. And if you are reading this now, you probably won’t be.

The Sabbath Principle, or the 7,000 Year Plan for Man

The material I present in this current section will be different from the rest of this book in a key respect. The rest of this book is almost exclusively based on a careful exegesis of the scriptures. But here, it is not the text of the Bible we will examine so much as making observations about the world, about history, and about the ways God appears to work in human affairs so as to discern, if possible, patterns in the way those things occur.

One of the many advantages of believing in the laws of nature and nature’s God as I do, is that it does not exclude the law of nature component from our efforts to discern God’s will. Remember, the laws of nature and nature’s God consists of the revealed word of God in the Bible and the person of Jesus Christ, and the general revelation of God’s will in the observable creation (i.e., the law of nature) and our consciences.

As between the two, the revealed will of God in the Bible is always of more authority than what we merely guess it to be from making observations. Yet it is valid to make observations about matters not addressed in the scriptures, and to use them to formulate arguments which are entitled to as much respect as they are persuasive. I argue it is not necessary that for any observation of the law of nature to be valid, it must be repeated in the scriptures. Such observations need only not contradict the scriptures. Their eventual proof or disproof will come by further observations over time.

So please allow me to make some observations and put forward arguments based on them as best as I can. I will let you judge the extent to which any of them are persuasive.

The Sabbath Principle is simple - 6 days of labor followed by one day of rest. Gen. 2:2-3; Exo. 20:11. Does the same thing hold true for millennia? That is, does God have a 7,000 year plan for man - 6 millennia of labor followed by one millennium of rest (Jesus’ kingdom)?

If I understand the millennial kingdom of Christ correctly, it will be a time of relative rest (that is, compared to what we have now). The curse of the ground will remain, but the face of the earth will be changed, cleansed, and in all probability be a more friendly environment over the globe. Men will still be born with a sin nature, but Satan and his demons will be removed from all earthly influence. Israel will be restored, and the earth will experience a time of unparalleled peace and
prosperity. People will live longer, disease and pestilence will be rarer, and war will be abolished. It’s not heaven - but isn’t it the definition of a period of rest from what we now have?

So the question which naturally arises is this: Assuming the Millennium will be a period of rest arguendo, has all the prior history of the earth occurred in only 6,000 years? That is, is there a 7,000 year plan of history, in which 6,000 years of turmoil are followed by 1,000 years of rest, where the last Millennium is a Sabbath Millennium, as it were? For the following reasons, I believe the answer is ‘yes’ - approximately. Plus or minus 50-100 years. Ask me again a hundred years from now.

A. The biblical genealogies, if one takes them at all seriously, or as trustworthy, cannot put together a chronology going back to Adam which extends beyond roughly 6,000 years. Numerous biblical scholars have constructed timelines of world history, and every one I have ever seen puts Adam at 4001-4004 B.C. Even if creation pre-dates Adam, all prophecy is concerned with (think back to Gen. 3) human history, which only goes back to Adam. Unless, of course, you just plain reject the biblical genealogies or reject a literal Adam and Eve who were created by the direct act of God and did not have any human parents.

However, consistency is important. If we’re going to assume for the sake of this discussion that the Millennium will be literal, it only makes sense to take the creation account of Gen. 1 & 2 literally, as well as the genealogies going back to Adam. Put another way, no, I don’t think the biblical genealogies are an example of God’s exaggerations about lineages and life spans.

But a review of the evidence in this regard is beyond the scope of this book, except to say that it isn’t a matter of science. Rather, it is a matter of documentation - what the oldest writings testify about the origin of man and whether those documents are reliable. I told you up front this was going to be a lawyer’s perspective on things. And to a lawyer, documents are competent evidence. God never said science holds the key to history.

So humor me, even if I may be out of my mind on this point. The documentary evidence is on my side, so it is at least a plausible and rational basis for proceeding, even if you disagree.

B. There are scientific studies of the distribution of blood types (A, B, AB & O) worldwide, showing how they are perfectly harmonious with the human race being started by only two individuals, followed by a catastrophic event which severely restricted the gene pool (i.e., the flood of Noah). The blood type distribution data of the present world fits exactly the predictive model based on the book of Genesis being taken literally. Here, obviously, I defer to scientists, but I leave you to your own devices in checking me on this, and I only suggest that if you are open to the idea, scientific research exists to support my claim. See, for example, the article, *ABO Blood and Human Origins*, by Daniel Criswell, Ph.D., published by the Institute for Creation Research. See, icr.org/article/abo-blood-human-origins.

C. There are scientific population studies with complex mathematical formulae calculating the rates of population growth over the centuries. The fact is, today’s world population fits exactly the predicted amount if one assumes eight people stepped off Noah’s ark around 2344 B.C. If you vary any basic assumption - e.g., Noah’s flood was only regional, not worldwide; or Adam and Eve were not literal, but representative of many more people living at that time; or that the human race started
even a modest 10,000 years ago (much less 100,000 years ago or earlier); the numbers don’t work.

Make any of those assumptions supporting a non-literal understanding of Genesis, and the world population skyrockets - even taking into account wars and plagues - so that we would be stepping all over each other with no unpopulated areas of the earth, resulting in many times the current world population. Today’s world population only makes sense if the human race is very young. Again, if you look into this, you will be able to find research by actual non-lawyers in support of what I have said. See, e.g., the article, *Evolution and the Population Problem*, by Henry M. Morris, Ph.D., published by the Institute for Creation Research. See, [http://www.icr.org/article/67/](http://www.icr.org/article/67/).

**D.** The Jewish calendar, which purports to keep track of the years since Adam’s creation is currently at year 5780 (in our year 2020). There are some interesting theories of why the Jewish calendar has a 240 year “gap”, but the point is, no reworking of the Jewish calendar will get you beyond 6,000 years since creation. And who on earth would have a more reliable continuous calendar going back to creation (according to the Genesis account) than the Jews? Oh, you want to rely on the Egyptian calendar? Good luck with that.

**E.** Many of the significant events in biblical history have occurred near 1,000 year or 500 year markers since creation, with a plus or minus of about 50 years. Namely, the births of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus, all of whom were instruments to bring in a new divine covenant. I argue the divine covenants are the key events in all of human history. Coincidence, or planned? It seems that God has tended to do big things in increments of 1,000 years throughout history - including the coming Millennium. Will the Second Coming follow this pattern? Who can say?

In calculating our current position in world history, I wonder whether, from God’s point of view, the historically significant date is the birth of Jesus or the death of Jesus. Since the Church was founded at His death, not His birth, I lean toward viewing His death as the more significant. Thus, if God were to go out 2,000 years from that date, it would take us to - ah, but that is what the next section is all about.

In any event, God is in charge of history. I’m not a numerologist - trust me, I’ve seen and studied many timelines and charts showing how God is supposed to work in certain multiples of years, etc. For the most part, I have not been convinced by any of these. But I know He is in charge, and nothing happens truly by accident, both at the small level and in the big picture. So whether history is only 6,000 years old or not, God has a plan and history is not just a series of random events over endless amounts of time. History has a beginning, an end, and a plan that goes all the way in between.

“I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ ... I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.” Isa. 46:9b-11.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Rev. 22:13.

All of this discussion leads to a final question. OK, let’s assume *arguendo* that the history of the
human race has taken roughly 6,000 years so far. Let’s also assume that any earthly kingdom of Christ, if it were to exist, would be a time of relative rest. But does any of that mean that God has actually planned for the totality of history to be structured this way? Not necessarily, but if that isn’t the grand plan, then what is? Is Jesus really going to wait 100,000 years before returning? Does God need that much time to spread the gospel to all nations? Does Satan need that much time to bring sin to its full fruition? Also see Job 5:19.

Oh wait! I forgot to put my postmill hat on. According to that view, Christians are gradually going to transform culture and dominate the world before Jesus returns. At the current rate of progress, it would probably take them about 100,000 years. No, I’ve changed my mind. There is no Christian cultural progress. The Church will never get there. Do you think the Church will ever really dominate the world before the Second Coming? Where is the evidence? Is Christianity trending on social media?

**He Will Raise Us Up on the 3rd Day**

There are other historical patterns people have suggested for how history may be organized. Thus, for example, some have suggested a model for the Millennial timetable based on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. In other words, He lay in the grave for two days, and arose on the third. Again making an argument based on a figurative day as a literal thousand years, this would put the beginning of the Millennial kingdom 2,000 years out from the crucifixion, or about 2030 A.D. In other words, two thousand years when Jesus was absent from the earth, and then a thousand years when He is brought back to life. [Note: I did not come up with this theory.]

Let me here submit an interesting scripture for your consideration, namely, Hos. 6:1-2. “Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.”

Many people regard this text as a prophecy concerning the resurrection of Christ, but the text suggests otherwise. There is no mention of the Messiah, an anointed one, the Rock, the Branch, the root of Jesse, the Son of David, or any other messianic language. The text is part of a larger context of God voicing a complaint against the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah. All the pronouns are plural - we, and us.

So think about these verses in light of our previous discussion of the time of the Gentiles. Israel was the most favored nation on earth from the Exodus until the crucifixion, when the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom and access to God was thrown open to the Gentiles. This began the time of the Gentiles and threw Israel’s national prominence into suspension - a time when Israel as a nation was put in the grave, so to speak. In other words, in God’s eyes, at the crucifixion the nation of Israel was torn, struck down, and knocked out. That happened in 30 A.D.

If Israel is to be revived, healed and raised up, what does that mean, except the restoration of Israel? And when does that happen? - at the Second Coming. So two days from the crucifixion is, again, 2030 A.D. Which means, working backwards, that the Tribulation could start in 2026 or earlier.

OK - no, I am not making a prediction, and I am not setting dates. All I’m doing is looking for
patterns in history, seeing if there is any possible support in scripture, and making an extrapolation. The pattern I think I’m seeing may not actually be there. Yes of course I could be wrong - and if I am it won’t change any of my analysis of prophecy generally. If you have a better interpretation of After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, I’m willing to hear it.

So when I talk about a 7,000 year plan for man, I really mean a 7,030 year plan for man. In other words, the birth of Christ did not divide time, but rather his entire life span divided time - 4,000 years before, and 3,000 years after. Now of course, the scripture says we cannot know the day or hour when Jesus returns (Mat. 24:36), but what is the lesson of the fig tree (Mt. 24:32-35) if not that we will know the season when these things will take place? And a season is only 91-92 days long.

Plus, all guesses of this nature have an implicit plus or minus factor, which I generally place at up to 50 years. Although, going in the minus direction would seem to be pointless. But I could easily be off by 50 years - or more. When we get closer - when we see the ten nation confederacy forming, when Jerusalem is actually attacked, or when the Jews regain control of the Temple Mount - then and only then, will we know that the season is near. Until then, we will just have to wait.

But before you get fixated on dates, consider the real importance of Hos. 6:1-2. Namely, God was not caught by surprise when Israel rejected Christ in 30 A.D., God did not have to put into effect a contingency plan to delay the coming of His kingdom, and the Church Age is not (I repeat NOT) a “parenthesis” in the timeline of prophecy. It is not true that if Israel had only accepted Jesus during His First Advent, then His earthly kingdom would have come much sooner (i.e., in the first century A.D.). God knew all along, and even disclosed the fact to Israel (if they had taken the time to look for it), that the kingdom would not come so soon after Christ’s resurrection. It’s right there in black and white.

I do not present this argument as doctrine, or as a prophetic revelation. It makes a certain amount of logical sense, but whether it has any connection to historical (or future) reality is something I can only guess at. That it has been almost 2,000 years since the crucifixion I take as a fact. That the Millennial kingdom will be 1,000 literal years I take on faith. Whether the end of one will be the beginning of the other remains to be seen.

Although some people immediately jump to 2 Pet. 3:8 ("one day is as a thousand years") to bolster their position either as to the 7,000 year plan for man or as to the 3,000 year scenario, I do not take that statement as laying down a rule of prophetic interpretation. It just means that God exists transcendent of time, and time doesn't affect Him. To read a prophetic rule into that verse is not required by the text.

However, I cannot deny the possibility that such a rule might be true for reasons other than the existence of the verse. Let me explain, again going back to the law of nature.

We know that murder has been wrong from the beginning of history, as may be discerned from the account of Cain and Abel. Gen. 4. We also know that murder was prohibited in the Ten Commandments, but that those commandments were specifically given to and directed solely towards Israel in its national capacity. Ex. 20. Thus, as a matter of scriptural interpretation, we do not properly say that murder is wrong in Gentile nations today because the Ten Commandments say so. Rather, murder is wrong in Gentile nations because it is part of the law of nature, which we can
prove without resorting to the Decalogue.

That these two should agree is no surprise, because the law of nature (or general revelation) and the laws of nature’s God (or special revelation, including the Decalogue) have the same author, namely God. So the fact that murder is prohibited in the laws of ancient Israel is not what makes that law applicable elsewhere, but it gives us a clue of what to look for in nature that might be proved by other means.

Similarly, the laws of immorality God used to vomit the Canaanites out from the Promised Land in Lev. 18 were not made applicable because those same laws were recited in the Mosaic code. Instead, the strong inference is those laws must also be a part of the laws of nature, and that’s what made them applicable to the Canaanites.

So too, when looking at 2 Pet. 3:8, the question is not whether the verse states a prophetic rule binding on God, but whether an observation of history corroborates or contradicts the possible existence of a pattern whereby God works in human affairs in 1,000 year increments. Present your arguments either for or against, and make your case. Until the pattern be proved or disproved, let others agree to disagree. But it does present an intriguing possibility.

The one thing I would caution in all of this is that even though God certainly knows how to count days and years, the imposing of judgment is always a matter of discretion (i.e., sovereignty) and therefore He is not constrained to act with any sort of mathematical precision. The human tendency - which we must resist - is that once a pattern has been discerned, we try to quantify it with numerical precision so we can calculate things in advance. God doesn’t work that way. Know when the season is at hand and be prepared, but don’t waste your time trying to predict things in advance because the numbers line up a certain way.

THE MILLENNIUM

Rev. 20:1-6 (summary) - Satan is seized, thrown into the bottomless pit, and chained there for a thousand years. Then the pit is shut and sealed over him to prevent him from deceiving the nations until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. Then, seated on thrones “were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.” Also, the souls of those who had been beheaded for the sake of Jesus and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received the mark of the beast came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.

The Millennium is, for all practical purposes, the same as the Golden Age of the O.T. The difference is that O.T. prophets saw this period primarily in terms of the restoration of Israel. Whereas Revelation sees it primarily as the establishment of the earthly kingdom of Christ, in which Christians will rule and reign. These two things are not incompatible, nor are they completely separate, nor are they completely identical. They are symbiotic and complementary.

Which is to say, Jesus will establish His worldwide earthly kingdom with its capital in Jerusalem. He will rule all the nations, but Israel will play a prominent role in that kingdom. Israel’s land, fortune and reputation will have been restored, and people from around the world will come to Jerusalem both the worship the king and also conduct official business. Israel will be the center of
the world not only geographically, but politically. Don’t be surprised if the GMT/UTC is reset to Jerusalem instead of Greenwich, England.

As an example of this symbiotic relationship between the restoration of Israel and the rule and reign of the Church, consider Mat. 19:28-29:

Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.”

Clearly, the bulk of Jesus’ remarks are directed to believers in Him - those who have left family and property “for my name’s sake.” So He is not speaking primarily to ethnic Jews. Yet, the twelve apostles will sit on twelve thrones governing not the Church, not twelve nations, but the twelve tribes of Israel. Yes, of course the apostles were all Israelites. Yet they will not sit on those thrones merely because of their ancestry, but because they were foundational to the inauguration of the Church. Frankly, I would have expected these twelve thrones to be occupied by the twelve sons of Jacob. So Israel and the Church will both be exalted in the Millennium together, symbiotically.

The Millennium, the 1,000 year earthly kingdom of Christ, is only mentioned once in the entire Bible as a fixed period of time, in Rev. 20:1-10. For this reason, some people discount it as something of an aberration - supposedly you can’t get good doctrine from just one text. And normally I would agree. But the phrase thousand years is mentioned six times in those few verses, adding considerable emphasis. Plus, when put together with scriptures regarding the Golden Age and other scriptures regarding the rule of the nations by Jesus with a rod of iron, you get a fairly comprehensive picture of the time we call the Millennium. The point is, you have to put them together.

**Why Christ’s Kingdom Will Be Physical And Political**

There are several reasons why a literal, physical 1,000 year earthly kingdom of Christ preceding eternity is plausibly a part of the overall plan of God, even if we were to ignore the mentioning of it in the first few verses of Rev. 20. I have alluded to a couple of these early on, namely, that there is something more that Jesus needs to do on earth, and there is some unfinished business relating to the divine covenants. Both of these are discussed in detail in the next section. Additionally:

1) **God is as concerned with the physical as He is with the spiritual.**

It really bothers me when people think God is only concerned with spiritual things, and to regard physical things either as necessary but unimportant, or as corrupt and to be avoided. It borders on Gnosticism - the belief that all material things are evil. In eschatology, the view which emphasizes all things spiritual and de-emphasizes all things material is amillennialism. Hence, in the amillennial world, the political kingdom of Christ is not past, present or future, it is non-existent.

There are so many ways in which God has shown himself to be concerned with the physical world, and that it matters, I cannot list them all. But here are a few: God created man from the dust of the ground, a physical being, perfect, without sin, and it was very good. God gave man dominion over
the spiritual (oops! I meant physical) world - stuff like plants and animals, involving physical work. The whole familial system created by God is gritty and earthy - sex, children, food, shelter, clothing. And all of it was very good when created, too.

If you consider the various laws God gave to ancient Israel, only about half of them concerned the temple/tabernacle, priests & Levites, sacrifices, feasts and holy days - you know, ‘spiritual’ things. The rest of the laws concerned clean and unclean food (not from a spiritual perspective, but a physical health perspective), dealing with bodily discharges, waste, various diseases and other health concerns. Not to mention all the commercial and economic laws, land laws, inheritance laws, the judicial system, etc. For a God supposedly only interested in spiritual things, He sure spent a lot of time and effort on physical things and wanted His people to do the same.

And then there’s the whole aspect of redemption. Spiritual redemption you know about. But God also provided for redemption of people from physical bondage (whether slavery or indentured servitude), redemption and release from financial burdens (debts, sureties & pledges), and redemption of the land (whether from transfers or conquests). See, e.g., Lev. 25:25-54; 27:13-33; Num. 18:15-17.

When He sent Jesus to earth, it was done in the most physical of ways - not by dropping in out of the sky, not by miraculously appearing, but being born as a child to real parents, and growing up to adulthood in the real world working as a carpenter. God didn’t have to do it that way. Don’t tell me God isn’t concerned with the physical world - He wanted to do things that way. And just as Jesus came to earth in bodily form (the incarnation), so His kingdom will come to this earth incarnate. When Jesus said His kingdom was “not of this world” (Jn. 18:36), He only meant, “not yet.”

2) Either the Golden Age will be literal or God is a great exaggerator and a liar.

One of the most profound questions you can ever ask someone about prophecy is, “Does God exaggerate?” Amillennialists especially, but also some postmillennialists, would have us believe God didn’t literally mean it when He said Satan will be bound for 1,000 years, the dead in Christ will rise from the dead and rule on earth prior to heaven, the throne of David will be reestablished, or that Israel and Jerusalem will be restored in physical terms in history. They would have us believe all these things are merely allegorical, spiritually symbolic, or a type of things to come in eternity.

Well, if that’s all those things mean, then God is a great exaggerator and a liar. Because the Jews of the first century knew what those things meant: the Messiah would conquer Israel’s enemies in this world and restore Israel in this world. The Jews weren’t actually wrong about that - they just got the timing wrong. Jesus is still going to do those things, and the Jewish Messiah is still going to come. The apostles knew it, too (Acts 1:6).

I don’t know about you, but if all the above prophecies are just allegorical, then I guess all that stuff about Adam and Eve was probably allegorical, too. The flood of Noah probably only covered the Black Sea. Jesus wasn’t really born of a virgin - what does it matter anyway? - his birth was just a spiritual type. We just need to believe, right? Nonsense.
I know God often uses symbolic and allegorical language - much of this discussion is devoted to acknowledging and understanding those symbols. But not everything, not even the majority of things, can be merely symbolic, or the whole framework of understanding God, man and the world in which we live falls apart. Allegorical things are the exception, not the rule, and we have to identify them carefully. Everything else must be literal.

So the way I answer the question is this: God sometimes speaks symbolically, but no, He never exaggerates, and no, God never lies. God is a God of truth. Isa. 45:19; Jn. 1:17; Jn. 14:6. And when God inspired the scriptures, He chose words carefully and knew what He was doing. 1 Tim. 3:16.

**The Nature of Kingdom Government**

**Isa. 2:3b-4** - “For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

**Mic. 4:3-4** - “He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.”

These scriptures tell us what the government of the Millennial kingdom will look like. We already know Jesus will rule as King from the Third (or future) Temple in Jerusalem. We also now know He will issue and promulgate laws, and He will judge between the nations as its supreme court of last resort. In other words, Jesus will be the supreme executive, supreme lawgiver, and supreme judge of the world, uniting all three branches of government in Himself without corruption. “For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king; he will save us.” Isa. 33:22.

In saying that Jesus will rule and judge all the nations, of necessity it means that nations will still exist. There may be a one world government in the Millennium, but it will not eliminate separate nations. Scripture teaches us that nations were not invented by men, they were created by God in the dispersion following the tower of Babel. Gen. 10:32-11:9. Governments are created by men, but nations were created by God. See my extensive treatment of this subject in my essay, *The Right To Alter Or Abolish The Government*.

The one world government of Christ will be in stark contrast to globalization movements today, whereby people attempt to destroy what God has created by eliminating both national sovereignties (governments) and national identities. There is only one way to have a godly globalization: maintain national identities and have Jesus Christ as the one world ruler. All current globalization efforts are doomed to fail because they deny these two requirements.

Under Christ, not only will national identities be preserved, but also to some extent national sovereignties. That is, not the governments in place now, but new national governments which are separate from each other. We can expect Jesus to follow the pattern of Exo. 18:24-26 in establishing
levels of inferior courts so that He is, in fact, only a court of last resort. It is not by accident that the scriptures tell us that Christ will judge the nations.

Similarly, we can expect Him to appoint national and regional governors, etc. to maintain internal governments for each nation. Perhaps the same will also be true of national legislatures. In other words, the U.S. model of federal and state government will likely be applied to the whole world.

As noted earlier, every mortal person who enters the millennial kingdom will be an unbeliever. The righteous will all have been transformed at the Second Coming. Only unbelievers will be left. Many people will come to Christ during the Millennium because of the pervasive and visible presence Jesus and His kingdom will have worldwide. But even then, no one will be forced to accept Christ, and many will not.

For those who are born during the millennium especially, it will be all they have ever known - so they will take the kingdom of Christ for granted and it will simply be the system in power. They will not know what it was like before the Second Coming, just like we cannot know what it was like before the First Advent or before Noah’s flood. Reading about the present age will not make it real. They will not necessarily see the millennial kingdom as something special, but treat it as background noise, like Washington politics.

Yet, they will all be born with a sin nature, as this will not have been bred out of the human race. They will act just like people being born now, except the official government position will support Christianity and the knowledge of Jesus will cover the earth. But each person will still have to choose for himself. Just because the world will be a theocracy does not mean people will be made to profess Christ at the point of the sword - that’s Satan’s *modus operandi*, not Christ’s.

Added to the mix are those unbelievers surviving Armageddon who will remember what it was like before - how they once had freedom to indulge in all kinds of sinful activities, and now they cannot. Some may turn to Christ, but Revelation says repeatedly that in spite of God’s many judgments, the people would not repent. Rev. 9:20; 16:9, 11. So just because Jesus comes to earth to visibly rule does not mean He will be welcomed by the masses. He is just as likely to be greeted with disdain and contempt. They will acknowledge His lordship and sovereignty, but grudgingly.

Many people seem to be under the impression that only Christians, or primarily Christians, will enter the Millennium period. This is often based on a misreading of Mat. 5:20; 7:21 and similar scriptures that an unbeliever cannot enter the kingdom. Oops! I stopped too soon. An unbeliever cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Which is not the same as Christ’s earthly kingdom. The first is spiritual and eternal. The second is physical, and temporary (1,000 years). One is already here, after a sort (the heavenly, or spiritual). The other has not yet arrived. Don’t get these two confused with each other.

Some people argue Mat. 25:31-46 is a basis for claiming that only believers will enter the Millennium. That text provides:

> When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate
people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” ... Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

According to advocates of this view, verse 31 (the first sentence) refers to the Second Coming. Therefore, all the rest of the text refers to the beginning of the Millennial kingdom. So when Jesus separates the sheep from the goats, only the sheep (believers) will inherit the Millennial kingdom, and the unbelievers will not enter in.

There are several factors which mitigate against such an interpretation. First, Jesus will in fact judge all the nations at the Second Coming, but this will be done in the context of Armageddon, where he will not separate the unbelievers, rather He will destroy them. Second, unbelievers are not sent to the lake of fire at the beginning of the Millennium, but at the end. Third, the Millennial kingdom has not been prepared from the foundation of the world, which speaks of eternity, because the Millennium will be merely an earthly kingdom.

Clearly, the context in Mat. 25 is the Great White Throne judgment which occurs at the end of time. It is only then when believers and unbelievers are separated, eternal rewards and punishment are meted out, and the wicked are sent to the lake of fire. The jump in time between verses 31 and 32 is just one more example of when separate events are telescoped together when viewed from a long way off. It’s not as if this is the only time such a thing occurs in biblical prophecy. So v. 32 (separating the sheep and goats) refers to the beginning of eternity, i.e., the new heavens and new earth.

What’s that you say? “Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess, that Jesus is Lord.” Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:11; Php. 2:10. True enough. That’s what people will do outwardly, and that’s what everyone will see in public. But is that what absolutely everyone on earth will believe and accept in their heart? Are these verses actually to be understood as standing for universal salvation? Is that what the Bible says - everyone on earth will be saved once Jesus returns? I’d be a little cautious of making that leap, if I were you.

If absolutely everyone is going to be saved in the Millennium, who are the people who will be waiting for Satan to lead them in a final battle against the God most High? Don’t tell me these are more backsliding or apostate Christians coming to plague the world again! Aren’t these people in fact going to be unbelievers in the time of Christ’s kingdom who will not accept Him, and who are biding their time to get out from under His thumb (the rod of iron)? Is Jesus really going to need to rule a kingdom composed of 100% believers with a rod of iron? So what is the rod of iron?

**Rule with a “Rod of Iron”**

**Ps. 2:1-3** - Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”

**Ps. 2:7-12** - The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I
will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Rev. 2:26-27 - “The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron.”

Rev. 12:5 - She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.

Rev. 19:15 - From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

I used to wonder why the nations would rage against God, but no longer. Today ‘days of rage’ are common throughout the world, and there is no shortage of people who hate Jehovah and Jesus. God’s response? Jesus will rule over them with a rod of iron, in other words, rule them harshly against their will. God will not oppress the people, but He will not let them practice evil, and to their sin natures it will seem like oppression.

And why do the nations rage? Is it because they reject the Gospel and Jesus as Savior? No, it is because they want to get out from under the cords and bonds, i.e., restraints placed on them by God. Which is to say, the nations want to get out from under God’s law, because it is the law which constrains. It is no coincidence that the Antichrist will be called the lawless one. 2 Thes. 2:3-9. The main goal of the forces of evil is to escape the constraints of God’s laws.

Just imagine: during the Millennium, no one will be able to open a casino, start a house of worship for the moon-god, or become a recognized sex worker. All LGBT(QIA) activities (which are simply differing methods of engaging in homosexuality) will be banned. “Community organizing” will finally be recognized for what it is: rabble-rousing and meddling in nobody’s business, and be prohibited, notwithstanding the seal of approval of former Presidents.

No one will be allowed to openly promote or engage in pornography, idolatry, abortion, bribery and corruption, or a host of other profitable vices and sins. They will all be shut down. All the purveyors and teachers of false religions, humanism, atheism, materialism and evolution will go back into the closet for a thousand years. And unbelievers won’t be happy about it. Instead of tolerating and winking at vice, the Millennial kingdom will actually eliminate all public vice.

I don’t mean to suggest that all forms of sin will be eliminated - it won’t. I daresay many of the worst vices will continue to exist out of the public eye and in secret. Human nature and temptation will exist and continue during the Millennium as they do now. The Millennium is a period of relative rest, not perfection or innocence.

But anyone practicing vice will have to do it at great personal peril, and this will be a vast change from our current situation. Those who wish to do evil will be frustrated at every turn, and that frustration will seethe and rage within them so that they bring themselves to the boiling point rather than repent and turn to Christ. They will instead plot in secret to overturn God’s rule of the earth.
Because of the profound ignorance of God’s laws among Christians today, most people have absolutely no idea what it will mean to rule and reign with Christ when the Millennium gets here. The most I get from others is that they think they will live “large and in charge.” But I conceive it will mean that Christians will be involved in the daily affairs of governing the kingdom of Christ. In other words, the saints will be public officials - government workers, if you will.

Some will administrate, but others will be police - enforcers of God’s laws. Some will undoubtedly be judges in the legal sense - trying cases and rendering legal decisions in disputes. Some will prosecute crime. Some may even govern in the traditional sense - be a ruler of a province under the general authority of Christ.

That is, they will engage in tasks the average Christian is totally unprepared for. Any Christian who has been a government employee or public office holder will probably be the least prepared of all. Not only will they be totally ignorant of God’s laws like everyone else, but they will also have to unlearn their entire understanding of how good government works. So most of the saints are likely to be very low level workers in the kingdom, such as filing clerks or sanitation workers. You know, stuff the average Christian is actually qualified for.

It is at least a possible interpretation of prophecy that the saints in the Millennium will return to earth after being ‘translated’ and rule in the kingdom with immortal bodies while the general population will consist of mortal people. The saints will have, ostensibly, bodies after the manner of what Christ had following His resurrection and before the ascension. It is hard to talk of such things with any degree of certainty because it is so foreign to all of our common experiences in the history of the world. Yet, that is what scripture seems to indicate. 1 Jn. 3:2.

If this will be the case, it seems to me to make perfect sense. What better way for Jesus to rule with a rod of iron all over the world, than to have an army of incorruptible agents dispersed over the surface of the planet enforcing His laws and commands? Is He more likely to enforce His laws in person all over the globe, or to employ agents to assist Him? Agents who will not take a bribe or look the other way. Agents whose judgment will be free of bias or prejudice. Agents who cannot be attacked or harmed (physically or mentally) or held for ransom by wrongdoers. Agents who are unattached to any mortal family members and therefore cannot be threatened. Agents who cannot be coerced.

Yes, to the evildoers, it will seem like insufferable oppression. But to the godly, both mortal and immortal, it will be the ultimate fulfillment of Luke 4:18-19: “He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

**A New World Order**

I’d like to emphasize the ways in which the millennial kingdom of Christ will be a time in the history of the world unlike any other. I’m going to do this by extrapolating a few principles that we know for certain and make some logical assumptions about how those will play out in the future. Generally, things created by God will remain mostly constant, but things created by men will change drastically.
What are the things created by God? Physical laws and the heavens and earth as we know them now. Human nature will not change, as man was created by God. The divine covenants will not change, as they all began in the mind of God. Nations and ethnicities will not change, as God is the creator of these as per Gen. 10-11. The other basic institutions of society - individual, family and Church - will not change, as God is the creator of all of them as well. No man or group of men created the family, the husband-wife relationship and the definition of marriage, or the parent-child relationship. Nor did any man create sex or the male and female genders.

However, some creations of God will change. For example, we have already discussed how the earth’s topography will be severely modified in the Millennium. Also, the relationship between humans and animals will change significantly. Apparently, God will also cause some kind of change to the languages spoken by the nations - which languages were first instituted by God.

“When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes.” Isa. 10:12. “You will see no more the insolent people, the people of an obscure speech that you cannot comprehend, stammering in a tongue that you cannot understand.” Isa. 33:19. “For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.” Zeph. 3:9.

I think at the very least the language of the king of Assyria (or, the Assyrian, aka the Antichrist) will be changed. (Which is the more likely candidate: Latin or Arabic?) But it is also possible the change in language of the nations (presumably to Hebrew) will be more widespread, including the whole world. How else would all of the peoples call upon Jesus “with one accord”? But I have to leave it as an open question as to the extent of language changes.

What are the things created by men? Governments are created by men pursuant to the consent of the governed. We have already discussed how Christ will institute a worldwide government with all nations being under His rule. All other social relationships - employment, businesses, academia, religion, and the military, to name but a few, will be reshaped and revised. All the things built by people, whether physical or institutional or structural, will be shaken. Very few, if any, will survive un-transformed.

The leading principle for the Millennium is that Christ will put all things in subjection under His feet. Heb. 2:5-9. Which means, as that scripture says, nothing will be left outside of His control. He will rule the world with a rod of iron, He will have the glorified saints dispersed around the world to implement His policies, and He will literally institute a new world order.

No More Wars

One of the most significant aspects of this new world order will be the fact that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. Isa. 2:4; Mic. 4:3. Further, those same verses indicate the nations shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, indicating that the weapons of war will be converted into agricultural tools, and possibly other benign implements. Let’s take a minute to think through what that really means.

War, obviously, will be abolished, and all disputes will be resolved without the need for military
actions. This will largely be a direct result of the implementation of the worldwide kingdom of Christ, where all the nations will report directly to Him, and be under His leadership and control. Thus, the nations will no longer be making independent decisions based on perceived self-interests (i.e., selfish interests).

All national leaders will submit to, and undoubtedly be appointed and installed in office by, Christ Himself. From what we have already seen so far, these leaders are likely to be resurrected saints, who will be purged of any evil intentions or sin nature, and whose loyalty and obedience to Christ will be absolute. With that kind of world government, there cannot help but be universal peace.

As if it needs to be said, the elimination of war also means there will be an eradication of terrorism and all remnants of holy jihad. Firstly, because the elimination of war does not merely refer to wars sponsored by nations - it encompasses all forms of armed conflict regardless of the motivation. It would be a poor peace indeed if only officially declared conflicts were eliminated, but unofficial conflicts were allowed to persist. When Jesus is called the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), I believe it means we have to take that in the broadest sense possible.

Secondly, if there is one thing we can be sure of, it’s that God will totally wipe out any desire and capacity of the enemies of Israel to carry on any conflicts which have historically existed, including specifically holy jihad. After all, the enemies of Israel - to the extent they survive the Tribulation at all - will join Israel in the worship of Jesus in the Millennium (as we have seen).

However, the Millennium will not merely be a time of no more wars - no one will need to learn the art of war. So, no one will need to train for war or be educated about strategy or tactics or weaponry. All war colleges and military academies will be obsolete and vanish. Gone will be all standing armies, army reserves and the need for military sailors, marines and airmen. There won’t even be a need for the national guard or militia groups - what possible contingencies would they ever be needed for? Domestic insurrection? With the nations ruled by the saints, it won’t happen. Natural disasters? With Christ reforming the surface of the earth and restoring the relationship between humans and animals (if you will, between men and nature) - natural disasters (hurricanes, floods, tornados, earthquakes, etc.) will no longer occur.

Weapons manufacturers will have been put out of business by the great earthquake, and nothing afterward will put them back in business. The market for weapons will literally dry up. Not only will no one need weapons to kill people, it is very likely (as we have seen) that no one will need to hunt, either. The right to bear arms and the National Rifle Ass’n will all be long distant memories never to be revived.

If I can extrapolate a bit, it is also likely there will not be a need for any police forces, either. Judgment will be implemented and laws enforced by the saints, who will not need weapons to do their jobs. No one will need to keep the peace, because peace will be universal. All law enforcement agencies and bureaus, the FBI, etc., will be unnecessary. Yes, the laws of the King of Kings will be enforced, but by saints who will not need to be armed, and who do not need to be employed at taxpayer expense. No one (among mortals) will make a career of law enforcement.

But I necessarily take it further, as some things are wholly incompatible with the rule and reign of Christ, such as government assassins, spy agencies, government surveillance, clandestine activities
of all sorts, double agents and moles, etc. All these will disappear.

I also strongly believe, though I cannot prove, that essentially every single job existing today - the primary function of which is to monitor, supervise, or regulate the activities of others - will be unknown in the Millennium. Why? Because not merely war, but conflicts, disputes, disobedience, rebellion and protests of every conceivable kind, right down to the local level, will probably be dealt with at the local level by the saints so efficiently no one will hardly notice such things occurring - and for the most part, will not occur at all.

I might be wrong, but I suspect this also has implications for national border security and immigration concerns. No one will be trying to penetrate national borders for subversive purposes or to infiltrate an enemy. Immigration *may* - I'm hazarding a guess here - become essentially unregulated because all nations will be under the worldwide government of Christ, and ruled by governors appointed by Him. So what national interests, exactly, need protection from the intrusion of foreigners? There won’t be any nanny states or welfare states in the Millennium for immigrants to take advantage of. And there won’t be any *foreign influences* (rogue ideologies, bad state actors, contrary religions, or significant criminal elements) to guard against. So why would anyone need to be kept out of any country?

*Agriculture*

It’s easy to assume that because there will be unparalleled peace and prosperity in the world, that will fuel technological improvements in agricultural production. However, I don’t see it that way. Historically, God has used environmental factors (floods, pestilence, fires, etc.) to stifle agricultural production in response to man’s sin. Thus, famine, drought and waste are very often an indication of God’s judgment of a nation. For example.

> But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. ... The Lord will make the pestilence stick to you until he has consumed you off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. The Lord will strike you with wasting disease and with fever, inflammation and fiery heat, and with drought and with blight and with mildew. They shall pursue you until you perish. And the heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you shall be iron. The Lord will make the rain of your land powder. From heaven dust shall come down on you until you are destroyed. Deut. 28:15, 21-24.

Man’s response historically has been to ignore or deny the sins of which he stands accused, and especially in recent times, to find a scientific way to beat back the effects of God’s judgment while leaving the sin problem unaddressed. Thus, in the wake of pestilence, man developed insecticides and other artificial and/or hazardous chemical means for protecting his crops. Then, people tried to genetically strengthen various crops through selective breeding or hybridization.

This was followed by genetic alterations by introducing foreign DNA strands into plant DNA to make it inherently resistant to certain insects or fungus, etc. in order to avoid the side effects of chemical deterrents. Now there are entire industries producing what are commonly known as GMO’s, or genetically modified organisms which have literally taken over certain basic food crops.
I predict advances in agriculture during the Millennium will not follow this course. Rather, once God’s wrath has been unleashed and concluded, all pestilences, droughts and famines will be removed worldwide. There simply won’t be any need for pesticides or other harmful chemicals, nor any need for GMO’s. God will restore viability and fruitfulness to the non-hybrid (heirloom) strains of seeds and the earth will see a radical improvement in agricultural production as a result. A side consequence will be the abandonment of vast chemical production companies and government monitored seed banks.

I say this because there is a fundamental principle at work here, namely, that the ground, the soil, the creation itself reflects the sin condition of its inhabitants. Laugh if you will, but consider these scriptures:

“The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” Gen. 4:10-12.

“But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.” Lev. 18:26-28.

“For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” Rom. 8:22.

There are many other scriptures which are just as easy to find to the effect that the ground will also recognize and respond to the righteousness of its inhabitants. Ps. 98:8; Isa. 55:12; Lk. 19:40. So the first and foremost way to boost agricultural production is to stop sinning. And in the Millennium, even though the ground will still be cursed and mankind will still have a fallen nature, the degree to which the earth will be defiled by sin will be greatly lessened. As a result of which, the entire planet will be extremely fruitful - without the assistance of chemicals or genetic modifications.

**Medicine and Science**

We’ve all seen the future of medicine on TV in the shining example of *Star Trek*, haven’t we? A little device that you hold in your hand about the size of a small flashlight - you just wave it over a sick person, and the device repairs blood vessels in the brain non-invasively, avoiding surgery and trauma. And they have pills that grow new kidneys overnight. Wow! What a future to look forward to. Actually, I don’t think things are going to go in that direction at all.

I have already mentioned a while back the healing (or living) waters that will flow from underneath the Third Temple in Jerusalem and the special fruit trees that will grow along the banks of the rivers created by this flow of living water. See Zech 14:8 and Ezek. 47:1-12. Of these trees, the scripture says, “Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.” Ezek. 47:12.

Let me tell you what I think this means. This special water and these special leaves - which do not
yet exist in the natural world, but they will - will heal the people of the nations of all their illnesses and diseases. They will heal people with toxins, pathogens, genetic disorders, and perhaps even certain traumas. They will literally be a cure all. So there simply will be no need for great advances in medical science - healing will come not from technology, not from human advances, but by God’s provision. Hospitals and most medical practices will be a thing of the past.

And people, being inherently entrepreneurial, will make the most of it. No one is going to patent anything or get any exclusive economic or legal rights, but people are going to bottle that water and ship it worldwide so everyone doesn’t actually have to travel to Jerusalem to take advantage of it. Those leaves are going to be harvested, dried, chopped up and made into teas, bread and any number of other confections and distributed around the world as well. Everyone will have bottles of the stuff in their pantries. And that is the future of medicine.

Not only will drug manufacturing become obsolete as a result, but so will all forms of genetic manipulation and the abominable practice of using animal parts or animal DNA to treat humans. There are three reasons I say this: 1) God is sovereign in the choice of what each creature inherits biologically, and He doesn’t like it when men play at being God; 2) in the Dominion Mandate (Gen. 1:28) God never gave men dominion over other men, which means (I believe) people lack authority to manipulate the human genome; and 3) God created every plant and animal after its kind (Gen. 1:11-12, 21, 24-25) and He never intended that men should genetically mix together creatures which God made to be separate and distinct.

That’s a mouthful, I know. I could unpack each of those three points in great detail, but I won’t do it here. This is just where I think things are going in the Millennium - and we aren’t there yet. And - do I have to say it? - say goodbye to in vitro fertilizations, surrogate motherhood and abortions. You can figure those out on your own, right?

In other ways, however, technology in general may explode. I would expect to see vast production of clean energy, vast computing power, and beautiful gleaming cities. No, I don’t expect we’ll see a jet pack or a flying car in every garage, but self-driving cars with unparalleled safety? I think it very likely. Perhaps even a cheap and efficient way to desalinate salt water, among other marvels.

But no colonization of space or traveling to distant worlds - these are not within the scope of the Dominion Mandate. There will be absolutely no need for any ongoing SETI activities (the search for extraterrestrial intelligence). No messages sent to other worlds. No first contact with alien races. Guess what? We aren’t alone in the universe! In fact, we never were. God has been with us all along - most people just couldn’t or wouldn’t see it. Come, Emmanuel!

I could be wrong, but I also don’t think the Millennium will see the development of matter transporters, time machines, traveling at the speed of light or faster, powerful and destructive ray guns in the form of a hand-held device, or cloaking technology (i.e., invisibility), etc. God alone is the master of all time and space (and the space-time continuum), and there are limits to what people can do. We will never ascend to become gods.
THE SEVENTH (AND EIGHTH) DIVINE COVENANTS

The Unfinished Work Of Christ

The Christian community is accustomed to saying things like *the work of Christ is finished*. When Jesus was dying on the cross, He said, “It is finished,” right? Yes, the spiritual ministry of Christ was completed in the First Advent.

The covenant in Christ is perfect and needs no tweaking. However, it only pertains to personal salvation, *i.e.*, it only applies to individuals in their individual capacities. To some, perhaps, this is all that Jesus will ever need to do and His remaining work on earth is limited to tying up the loose ends of the First Advent.

I stated early on that if the whole purpose of the Second Coming of Christ is merely to: 1) collect the saints and take them up to heaven; 2) defeat the forces of Satan; and 3) usher in eternity (the heavenly kingdom); then all of those can be done without Jesus returning to the earth, that is, actually touching ground. Jesus can meet the saints in the air, defeat Satan and his forces by the mere appearance of His coming, destroy the heavens and the earth, and send everyone to the Great White Throne without ever doing anything *on earth*.

In which case, the Second Coming being accompanied with clouds, signs in the sky, riders on white horses and the saints or the host of heaven is merely grand theater - a spectacle for the ages that no one will be around to remember. As soon as it happens, everyone will be whisked away into eternity where all such things will be forgotten, but gosh, Jesus sure ended everything with a big show!

On the other hand, if Jesus is going to actually touch ground, stand on the Mt. of Olives and split it in two from north to south, *there must be something more*. There is - there must be - an unfinished work of Christ on this earth. That something must be - can only be - the establishment of an earthly kingdom separate from and prior to the eternal heavenly kingdom, *i.e.*, the Millennial kingdom.

When we took a look at the Millennium, we saw that everyone initially entering the kingdom will be an unbeliever, though converts will quickly come. Nonetheless, there will never be a time short of eternity when everyone on earth turns their hearts to Christ, nor will the sin nature of believers be abated. So even in the Millennium, people will sin, break the law, and need governing. Not just moral governing, but civil government. Thus, the saints will be there to rule and reign with Christ as government workers to operate the machinery of that government.

The Jews, for their part, will finally welcome Jesus as their Messiah, and He will reclaim the throne of His ancestor king David, which has laid dormant for all these years since the *diaspora*. After the Second Coming, Jesus and the Jews will regain control over Jerusalem, rebuild the temple, and Jesus will occupy the temple as God and rule the nations from His throne in the new temple.

There’s just one tiny, little problem with all of that. The throne of David only entitles Jesus (the “Son of David”) to rule over the nation of Israel. It does not give Him the right to rule over any of the other nations. Go ahead - search your Bible. By what covenant is Christ entitled to rule the whole world? There is none. Yet, *there needs to be one*. 
The covenant in Christ may be perfect as it relates to Jesus as Redeemer, but it does not apply to Jesus as the King of Kings, nor does it pertain to nations or governments. He will be the conqueror of the whole world, but He will only have the authority to rule a very tiny piece of it. What - you don’t think things like that matter to God?

As if Jesus is going to simply land on the Mt. of Olives and say, “Hello, I’m the big guy. Everybody bow down and worship me,” and start ruling with a rod of iron. When has God ever operated on the principle of the rights of conquest, or “you keep what you kill”?

God has *always* been the big guy, yet He has *never* operated in this fashion. Merely having a superior power and conquering one’s enemies is not a sufficient basis for establishing rule, not even for God. It is God’s nature to inaugurate a new aspect of His relationship with mankind with a covenant specific to that new aspect. In this case, it means a new covenant with the nations.

**Perfection of the Mosaic Theocratic Law**

I conceive of this new covenant as a form of further perfection of the Mosaic and Davidic covenants. The Mosaic covenant was a national covenant. By that I mean it was inaugurated with the Jews in a corporate capacity - with Israel as a nation. It was not, in essence, a covenant with individual Jews, because participation in the covenant was determined by birth in the line of Jacob, not on the basis of faith.

The Davidic covenant, similarly, pertained solely to the succession of the throne of Israel. This was not a promise to individual Jews, so much as a promise to the nation in its corporate capacity, that the throne would never lack an heir, and the eventual heir would be the Messiah.

Thus was all in sharp contrast to the ministry of Christ in establishing the Church covenant. Rather than being directed to any number of nations, or people in a corporate capacity, the Church covenant was directed solely to individuals. Instead of participation being based on biology, it was based on faith. Thus, the Church covenant was an improvement over, and in some sense a perfection of, the Mosaic covenant. That is, the means of redemption was superior, and its availability was extended to all people, instead of just one nation among many.

But the Church covenant never did anything - not one whit - to address the needs of any of the Gentile nations *as nations*. It did not address the basic human need for godly civil government, except to leave it in the hands of the people - which is exactly where it has been ever since the Tower of Babel. The Church covenant never did - and never will - function as a *civil constitution*, which of course the Mosaic covenant actually did.

Now we know that when Jesus returns, He will revive and resume the theocratic laws of ancient Israel. Chief among the theocratic laws is the Davidic covenant, which provides for the orderly transfer, and rightful possession, of the throne of David. 2Sa. 7. Like the rest of the theocratic laws of the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant has been laying dormant since the deportation to Babylon in 606 B.C. No rightful king of Israel (*i.e.*, a male descendant of David) has assumed the throne since. It is waiting to be reactivated by the coming of the Son of David. Therefore, when Jesus returns He will claim the throne of David, reinstitute the theocracy in Israel, and rule as king over that nation.
But if that’s all Jesus does governmentally, it will be a colossal failure. Although re-establishing the throne of David will be terribly important to Israel, merely reclaiming the old system in place at the time of David won’t be enough to establish a *worldwide* government. The old system will need to be extended and perfected to make it apply to all nations. And that will be accomplished by taking what was originally administered by men (the descendants of David) solely for the Jews, and replacing it with a new covenant administered by Christ for the people of all nations based on a “higher” kingship. Just as Christ needed a priesthood higher than Levi’s to redeem the world, He will need a kingship higher than David’s to rule the world.

Sadly, the religious community is not very well attuned to this reality. When examining the divine covenants to date, theologians tend to view all the covenants as having the common thread of redemption, and so they emphasize the elements of grace, mercy, and the remission of sins as provided for in the covenants. This limited understanding misses much of what God is doing by way of His covenants. There is another thread running through the covenants, a thread of law and government.

This thread is every bit as prominent as the redemptive thread. For example, after the Fall, the covering of Adam and Eve’s nakedness and the prediction about the seed of the woman all occur *after* the giving of the Adamic covenant and its Dominion Mandate. Yes, Gen. 3:14-19 are important, but they were not - are not - part of the *terms* of the Adamic covenant. They are merely part of the *circumstances* occurring near the same time as the covenant. The Fall came *after* the Adamic covenant - it is not part of it. Let me just come right out and say it - redemption was not actually part of the *terms* of either the Adamic or Noahic covenants at all.

What the Adamic and Noahic covenants really did was establish a basic framework for living on this earth in obedience to God’s laws. They covered such non-spiritual things as subduing the earth, having children, work and labor, eating meat, and capital punishment. Those early covenants were sufficient to establish man as a self-governing person, with only individual self-government and family government instituted to carry these purposes out.

Neither civil government nor the Church were essential to God’s purposes for creating man and putting him on the earth. If they had been, wouldn’t God have instituted them from the beginning?

Civil government didn’t come along until after Babel (about 1760 years after creation), and people were on this earth over 4,000 years before the Church came along. Hey, I’m glad the Church came along, but don’t tell me people didn’t have a purpose, or couldn’t do anything right, until the Church arrived. Did God really put people on this earth and forget to give them everything they needed to do well until God suddenly remembered what He forgot 4,000 years later?

Yes, the Church covenant enhanced people’s ability to carry out the prior covenants, but it did not supersede them, or suddenly give them new meaning they didn’t have before (as in, “fulfilling” or completing those prior covenants). Admit it - the Church covenant did nothing to address the *civil* or *national* needs of humanity.

I said it earlier - a person's view of the end times is entirely pre-determined by their view of the divine covenants, and now you know what I mean. If you think the new covenant in Christ (the Church covenant) is the last divine covenant there will ever be, then you will miss completely what
God wants to accomplish in the earthly kingdom of Christ.

When we get to the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants, we see God utilizing one nation as an example of how His law was to be implemented for the good of mankind both temporally (horizontal relationships between man and man) and spiritually (vertical relationship between man and God). But each of these three covenants had significant non-spiritual elements in them. The Abrahamic related to real estate (the Promised Land) and the formation of several new nations, including Israel, while the Davidic related to kingdom succession. As I mentioned earlier, much of the Mosaic covenant was devoted to non-spiritual things, including diet, sanitation, contracts, property, torts and crimes.

Only the covenant in Christ, of all the divine covenants, did not apply in any of its terms to non-spiritual matters. Accordingly, the Mosaic and Davidic covenants practically scream for extension and perfection. Which is to say, perfection by the introduction of an incorruptible ruler, and extension by including all the nations of the world. In other words, yes, the earthly kingdom of Christ will need to be inaugurated by a new divine covenant establishing a worldwide theocracy in the legal sense.

A Worldwide Theocracy

People today use the word theocracy to mean all kind of things, most of them pejorative, and most of which have nothing to do with an actual theocracy. Thus, merely trying to remain faithful to the laws of nature and nature’s God is branded theocratic, and therefore bad, because the First Amendment says we can’t have any theocracies here. People scream, “Separation of church and state!” completely ignorant of the fact that the laws of nature and nature’s God do not authorize the creation of a theocracy or make America theocratic. Then they turn a blind eye towards Shariah law, which actually does attempt to create a theocracy. Talk about a mixed up world.

The fact is, there has only ever been one theocracy in the history of the world, and all of our attempts to create a theocracy this side of the Second Coming are utterly doomed to fail. That’s because a theocracy, in the legal sense, is a nation where: 1) God personally rules national affairs as the supreme civil head of state; and 2) God is an actual party to the nation's civil covenant, or constitution. The only nation in the history of the world where such a thing has been done is ancient Israel.

[For all you doubters, let’s check the proofs. 1) God was the supreme civil head of state (i.e., king) of ancient Israel: “And the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.’” 1 Sam 8:7. “For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king; he will save us.” Isa 33:22.

2) God was a party to the civil constitution of ancient Israel: “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Exo 19:5-6a. “These are the words of the covenant that the Lord commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb.” Deut 29:1.]
But when Jesus comes, that is exactly what He will do - establish a theocracy. Meaning: 1) He will personally rule the world as the supreme civil head of state (i.e., as King of kings and Lord of Lords - Rev. 19:16); and 2) Jesus will be an actual party to the worldwide civil covenant. Which necessitates that there be a new civil covenant with Jesus as king. And if Jesus is a party to the covenant, then God is an actual party to the agreement.

Ah, but now I find that I have skipped ahead of myself. For in fact all of the above discussion relates to the Eighth Divine Covenant. What happened to the Seventh Divine Covenant, also still future? Go back, if you will, and review my discussion of the Spiritual Rebirth of Israel. There it is, right there - the Seventh Divine Covenant - Jer. 31:31-34. The one where God puts His laws into the hearts of the Jews in the Millennium. Not the nations. “I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.” Jer. 31:31. Which means that the new covenant with Israel cannot be the vehicle by which God exercises His rule over the nations.

Which means that of this writing, there are likely to be two new divine covenants coming on the scene post-Second Advent: 1) one covenant limited to the nation of Israel with regard to its salvation, security and prosperity; and 2) another covenant with all the other nations with regard to their civil government and Jesus Christ as their king.

Are these likely to be wrapped up into a single covenant, rather than two? I think it highly unlikely. The fact one of them is specifically foretold and expressly directed to Israel leads me to believe they will be separate. Plus, God has always dealt with Israel separately from all the other nations. So I think it unlikely He will commingle them together at this point - especially since Israel will remain first among the nations and not merely bunched in with the rest. Thus, my belief is there will eventually be a total of eight divine covenants, not just seven.

This is consistent with the usage of the number eight in scripture as the number of new beginnings. If there is one thing the earthly kingdom of Christ will be, it is a new beginning. Especially since - as we have already seen - the beast kingdom will culminate in an eighth iteration, marking the latest, greatest and final instance of the kingdom of Satan. So the Millennial kingdom will be the latest, greatest and final instance of the kingdom of Christ prior to eternity.

We can expect that the millennial civil government thus established will most likely enforce religious laws, such as idolatry and blasphemy, although even then redemption will not be coerced. People will still be free to reject Christ, and this will not be unlawful. We know that all of Israel will be saved, but this will not be true of the rest of the nations.

It is in this context that we can best understand the prophecy of Zech. 14:16-19:

Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths.
Students of scripture will be familiar with the fact that several of the O.T. feasts (such as Passover) were symbolically fulfilled in the First Advent and we have no expectation of seeing those feasts revived in the Millennium. Not so the Feast of Booths, and here Zech.14 specifically foretells that feast will be a regular part of life for the nations which were defeated at Armageddon under the rule of Christ. And consistent with what I have said earlier, this threat of withholding rain is no mere idle contingency plan. We can be confident Egypt and other nations will do exactly as Zech. 14 predicts, \emph{i.e.,} fail to observe the Feast of Booths.

This is exactly the kind of law that can only be enforced in a theocracy - a religious feast observance specifically directed to nations other than Israel. And notice, it is not merely a form of moral persuasion or enforcement that we are accustomed to seeing today. Rather, it is a law enforced with a measure of temporal punishment and coercion as befits a kingdom ruled with a rod of iron. It is the use of the office of civil government (\emph{i.e.,} the King, not the Savior or the Redeemer) to enforce a religious observance. Clearly, the kingdom of Christ will be unlike any prior civil government among the Gentile nations.

But how will Jesus acquire the authority to enforce such a law? It was not granted to Him in the First Advent. It was not granted to Him in the Davidic covenant. It will not be conferred on Him when Jer. 31:31-34 is fulfilled. Is God going to simply grant that authority to Jesus in the absence of a covenant?

We know that eventually all things will be put in subjection under the feet of Jesus. This was first foretold in Ps 8:4-6 and Ps 110:1. Heb. 2:5-8, quoting Ps. 8, makes clear that nothing will be left outside of Jesus’ control. However, that same text also notes, “At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.” Also, 1 Cor. 15:24-27 indicates that not everything will truly be put under subjection to Jesus until the end comes and death is destroyed - meaning that the ultimate fulfillment of Ps 8 will not come until the Millennial kingdom is ended and sin itself is ended.

So the question is what God will do in the meantime. Again, I must look to the pattern of what has happened in history so far, that is, the divine covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, David and the Church. God has always ruled man via covenant - never on the basis of merely having superior power or the right of conquest. And in the only instance of a theocracy so far - the covenant with Israel - God had every right to rule the nation as its Creator, yet He chose not to. Will He act differently with the rest of mankind? Why would He?

To me the biblical pattern is abundantly clear: it is absolutely necessary that before any earthly kingdom exercise the authority to enforce spiritual laws, of whatever nature, a covenant exist by which such authority is conferred. There simply \emph{must} be a new civil covenant. Even when the ruler is God Himself.

It is easy to understand what God has done in the past - but what He is doing now, and where He is going with it, is harder to discern. Yet, He has disclosed this intention, because fundamentally, Jesus’ Second Advent will not be the same in character as the First Advent. The First Advent was limited to a spiritual kingdom which was redemptive in nature. The Second Advent will be a temporal kingdom which is civil in nature. What is the Church doing today to prepare its people for responsible citizenship during the Second Advent? Precious little. Perhaps we can change that.
ONE WORLD RELIGION

The Millennial Church

We’ve talked about what the kingdom of Christ will look like governmentally during the Millennium. But what about the Church? What will it look like?

Mainly, it will actually look like a worldwide body of Christ. That is, one body, with one head. Believers, though many, will be one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Rom. 12:5. No longer will there be any divisions within the Church, but believers worldwide will be united in the same mind and the same judgment. Cf. 1Cor. 1:10. It’s hard to imagine. But that’s what you will get when the one true head of the Church (Col. 1:18) will lead it visibly.

I suspect all Christian denominations and sects with which we are now familiar will disappear. Christ is not divided (1Cor. 1:13), so neither will His Church be after He arrives. All too familiar divisions over baptisms and sacraments will vaporize. So too will all doctrinal disputes in other areas. Jesus will be here in person to answer all religious questions and put an end to all disputes. There will be no contrary viewpoints on any matter to which He will speak. His word will be the one true rule of faith and practice for everyone. Isa. 2:3. No one else’s opinion will matter.

Undoubtedly all separate Christian movements led or started by so-called prophets coming after Christ will be gone. Prophets and prophecy will not necessarily be sealed up and finished, but prophets will merely take their place alongside other Church officers as contributing members of the body, and not be its leaders or founders. Gone will be all false prophets and self-appointed prophets. Those who are called by Christ as prophets will not involve themselves with anything so scandalous as a separated denomination or sect. Those things will not exist.

When the Millennium starts, the Church will literally start over from scratch. All that came before will be discarded and thrown away by God as useless. Just imagine, if you will, all the people who are religious and church-going but who never truly believed at the point when Jesus returns. They may (or may not) survive the Tribulation, but do you really think God is going to move forward in the kingdom of Christ, (re)building the Church with people who were only pretenders? They will be of no use to Jesus.

Instead, Jesus will form a new core constituency consisting of the nation of Israel, who will follow the example of the 144,000 and convert to Christ so that Judaism and Christianity will unify and merge with the result that “all Israel will be saved.” Rom. 11:26. [Note: I did not just say that the nation of Israel and the Church would unify and merge. Once the Jews accept Jesus as their Messiah, the religions of Judaism and Christianity will merge - Jesus is not going to rule the world and preside over two religions from the rebuilt Temple. But national Israel (genealogically and politically) will always be separate from the Church.]

From there, the Gospel will spread around the globe and many of the remaining peoples will also turn to Christ. The Church, as an institution, will be recreated from these new exclusively Gentile converts, guided and judged by the translated saints. No one will be grafted into the Church based on prior religious experience. And all remnants of the religions which previously covered the earth will be discarded in toto.
Also totally absent will be all forms of human priesthoods, except for the Levites who will minister exclusively to the Jews, of course. “For thus says the Lord: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifices forever.” Jer. 33:17-18. And in the Millennium, “the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me, shall come near to me to minister to me. And they shall stand before me to offer me the fat and the blood, declares the Lord God.” Eze. 44:15.

For Christ abolished all human priesthoods in the Church as a result of the First Advent, and He alone will act as high priest on behalf of all believers as a priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Heb. 5:10; 6:20; 7:17. The universal priesthood of all believers is of course a present spiritual reality, but in the Millennium it will be a political (i.e., an institutional) reality.

No one in a leadership role in the Millennial Church will dare to call themselves a priest. Or for that matter, reverend (for all believers are equally holy to God). Or father. Mat. 23:9. The word minister will return to being a verb, not a noun or a title. I suspect (but don’t know for sure) there will still be bishops and overseers, but they will likely be known simply as elders and they won’t be able to turn their humble office into a career. There simply won’t be any more profiteering in the Church. It’s way long overdue.

In Shakespear’s Henry The Sixth, one of the characters (a rebellious person) declared, “The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers.” But in the Millennium, it is the priests who will all be eliminated, since all human priests in the Church are false priests (there is no true priest except Christ). True, some present day priests may be genuine believers and be translated along with the rest of the Body of Christ at Jesus’ return, yet I suspect many will not make the cut. The point is, those priests who remain un-translated will no longer be needed and those who are translated will not be replaced or returned to their old jobs.

And while a great many lawyers will also undoubtedly not be included in the First Resurrection, at least in the kingdom of Christ there will still be a need for lawyers and judges to help govern the people - lawyers who will be honest and judges who will be righteous. “Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.” Rev. 20:4. But a professional priest who is either honest or righteous is an oxymoron, as any honest man of God would acknowledge there is no true priest in the Church but Christ, and any righteous man of God would decline the dishonor of being named a priest of God among men.

Oh, there might still be pastors in the Millennium (maybe), but there definitely will no longer be any clergy. By this I mean that the original intent of Eph. 4:11 will finally be put into effect. That scripture tells us there are certain offices in the Church appointed by God: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers. I have no reason to believe any of these offices (as originally intended) will change in the Millennium - each of them will still play a vital role in the life of the Church. But “pastors and teachers” probably refers to only one office, not two.

Although perhaps 1 Cor. 12:28 is a more realistic list (it does not mention pastors). I do not want to get bogged down in this issue here, because I have written about it very extensively in an essay called Five Biblical Principles of Church Government. But the upshot is this: the word pastor is only ever mentioned in the N.T. exactly once. So its viability as a spiritual office separate and
distinct from teacher is highly suspect. Look up my other essay if you want to know more.

The Bible absolutely nowhere indicates there is any hierarchy among these offices (whatever they are), that any of them are full-time while others are part-time, that any are compensated while others are uncompensated, or that any have authority or leadership over the others. So, there might or might not be pastors, but pastors will not be in charge in any event. They will have no elevated status, no higher calling, no superior authority, no exclusive sacerdotal functions, and no greater ministry than apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers. Which is to say, there will be no clergy.

Neither will there be any laity. The clergy-laity distinction will evaporate. The Church will still be an institution of charity and giving, but no one will collect tithes, which absolutely never were made a part of the functioning of the Church. “But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.” 1 Cor. 12:24-25.

The whole concept of a tithe presumes a division in the body: those who pay it (laity) vs. those who receive it (clergy) - a shameless carryover from Judaism and its division between Levites and non-Levites. The absence of a clergy-laity distinction negates the tithe - not that it ever belonged in the Church to begin with.

Each of the offices will return to its original function for the benefit of all. Apostles will be needed to plant churches (which is all the authority the original apostles ever had). Prophets will be needed to proclaim the word of God (but not necessarily to predict the future). Evangelists will be needed to spread the Gospel (it never has been and never will be the job of every Christian to evangelize). Pastors may be needed to mentor believers (but not to lead or shepherd people like sheep). Teachers will be needed to instruct the faithful (but not have any inherent ruling authority). And none will jockey for positions of authority and power. They will just fulfill their callings.

This will be possible only because everything that exists now (Church-wise) will be removed. For one thing, only unbelievers will enter the Millennium. So as an institution among men, the Church will start over and be done right, since Jesus will be there personally to supervise its rebirth.

You know - the way the Church was intended to be from the beginning, but people screwed it up. They could have, would have, should have read the scriptures to see what is plainly written there about the Church, but instead they promoted and preserved their own selfish interests. At long last, all these false religious trappings will be thrown off once Jesus returns.

**A Kingdom Of Priests**

You may be asking yourself, what about Rev. 20:6? “Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.” Aha! Does’t that prove there will be priests in the Millennial Church? Yes and no.

Look at the verse (Rev. 20:6). **A** These are resurrected (and translated) saints we’re talking about, not mortal human beings who survive the Tribulation. **B** These priests will rule and reign in the Millennial kingdom, *i.e.*, they will be kingdom priests. Government workers. Not exactly your
typical sort of priests. So if you’re inclined to draw any parallels between these priests and the clergy of today - well, don’t bother. But, let’s see what else the scriptures have to say about the matter:

**Ex. 19:5-6** - “if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

**Isa. 61:5-6** - “Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks; foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers; but you shall be called the priests of the Lord; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory you shall boast.”

**Isa. 62:1-2, 12** - “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. ... And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.”

**Zech. 8:20-23** - “Thus says the Lord of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, ‘Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord and to seek the Lord of hosts; I myself am going.’ Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”

**1 Pet. 2:9-10** - “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Let’s look at the biblical concept of kingdom priests. It all started with the giving of the law to Israel in the time of Moses. “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Ex 19:6. Observations: **A** this statement was directed exclusively to Israel in its national capacity; and **B** this statement was *not* referring to the Levitical priesthood.

Unquestionably, Ex. 19:6 is the verse where God sets Israel apart from all other nations as His most favored nation. But Israel did not at that time become either a *kingdom of priests* or a *holy nation*. Rather, those descriptions look forward to the day when all Israel will be saved. Only then, *i.e.*, once the Millennium begins, will the nation truly be holy and every member thereof stand as a priest before God. Only when Jer. 31:33 is fulfilled, or as God says, “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts,” will Israel be a *kingdom of priests*.

In other words, the Levitical priesthood did *not* make Israel a kingdom of priests. Under that system, only a very small number of persons were priests - the rest of the nation, even the rest of the Levites, were not. The concept behind a kingdom of priests is that *every single member of the kingdom will be a priest*, not just some. The fact that Israel as a nation is not at the present time a kingdom of priests is confirmed by Hos. 4:6. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;
because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me.”

Thus, in the N.T., we see this concept begin to be realized (or foreshadowed) in the priesthood of all believers. The whole idea of which is that people no longer need to go through a human intermediary (a priest) to get to God. Through Jesus and because of His high priesthood (in other words, He is the head priest), each believer has direct access to God. Human priesthoods are obsolete. I have covered this in extensive detail in Five Biblical Principles of Church Government.

“You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood.” 1 Pe 2:5. “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father.” Rev 1:5-6. “You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God.” Rev 5:9-10.

The priesthood of all believers was specifically foretold in Isa 66:18, 21. “The time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. ... And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites,” says the Lord. But no one who is a member of the universal priesthood of believers would refer to himself as a priest, as a title, because it doesn’t distinguish any believer(s) from all other believers. It would be like a Christian today calling himself The Saved One, when there is absolutely nothing distinctive about one person’s salvation compared to others. Nonetheless, it is technically true that every believer is a priest.

So the question is, when the saints rule and reign with Christ in the Millennium, what kind of priests will they be? Will they be chosen on the basis of ancestry? Is it a position anyone can sign up for? Will these priests be seminary graduates? Will they collect tithes? Will they be a separate class of believers within the Church? Bottom line: Will the Millennial priests be priests after the fashion of the Levitical system (which today’s clergy are modeled after), or will they be priests after the fashion of the universal priesthood of all believers?

Unless God completely changes the nature of the Church in the Millennium (something I can’t even imagine that He would do), I have to believe the priesthood of believers will be the model for the priesthood. Thus, there will be priests, but no clergy in the Millennial Church.

Nevertheless, the nation of Israel will occupy a unique position within the Millennial kingdom, essentially as go-betweens for the Gentile nations and the King of kings. See Isa. 61:5-6, above. Isa 62 (above) indicates how Israel will be a light to the Gentile nations, serving essentially an evangelistic function. This is in fact a repeated theme in the Bible. “I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” Isa. 49:6. Also see Acts 13:47; Lk. 2:32. This, then, will be the full and final realization of Israel as a kingdom of priests.

A Revival of Sacrifices

Ezek. 43:18, 26-27 - And he said to me, “Son of man, thus says the Lord God: These are the ordinances for the altar: ... Seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and cleanse it, and so consecrate it. And when they have completed these days, then from the eighth day onward the priests shall offer on the altar your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, and I will accept you, declares the Lord God.”
**Ezek. 45:17** - “It shall be the prince’s duty to furnish the burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings, at the feasts, the new moons, and the Sabbaths, all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel: he shall provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings, to make atonement on behalf of the house of Israel.”

**Ezek. 44:6b-8, 10, 12** - “Thus says the Lord God: O house of Israel, enough of all your abominations, in admitting foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary, profaning my temple, when you offer to me my food, the fat and the blood. You have broken my covenant, in addition to all your abominations. And you have not kept charge of my holy things, but you have set others to keep my charge for you in my sanctuary. ... But the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment. ... Because they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn concerning them, declares the Lord God, and they shall bear their punishment.”

These verses from Ezekiel are some of the toughest prophetic scriptures to understand. I struggled with them myself for a long time, but I believe I now have the key.

The problem is this: Ezekiel’s temple has never yet been built, so it must be yet future, because (among other things) God does not make contingency plans that He will never use. Not only the Third Temple, but the sanctuary and altar are measured and specified in long cubits (a cubit and a handbreadth - Ezek. 43:13). These are the units of measurement in real world human construction, confirming the Millennial sanctuary and altar are to be taken literally, and they will indeed be used for animal sacrifices.

Yet we know that the redemptive work of Jesus has already been perfected and completed in His First Advent, eliminating the need for animal sacrifices in the context of the Church covenant. So, if the Third Temple will have a literal sanctuary and altar - and literal animal sacrifices will be taking place - what is going on? How are these two things to be reconciled?

If you read up on this question, you will find many proposed answers, including: 1) the sacrifices and offerings must be allegorical or symbolic only; 2) there are different types of atonement (higher and lower), and whereas the salvation through Christ is a high atonement, the sacrificial system is a lower atonement; 3) another way of saying that, I suppose, is that animal sacrifices never actually saved anyone, they just atoned for sins temporarily, until the next set of sins were committed; 4) the Ezekiel sacrifices are to be understood as a memorial or remembrance rather than as a form of atonement; 5) the Jewish sacrifices under the Mosaic law never really went away and are eternal until the new heavens and new earth are created; and 6) the sacrifices are not really for atonement purposes at all, they are just a form of kingly tribute paid to the King of Kings.

Let me address each of these, in turn. First, you don’t need a literal altar on which to perform merely symbolic sacrifices. The Jews in the Millennium aren’t going to be performing sacrifice re-enactments. Yes, there will be real slaughtering of animals going on. Eze. 40:41-32; 44:11. Second and third, the problem with higher and lower atonement (or forgiveness vs. atonement), is that sacrifices in the Millennium will not be for the purpose of individual redemption at all. They will serve a national or corporate purpose only, for Israel as a nation. Remember, at this point all Israel is saved. What does anyone need “more” personal redemption for?
Fourth, the sacrifices will not be for a memorial, because they will be required as part of an ongoing obligation under the Mosaic covenant that never ended. The Mosaic law is not being remembered, it is being resumed. And yes, the sacrifices will serve the purpose of national atonement. Eze. 45:17. Fifth, true, the Mosaic sacrificial obligations never really went away. They were simply prevented from being observed due to the lack of a physical temple. Sixth, as per Eze. 44, the sacrifices will not be a form of tribute, but a form of punishment. But yes, the King of Kings will demand it.

I want to make it clear I am not suggesting that the future resumption of animal sacrifices has anything to do with the redemption of any individuals. Jews in the Millennium will be covered by the New Covenant with Israel, under which all Israel will be saved. Meanwhile, the Church covenant will be plenty sufficient to redeem any individual Gentiles. But this isn't about the Church, or salvation, or redemption. More to the point, Millennial animal sacrifices are not about any individuals at all. It's about the nation of Israel as a corporate entity. And as a nation, Israel has both a unique privilege, and a unique burden.

The privilege, we have already partially identified. Israel, among all the nations of the world, is the only one identified by God as His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. Israel is also singled out as the only nation whom God calls my people, the people whom God will dwell among, and who are identified with His holy name. To the Jews alone were committed the oracles of God, that is, the scriptures, (Rom. 3:2). Salvation itself is from the Jews (Jn. 4:22). Further, even the territories of the nations were determined around Israel (Deu. 32:8), and Jerusalem is the center of the world (Eze. 5:5; 38:12). All of that is pretty special, and unique.

In Ezek. 43, when the sacrifices are made, who is it that the Lord will accept? Israel. In Ezek. 45, the prince of what nation is to furnish the sacrificial offerings? Israel. So grab onto this truth: Ezekiel nowhere says that the sacrifices in the Millennial temple are to be offered by or on behalf of any Gentiles. The sacrificial system, when revived, is for Jews only. And when I say Jews only, what I mean is the nation of Israel, as a nation, in its corporate capacity.

God has always dealt with Israel covenantally as a nation, or corporately. The Mosaic covenant was given to Israel as a national constitution. When all Israel saved, salvation will be imparted to the Jews corporately, as a nation. (Jer. 31:31-34). So when God finally deals with the past sins of Israel, it should be no surprise He will deal with them corporately, as a nation.

This is an issue of national (corporate, and ancestral) shame and iniquity. It is, as Ezek. 44 clearly indicates, a matter of national punishment. It doesn’t mean that any Jews will be denied entry into heaven, or even that they will be denied the many physical blessings God has promised to bestow on Israel during Christ’s earthly kingdom. It simply means, in terms of religious duties, that they will have certain ritualistic obligations the Gentiles will not also have. And this punishment will be imposed not because of anything the Jews at the time will have done, but because of what their ancestors did long ago in the past.

How, you may ask, is God justified in making this corporate punishment for past sins? Consider this:

Then the word of the Lord came to me: “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this
potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. ... Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: ‘Thus says the Lord, behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.’” (Jer. 18:5-6,11).

But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use? (Rom. 9:20-21).

It’s tough love, people. God can do whatever He wants with His own possession among the peoples of the world. Ours is not to question why, but merely to understand. God has made His intentions known, and they are unmistakable. They shall bear their punishment.

Is it starting to make sense to you now? In reality, there is no conflict between the resumed sacrificial system for the Jews and the grace of God (i.e., salvation through faith) extended to all nations through Christ. They both exist together, side by side.

Levite Land Ownership

I suppose I can briefly mention the apparent contradiction, in speaking of the Levitical priests, between Ezek. 44:28 (“This shall be their inheritance: I am their inheritance: and you shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession.”) and Ezek. 48:10, 12 (“These shall be the allotments of the holy portion: the priests shall have an allotment measuring [25,000 by 10,000 cubits]. And it shall belong to them as a special portion from the holy portion of the land, a most holy place, adjoining the territory of the Levites.”).

So, do the Levitical priests in the Millennium have land ownership, or not? Remember that under the Mosaic law, the Levites had no land ownership in ancient Israel. “And no portion was given to the Levites in the land, but only cities to dwell in, with their pasturelands.” Josh. 14:4. See the pattern? Obviously, even if they did not individually own any land, the Levites had to live somewhere. Where did they live? In cities, connected to pasturelands that were held in common. Held in common by whom? All the Levites.

In the Millennium, this pattern will repeat, except it will not be limited to cities. So, the Levites will have an allotment of land to be held in common among them, but no, none of them will have individual ownership which can be sold or otherwise transferred. Thus, there is no inconsistency between Ezek. 44:28 and Ezek. 48:10-12.

Religious Freedom - The New Normal

As for non-Christian religions in the Millennium, we can expect unbelief in Christ to persist in this time, but it will likely be scattered and largely unorganized. The worldwide Church of Christ will be pervasive and, in keeping with the nature of a theocracy, sponsored and protected by the government. Now, before the Second Coming, religious establishments (state sponsored religion) are always a bad idea and lead to tyranny. But in the Millennium, Jesus will not let power go to his
head - He will not be corrupted by it as men always are - and He will not become a tyrant.

We can expect, in keeping with the original Ten Commandments, laws acknowledging Jesus as the one true God, prohibiting idolatry, prohibiting taking God’s name in vain, and possibly some Sabbath laws. But the mistake many people make is in assuming these laws will be of a most extreme and restrictive nature, when I see something quite different emerging.

Yes, there may be laws acknowledging Christ as God - they pretty much would have to, seeing as how His seat of government will be the Temple in Jerusalem, and where He will also sit as the Head of the worldwide Church. Kind of like the King of England also being the head of the Church of England - *Defender of the Faith*, etc. - but worldwide and for real this time.

God has never yet punished mere unbelief as such, and I have no reason to expect that to change in the Millennial kingdom. People will not be walking around saying “Praise the name of Jesus, peace be upon him” and crossing themselves every time they have a simple conversation. There will be no religious oaths required as a condition of citizenship or as a badge to conduct commerce. Jesus is not going to pattern His kingdom laws after the manner of Satan’s kingdom.

Yes, we can expect some laws against idolatry, but only overt idolatry of the kind indicated in Exo. 20:4. In other words, idolatry involving physical idols, or graven images. Most probably, all worship of the sun, moon and stars will be prohibited, given the historic animosity God has had for such things and the role they will play in the end times. But don’t expect any laws regarding matters of the heart - the so-called idolatry of worshiping the desires of the heart such as a love for material possessions. Don’t get me wrong - the love of possessions is a moral wrong, but I don’t expect there will be a *civil law* about it.

Perhaps I’m wrong, but I have never yet found an instance in the Bible where God punished or prohibited what might be called mere *conceptual idolatry* (the worship of possessions, pleasure, power or money, etc.). Idolatry in the Bible, as far as I can determine, is always referring to the worship of an actual physical object as a god, usually made of stone, wood or metal. If you can find a contrary instance in the scriptures, let me know.

Jesus - even in a theocracy - is not about to violate the principles of Mat. 5:21-48, where He clearly marked the difference between man’s court and God’s court. Anger, lust, swearing, alienation of affections, and hate are all morally wrong, but they are matters of the heart God alone judges, and judges in the heart alone. Just because God will rule the earth in visible form does not mean that all moral offenses will become legal offenses and men will be authorized to punish all offenses against God as an offense against the state.

No one in the Millennium is going to be punished for *compassing* (or imagining) the king’s death, as the laws of England used to provide. Just because Jesus will rule the earth does not mean He will institute mind control or thought police as a matter of law or government. There will still be intellectual freedom in the Millennium, because as people used to say, *God has created the mind free* (Thomas Jefferson). God has never overstepped that boundary before and He isn’t going to do so just because He comes into political power. Power isn’t going to corrupt Jesus when He gets it.

Yes, there may be laws prohibiting taking God's name in vain, but remember this only applies to the
name of God, not the word God. In other words, the names God has revealed for Himself, such as Jesus, Elohim, Yahweh (or Jehovah), Adonai, etc. will likely be protected. But the word god just means deity - it isn’t a name, even when it’s capitalized.

And yes, there may be Sabbath laws, something on the order of old Sunday blue laws in the U.S., perhaps closing of businesses. But don’t expect any Millennial laws regulating the number of steps you can take on the Sabbath as the Jewish rabbis used to do. For that matter, don’t expect laws to prohibit most of the things the Jews used to regulate which Jesus declared to be mere traditions of men, and not really God’s laws. Don’t expect any laws against personal amusements on Sundays, or any of the similar things various Christian groups have long preached about which aren’t really in the Bible either (dancing, playing cards, watching movies, etc.).

If you are wondering what part anti-blasphemy laws will play in the Millennium, that is a fair question. Part of the problem in answering it has to do with defining blasphemy. Historically, blasphemy has had a broad definition in certain cultures. Generally, it means to defame, or bring reproach upon, God. Muslims seem to have a very high regard for blasphemy (and a very low regard for free speech) in that they view any speech critical of Mohammed, Islam or the Q’uran to be blasphemous.

In 17th Century England, blasphemy was regarded as including any speech in which a person would dispute what God may do, deny His existence (atheism), or reproach Jesus Christ. According to Blackstone’s Commentaries, blasphemy included engaging in any “profane scoffing at the holy scripture [the Bible], or exposing it to contempt and ridicule.” Vol. 4, Chap. 4. In other words, pretty much the same as historic Islam. Which is exactly the result you should expect whenever government and religion are intermingled and mere men are in charge - a corruption of the law.

Jesus Himself was wrongly accused of blasphemy because he claimed to be able to forgive sins (Mk. 2:7), and He claimed to be the Son of God (Jn. 10:36). Stephen was falsely accused of blasphemy by supposedly slandering Moses, a prophet of God (Acts 6:11). I can find no evidence that any of these things, even if true, would have constituted blasphemy under the Mosaic law.

In point of fact, the only prohibition of blasphemy in the law of God is found in Lev. 24:16, in which the offense is limited to blaspheming the name of God. To be sure, God regarded as blasphemous the idolatry of Israel (Ezek. 20:27), but this was a moral judgment - it was never part of the law given to men to enforce. What men could enforce was limited to essentially a violation of the Third Commandment not to take the name of God in vain. Thus, I have no reason to believe broad general blasphemy laws will be part of the kingdom of Christ.

**THINGS THAT WILL NOT CHANGE**

In considering the attributes and character of the Millennial kingdom, I have suggested some things that are significant departures from the way both civil society and religion are presently governed. It will indeed be a new world order, not brought about by man, but by God. But I don’t want to leave you with the impression that everything about nature and society will be changed during the Millennium. This period of time will have significant continuity with the present, and it may be helpful to cover some fundamental ways in which this continuity will be maintained.
The Curse of the Ground

There is a common misconception that during the Millennium the curse of the ground will be at least partially abated, if not repealed. Many people make this argument based broadly on the concept of Israel’s restoration, some assuming the entire world will be restored to the condition it was in prior to the Fall. Others take their cue from Isa. 11:6-9:

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

However, nothing in this text - or any other text relating to Israel’s restoration - relates to the curse of the ground. The curse of the ground was instituted at the time of the Fall (Gen. 3:16-19) and consists of three key elements: 1) toil and pain (i.e., the creation working against man instead of for him); 2) death; and 3) each person being born separated from God (i.e., having a sin nature).

I am here ignoring God's curse of the serpent and His curses directed to Eve (pain in childbearing and to be ruled by her husband) because textually those curses were pronounced before God said the words curse of the ground, which phrase was specifically directed to Adam. As I see it, these other curses are certainly part of the Fall, but not part of the curse of the ground. Although, this may be a distinction without a difference, because no part of the Fall will be reversed or undone prior to the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, in my opinion.

Note that fear and enmity between men and animals was not part of the curse of the ground or any part of the Fall. That didn’t come about until mankind was permitted to eat meat after the flood, in Gen. 9:2-3 (at least 1650 years after the Fall). The scripture does not say, as far as I know, exactly when animals became carnivores. Presumably, they were all herbivores until after the flood and man and animals became carnivores at the same time.

Therefore, what Isa. 11:6-9 suggests is that only the post-Noahic flood curses of enmity between men and animals and carnivorous relationships among animals will be at least partially relaxed, if not repealed. I have already discussed this matter earlier.

In any event, death, toil and pain, and mankind’s sin nature will remain unabated during the Millennium. Neither Isa. 11 nor any other scripture indicates that the curse of the ground, as it was pronounced in Gen. 3:17-19, will be partially or fully repealed. How could it be otherwise? The Fall changed the nature of creation and the nature of mankind right at the beginning of history. Nature, as the law of nature tells us, is immutable. It will not change until the creation itself is changed.

In other words, the curse of the ground will not be lifted until God destroys the present creation and makes a new heaven and a new earth. Indeed, this is the clear indication of Rev. 22:3 when describing the New Jerusalem: “No longer will there be anything accursed,” which the KJV
translates as *there shall be no more curse*.

Further, since death is an integral part of the curse, the curse cannot be repealed until death itself is abolished. As long as death exists, the curse of the ground exists. And we know death will not be abolished until death and the grave are thrown into the lake of fire at the Great White Throne Judgment at the very end of history, immediately preceding the new heavens and new earth. Rev. 20:14. Also see Rev. 21:4, describing eternity (not the Millennium) as when “death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

So that is why I say, during the Millennium people will still be born with a sin nature, separated from God. All people alive during the Millennium will sin and fall short of the glory of God. People will still die and experience toil and pain. Life will be better, but not perfect. The Millennium is not heaven. It is not even a return to the Garden of Eden, or strictly speaking, a return to innocence. Innocence once lost can never be regained. It will simply be a time of relative rest from pervasive wickedness - not an end of sin. That comes later.

**Dominion Over The Earth**

Tell me if you’ve heard this bedtime story: In the beginning God gave mankind dominion over the earth, but in the Fall that dominion was lost. Since the Fall, the earth has been under the dominion of Satan, but when Jesus returns man’s rightful dominion over the earth will be restored (as Satan will be locked and chained in the Abyss). Leave this fable in the fairy-tale book, because it simply isn’t true.

Yes, of course God gave mankind dominion over the earth in the beginning. “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over everything that moves on the earth.” Gen. 1:28. And yes, Satan will spend the Millennium locked up in the Abyss. Rev. 20:1-3.

But people never lost that dominion in the Fall. And God never gave Satan man’s prior dominion (much less could Satan forcibly wrench from people what God had given them). People still have full dominion authority over the earth, and no one can or will take it from us - ever, and we can never lose it - ever. “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” Rom. 11:29.

For one thing, the Dominion Mandate of Gen. 1:28 was repeated almost verbatim in Gen. 9:1-3: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.” If anything, this second giving of the Dominion Mandate was more expansive than the first, not less.

If the first giving of the Dominion Mandate had expired or been terminated because of the Fall, then the second giving of it undid whatever damage the Fall had done. But in truth, the second giving of the command was not really necessary as the first command had never lapsed. The second merely affirmed and confirmed for Noah and his family that in spite of all that had happened as a result of the flood (*i.e.*, the death of 99.99% of the world’s population), God’s intention, plan and command
had not changed. “Get out there and do it again, only this time eat meat” is all it meant.

We cannot really grasp the significance of the Dominion Mandate until we recognize that it is the better part of the Adamic covenant, the first divine covenant between God and men in history, and one of only six such divine covenants to date. The nature of all divine covenants is that each of them is eternal - they never expire. So the Adamic covenant, along with the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and New Testament covenants are all still running in parallel until God creates the new heavens and the new earth.

The Adamic covenant didn’t stop when the Noahic covenant came along (people are still reproducing). The Noahic covenant didn’t stop when the Abrahamic covenant came along (we still eat meat and the rainbow is still a promise). The Abrahamic covenant hasn’t stopped (all nations are still blessed through Abraham and the Promised land still belongs to Israel). The Ten Commandments are still standing. Jesus will still sit on the throne of David in the Millennium because the covenant with David is still good, and the Church will still be with us until the end of time.

By its very nature the Dominion Mandate is something which will never end while this earth remains. Which means that whatever dominion God gave man back at the beginning is still man’s to exercise with full authority.

So, exactly what authority was included in the Dominion Mandate? First, the authority to have children, and to have more of them than there are of their parents (i.e., to multiply). By necessary implication, the right of reproducing includes all associated rights of child-raising, including their training, discipline and education.

Second, the right to subdue the earth includes the rights to labor, industry, invention, cultivation, construction, and like things. To shape and reshape the earth - to work it, tend it, and use it for our benefit. By necessary implication, the right to subdue necessarily includes a host of economic rights: freedom of contract, private property, commerce and choice of occupation, etc.

Third, the Dominion Mandate includes the authority of mankind to rule over the entire animal kingdom. Which means: 1) animals have never been and will never be our equals - they are beneath us; and 2) animals are living things, but they are not living beings, meaning that they have no souls. Compare with Gen. 2:7. By necessary implication, animals are mere property for man.

Notice what the Dominion Mandate does not include: dominion over outer space (such as other planets), and a limited dominion over the seas (we can traverse them, and fish them, but they are not given to us as a habitation). Plus, as other scriptures make clear, man’s dominion over the earth is exercised as a steward, not as an owner. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.” Ps. 24:1.

But most importantly, mankind’s dominion does not include the authority to rule over other men (apart from the parent-child relationship). Thus, mankind has no inherent right to rule over neighbors, governments, nations or kingdoms. This is the basis for the rule that governments are instituted among men by the consent of the governed, and not by any inherent or inherited right.
So when we look at what scripture says about Satan’s dominion for comparison, what do we find? Jn. 12:31 calls Satan the ruler of this world, a phrase echoed in 2Co. 4:4 (god of this world). But, what world, or what part of this world? The spiritual world? The physical world? 1Jn 5:19 says the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. But, does that mean absolutely everything in this life is ruled by Satan?

Part of Satan’s dominion is unquestionably in the spiritual realm. Satan is denoted the prince of the power of the air in Eph 2:2. We have already discussed how he is likely the king of the demons. Rev. 9:11. We know that Satan stands before God accusing the righteous day and night. Rev. 12:10.

We begin to get a clue concerning Satan’s earthly dominion in Lk. 4:5-6: “And the devil took [Jesus] up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, ‘To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.’”

We can add to this the statement of Eph. 6:12: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” Fortunately, we also know that Satan will be cast out - or thrown down - from the heavenly places. Jn. 12:31; Rev. 12:9-13.

These scriptures clarify for us what it is Satan has dominion over: the whole world system of governments and kingdoms, which he rules in darkness and for evil purposes. We have seen this already in examining the history of world empires - each one of them, not merely some, played a key role in the progression of Satan’s kingdom building on the earth, which will culminate in the kingdom of the Antichrist. This is the dominion of Satan, and it covers the whole earth.

However, does the scripture ever say that Satan has dominion over the animal kingdom? No. Does he have authority to reproduce, or to raise or educate children? No. Does Satan have private property rights, freedom of contract, or occupational freedom? No. At no point was Satan given the authority that was given to people. At no point did mankind’s dominion become forfeit or lost.

What we have here are two dominions operating concurrently. Each dominion is for a separate purpose, and operates under a separate authority. Between the dominions of mankind and Satan there is no overlap. Neither one interferes with, or cancels out the other. They both run in parallel at the same time. They are separate and distinct. Yet both dominions cover the entire globe at the same time.

This shouldn’t be a hard concept to grasp. A man can simultaneously be an individual, a husband, a father, a sibling, a church member, a church elder, a school teacher, a member of a union, a member of a veterans group, a resident of a town, and a citizen of both a state and a nation. All of these are separate and distinct jurisdictions: a man can’t claim the rights of a father at his school, or the rights of a church elder with respect to his state, etc. If he retires as a teacher it does not affect his status with other jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction is for a separate purpose, and operates under a separate authority. In this there is no conflict, no overlap, and no cancellation of some by others.

So it is with the dominions of mankind and of Satan. Whatever changes occur to Satan’s dominion -
whether he is standing before God in heaven, locked in the Abyss, or cast out from heaven - these have no effect on mankind’s dominion. And whether mankind is in a state of innocence, subject to the curse of the ground, alive during the Millennial kingdom, or whether any individual is a Christian or is unsaved, these have no effect on mankind’s dominion either.

Until this earth is destroyed and God creates a new earth, man’s dominion will not change. So be it.

**Ministry of the Holy Spirit**

One of the marvelous wonders of paperback prophetic interpretation is the contrivance often forced upon 2Th. 2:6-7: “And you know what is restraining [the Antichrist] now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.” According to this common theory, the “he” in the last sentence, the one who now restrains lawlessness and who will be taken out of the way when the Antichrist comes is the Holy Spirit. That’s right - the third person of the Trinity.

This plays right into the dominant view of dispensationalists that when the secret Rapture comes and the (Great) Tribulation begins, the Church age will end. Thus, according to the theory, the Holy Spirit either won’t be around or will have a severely curtailed ministry during the Tribulation, which is OK since the Church won’t be on earth at the time anyway. As if there is something theologically incompatible with having the Antichrist and the Holy Spirit both fully functioning on earth at the same time.

Which helps explain why, according to many dispensationalists, the Tribulation saints aren’t really part of the Church and will be handled differently, or at least separately, from other Christians in the end times. It also explains why people believe the Church isn’t mentioned in chapters 6-18 of Revelation, even though the Tribulation saints figure prominently in those chapters. (Because those saints can’t really be part of the Church if the Holy Spirit isn’t there.)

I have already shown that: 1) there won’t be a secret Rapture event - ever; 2) the Church age won’t end when the Tribulation begins or the Antichrist appears; and 3) the Tribulation saints are the Church because the Bible only says when these people will die - not when they became Christians. I suppose I might as well finish the job and show why the Holy Spirit won’t leave when the going gets tough.

Did Jesus, in his First Advent, send the Holy Spirit, or did He not? “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.” Jn. 15:26. Was that part and parcel of the ministry of Jesus’ First Advent or not? “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” Jn. 16:13. And how long was this supposed to last? “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.” Jn. 14:16.

I thought the whole purpose of sending the Holy Spirit was so that God would be with us on the earth while Jesus was away. “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.
And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment ... because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer.” Jn. 16:7-10. So, knowing that Jesus will not be on earth during the Tribulation, why would the Holy Spirit leave before Jesus returns?

Are we really supposed to believe that the Tribulation saints will not be indwelt by the Holy Spirit? Where do the scriptures ever say that? (Nowhere.) Remembering that the Holy Spirit is not a thing, but a person of the Godhead, why would God need to take Himself out of the way in order to accomplish His own will? Is the Holy Spirit an obstacle to what God wants to accomplish in the Tribulation? Is the Holy Spirit, just like Jesus, going to have His own second coming? Or will He be absent during the Millennium, too?

If Jesus and the Holy Spirit are both absent from the earth during the Tribulation, isn’t that effectively God abandoning the human race? Going backward in His relationship with people? Is God going back to the Old Testament status of the Holy Spirit as a way of moving forward? Does that mean we’re also going back to a reliance on the Mosaic law when the Holy Spirit leaves? Should I start building a stone altar in my back yard now, while I still can? (Better stock up on knives, too.)

Permit me to note the irony that people who believe the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way are very often the same ones who think the non-Raptured Christ-following saints, in their mortal bodies are going to enter the Millennial kingdom and these will form the foundation of the Church going forward. What kind of true Church is going to carry out the future plans of God without the Holy Spirit? Wait! Aren’t the Christians who survive the Tribulation just the Tribulation saints? I thought they weren’t even part of the “real” Church? How can they be its foundation going forward? Oh, so there won’t even be an actual Church for 1,000 years? Yeah, right.

I have already said that God is going to judge the Church in the Tribulation. Between the persecution of the Antichrist and the great earthquake that will re-level the earth, everything built by the present day Church (physical buildings and organizations of people) will be swept away. Plus, all the Christians alive when Jesus returns will be translated into immortal bodies.

But I never said, and I never meant to imply, that the very nature of the Church would be redefined at that time. God is going to rebuild His Church from scratch, based mainly on the witness of the Jews to convert the Gentiles. But it will be the same type and composition of the body of Christ that we have now. Salvation and the comfort of the Holy Spirit will come to believers the same way they do now. The nature of the Church is not going to change in either the Tribulation or the Millennium. And that includes the nature and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

It is a fair question to ask, “Then what does 2Th. 2:6-7 mean?” The only thing we know about the “he” in the text is that he restrains lawlessness. However, scripture nowhere declares, to my knowledge, that this is the job of the Holy Spirit. Rather, the job of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of evil, not restrain it. Jn. 16:8. Civil rulers are given the job of punishing evil (Rom. 13:1-4), which is a form of restraint, but I doubt civil rulers are in view in 2Th. 2:6-7 because no civil ruler will be able to restrain the Antichrist.

Most likely the text refers to an angel, or possibly the Godhead. But when it says he will be out of the way it most likely means that God will simply allow what He has up to that point not allowed.
In other words, even if the “he” in the text refers to God, it does not mean any aspect of the ministries of the Father, Son or Holy Spirit will change. It means nothing more or less than God will not allow the Antichrist to be revealed until it is time to do so on God’s calendar. God will not let Satan or the Antichrist jump the gun.

And this, I think, is the real key to understanding the text. We shouldn’t be focusing on the method or manner of restraint, or what it means to be out of the way. The focus of the text is the revelation of the Antichrist, and that the timing of this revelation is under God’s control, even though lawlessness is already at work in the world.

Honestly, people - to manufacture a “God’s going to take the Holy Spirit off the earth after the Rapture” teaching from this text does the text a great disservice. If God actually intended to convey that meaning in the scripture, don’t you think He would have said so a lot more plainly, and probably confirmed the matter elsewhere in the Bible? To take something which is a mere inference, and a remote possibility at that, then to blow it up into a major change in the ministry of the Godhead - this is eisegesis, not exegesis. It’s reading something into the text that isn’t there.

**NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH**

**Rev. 21:1-27** (summary) -

vv. 1-5: The present heaven and earth pass away, and a new heaven and earth replace them. There are no more seas. The new Jerusalem comes from heaven to earth as the place where God will dwell with man: He will be their God, and they will be His people. Death, pain and crying are no more; the former things have passed away.

vv. 6-8: All things are made new. God on the throne declares He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. The spring of the water of life will be given as a heritage to the thirsty, those who conquer, the sons of God. But the lake of fire and sulphur, the second death, is reserved for “the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars.”

vv. 9-21: The New Jerusalem is described as the Bride of the Lamb. It is a city, clear as crystal, with a high wall, and a square base. Its length, width and height are equal: 12,000 stadia (1,500 miles). It has 12 gates, each made of a single pearl, three gates facing each direction (N, S, E, W). An angel is stationed at each gate, and the gates are named after the tribes of Israel. The city has twelve foundations, each named after one of the apostles of the Lamb, and each made of a precious stone (which are specified). The city and its street are pure gold, clear as glass.

vv. 22-27: There is no temple in the city, for its temple is God the Almighty and the Lamb. There is no sun or moon to give light, for God and the Lamb are its light, and there will be no night. The gates will never be shut, and the kings and nations will enter the city. But nothing unclean or false can enter in - only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

**Rev. 22:1-5** (summary) - The river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side is the tree of life, with twelve kinds of fruit, yielding fruit each month. The tree’s leaves are for the healing of the nations. The servants of God will worship Him, and see His face. His name will be on their foreheads, and they will reign forever.
All Things New

After the battle between good and evil has been fought and permanently won, after God has accomplished everything He has wanted to do on the earth and with humanity, and after history has run its full course, all that exists now or will ever exist in the present universe will come to an end. Time will be no more, and eternity will start. How will this take place?

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 2 Pet. 3:10-13.

Thus, the present universe will go out of existence with a big bang after coming into existence by the word of God. It’s just the opposite of current “scientific” thought (that’s a laugh), that the universe was started with a big bang and will go out with a whimper (i.e., loss of all energy). Somebody’s got it backwards, as usual.

Commentators often surmise the universe will be destroyed either by a large explosion, or by fire coming from the mouth of God (as it does when God destroys His enemies). But the word dissolved suggests something else to me - namely, that God will simply stop sustaining the present creation by the word of His power. See, Heb. 1:3. By withdrawing His power, which keeps all things together (Col. 1:17), everything we know as matter will simply dissolve. But of course, as we know in the atomic age, when matter is destroyed it releases great energy. Huge energy. $E = mc^2$. But the exact mechanism of destruction is not for us to know. In any event, all things physical will pass away.

Which is not to say that everything in the new creation will be metaphysical (or spiritual only), but rather it will be incorruptible. In scientific terms, the law of entropy will no longer apply (energy will not always tend towards a less ordered state). Tangible things will exist, but they will not decay, fall apart or wear out. As Paul stated, “For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality,” in other words, an immortal body. 1Co. 15:53-54.

We will have new immortal bodies and not merely have our spirits float about the universe incorporeal (without a body). There must of necessity be things of substance - for lack of a better term, made of matter - and the new earth and the new Jerusalem (like our bodies) will be tangible things. But the curse of the ground will be gone - there will be no death, no pain or suffering, and no diseases or defects. Men will no longer toil, and women will no longer give birth. No one in heaven will be separated from God or have a sin nature. In fact, sin itself will be gone forever.

As to why God will create a new earth, it is because that’s where His people will live. We are not going to live either in outer space (second heaven) or the third heaven (a purely spiritual realm). The eternal “heaven” for which God’s people are destined is none of these. No, the people of God will be firmly tethered to a new earth, undoubtedly a planet like the present earth, but without any
oceans, which I take to mean it will be 100% habitable (unlike the present earth). In fact, what people commonly refer to as heaven is really the New Jerusalem, because that’s where the pearly gates will be.

The scripture indicates that Christians are in a sense strangers and aliens (or exiles) on the earth (Heb. 11:13), but I confess I have a pet peeve when this is commonly characterized as “the earth is not our home,” or “our home is not this world.” The reality is that people were created to live on the earth, and only the earth.

And when I say we will be tethered to the new earth, I mean that we will never leave it. In a spiritual sense, we are not of the current world spiritual system, but in a physical sense, we always have been, and always will be forever the people of the earth. The earth is the only home we will ever have and we’d better get used to it.

It is possible the new earth will not have a solar system - although it might, too. We know that the New Jerusalem will have no need of the sun or the moon, which may mean they won't exist, because there will be no night. However, the scripture never plainly says the new earth will have no need for the sun or moon - only that the holy city will have no need of them, because it will have an internal light source. As for the rest of the earth, who knows?

And then there is the curious reference to the tree of life in Rev. 22:2 to the effect that it will yield its fruit each month. Most commentators focus on why, if at all, anyone will need to eat such fruit, but my concern is the fact that it will yield fruit each month. You can’t have a month without a moon. A month is a lunar cycle - at least, for now. But for reasons described next, that analysis may not apply in eternity.

Though it is hard for us to conceive of it, time will cease. People will still move about and do things - there will be motion in eternity - but time will not be relevant. Since in our physical world time equals change (motion), I take this to mean two things: 1) nothing in the new creation will age; and 2) all of the things by which we measure time will likely be gone - the day, the week, the month, and the year.

All of these time measurements depend on the movement of astronomical bodies (sun, moon and earth), and it is likely that even though the new earth will still be a planet, all of the references by which days, months and years are observed will be gone. Thus, on balance, I conclude there will be no sun or moon, and possibly no rotation of the new earth. How months will be measured in eternity, I have no idea.

If you ask me whether people will make appointments in heaven and be able to keep meetings, I suspect the answer is yes, but perhaps people will intuitively know when to coordinate with each other. Or maybe they won’t care when anyone arrives, because it’s not like there will be any emergencies or time pressures in eternity. Obviously, I don’t know the answer to the question and God isn’t going to tell us before we get there, most likely. But time, as we now know it, will no longer apply.

Further, I doubt anyone in the new creation will remember anything of our lives on earth, nor ask about it. We will not be sitting around watching reruns of history for our amusement or edification.
All those things would do is remind us of sin and sorrow. Isa. 65:17 suggests we will have no memory of what came before. “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.”

In keeping with that, Jesus indicated there will be no marriage or family relationships in heaven, because those only applied to carrying out the Dominion Mandate of Gen. 1:28, which I assume will no longer apply. See Mat. 22:30. There will certainly be no need for procreation - once eternity sets in, whoever has been born up to that point is all the people there will ever be, forever.

The number of heavenly occupants will remain constant. Which means no one will leave, either. No one will be traveling to other stars or planets. If you’re waiting for space aliens to show everyone that we are not alone in the universe, you wait in vain, even for an eternity.

Rev. 2:17; 3:12; and 22:4 all indicate that in heaven everyone will be given a new and unique name from God that no one else has. This tells me that God is going so far in making a new creation that we will all have completely new self-identities - another confirmation that all past memories will be wiped away. We might - no one can say for sure - retain our memories (even as translated saints) up until the Great White Throne. But after that, memories of our first creation would be totally inconsistent with being a new creation. I suspect God will give everyone in heaven a mind wipe.

The fact that the New Jerusalem will have twelve gates named after the tribes of Israel and twelve foundations named after the apostles is interesting, but I wonder if we will know the significance of it then. If everyone in eternity gets a new and unique name from God (as well as a mind wipe), how would we associate anyone in heaven with the names on its gates or foundations?

It is therefore no mere coincidence that Revelation 21-22 tells us the New Jerusalem will have twelve gates named after the tribes of Israel, but nowhere mentions the names of the tribes themselves. This in sharp contrast to Rev. 7, in discussing the 144,000 of Israel during the Tribulation, which names each of the tribes.

Similarly Ezek. 48, in describing the apportionment of the land of Israel and the gates of Jerusalem during the Millennium, names each of the tribes. Yet, when we are told the gates of New Jerusalem will be named after the tribes of Israel in eternity, the names of the tribes are not given. I suggest the reason for this is simple: when eternity arrives, those names will no longer mean anything to us.

If they were to mean anything to us, that is, if we were to remember who the tribes of Israel were and what they did or why they were important, we would necessarily remember their trials, sins, failures, and times of judgment. But we will not remember those things. “The former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.” Thus, it should be no surprise that when we are told the foundation layers of the New Jerusalem will be named after the apostles, they are not named either. We will not remember who they were. Nor will we care.

As to what people will do in heaven once they get there, the Bible doesn’t say. Other than worshiping God and going in and out of the city, we will just have to wait and find out. Sadly, there is no reasonable expectation that anyone will be able to have sex with 70 virgins in heaven. And I was so looking forward to that. (What do the virgins have to look forward to, I wonder?) But on a planet as large as the new earth without any seas, I’m betting we’ll have plenty of things to do,
places to go, and people to see. Just think of all the songs I could write.

**The New Jerusalem**

*Significance*

We are told that the New Jerusalem will come from heaven to the new earth adorned as a bride. It will be like a jewel, clear as crystal. The entire city will be made of precious metals and precious stones. It will have twelve pearly gates named after the tribes of Israel, and twelve jeweled foundations named after the Lamb’s apostles. It will be square, either 1,400 or 1,500 miles on each side, depending on your Bible translation (12,000 stadia vs. 12,000 furlongs). It is also the same height.

When it is said that the New Jerusalem comes out of heaven from God, the primary significance is that the city is entirely made by God without any human input or contribution. The New Jerusalem will not be under construction, and no man will build it. God will be able to say to His people, on behalf of Himself and His government, “You didn’t build that.” (Apologies for the Obama-era reference.) Which statement will actually be true for the first time ever.

I would do a disservice if I gave the impression that the New Jerusalem was something mentioned in the Bible only at the very end of Revelation. It is of course mentioned in Rev. 3:12, “The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.”

But the New Jerusalem is also mentioned four times in Hebrews. “For [Abraham] was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” Heb. 11:10. “Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.” Heb. 11:16. “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” Heb. 12:22. “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.” Heb. 13:14.

The holy city of God, founded by Him and wherein He dwells, as well as His holy mountain, are also prefigured many times in the Psalms. “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.” Ps. 46:4. “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth.” Ps. 48:1-2. See also, Ps. 87:1. The New Jerusalem is also prefigured in the many scriptures referring to God dwelling with His people, or in Jerusalem, forever. So the New Jerusalem is in fact a theme throughout the Bible.

It would be hard to overemphasize the importance of the New Jerusalem, not just with respect to prophecy, but to all of life. It is in a very real sense the culmination of everything - the ultimate reason for mankind, the creation, all of history, and existence itself.

Consider this: When God created the world, He made it a home for humanity and the theater in which history would be played out. God created man for fellowship, but because of the Fall man was flawed and incapable of engaging in fellowship with any degree of purity. So God laid out a
plan of salvation which unfolded throughout history. All of which, at the macro level had one objective, namely, to separate mankind into two groups: those who truly wanted fellowship with God and those who didn’t.

The New Jerusalem is the culmination of the process of culling/calling the true believers from the rest of humanity and putting them in the position where they can have eternal, undefiled, intimate and pure fellowship with God. Literally everything that has come before is a prelude to this: that God and His people will dwell together in holiness forever.

Accordingly, the New Jerusalem is no side show. It is God’s ultimate goal for human existence. So when the scripture says Abraham looked forward to the city “whose designer and builder is God,” he once again serves as a model for the rest of us. God’s ultimate goal should be our ultimate goal. When the end times come, don’t you want to be regarded as someone who looked forward to the city of God?

**Physicality**

As for the size and shape of the New Jerusalem, when you consider a city 1,400 or 1,500 miles square, that’s larger than the size of India (2,000,000+ sq. miles) - all for one city. Since the city is to be the same height, it poses some significant difficulties for a new earth the same size as the current one (7,926 miles in diameter). That’s a city sticking 17%-19% the diameter of the planet off the surface - a freakish impossibility. Yet, the measurements of the New Jerusalem are said to be “by human measurement,” which indicates they are to be taken literally.

The conclusion I come to is that the new earth will be significantly larger than the present earth. When you consider that the highest peak on earth today is Mt. Everest, it is only 5½ miles high, or .07% of the earth’s diameter. If that same ratio were to hold true for the New Jerusalem, the new earth would have to be over 2,000,000 miles in diameter. Obviously the Bible doesn’t actually say this, so it only seems reasonable that the new earth may be significantly larger than the present earth, but no one can say by how much.

Some people have concluded the New Jerusalem will be a cube because it is as high as it is wide, and its base is a square. However, the Bible doesn’t say that. It just says the city will have a high wall all around. I have concluded there is only one possible shape for the city - one that is both appropriate for a surface feature of a planet, and which is also the singular symbolic description of the kingdom of God throughout the Bible - a mountain. A mountain with a square base. Not a pyramid - when has God ever described His kingdom as a pyramid? Rather, a majestic and beautiful crystalline mountain.

I will not here elaborate on all of the details of the construction and appearance of the New Jerusalem. Everything it is made of is precious, pure, and apparently transparent. In this world even pure gold is not transparent, yet gold will be “clear as glass” in eternity. One more indication that matter will still exist in eternity, but it will be different somehow. Likewise for the pearly gates - each made of a single pearl, yet large enough for people to pass through it. I’d hate to meet the oyster they will come from ...

The main thing about the gates is that they will never be closed, and they are obviously designed for
people to go in and out through them. Thus, the New Jerusalem will not be a place where anyone is confined. The nations will be going in and out of the city. If the new earth will be as large as I suspect, and there will be no seas, then it will be quite open, airy, well lit, roomy, and spacious - not just the city, but the entire globe. The exact opposite of the lake of fire.

**The Sum Of All Things**

And so here we come, at last, to the end of the story of the end times. We started this entire discussion by noting that Dan. 9:24 was a pretty good summary of the overall purposes of end times prophecy. And I say this, even though that scripture is specifically directed to Daniel’s people and his holy city, meaning the Jews and Jerusalem. Those purposes are: “to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place.” Let’s now look at each of these in turn.

1) *To finish the transgression.* Note that the scripture says, the transgression, not transgressions in general or all transgression. So it is probably a reference to a particular transgression. Which one? There are three likely candidates.

First, the Abomination of Desolation, referred to as *the transgression that makes desolate* in Dan. 8:13. It’s true, that event is a significant one, spoken of in prophecy, which Jesus will personally end with His Second Coming. But compared to all the other purposes listed in Dan. 9:24, the Abomination of Desolation is just one event, not a continuing theme like the others. Plus, if that is here referred to, how is it different from purpose #6 (anointing the most holy place)?

Second, *the transgression of Adam.* Rom. 5:14. In other words, original sin, or the Fall of mankind. Perhaps, but if that be the one referred to, it is utterly redundant with purpose #2 (to make an end of sin). The transgression of Adam was the introduction of sin into the world. So they are the same.

Third, (my choice) is *the transgression of Jacob and/or the transgression of Israel*, which I take to be the same. Mic. 1:5, 13. This is a reference to the idolatry and unfaithfulness of Israel, i.e., the betrayal of God by His own chosen people. This transgression will begin to be finished when the 144,000 are sealed by God as the firstfruits of Israel, and more fully finished when Jesus enters his Millennial kingdom and all Israel is saved. Although, I suppose the transgression of Israel will not be *totally* finished until the ritualistic punishment it will endure during the Millennium (per Eze. 44) is finished.

2) *To make an end of sin.* Rev. 20:14. Sin entered the world with the fall of mankind in Gen. 3:14-19. Rightly it is called *the transgression of Adam*, for when God pronounced judgment on the serpent, the woman, and the man, only in the judgment of Adam did God inaugurate the three things most germane to the history of the world thereafter: 1) the curse of the ground; 2) the sin nature (“original sin”); and 3) death.

Mankind’s sin nature will finally be eradicated at the time of the second resurrection (the Great White Throne), when all people will receive their immortal bodies. The fleshly bodies we have now, so inextricably linked with sin and death, will finally be gone forever. Those in Christ will receive their eternal and incorruptible bodies, but even those not in Christ will shed the mortal coil. It is not
as though people in the lake of fire will have an expiration date - they will be there forever, and they will need an imperishable body for the duration.

As per Rev. 20:14, death and Hades will then be thrown into the lake of fire, which is to say, death will be no more. This necessitates that sin will be no more. For sin and death entered the world together, and they will leave it together as well. Scripture tells us the wages of sin is death. Rom. 6:23. That is, if sin exists, then death exists. Logically, if sin => death, then the contrapositive is also true, i.e., if no death => no sin. When death is abolished, sin will end.

Finally, the curse of the ground will be erased when the present earth is destroyed and the new creation - the new heaven and earth - replaces it. The new earth and its jewel the New Jerusalem will not be under any curse. People there will not know pain, subjection, toil or death. What a blessing that will be!

3) To make atonement for iniquity. Since Jesus made an atonement for sin during His First Advent, what does that have to do with the end times? Well, as long as we are in these bodies of flesh, we cannot escape the effects of sin. We receive spiritual redemption immediately at the point of salvation, but only the promise of the eventual redemption of our bodies, at either the first or second resurrection. Even the spiritually redeemed are not exempted from the effects of their own sin, the sinful actions of others, or the consequences of nature. Every day of our lives, we pay for somebody’s sins by way of the pain, death, trials and suffering we constantly endure. In this life we have the hope and promise of full atonement (payment for the effects of sin), but not the reality of it.

Only after the second resurrection will all iniquity be fully atoned for, redemption be finally completed, and the consequences and effects of sin be fully terminated. Only after the second resurrection will the blood of Jesus fully atone for all the iniquities of our physical existence, so that no further payment will ever be required of either Him or us. Thus, the first and second resurrections - both yet future - are as vital to our ultimate atonement as the First Advent.

4) To bring in everlasting righteousness. I suspect this goal is tied to establishing a kingdom of righteousness, as per Isa. 9:7, which has three parts: 1) the kingdom of Christ not of this world, i.e., the spiritual kingdom of righteousness inaugurated at the conclusion the First Advent; 2) the earthly kingdom of Christ, i.e., the physical and temporal kingdom during the Millennium; and 3) the eternal kingdom of Christ, being the one which will be perfect and will never end.

The spiritual kingdom of Christ allows people to attain righteousness by having it attributed to them through Jesus, but they will not be able to completely conquer the spiritual kingdom of darkness in this world. The Millennial kingdom will have conquered the kingdom of Satan and greatly diminished (but not eliminated) sin, but it will be temporary in any event. Only the eternal kingdom of Christ will totally eliminate all unrighteousness and be permanent.

5) To seal up vision and prophecy. Once history ends, there will be no further need of prophecy or visions of the future. For one thing, there will be nothing left for God to accomplish on this earth - all His works and purposes will have been fully realized. All prophecies will have been fulfilled to the fullest extent, with nothing remaining undone. Thus, there will be nothing for God to give further advance notice of to His people.
Additionally, it will be meaningless to say anything like *many days from now, in the time of the end, for such and such a period of time*, etc. All prophecies relate to a future time, but time will not exist in eternity. There will be no markers by which anything God does can be measured. The concept of the future will be meaningless in eternity. There will be no past either. There will only be a never ending present reality. Prophecy and visions will be pointless.

6) *To anoint the most holy place.* In this life, the most holy place is wherever the presence of God is to be found, epitomized in both ancient Israel and the future Millennial kingdom as the holy of holies in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. And certainly, when the Millennium arrives, the temple will be rebuilt, Jesus will occupy it as God, and it will be consecrated or anointed as the most holy place on earth because it will be where God dwells.

But the same can be said for the New Jerusalem when it comes to the new earth, which is said to be the dwelling place of God. Rev. 21:3. “And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.” Rev. 21:22-23.

So there you have it. When the new heaven and new earth arrive, history and His story will both be complete, and there will be nothing more to tell.

**POSTSCRIPT**

I know how all of this looks. Demon hordes roaming the earth to torture and kill people. The divine slaughter of billions of people (at least half the total world population) in only 3½ years. The oceans and rivers turned to blood. An earthquake that levels everything, both natural and man-made, on the whole earth. Prophets performing signs and wonders in full public view. And a battle - the biggest and baddest ever - between good and evil played out in real life.

But we’re just getting started. Jerusalem will be sacked - that’s to be expected. But it will lead to the building of a Third Temple. The Temple will first be desecrated and profaned, then made the capital of the world. The Jews will be regathered and restored in an unprecedented way. Peace will finally come to the Mideast. And the Jews *en masse* will eventually accept Jesus as their Messiah. But only when the evil pretender to the throne is locked away in a bottomless pit.

An unlikely world empire will arise again from the ash heap of history and surprise many. It will lead the way for the worldwide persecution of Jews and Christians. It will force allegiance on all people and behead those who refuse. But the evil empire will be divided and it will turn on itself in part, destroying its most sacred city. Its leaders will be from the pit of hell, yet no man can depose them. But all of this is a mere prelude to strangeness.

People will be resurrected from the dead in an instant. Jesus will return visibly to the earth and rule it for 1,000 years. There will be one worldwide religion (Christianity - who knew?), and one worldwide government - a total theocracy. For believers, a time of unparalleled peace and prosperity. For unbelievers, a time of unbelievable frustration. After a brief and final rebellion, an eternity of dwelling with God in His holy mountain of a city for believers, and an eternity of darkness and suffering on some distant otherworld for unbelievers.
It’s all a bit much, isn’t it? Who can comprehend such things? How can the unthinkable become reality? From where we sit right now, it all seems too fantastic to be even possible. It is the stuff of science fiction, not even remotely similar to all of human history so far.

Yet, I suggest, it is exactly where the words of the Bible take us, if taken literally where not clearly symbolic. Do you believe God will make good on His promise to give you eternal life? Well, then this is how He is going to do it. Not gradually, but suddenly.

I suppose that is why both postmillennialism and amillennialism have many strong adherents. Both of those schools of thought defer most of the end times events to the distant future. Amills deny any physical kingdom of Christ and think the Tribulation and Second Coming will end history, so in practical terms everything in history will continue indefinitely pretty much as it is now. What is normal now will be normal indefinitely. What’s to worry?

Postmills first allocate many end times events to the past, and therefore they do not have to worry about them changing what the future will look like. To the extent things do change, it will be because people bring about the changes gradually as they yield more to Christ, so we will have plenty of time to adjust. Again, no sudden changes to worry about, and in the long run, those changes will be positive, not negative.

What I have suggested is much more jarring. People don’t like to be jarred. Maybe you don’t like to be jarred. But that isn’t the question. The question is, will God shake things up suddenly in order to bring them to a conclusion? Is God a go along, get along kind of guy, or is He a mover and a shaker? What does the scripture say? “Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the Lord of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.” Isa. 13:13. “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” Heb. 12:26-28. See also Hag. 2:6, 7, 21.

“And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Lk 21:25-26.

Yeah, you might want to forget that whole I can wait until later to be concerned about biblical prophecy thing. And since you’ve read this far, you might want to tell your friends ...
Appendix A

BIBLICAL PROPHECY CHART (OVERVIEW)

BIBLICAL PROPHECY CHART

Restoration of Israel

Conquest of Evil

God's people will know true peace only when the forces of evil are destroyed

The Golden Age of Messianic Era
70 Weeks
The 144,000
Messianic Era
Rebuild the Temple
Time of Jacob's Trouble

forces must be destroyed together to conquer evil

Antichrist
Great Harlot
False Prophet
Beast Kingdom
Final Punishments

Jerusalem is at the center of everything

The Gentile nations must be brought low before Israel can be raised up

Armageddon
Two Witnesses
Tribulation Saints
First Resurrection
7 Seals/Trumpets/Bowls

1,000 Years
Second Coming
A New World Order
The Saints Will Reign
New Heavens and Earth

Before Christ can rule the world all other rulers must be subjugated

Establish Christ's
Earthly Kingdom

Judgment of the Nations
### Appendix B

**COMPARISON CHART OF PROPHETIC VIEWS**

The Nature of the Kingdom of God on Earth - Its Significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISPENSATIONALISM</th>
<th>HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM</th>
<th>POSTMILLENNIALISM</th>
<th>AMILLENNIALISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historic divine covenants (Noah/Moses, etc.) are: Mutual (agreement between God and men) Limited duration (some have ended) - revocable Different (discrete) parties Binding on descendants until revoked</td>
<td>Historic divine covenants (Adam/Noah, etc.) are: Mutual (agreement between God and men) Perpetual duration (none ended) - irrevocable Different (overlapping) parties Binding on descendants forever</td>
<td>Historic divine covenants (Adam/Noah, etc.) are: Unilateral (dictated by God to men) Perpetual duration (none ended) - irrevocable Same parties, i.e., God’s elect Binding on the elect, not descendants</td>
<td>Historic divine covenants (Adam/Noah, etc.) are: Unilateral (dictated by God to men) Perpetual duration (none ended) - irrevocable Same parties, i.e., God’s elect Binding on the elect, not descendants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church age is a parenthetical (unplanned) aside in God’s plan of history</td>
<td>The Church age is the initial phase of Christ’s kingdom</td>
<td>The Church age is when Christ’s kingdom will gradually increase and dominate politically</td>
<td>The Church age is the final kingdom era of Christ (i.e., spiritual only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ’s spiritual and political dominance are both deferred until the future millennium (entirely ‘not yet’)</td>
<td>Christ has spiritual dominance in the Church age. Political dominance is deferred until millennium. Spiritual is ‘here,’ political is ‘not yet’</td>
<td>Christ has both spiritual and political dominance in Church age - the spiritual is ‘here,’ the political is ‘not yet’ - saints must bring the political into being</td>
<td>Christ has spiritual dominance in the Church age (‘here’). Political dominance is deferred until eternity (‘never’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church will escape the Antichrist kingdom.</td>
<td>The Church will suffer the Antichrist kingdom.</td>
<td>The Church will conquer the Antichrist kingdom.</td>
<td>The Church will suffer the Antichrist kingdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennium is a future earthly kingdom of Christ for 1,000 literal years inaugurated by the 2nd coming</td>
<td>Millennium is a future earthly kingdom of Christ for 1,000 literal years inaugurated by the 2nd coming</td>
<td>‘Millennium’ is already here - an earthly kingdom of Christ of indefinite duration will be introduced by conversion of Jews</td>
<td>‘Millennium’ is merely symbolic. Christ never will have an earthly kingdom in history - His kingdom has already fully come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Age saints will rule the world politically via a Davidic (Jewish) kingdom (the ‘Golden Age’)</td>
<td>O.T. and N.T. saints will rule the world politically via a worldwide kingdom based in Jerusalem (the ‘Golden Age’)</td>
<td>Church Age saints will rule the world politically via the nations (the ‘Golden Age’) and usher in the 2nd coming</td>
<td>Past saints in heaven exercise a present spiritual reign. The Golden Age is in eternity, not history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satan is physically bound by God during millennium. Saints will experience literal (material) blessings.</td>
<td>Satan is physically bound by God during millennium. Saints will experience literal (material) blessings.</td>
<td>Satan is spiritually bound by saints in the present age. Saints will experience literal (material) blessings.</td>
<td>Satan is spiritually bound by God in the present age. Saints will experience only spiritual blessings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and morality will decline prior to 2nd coming</td>
<td>Culture and morality will decline prior to 2nd coming</td>
<td>Culture and morality will progress (improve) prior to 2nd coming</td>
<td>Culture and morality will decline prior to 2nd coming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church and Israel are separate and distinct now. God’s future plans for Israel are also distinct (political and spiritual)</td>
<td>The Church and Israel are separate and distinct now. God’s future plans for Israel are also distinct (political and spiritual)</td>
<td>The Church has become the Israel of God. God’s future plans for them are one and the same.</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
## COMPARISON CHART OF PROPHETIC VIEWS

The Nature of the Kingdom of God on Earth - Timing and Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISPENSATIONALISM</th>
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<th>POSTMILLENNIALISM</th>
<th>AMILLENNIALISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel’s 70 weeks has a gap/parenthesis - 69 weeks have passed, the 70th week is yet future</td>
<td>Daniel’s 70 weeks are linear 490 days (all future), and signal the beginning of the last days</td>
<td>Daniel’s 70 weeks are linear 490 years in the past, and have no future implications</td>
<td>Daniel’s 70 weeks are linear 490 years in the past, and have no future implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rapture of the Church is imminent</td>
<td>The Tribulation period is near at hand</td>
<td>The 2nd coming is far off</td>
<td>The Tribulation is far off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At ‘secret’ Rapture, the dead in Christ will rise, and living saints will be transformed. The saints will meet Christ in the air and immediately be taken into heaven</td>
<td>The First Resurrection (when the dead in Christ will rise and living saints will be transformed) will occur after the Tribulation. Saints will meet Christ in the air and return to earth</td>
<td>The First Resurrection is spiritual only and refers to personal regeneration in Christ (a ‘new creation’). There will be no Rapture. Saints stay here on earth at all times.</td>
<td>The First Resurrection is spiritual only and refers to personal regeneration in Christ (a ‘new creation’). There will be no Rapture. Saints stay here on earth at all times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tribulation period of 7 years immediately follows the Rapture.</td>
<td>The Tribulation period of 3½-7 years begins the end times and is yet future.</td>
<td>The Tribulation period is past, occurring about 70 A.D. for 3½ years (the destruction of Jerusalem)</td>
<td>The Tribulation period will occur in the indefinite future, following the Church age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd coming follows the Tribulation</td>
<td>2nd coming follows the Tribulation, coincident with the First Resurrection</td>
<td>2nd coming will follow Christ’s earthly kingdom, coincident with the Second Resurrection</td>
<td>2nd coming will follow the Tribulation and coincide with Second Resurrection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennium is literal 1,000 years</td>
<td>Millennium is literal 1,000 years</td>
<td>Millennium is present age of indefinite duration.</td>
<td>There is no ‘millennium’ except as an allegory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews (not the Church) will be regathered and restored to their land</td>
<td>Jews (not the Church) will be regathered and restored to their land</td>
<td>The Promised Land is no longer promised to the Jews, nor is it important geographically</td>
<td>The Promised Land is no longer promised to the Jews, nor is it important geographically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jerusalem temple will be rebuilt and the old sacrificial order restored for the Jews</td>
<td>The Jerusalem temple will be rebuilt, and a modified Levitical system will be implemented (Jews only)</td>
<td>Jerusalem temple will never be physically rebuilt, and no part of ceremonial law will be restored</td>
<td>Jerusalem temple will never be rebuilt, and no part of the O.T. ceremonial law will be restored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Jews will be saved in millennium. Among Gentiles, only the redeemed will enter the kingdom.</td>
<td>All Jews will be saved at 2nd Coming. Of the Gentiles, only the unsaved will enter the kingdom.</td>
<td>All Jewish people will be saved in Church age. Not all Gentiles will be saved</td>
<td>All Jewish people will be saved in Church age. Not all Gentiles will be saved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentile nations will serve Israel in millennium, with Jerusalem as Christ’s world HQ</td>
<td>Israel will be first among the nations in millennium, with Jerusalem as Christ’s world HQ</td>
<td>Jews and Gentiles are equal now and forever</td>
<td>Jews and Gentiles are equal now and forever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 2nd Resurrection of the wicked dead only follows millennium. Unsaved are judged at Great White Throne, saints judged separately at Bema Seat, and then eternity</td>
<td>The 2nd Resurrection of the dead (saved and wicked) follows the millennium, saved and unsaved both judged at White Throne (same as Bema Seat), and then eternity</td>
<td>The Second Resurrection is physical, for both saved and wicked, coincident with 2nd coming, followed by judgment at Great White Throne, and then eternity</td>
<td>The 2nd Resurrection is physical, for both saved and wicked, coincident with 2nd coming, followed by White Throne judgment and then eternity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C
A BRIEF TIMELINE OF THE END TIME

Prophetic Time References

Dan. 7:25  The saints will be given into the hands of the Antichrist for 3½ times.  [literally a “time, times and a half a time.”]

Dan. 8:13-14  From the time the regular burnt offerings are stopped until the sanctuary is restored will be 2,300 days.

Dan. 9:25-27  From the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the sacrifices and offering are stopped will be 69½ weeks, or 486½ days.  [Is God concerned with half a day?  See Rev. 11:9.  Half a day => sacrifices stopped at sunrise (a day starts at evening - “evening and morning are one day”).]

Dan. 12:6-7  It will take 3½ times until "the end of these wonders," the endpoint of which will be "when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end."

Dan. 12:11  "From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days."

Dan. 12:12  "Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days."

Rev. 11:2  The nations will trample the holy city for 42 months.

Rev. 11:3  The two witnesses will prophesy for 1,260 days.

Rev. 11:9, 11  The two witnesses will lay dead in Jerusalem for 3½ days.

Rev. 12:6  Israel will be nourished in the wilderness for 1,260 days.

Rev. 12:14  Israel will be nourished in the wilderness for 3½ times.

Rev. 13:5  The Antichrist will be allowed to exercise authority for 42 months.

Timeline Analysis

There are two key markers which anchor the end times timeline, and which everything else seems tied to - these are: 1) the stopping of regular sacrifices; and 2) the Second Coming.  This presents us with an initial problem - there haven’t been any regular sacrifices offered on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (where they would need to be made) since 70 AD.  So before any part of the end times timeline kicks in, current status quo will have to be changed.

Daniel’s 70 weeks start off the timeline, because those 490 days essentially end with the stopping of regular sacrifices - the first marker.  So of Daniel’s 490 days, 486½ days occur before the first marker.  Something must happen - whether during the 486½ days or even before it - that causes the regular sacrifices to start back up.  Something that has not happened yet.  If we just stick with the time constraints the Bible tells us, my best guess is that sacrifices resume after the 490 days have begun, at some point in the rebuilding process.

Of course, something must also precipitate the decree to rebuild Jerusalem.  Why will that decree be made?  It seems to assume Jerusalem will be attacked early on - before the 490 days of Daniel - although we know it will not be the final attack, because the people of the Antichrist will destroy
the city near the end of the 490 days and the battle at Armageddon will come even after that. These, then are the events that will truly kick off the end times: a possible initial attack on Jerusalem, and a possible resumption of sacrifices on the Temple Mount. But the certainty of either of these as a trigger for the end times will only come when the decree goes forth and someone responds to it.

Now within the 490 days of Daniel, it will take 49 days for someone (an anointed one) - not Jesus - to initiate the rebuilding effort. That person will work for 62 weeks (434 days) to rebuild foundations (“squares and a moat”) and then he will be stopped. This effort, especially since at some point sacrifices will resume, will enrage the enemies of Israel. These enemy nations will undoubtedly call for mounting an attack. Someone, most likely the Antichrist, will broker a 7-day cease-fire (“a firm covenant with many”), ostensibly allowing the sacrifices to continue, but that cease-fire will be broken after 3½ days. At that point, Dan. 9 suggests the attack on Jerusalem will be allowed to begin and the regular sacrifices will be stopped.

Thus, there will be 486½ days from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until sacrifices are stopped. Daniel then gives us three time periods from the first marker going forward. The first is 1290 days from the stopping of sacrifices until the Abomination of Desolation is set up. The second is 1335 days from the stopping of sacrifices to a time of blessing. The third is 2300 days from the stopping of sacrifices until the sanctuary is restored.

I take the time of blessing as a reference to the Second Coming. Thus, there will be 45 days from the time the Abomination of Desolation is set up until the Antichrist is defeated at Armageddon, which is also when the Second Coming occurs. This 45 days is the worst of the worst, the “great tribulation” as referred to in Mat. 24, because it represents the height of the power of the Antichrist, who will proclaim himself to be God, right up until the moment Christ removes him from power. The next 965 days (2300 - 1335), after Jesus has returned, is the period of time it will take to rebuild the (Third) Temple - less than 3 years.

So I mark the Second Coming at 1335 days after sacrifices are stopped. We can work backwards from this second marker for a number of other key time periods. The scripture says the Antichrist will reign for 42 months, Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles for 42 months, and Israel will be nourished in the wilderness for 3½ times or 1260 days. All these must necessarily terminate when Christ returns - the Antichrist will be overthrown, Jerusalem will be freed, and Israel will no longer need to hide. So for most practical purposes, these three things will coincide or overlap at virtually 100%.

Depending on how you reckon 42 months (either 1260 or 1278 days), and depending on whether the destruction of Jerusalem comes at the beginning of Daniel’s 70th week or in the middle of it, you have a gap of 60-82 days, more or less, between when the sacrifices are stopped and the beginning of the 42 month period when Antichrist reigns, Jerusalem is trampled, and Israel is nourished. And I can’t rule out the possibility that 42 months may be calculated on the basis of the Hebrew calendar (1240 days or so) adding another 20 days to the gap. Remember, we have 1335 days to account for, plus an additional 3½ or 7 days before sacrifices are stopped, which is more than 42 months in any event. What is happening during that period, and why don’t all these things start immediately in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week?

My best guess is that the destruction of Jerusalem does not occur in a day. Or perhaps, it takes that
long for the Antichrist to consolidate power, or both. So it may actually take 60-82 days for Jerusalem to be fully destroyed, and the Antichrist to set up his kingdom.

We also know the two witnesses will prophesy for 1260 days, but this does not seem tied to either of our key markers. It makes sense that they will appear around the time the Antichrist takes power, but when they die and are left in the streets for 3½ days, this will presumably all happen before Christ returns. So, there may be 30 days (1290 - 1260) between when the two witnesses die and when the Abomination of Desolation is set up. But not necessarily - no one can say for sure.

It should be obvious from this discussion that I do not accept any of the biblical time periods given as days to mean years. Daniel’s vision does not refer to 490 years, and none of the 1260, 1290, 1335 or 2300 numbers - each given as a number of days - actually means years. God knows how to tell time, and besides which there is no way to make days = years and have it work out historically.

Thus, as I see it, there is no seven-year Tribulation. The Tribulation is essentially the 1335 day period between our two key markers. Most of Daniel’s 70 weeks are not part of the Tribulation, but precede it. It’s the stopping of the sacrifices that marks the time of destruction and conflict, and this makes the most sense to my mind as to when the Tribulation will begin. And I don’t know why God can’t do everything He wants to do during the Tribulation in 1335 days. After all, the U.S. involvement in World War II was only 1347 days.

Is it possible that Daniel’s 2300 days mark the total length of the Tribulation (roughly 6.3 solar years)? Yes, but if that is the case, then how can the 1335 day marker - occurring in the middle of that 2300 days - be a time of blessing? Isn’t that exactly when (i.e., the second half of the Tribulation) when everything is supposed to get worse? How can that be a time of blessing? Unless, of course, the Tribulation isn’t really 2300 days long at all. But you can disagree - it’s OK.

And now, even though it still does not drive my overall prophetic analysis, I present my best guess as to a timeline of the end times for your consideration.
TIMELINE OF THE END TIMES

A decree is issued to rebuild Jerusalem
An anointed one responds to the call to rebuild Jerusalem after 49 days (7 weeks)

The anointed one will work for 62 weeks (434 days), then be cut off and have nothing

Regular sacrifices are stopped - 3½ day interval
The end of Daniel’s 70 weeks (490 days)

A gap of 60-82 days ± while Jerusalem is destroyed and the Antichrist consolidates power

The 7 seals, 7 trumpets and 7 bowls of judgment all occur during the 1290 days
- not in linear succession, but overlapping each other in the timeline

42 months
Antichrist will reign; Jerusalem is trampled; Israel nourished in wilderness

The two witnesses will prophesy for 1260 days some time during the 1290 days

The 144,000 of Israel will be sealed some time during the 1290 days, probably early on

The Abomination of Desolation is set up
The time of blessing (Second Coming) - 1335 days from the stopping of sacrifices
This same period of 1335 days is probably also the length of the Tribulation

The Millennium (Golden Age or Messianic Era) starts with the Second Coming and runs
for 1,000 years

Israel will spend 7 months burying the dead after Armageddon

The Third Temple will probably be built during this time of 965 days

The sanctuary is restored - 2300 days from the stopping of sacrifices
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